An Islamist *Gründerzeit*: Cities with Mosques, Adhan, and Spirit in AKP Turkey

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Kemalist modernity was, to a significant extent, a spatial project expressed through new architectures, buildings housing novel social relations, and unfamiliar cityscapes. For the first two decades of the Republic from the 1920s to the 1940s, often referred to as the 'young Republic', architects and planners, many of them displaced from central Europe, built modern architectural environments shaped by the debates on radical modernity of 1920s Germany and Austria. Photos of Republican Ankara, its construction, and the staging of sports events –taken artfully by the Graz-born Austrian photographer Ohtmar Pferschy (Suda 2020, Dogramaci 2010, Istanbul Modern 2006)– played a central role in propagating the success of Kemalist nation-building, the transcendence of the 'old' order and the 're-birth of a nation' (Kinross 2012). The power of these images extended well beyond their time and laid the foundations for the 'nostalgia for the modern' (Özyürek 2008) among middle-class Kemalists in the 1990s and 2000s and continues to frame aesthetic longings for the 'lost modernity' of the early republic.

Kemalists were not the only ones to note the persistence of these iconic statements of modernity and to engage with them constructively: First Islamist critiques of Kemalist urbanism emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily manifested in the building of mosques and religious infrastructures catering to growing populations of rural to urban migrants. Yet, it was only after the ascent to power of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) in the early 2000s and the progressive consolidation of AKP rule in the 2010s that we can attest to what amounts to an Islamist response to the urbanism of the early Republican era. The Islamist alternative to the Kemalist cities did not so much emerge as the result of an intellectual debate among pro-AKP architects and urban planners but as the coincidence of structural factors and political preferences, combining the economic opportunities of neoliberal authoritarianism (Altınörs and Akçay 2022, Tansel 2018, Özbay et. al. 2016) with a rising conservative middle-class and industrial families (Akçaoğlu 2022, Zencirci 2020) commanding expendable income available for Muslim charitable works, as well as the representational needs of an increasingly autocratic regime.

This chapter examines how, in more than two decades of AKP rule, cities in Turkey have changed through the combined effects of the aforementioned structural changes and how this has altered their 'meaningscapes' (Nielbo 2015), i.e. their compound meanings, cultural references and memories associated with particular urban geographies. This examination is especially interested in big edifices and grand projects of the AKP regime that make conscious ideological statements and challenge the Kemalist and sometimes even the Ottoman past. For this reason, the re-conversion into mosques of Greek Orthodox churches that were hitherto used as museums –with the reconversion of the Haghia Sophia in Istanbul in 2020 being the most noted and politically exploited case (Oztig and Adisonmez, 2023, Eldem 2021)– will not be included in this analysis, even though the populist Islamist context (Sofos 2021), within which the decision for reconversion emerged resound with the AKP regime's Islamist identity proposal, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter. For the same reason, the AKP's so-called 'crazy projects', ranging from the humongous new Istanbul airport to the yet-to-be-realized 'Kanalistanbul' – a massive real-estate development on a canal parallel to the Bosporus are excluded. Both projects constitute interventions into the existing urban fabric on a momentous scale and both threaten the delicate ecological and marine systems of the greater Istanbul area. They do not, however, come with a distinct ideological framing apart from a general emphasis on authoritarian notions of greatness.

I argue that the de-facto Islamist urbanism of the 2020s –de facto, because it is not led by a grand plan or intellectual debates and because it emerges piecemeal, and through individual projects, if not haphazardly– finds itself in a conversation with the Kemalist legacy, which it seeks to transcend but at the same time denies and prefers to be rendered invisible. The most eloquent and coherent attempt at theorization is to be found in the speeches of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and especially in his public addresses at the groundbreaking and opening ceremonies of grand mosques. 'Islamist urbanism' or 'Islamist architecture' (Batuman 2021, 2018) here is a heteronomous term that the actors of this transformation, architects, politicians, mosque-builders, and -funders would neither recognize nor welcome. They would probably prefer 'Turkish-Islamic' architecture, which however is an ahistorical framework and hence insufficient for the purpose of analysis. In the absence of more theorized alternatives, therefore, 'Islamist urbanism will be used here for a heuristic engagement with the subject matter. The same can be said for 'Kemalism', a contested term that remains useful as a heuristic tool to refer to the political and cultural project of domination advanced by the nationalist elites in the early republic.

