

# **La Città Palinsesto**

## **The City as Palimpsest**

**Tracce, sguardi e narrazioni  
sulla complessità dei contesti urbani storici**

Tracks, views and narrations  
on the complexity of historical urban contexts



**Tomo primo**  
**Memorie, storie, immagini**  
**Memories, stories, images**

a cura di  
Francesca Capano e Massimo Visone

Federico II University Press



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contributo alla curatela: Federica Deo

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#### *Co-direzione*

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### ***La Città Palinese***

*Tracce, sguardi e narrazioni sulla complessità dei contesti urbani storici*

Tomo I - *Memorie, storie, immagini*

a cura di Francesca CAPANO e Massimo VIGONE

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## *Forgetting by Modernity and Constructing the New for the Ideal Modern City in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Ankara as the City Act-Palimpsest*

**GOZDE YILDIZ**

Politecnico di Torino

### **Abstract**

*The 20<sup>th</sup> century was the important period for the modern ideas on heritage preservation and the search for the ideal-modern city. And some cities attained the role of capital-city through the will of political and national ideologies such as Brasillia, Canberra, Candigarh and Ankara. Although Ankara has a long history, it is generally known as designed ideal-modern capital for the Turkish nation state. The modern stratification of the city which was interpreted by the national dominant actors following the prominent movements of that era such as modernism, garden city concept in architecture and urban planning, was designed based on the dichotomies of the ideas of culture in society. This work addresses the comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the pre-existing and new, the past and present of the city itself by reading the modern stratification of the city through the existing publications, photos and on-site investigations in order to understand the historical trajectory of the city.*

### **Keywords**

Ankara, Modernism, City-Palimpsest, Forgetting, Early Republican Period.

### **Introduction**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was the important period for the modern ideas on heritage preservation and the search for the ideal-modern city through the transportation of forces and ideas which travelled whole around world [Bandarin and Van Oers, 2012]. Some cities attained the role of capital-city through the will of political and national ideologies in this period such as Brasillia, Canberra, Candigarh, Islamad and Ankara. Although Ankara has a long history, it is generally known as designed ideal-modern capital for the Turkish nation state. The city provides an exceptional example of 'other modernisms' through its constructed image of modern-ideal capital city in its recent historical trajectory starting from the 1923 with the foundation of Turkish Republic [Deriu, 2013]. The modern stratification of the city was interpreted by the national-international dominant actors following the prominent travelled movements, ideas, people, information, technology and so on in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as modernism, garden city concept in architecture and urban planning. In fact, the transformation of this Anatolian Ottoman city began as a declining Ottoman town, although republican historiography presents as a city-palimpsest [Batuman, 2012], but rather, in this presented paper I will discuss the city as act-palimpsest.

The focus of this paper is the city of Ankara concentrated on the modern and contemporary - or modern in a common sense- stratifications and their relationship with the previous and recent time-making acts of the city in the actual time to construct the collective memory. I will benefit Akcan's conceptions of translation in architecture of which she defines as international transportations of any cultural flow from one place to another in the transformation processes during the act of transportation [Akcan, 2018], and other post-structuralist conceptions in order to understand the modern and contemporary in global era, approaching to the city as a body or object. To do this, Ataturk Boulevard planned by Herman

Jansen as a 'skeleton' and network linking the other segments of the city for urban growth through time-making acts of the major actors in the transition eras, is chosen to analyse the relationship between ancient, modern, contemporary and recent stratifications of Ankara which has become a skeleton linking the time-making acts. It has strong symbolic role, as like inherited 'monument' for time-making actors or act-palimpsest. I will assume that Ataturk Boulevard reflects the memory-scape formed through acts in time which makes the city of Ankara as act-palimpsest.

### **1. Memory-scape and Selectivity**

The landscape and landscape folding formations both in abstract and actual space are the central elements in a cultural system as a 'potential of differences' which represent together inside and outside signifying elements communicated, re-produced, experienced and explored by social agents, by both insiders and outsiders [Deleuze, Guattari, 1987]. They define the values given to heritage specific to geographies by any kind of agents including visible and invisible forms, material and immaterial objects, human and non-human actors, depending on societies' predecessors and cross-cultural relations occurred beyond time and space. Culture, in general sense, might be existed by inflicted powerful idea on its formation process which means that it shaped through the time-making acts, either organic or artificial ways. For the cases which have shaped through artificial intertwined histories, built environments are very symbolic since they are the stages on which these acts produced, reproduced, erased or invented by the operator organisms [Choay 1995]. These operators and their operations, or actors and their acts for time-making, generate their reflections on built environments as heritage, values of heritage, memories, collective memories in actual space as representation of time translations following the Akcan's theory of translation [Akcan 2018].