Dichotomous readings impose themselves on the debate particularly when the focus of analysis falls on ideologically, culturally and emotionally loaded political projects, cultural representations and architectural environments. The Kemalist self-representation of the 1920s and 1930s itself established this trope in Turkey through publications like *La Turquie Kamaliste* (Suda 2020) and exhibitions, one of them travelling around Mediterranean Europe on the refitted steamboat *Karadeniz* (Black Sea) (Bozkurt 2019, Erdem 2019). They celebrated the early Republic's achievement by juxtaposing images of the Ottoman and Islamic past, coded as backward and deficient, with a modern present and future determined by the 'will of the nation', science, and social progress. Dichotomies of 'modern' vs. 'traditional', 'western' vs. 'oriental' or 'Islamic' vs. 'European' have been entrenched in much academic production about Turkey, as well as in everyday speech in Turkey and elsewhere. They are also at the core of orientalist reductions of non-European societies and of modernist accounts of Turkey's society, above all Daniel Lerner's 'The passing of traditional society in the Middle East' (Lerner 1964), and they have recently been resuscitated in the AKP discourse of contrasting today's Turkey of highways, high-rises, high-speed trains, and mega-mosques to the seemingly poorer and less developed Turkey of pre-AKP times. The emerging Islamist urbanism of AKP Turkey, however, is not positioned against modernity, but against the particular form of Kemalist modernity with its key parameters of secularism, nationalism, and racial exclusion. By examining 'Islamist urbanism', we encounter the concretized version of the AKP's Islamist identity proposal (Hintz 2018), which does not aim at transcending modernity per se but seeks to disestablish it from the Kemalist legacy and rewrite it from a seemingly Islamic conservative perspective and thereby to own it in the name of an imagined Muslim community.

Kemalist urbanism: Secular sociabilities and modern cities without mosques

What are the defining characteristics of Kemalist urbanism, the canvas against which Islamist urbanism is defined? Even though there now is a sophisticated body of literature on the architectural language of the Kemalist nation-building project that reconstructs the early republic's politics of planning and construction and their ideological underpinnings (Kezer 2015, Akcan 2012, Bozdoğan 2001), this literature is a relatively recent phenomenon. The cultural elites in the Republic did not have a blueprint for the future of Ankara and other cities. The focus of nation-building in the early Republic was at once more general and more specific, geared towards creating a cultural-historical narrative that prescribed the content and limits of citizenship, and hence, rights or the lack thereof. The citizen of the republic had to be Turkish-speaking and Sunni Muslim but at the same time secular and committed to the Westernization of the country. Non-Muslims, conservative Turks, and Kurds were considered –to different degrees– extraneous to the Turkish identity framework and its limits of citizenship, and so was the religion of Islam as a primary cultural and religious reference. Non-Muslim communities, and especially Armenians, Greeks, and

to a lesser extent, Jews were classified as 'internal foreigners', excluded from equal citizenship, and subjected to the inclement combination of forced assimilation and repeated massacres like the expulsion of Jews from Thrace in the 1930s, the pogroms against non-Muslims in Istanbul in 1955 and the deportation of Istanbul Greeks in the 1960s. Several conferences and new institutions like the Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*) and the Turkish Linguistic Society (*Türk Dil Kurumu*) were committed to creating the new identity narrative and disseminating it through publications, school curricula, and legal reforms (Coupeaux 1998).

Kemalist urbanism, and its most important showcase, the capital Ankara, emerged in this political-ideological context and as the outcome of the confluence of a number of factors. The decision of the nationalist movement to establish the headquarters of its uprising against the Sultan and the occupying forces in the country's interior and the subsequent preference for the central Anatolian town as the new capital required a large building program to create the infrastructure for the new government and its administration. The availability of highly talented planners and architects, mostly from German-speaking central Europe, further augmented by the anti-Jewish policies of Nazi Germany and eventually the Holocaust, steered the urbanist project of Ankara towards a specific universe of architectural language and style (Dogramaci 2008, Nicolai 1998). This was the language of radical modernity of German provenance, moderated by the experience of Fascism in Germany. The planners and architects of Ankara, hence, stayed away from imposing, overbearing gestures, and instead preferred functional buildings with local building materials and relatively humble proportions, which sought to project modernity and rationality rather than power and domination.[1]

The key premises of the republican nation-builders were to build a new capital that would demonstrate to both a domestic audience and the outside world that the 'new Turkey' that emerged from the remains of the Ottoman Empire would be based on Western science, rationality and secular education. Large parks and recreation areas like the Çubuk Dam in Ankara's vicinity signaled the end of gender segregation while mass events in newly-built stadiums propagated the advantages of a young and healthy nation (Dogramaci 2010). Schools, mostly co-ed, as well as institutes of higher learning, stood for scholarly achievement, gender equality, and a habitus steeped in the positive sciences. This, in short, was the program for nation-building shaped by the preferences of Kemalist elites and propagated through a tightly organized one-party state. That it was expressed through the particular language of (German) radical modernity, however, was owed to the geopolitics of the time and the availability of architects and planners with a specific theoretical repertoire. Nevertheless, this architectural language became the face of the young Turkish republic, and its images and surviving examples continue to shape aesthetic representations of the early republic today as well as its contestation.

[1] The Mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Anıtkabir) is the only truly monumental structure of Republican Ankara with its dominating location on a hill overlooking the city. The construction, however, began only in the mid-1940s and it was completed in the 1950s. Hence, it is a much later addition to the early republican architectural canon, from which it differs in both style and monumentality.



Illustration 1: The Çubuk Dam in the late 1930s, with the Casino next to the lake, as shown in *La Turquie Kamaliste* (Ministère de l'Intérieur. 1938, 29).



Illustration 2:The station road leading towards Ulus Square and the old town, as shown in *La Turquie Kamaliste* (Ministère de l'Intérieur. 1938, 31)

As important as what Kemalist urbanism promoted is what it omitted. There were no provisions for new religious infrastructures. A project for a national mosque in Ankara, which would have symbolically included Islam in the young republic's repertoire of representations, was dropped in 1927 (Divleli 2021, 47). After this aborted attempt, no new mosque was built in Ankara, or elsewhere in Turkey, for two decades while religious infrastructures, like public expressions of piety, were considered undesirable and banished from sight. Kemalist nation-builders, unlike their counterparts in the Soviet Union, and later in Albania under Enver Hoxha, did, however, not mobilize their societies into destroying places of worship (Karataş 2020). Yet, especially in Ankara, where a new city was built next to the old town following the master plan of the German architect and urban planner Hermann Jansen (Yiğit-Turan 2016, Altaban and Güvenç 1990), religion was symbolically demoted to a remnant of the past. The city's mosques, as well as Armenian Catholic churches and synagogues, survived in the Ottoman old town.

In his detailed drawings, Jansen presented the citadel and the old town as a repository of tradition and history, on which the young Turkish republic should draw symbolically while establishing its modern capital (Cuda 1939). Yet, the way the dichotomy of this urban constellation unfolded took on a more complex quality. While a modern city -without mosques and without audible calls to prayer- emerged in the valley steppes, the old town became a repository of the rejected past of the Ottoman Empire, with its

narrow alleyways and cul-de-sacs, neighborhood mosques and religious foundations, with its townsfolk in 'traditional' dress, and probably even more displeasing to the eye of a Kemalist official at the time, a Jewish quarter, as well as the remains of Ankara's Armenian Catholic community, diminished during the genocide (Kezer 2017, Bal 2006). The old town, thereby, became a manifestation and reminder of all the things the young Republic sought to distance itself from. One cannot miss the irony: If not by choice but due to historical contingency and topographic condition, the Republican nation-builders re-created the dichotomies of their own propaganda material, in which they juxtaposed the undesired 'old' ways of the empire (religious bigotry, underdevelopment, diseases) with the new ways of the republic and thereby both recreated and inscribed this dichotomy into Ankara's cityscape. With its skyline of minarets, mosques, and konaks, the old town continued to dominate the Jansen plan's new city, while the call to prayer percolated to the offices of the state administration in nearby Ulus (Nation) Square.

Even though republican nation-builders were above all seeking to overcome the past, in Ankara, as in many provincial cities, a dual structure of urban spaces emerged: A rationally planned new city with representative buildings of the state administration, train stations, schools, stadiums, parks, and public spaces, in which religion and religious buildings were absent, and an increasingly neglected old town with its vernacular architectures, religious infrastructures, and lifestyles reminiscent of the rejected Ottoman past. This ideal-typical duality of paradigmatic opposites was nowhere as pronounced as in Ankara. This duality was soon challenged by the economic and political transformations of the cold war: Turkey's strategic shift to the West and multi-party politics from the late 1940s allowed for a timid return of mosques and religiosity. The first representational mosque, still with humble proportions, was built in Istanbul's Şişli district and completed in 1953 (Divleli 2021, 49). Industrialization based on Import Substitution in the 1960s and 70s engendered a wave of massive rural-to-urban migration which subsided only in the 2010s and led to the emergence of informally built neighborhoods (gecekondus, 'houses built overnight') in the immediate vicinity of city centers (Pérouse 2004). In Ankara, the first gecekondus were built in the 1950s and 60s on the hills adjacent to the old town and the citadel, complicating the clear-cut dichotomy of the 'old' vs. the 'new'. By the 1970s, in most Turkish cities, the duality was not so much between the 'old' and the 'new', but between the planned city centers and middle-class residential areas on the one side and the informal neighborhoods of rural immigrants on the other.

These processes were further augmented by Turkey's neoliberal turn and integration into the global economy after 1980, coupled with state policies welcoming religious actors and ideas to counter socialist mobilization. The confluence of these two factors facilitated a forceful return of religion and religious infrastructures into the public space. The most noteworthy examples of this 'religious revival' were the Kocatepe Mosque, the first major mosque built in Ankara after the foundation of the republic, completed in 1987, and the mosque in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. But with the exception of these two 'state' projects –the first financed and executed by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), the latter by the Turkish Parliament– the building of mosques was largely localized, limited to small plots or, in the center of Ankara, to the basements of apartment buildings. Mosques were built everywhere in Turkey, in a multitude of styles and sizes, often with reference to Ottoman mosque architecture, but also in discussion with modern forms and international examples. And still, in the early 2000s, in Ankara, Istanbul or Izmir, religious infrastructures were built, mostly, with the limited funds of local congregations or the endowment of charitable donors, and hence were often modest places of worship. The call to prayer was audible but rarely overbearing, a recurring part of the ambient noise of Turkey's expanding cities.