The term '*belonging*' plays very crucial role for explaining the '*avant-garde's interests*' in the materials of memory and memory-scape formations. Those interests also could be considered as the collage, objet trouvé, formation of new orders and groups by shifting those materials which belong to memory's heritage [Jones 2007]. Within this regard, formation, trans/re-formation and transmission are the actions which are always linked with the 'concept of culture' depending on the thing and the people (observed and observer), they define the heritage values, and the relationship among them enlightens the questions of 'which cult of monument to select as heritage?' and 'what represent for the modern societies?' [Choay 1995]. For defining the values, the action of 'remembering' or 'forgetting' which is always linked with the memory, plays a crucial role for societies and the phenomena of identity. In fact, it is not the thing per se we are trying to conserve, but its cultural significance perceived by the societies in a specific time according to selected values [Riegl 1982]. The time provides the stability through orders against 'another' by the actions of remembering or forgetting of the fragments of the past through the act of selection [Augé 2004]. And memory is a fundamental element of this whole complex structure during the implementation of the idea of culture in order to provide the stable turning points. Therefore, memory is a must for the acts of time-making actions and for constructing the memory-scape.

In this regard by benefitting these conceptions and approaches, cities or capital cities as like Ankara that is the focus of this paper, has become body comprised of different organs with soul or without soul depending on the acts done. Architectural and their related forms are the reflection of this body-soul relationship as assembled assemblages in a unified image as a collage, representing the heritage itself. According to Hegemann, the city as a continuous and incremental collage, where all the parts while maintaining their identity, interact to create

the new spatial meaning in diverse time sequences [Bandarin, Van Oers 2012]. From the 1920s, just after the declaration of the independence and establishment of the republic, until the end of 1950s, new ideology for the new country had formed the modern and/or contemporary stratifications of Ankara. Following the cross-cultural relations, travelled ideas, people, information, movements, technology which have occurred between places in time, had re-defined the built environment of the city using the idea of culture, memory and identity by main actors through time-making acts, and made the city as act-palimpsest. This process of time-making could be re-read on Ataturk Boulevard today which carries the role of linking the different time-sequences acts through existing modern architectural buildings.

## **2. Modern and Contemporary Stratifications of Ankara: Ataturk Boulevard, Memory-scape of the City as Act-Palimpsest**

The fate of modern-ideal capital city, Ankara, emerged in the 1920s with arrival of republicans which had been known as an important commercial Ottoman town before the First World War [Batuman 2012]. Its topographical and geological features and importance locating at the central zone of Anatolia, had always played a crucial role for the city history. At the beginning of the 1920s and after the 1923 just after the declaration of the independence, Ankara was chosen as the new capital for the new country which represented a perfect city to 'start over with a clean slate' through new republican ideology against the past, against Istanbul that was seen as the symbol of Ottoman Empire and the dark past wished to forget by the main actors [Baykan 1988; Derideu 2013]. After a short while of the establishment of the new country, the population increased rapidly, and planning of modern capital initiatives started. Most of these modern initiatives done after 1928 through national and international planners, architects and designers, using the masterplan prepared by Herman Jansen (1932), just after Lörcher plan (1924) for the new-modern capital of Turkish Republic which was the first step of the modernization of the city linking the ancient district with 'the new centre' planned and designed zoning and flexible planning approach, linking these modern new ideas on a boulevard as a skeleton of the city [Cengizkan 2004; Batuman 2012].

Jansens' famous drawings on flexible city planning approach at the beginning of the 1910s was quite influential in most of the planned modern cities that also proposed to the city of Berlin for the Greater Berliner Competition, in which he proposed a traffic network as a skeleton for urban growth and for linking and differentiating the green, industrial and residential zones in a city, defined with monumental inner-city squares and buildings [Borsi, 2015]. This planning approach of him also applied to the city of Ankara, and it is still one of a distinct character of the city planned by Jansen. In his design for Ankara as a capital city, while he kept the central role of the ancient district as it was, and proposed this skeleton - Ataturk Boulevard- to link the ancient part with European modern ideas for the new style of modern life as wished by the main actors' ideals in those years, with new modern monumental inner-city squares, green areas and buildings [Batuman 2012]. In time, boulevard has become one of a Lefebvre's concept of urban space as representation of space or space of representation [Lefebvre, 1991]. In other words, Ataturk Boulevard has become an articulation space which is a term conceptualised by Wolpe [1980] as a combination of relations and forces of productions through time-making acts as palimpsest. Its strong connector role between pre-existing and modern, modern and contemporary layers of Ankara, always plays a crucial role for continuity of the city too through symbolic weight of it [Uguz 2008].