Islamist urbanism: Cities with mosques, adhan, and spirit?

If there is a distinguishing quality of cities in Turkey today, apart from the omnipresence of dense high-rise buildings, large-scale shopping centers, and transport infrastructures, it is the preeminence of recently built large religious infrastructures: Strategically placed mosques and adjacent buildings (külliye) dominate the urban landscape, complemented by the 'soundscapes of Islamic populism' (Basdurak 2020, also Koymen 2017) created by the omnipresent call to prayer. More than architectural additions, these structures shape the 'feel' of a city, the representation of its cumulative meanings, by adding to the public space a conspicuous layer of religious references, functions, and rituals. Mosque-building and the transformation of its dynamics particularly in the last two decades have been at the root of this transformation, further augmented by the reaction to the 15 July 2016 coup attempt and the autocratic consolidation it facilitated.

Yet, as in the case of republican Ankara and Kemalist urbanism, there has been no grand plan for a specific form of Islamist urbanism. In a comparable fashion, the initiatives, projects, and decisions made by individual donors, local administrators of the AKP, and state institutions like the Presidency for Religious Affairs (Diyanet) or the Office of the President of the Republic are the result of the imperatives of the 'Ottoman-Islamist identity proposal' (Hintz 2018) and 'Muslim nationalism' (White 2014) that sees Islam as a key principle of managing state and society. As the author of the important study 'The creation of the ancestors' (Ecdadın İcadı) Reyhan Ünal Çınar suggests, these mega mosques are unmissable and "in their immensity overshadow everything that was there before"; they can be seen as the "visual power instruments of the government's new Turkey discourse" (2021, 116).

Mosques here are much more than structures for religious worship, but locales of community building, places for the dissemination of identities, rituals, and practices, as well as starting points for the sacralization and Islamization of their immediate surroundings. Where mosques are built, religious norms and limitations soon cascade into the surrounding public space: The sale of alcoholic drinks, for instance, is proscribed in the immediate vicinity of mosques, while the call to prayer and norms of gender segregation combine to create a 'sacred space' around the mosque, where conservative Muslims may feel empowered as the owners of the place while others may not. Thanks to various programs of the Presidency for Religious Affairs, mosques have also become welcoming to the outside world and to women, thereby 'feminizing Islam', but also 'Islamizing femininity' (Maritato 2020) and 'Islamizing' the surrounding public space. These are strategies for the political mobilization of Islamist movements globally, yet they take on a particular form in the context of post-secularist Turkey of the 2020s.

It would be misplaced to categorize all mosques and religious infrastructures in Turkey today as agents of authoritarian domination and Islamization. Mosques are still mostly built by and for local communities and their religious, spiritual, and social needs. In most cases, in Turkey, they are financed and constructed by mosque-building associations, village communities, charitable donors, foundations, or municipalities, but also increasingly by the ever-growing Diyanet Foundation (Diyanet Vakfı).[2] However, mosques have progressively taken on political functions, especially during and after the coup attempt of July 2016, when religious officials and imams, due to their status as civil servants, were compelled to use their mosques and sound systems to mobilize support in favor of the regime (Karakaş 2021, 15; Koymen 2017). This politicization continued during the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections when mosque courtyards were used for campaigning by President Erdoğan and imams were compelled to

[2] Burcu Karakaş (2021) refers to the Diyanet Vakfı as the 'black box' of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, because it is not open to public audit and hence can be used to finance projects who would not withstand scrutiny.

declare the opposition as ‘non-Islamic’ (Cumhuriyet 2023). Despite this instrumentalization, it is not the neighborhood mosques that I am concerned with in this paper, but the grand mosques, built in the last few years with the identifiable agendas of the projection of power, domination, and Islamization. It is these ‘mosques of power’ that emulate the imperial mosque architecture of the court architect Mimar Sinan in the 16th century (Necipoğlu 1994). Due to their large numbers, size, and scale, their building, I argue, marks an era that, with reference to the German ‘age of the founders’ we can call an Islamist Gründerzeit that posits itself against the construction of the early republic.

Grand mosques and the AKP’s Islamist Gründerzeit

The closest we come to a theory of ‘Islamist urbanism’ is in President Erdoğan’s speeches delivered at the inauguration ceremonies of grand mosques, which are major political spectacles in their own right. They are not only attended by the donors –often wealthy businessmen in contractual relations with the government–, religious dignitaries and politicians of the governing party but also by leaders of ‘friendly’ Muslim nations like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Azerbaijan, and African countries where Turkish influence has been rising in the last decade (Güner 2023, Langan 2017). These events are choreographed to represent not only the making of a ‘new Turkey’ (Caliskan and Waldman 2017) but also to signpost Turkey’s role as a leader of the Islamic ‘ummah’, the imagined community of the ‘Muslim world’ (Aydin 2017). Erdoğan delivered one of the most paradigmatic of such speeches at the opening of the Melike Hatun Mosque in the heart of early Republican Ankara in 2017, laying out the core principles of ‘Islamist urbanism’ in contradistinction to the Kemalist legacy:

> Ankara is not only the capital of the republic, but also a central city of the Seljuks and the Ottomans. I believe that with its Ottoman, Seljuk, and modern architectural characteristics this work will be one of the symbols of Ankara… With the Melike Hatun Mosque, we bring together the Ankara of the republic and the Ankara of the Ottomans and the Seljuks. …
>
> It is an undeniable fact that, especially during the one-party era, efforts were made to detach Ankara from its ancient identity and to render it devoid of mosques. The mindset that turned older mosques into stables condemned the masjids to cellars, basements, and to the darkest corners of buildings. Those who prevented people from entering the city center based on the way they dressed planned their newly constructed cities without mosques, without adhan, without spirit. Underground mosques, which do not befit a capital were, for a long time, the destiny of Ankara. … (Diyanet 2017, translated by the author)

The statement begins with an ostensibly inclusive reading of the city’s past by suggesting that Ankara’s history is not limited to the republic, but includes also the Seljuks and Ottomans, which in current state parlance are considered the two most important predecessors of the Turkish republic. In the second section, however, the tone turns resentful with the accusation that the republication elites discriminated against common Muslims by judging them on the way they dressed and by banishing them into cellars, i.e. into the basement mosques of central Ankara, which still exist today in the central city. Erdoğan states that the Kemalist pioneers built their cities ‘without mosques, without adhan, without spirit’, which is exactly what the urban planners and political elites of the time did. The counterproposal to this ‘godless city’ of the Kemalists is to build cities with mosques, adhan, and spirit.



Illustration 3: Melike Hatun Mosque in its urban context next to the Youth Park and a block of flats of Mimar Kemaleddin from the 1930s. Photo by the author (November 2020).



Illustration 4: The youth Park, a key project of Hermann Jansen's Ankara plan, dominated by the Melika Hatun Mosque. Photo by the author (November 2020).

Where this speech was delivered is almost as important as what it entailed. The Melike Hatun Mosque is situated off the 'Opera Square', a part of which has been renamed after Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of Turkey's mainstream Islamist movement, in the very heart of early republican Ankara. It is located opposite the 'Youth Park' (Gençlik Parkı), one of the most iconic manifestations of the social imaginary of the early republic, with a large lake, pleasure boats, and cafes, where secular sociabilities were to be performed for everybody to see. The Bank of the Provinces (Iller Bankası), an impressive 1930s edifice was destroyed to make place for the mosque's large plaza (Çınar 2020). With its massive proportions and space for up to 7,000 worshippers, the mosque now dominates the park, with its minarets visible from all possible vantage points. It also introduces an Ottoman Sultan's Mosque (Seladin Camii) into an architectural environment, where throughout Ottoman rule, mosques were built in a very different vernacular style and scale, without domes, but with protruding timber roofs.

Why did the architects not search for a design that establishes some form of rapport with the existing structures of the Republican era and with the vernacular tradition? An architect sympathetic to Islamist politics, if critical of the AKP government's autocratic shift, explained the selection of architectural style and language with reference to the personalization of Turkish politics:

> There are many modern mosques built now and even the Diyanet has become more open to new designs. But when important symbolic projects are at stake, big projects, the ones that are associated in one way or another with the President, they all come in front of him. And the Reis looks at them, and says "We should have a mosque with a large dome in the Ottoman-Seljuk style." He will say this,

> whether it's the Çamlıca mosque or the central Mosque in Tirana. The dome is a must, Mimar Sinan is a must. It is the Reis who decides on the final project. It is this simple (January 2023).[3]

Erdoğan's prerogative of interpretation and his definitional power to posit what a mosque is supposed to be is indisputable. In a speech, which he gave at the inauguration of the Çamlıca Mosque he clearly distinguished between what is considered a Muslim homeland and what is not:

> Our places of worship were constructed in grandeur and magnificence, because [in this way] they add meaning to the cities in which they rise. Wherever there is a dome, a minaret, wherever our adhans blend into the firmament, without doubt, that place is a Muslim home. (Diyanet 2019, translated by the author)

The not-so-implicit message here is that the early republic is not considered a 'Muslim home', followed by the injunction to build domes, minarets, and to make audible the adhan to safeguard the 'Islamicity' of Turkey's cities. This undisguised quest for domination resonates with the place and location of the Çamlıca mosque, which is considered to be President Erdoğan's landmark project in Istanbul. It is located in the northeastern suburbs of the city, planted on a hill overlooking central Istanbul as well as much of the Anatolian side, and hence is visible from almost everywhere. From afar, its gigantic dimensions and its central domed hall for 60,000 worshippers can only be divined. In the immediate locale of the mosque, however, the monumentality of the place is mediated by the fact that the mosque complex is disconnected from its surroundings. In order to reach the mosque courtyard, visitors have first to make use of escalators, as the complex is elevated and does not allow for access from street level. This is a mosque built for people visiting with cars: There are four levels of car parks under the mosque, accessible from an underground motorway and connected to the mosque and museum by elevators and escalators.