Following these developments, Ankara has always imagined a tabula rasa due to the image of 'the other' based on dichotomies as a reference for the implementation of the new idea. In fact, the modernization process has formed the spaces and organization of the spaces within the city by constituted dichotomies such as İstanbul versus Ankara, Old Ankara versus New Ankara [Bozdoğan 2001; Gür 2011]. Starting from the 1920s, spatial organisation of the city had shaped around this time-making act-skeleton which is a boulevard as a modern public space defined through monumental public buildings, squares, ideologically symbolic sculptures, parks and green walking-ways. In the 1925s, the part of the boulevard which linked the historic and new centre reflected the first phase of modernisation of the city through governmental and educational monumental buildings mostly constructed by European architects and planners. In the 1930s, centralised economic policies, soviet ideas, centralised industrialisation which were stately controlled and managed activities, had strong impact on urban environment, especially on the expanding part of the new city -Yeni Şehir- and around the boulevard [Batur 1984; Keskinok 2006; Kocak 2008]. Through these developments, new city has become a spatial representation of elite identity and republican ideals [Batuman 2006], and the boulevard expanded towards north through new-modern representative public buildings of this time such as embassy and municipality buildings, parks, cafés, educational and cultural centres and so forth [Uguz 2008; Al 2011]. These transformations occurred on the boulevard in its historical trajectory were quite apparent also observations of the foreign people [Uguz 2008].

Starting from the 1950s and following them in the 1970s also had a representative image on the boulevard as another transition era as a result of the new travelled global ideas and after-war crisis impacts, and thus national dominant actors and their time-making actions were also quite different. Governmental changes occurred in this era, such as democratic multi-party system, liberal global travelled policies have influenced modern architecture through new applied liberal laws on property rights [Gultekin 2017]. These differences on built environment could be observed on the northern part of the boulevard's urban characteristics through new constructed public-private 'modern' – or contemporary – buildings such as Kizilay Emek building, Turkish Language Association building and Is Bank Building which are constructed in this transition era are few of them. In fact, this period was different from these previous mentioned top-down modernisation developments in the early republican era, and the public-private concrete buildings constructed in this time period were also 'modern' in Turkey [Resuloglu 2011].

The use of 'modern' as a term had a turning point in the 1950s, a new generation of modern architects used 'different kind of modern' in favour of contemporary architecture to distinguish their works [Laurence 2014]. Accordingly starting from the 1950s onward, national architects in Turkey re-evaluated the period's foreign works, and distinguished their works from the previous modern through new materials such as exposed concrete [Hasol 2017], thus one can say that the dichotomy was created between previous modern and new modern by the national architects which has constituted the modern memory-scape of the boulevard.

### **3. Remaining Inconclusive. Which act of Time-making for Which Cult of Heritage?**

Following this, from the 1980s onwards which are the years marked by an original combination of neoliberal development strategies and internal Islamist policies as new ideology of the main actors, caused many impacts on the city through other time-making acts. If one thinks the relationship between memory and any kind of time-making act proceeding by analogy to 'live and death', the action does not behave as a inflicted formation,





1: Collage of the time-making acts of boulevard [prepared by YILDIZ, G.]

but rather it is inevitable and inherent in the nature of the memory itself [Augé 2004; Al 2003], and this inside dynamic relations between memory and time-making acts makes the city of Ankara act-palimpsest. Taken the words of Baudelaire, past cannot be removed but it transformed in present, which could be observed on Ankara's Ataturk Boulevard through articulated time-making acts.

On 16<sup>th</sup> June of 2017 one of the 1937's modern heritage buildings, namely 'İller Bankası Building' was destructed with the former mayor's victory pose for the media within the ruins of monument. And today, recently constructed huge mosque arises instead of this teardown, and 2 years later of its destruction 'can not be destructed' decision of the court was published. In parallel, some of demolished 1950s modern heritage buildings without waiting the decision of conservation council is quite critical in the conservation agenda. Moreover, current economic crisis, national governmental-political actors demands based on economic income, as well as current re-ottoman policies of the government bring land property problem in addition to their conservation problems. For example, one of the important modern heritage buildings from the 1970s, Is Bank Building waits to have next users since 2018 in an abandoned state due to uncertainties, contradictions, conflicts among the actors and due to the gap of national regulative frame of the conservation of the modern heritage.

If one looks to the current condition of Ankara, cannot see the city as palimpsest, but rather he/she sees the city as act-palimpsest which could be read quite well on Ataturk Boulevard through its symbolic landmarks from diverse time sequences and time-making acts, actions as engraved in one's memory and city image as a soul of the body of the city. This complete image of the boulevard provides the memory-scape of Ankara as act palimpsest. Accordingly, this strong political power on the landscape, society, monuments, in other words on the heritage and memory itself which is very connected to the traditional relations of power of each society, creates a huge conflict with the citizens in the global era by colonizing them. Salvatore Settis (2010) writes that some groups in the society feel out of place. Because the ideology means imposing a concept for the whole society which was chosen by a group of people in the society from their own perspective as a natural situation occurred during the translation. Thus, the idea of culture became an attempt to universalize/colonize the whole society by this group of people. However, it is quite clear that the destruction of the heritage also is a part of heritage itself by the process of time-making acts on the fragments of past in the present. Because it is complete nature of selection which someone decides a thing to preserve (to remember) by ignoring another thing (by forgetting) which are as a result of time-making acts [Harrison 2009].

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## CAP. 8