The mosque is far away from the center, but it is teeming with people, as a taxi driver relayed, who works in the vicinity.

> You would be surprised by how many visitors come here. It is Turks from Germany, and visitors from other cities in Turkey. Many Arabs come. And Europeans. Everybody comes. Most don't come to pray. This has become a real tourist destination here. Families come to picnic in the park, particularly on weekends. People come every day, but for Friday prayers, it is not that full. I guess without the Reis, the mosque never fills. It is simply too far away. When he does come, it gets really lively. But then, his entourage already is a thousand people (June 2023).

The Çamlıca Mosque is now not only the largest mosque in Turkey, but it is also the most ambitious in its conception, set in lavish gardens on a rolling hill offering impressive views over the city and the Bosporus. A well-attended Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in its basement celebrates the history of Islam with exquisite artifacts and sophisticated curatorial techniques. The mosque and Museum grounds, which can be visited freely, vibrate with families and groups of conservatively dressed women, as well as with tourists, both ostensibly Muslim and not, who enjoy the vistas of the city and the grandeur of the spaces. The atmosphere in the whole complex is more celebratory and cheerful than spiritual, as most visitors do not appear to be praying but visiting. This is partly due to the fact that Çamlıca Hill is one of the seven hills of Istanbul and a destination, where Istanbulites, and particularly couples have come to enjoy the solitude and the view for centuries.4 Before the mosque construction, this was a secular space

[3] The dedication plaque of the mosque, signed by the President in June 2018, also refers to the domes: "While our nation wrote great epics throughout history, it also showed great artistic ingenuity. The alluring domes we cast on three continents are rare and precious examples of our works of art."

[4] Zeki Müren, in his 1950s song 'Gel Güzelim Çamlıca'ya bu gece' (Come, my beauty, to Çamlıca tonight) refers to the hill as his 'love nest'.

without any religious connotations, associated primarily with romantic outings into the adjacent countryside, celebrated inter alia in a risqué song by queer singer and performer Zeki Müren in the 1950s.

Like most other grand mosques of the AKP era the Çamlıca mosque was built in the context of a public-private partnership, with the bulk of the financing shouldered by businessmen in mutual relations of interest with the AKP regime, and the construction carried out by companies in the remit of the Diyanet Foundation (Diyanet Vakfı) and its subcontractors. This entanglement of the spiritual, the political, and economics is in many ways representative of the AKP and its neoliberal authoritarian political economy. As much as a claim to appropriate and dominate Istanbul –a city whose support for the AKP regime has been waning in the 2020s– and 'seal' its Turkish-Muslim identity, the Çamlıca mosque is also part of a larger rent-generating real-estate scheme. With its views of historical Istanbul and the Bosporus, it has become a tourist destination in its own right. A metro line is being constructed in order to ease access for visitors. The demolition of a former informal neighborhood and the eviction of its former residents have cleared the way for the construction of upmarket residential complexes not only for the conservative middle classes. Concurrently, real estate prices have risen significantly in the once-peripheral quarters surrounding the complex.



Illustration 5: The Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul. Photo by the author (November 2020).



Illustration 6: A visual art installation in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in the Çamlıca mosque. Photo by the author (June 2023).



Illustration 7: The vast terrace surrounding the Çamlıca mosque. Photo by the author (June 2023).



Illustration 8: Luxury residential units next to the mosque, with the Istanbul skyline in the background. Photo by the author (June 2023).

Changing the spatial power relations is also the guiding principle in the case of the Taksim Mosque in Istanbul, which is located at the intersection of the city's cosmopolitan quarters of Beyoğlu and Galata and Taksim Square, one of the few iconic urban ensembles of the early republic in Istanbul. A mosque project for Taksim had been on the books since 1977 when a zoning plan revision to allow for mosque construction was granted. But the project remained deeply contested (Şimşek, Polvan and Yeşilşerit 2006). The idea was revived as part of the government response to the Gezi protests of June 2013 that, among other things, had called into question the AKP's discursive control of Taksim Square when activists defended the Gezi Park ensemble against the building of a shopping mall, disguised as the 19th century barracks that had stood there until 1940. It was thanks to the state of emergency following the military coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and the subsequent autocratic consolidation that construction could begin in 2017.

While clearly a pet project of President Erdoğan, the mosque was financed and built by Sur Yapı, a leading construction company whose owners are close associates of the president. Unlike other new grand mosques, the Taksim Mosque holds only about 1,000 worshippers and its dimensions are less intimidating than, for instance, those of the Melike Hatun Mosque. It nevertheless changes the square's topography and its meaningscape by challenging its largely non-Islamic content, defined by secular structures such as the Atatürk Cultural Centre and by institutions of Istanbul's Christian minorities, ranging from the Greek-Orthodox Haghia Triada church to the Zapyon High School – one of the few remaining educational institutions of the Greek Orthodox community – and the Esayan High School serving the Armenian community.

The mosque's role hence is to establish the symbolic dominance of Islam in a locale, which until recently had figured as the heart of Istanbul and as its most European-connoted square. The structure also stands out with its departure from the official Seljuk-Ottoman cannon and its slightly generic, orientalising architecture. The mosque's architect is Şefik Birikiye, a Brussels-based architect and real estate developer who also designed the Presidential Complex in Ankara, a massive compound including the Presidential Palace, a library and a mosque.



Illustration 9: The modernist urbanism of Taksim Square and the Gezi Park in the 1940s (Istanbul Belediyesi 1943).



Illustration 10: The Mosque on Taksim Square, surmounting the Monument of the Republic. Photo by the author (November 2020).

The building of grand mosques is not limited to Turkey's major metropoles. Such structures are being built in all provincial capital cities and even in some smaller towns. As in the aforementioned cases, the mosques emerge as complex amalgams of spiritual, political, and economic objectives. The 'Uzun Mehmet' (Tall Mehmet)[5] mosque in the western Black Sea town of Zonguldak is but one of many such grand projects, but a good example to explore these complexities and to see the importance of the context in which mosques are built and perceived. Zonguldak is located in the center of Turkey's largest coal fields. Exploitation began in the mid-nineteenth century when French companies established the first extraction and harbor facilities (Quataert 2006) and built a number of administrative and logistical structures like lighthouses and office buildings that stand out in the historical center even today. In the early republic, large-scale state-owned combinates took over operations, regulating production and eventually

[5] The naming after Uzun Mehmet here is noteworthy, as it connects, unwittingly, the mosque to the Soviet-inspired republican myth of a local villager, who is said to have discovered the first coal mine in Zonguldak.

allowing for trade unionization. Privatization in the era of Prime Minister and later President Turgut Özal in the 1980s and 90s undermined the dominance of state-owned enterprises and caused several miners' strikes and workers' marches, thanks to which Zonguldak became the center of Turkey's labor struggles against neoliberal policies (Koçak 2016).

Zonguldak has been hit hard by these structural transformations. Today, it is an economically depressed city with little to show apart from dilapidated industrial infrastructures and harbor facilities in the heart of the city and a palpable sense of being abandoned by the central state. It is in this context that the construction of a large mosque was eventually seen as a welcome impulse for local development even by the opposition Republican People's Party, with whose votes the project was affirmed in the local council and the only large green space in the city center was rededicated as a religious use area. Nevertheless, criticism of the project is widespread:

> Zonguldak is a weary city. Turkey owes a lot to this place. This is where the coal for the whole country is extracted. This is where all the miners are. And died. … But it all changed in the early 1990s, under Özal. When the miners went on strike here and then began to march to Ankara. There were tens of thousands, led by a local trade unionist, Şemsi Denizer. I think this scared many people in Ankara. After this, the state basically punished Zonguldak. …. You can say that the only real investment here in the last few years, the only thing you can see is the mosque (July 2023).

The mosque was financed by a construction company that later fell out of favor with the authorities, as well as a businessman and personal acquaintance of Erdoğan from school days in a religious high school (Imam Hatip) in Istanbul. After the departure of the construction company, large-scale support was enlisted by local state agencies and apparently involved several cases of corruption and embezzlement (Akgün 2021). In the urban sprawl of the city, the mosque stands out and constitutes the single most remarkable structure visitors note when they enter the city. Together with a park stretching along the sea, it also constitutes one of the few public spaces in the city center. Even though it is isolated by the port facilities and a major road with heavy traffic, it is well-used by families in the evenings and has indeed become a center of attraction.



Illustration 11: The Uzun Mehmet Mosque in Zonguldak seen from the west, with the city. Entre in the background. Photo by the author (July 2023).



Illustration 12: The Uzun Mehmet Mosque in Zonguldak with its sea-side gardens in the evening. Photo by the author (July 2023).

At the opening ceremony in June 2021, Erdoğan put the Uzun Mehmet mosque into the larger context of mosque-building attempts under his auspices:

> I believe that the mosques we have bestowed upon our cities are spiritual guardians that protect the future of our country and our nation. … We have turned this land into our homeland thanks to the independence we gained by shedding blood and by building mosques, whose adhan has never ceased and in whose firmament our flag waves. This is why it is so important that the Haghia Sophia, the legacy of the Conquest [of Istanbul], has been opened to worship. The Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul, which we built as an edifice greeting the Bosporus from the Anatolian side as a seal of our age will elate our nations for generations to come. The Mosque of the Nation in the Presidential Complex and the Melike Sultan Mosque, opened recently in the Ulus neighborhood in Ankara are monumental works that serve the same mission. The mosque, which we opened last week in Taksim, will serve our city as a seal of our civilisation in that historical area of Istanbul." (Diyanet 2021, translated by the author)

In the excerpt, the motives and key determinants of 'Islamist urbanism' become most pronounced: 'Land' becomes a homeland by 'shedding blood', i.e. by the martyrdom (şehadet) of soldiers in faith, by building mosques, and by rendering the adhan audible. Mosques, in this reading, are much more than just houses of worship, but essential actors that uphold the nation: They are guardians (muhafız) and 'seals' of Islam that ensure that the ownership over a territory or a city becomes legible and remains so for future generations. In the particular context of Zonguldak, this insistence on 'sealing' the Islamicity of the place becomes comprehensible, as the city, like Taksim Square, has no specific memory related to Islam and no architectural heritage that would allow it to be 'legible' as an Islamic city.

Conclusion: Post-Kemalist modernity in Turkey's cities

The juxtaposition of two distinct political and cultural projects in time, the Kemalist and Islamist projects of nation-building and their urbanist visions, by default recreates dichotomous readings, where continuities and grey areas risk being overlooked. A critical history of the architecture of Turkey would above all see continuous development and gradual transformations, the rise and fall of certain architectural tropes, and the intensification of others in the more than five decades between the end of the early republic in the 1940s and the 'new Turkey' of Erdoğan and the AKP in the early 2000s. The aim of this chapter,

however, was to reconstruct and examine two major identity proposals and their manifestation in the built environment of the cities of modern Turkey. We have seen that neither Kemalist nor Islamist urbanism were theoretically grounded, conscious projects geared toward creating a new urban environment. Yet, in both cases, cities and their meanings were created in complex processes shaped by the two identity proposals and enabled and appropriated by the larger political, cultural, and economic context of the time.

The early republic's aesthetics and architectural representations were limited by the scarce resources of isolationist economic policies and the restrictions of a war economy. On the other hand, the availability and commitment of Central European architects and planners, many of whom had escaped Nazi Germany, enabled a notable experiment in modern urbanism. The German and Austrian architects worked from within the theoretical debates of their time, built austere modern architectures with local materials and stylistic references, and created rational development plans for several major cities. In addition, they had at their behest the almost empty slate of Ankara, where they could build a new city that was to represent Kemalist Turkey to its citizens and, thanks to photographers like Othmar Pferschy, to the world. That Kemalist modernity was coded in the specific idiom of German, Austrian, and Swiss modern architectures of the 1920s is, of course, largely a coincidence owed to the geopolitics of the time, but it nevertheless came to shape the image of the early republic as a canvas of nostalgia as well as its rejection. The Islamist elites of the AKP era also started without a blueprint for Turkey's cities, but their policies of a nationalist Islamist remaking of society and their claim for hegemony crystallized into large construction projects, specifically in the form of grand mosques, Islamist soundscapes and toponomies of martyrdom, which create meaningscapes dominated by Islamist ideology. Two decades ago, Islamic piety and visibility in Ankara and many other cities, was unassuming. Today, cities in Turkey are shaped by the hypervisibility of Islamic references and the hyper-audibility of calls to prayer, which are exceptionally overbearing in comparison to major Muslim-majority countries in Turkey's neighborhood like Iran or Egypt.

Unlike the planners of republican Ankara, however, the political elites of the AKP have to operate in the context of neoliberalism, if in its authoritarian variation. This means, on the one side, the availability of large financial resources, readily advanced by businessmen and building contractors in possession of government contracts and by rich donors who wish to ingratiate themselves with the regime. Concurrently, though, the very same contractors build the high-rise office and luxury residential blocks that surmount even the highest minaret and the transport infrastructures and shopping centers that render futile the attempt at creating sacralized cities and coherent Islamic meanings. Yet, what may appear as a contradiction between religious infrastructures and high-rises, is seen by many as an indicator of the country's modernity and newfound pride. AKP elites, the architects and planners who work for them, and the businessmen and foundations that fund them have brought back the mosque into Turkish modernity and diminished, both symbolically and materially, the identity proposal and urbanism of Kemalism.

The grand mosque complexes of the AKP's *Gründerzeit* are all built in places and locations that previously had non-religious meanings and that meant something to the people using them, reminding them of the non-religious experiences they acquired there. Whether in Ankara, in Zonguldak, or on Çamlıca Hill, these were secular public spaces. They were appropriated and sacralized, while their secular histories were effaced and religious histories and memories were created in their place. All these mosques will one day be but a historic layer in the palimpsest of Turkey's cities. But this will be a hyper-visible layer that is built and meant to stay. In the end, it may outshine not only the early Republic's power of attraction but even the allure of the Ottoman past.

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