

Architectural Dynamics towards the inclusion of the Ataturk Cultural Center (AKM) in Taksim Square, Istanbul: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Design Evolution from Tabanlıoğlu Generation

AR2A011 Architectural History Thesis (2023/24)
Faculty of Architecture & the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology
Julianalaan 134, 2628BL Delft

Ezgi Üzümcü

6036074

18.04.2024

Kaiyi Zhu

ABSTRACT

This study specifically examines the Ataturk Cultural Centre, AKM in Istanbul from 1956 until the present by focusing on the issue of reconstruction of the same building by the Tabanlıoğlu father-and-son generation. This examination explores how the design of the Ataturk Cultural Centre evolved from Hayati Tabanlıoğlu's initial concept to Murat Tabanlıoğlu's subsequent contributions. The aim is to explore the dynamic between the original and the new construction of the building and to assess how the redesigned AKM cultivates a socio-economic impact within the culture it serves. At first, at the request of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, French architect Henri Prost proposed an urban plan for Istanbul. This plan included the innovative concept of building an opera house in Taksim Square, known as the 'Istanbul Opera House'. Later it will be known as the 'Palace of Culture'. The government actively chose to uphold and carry forward the legacy of this design idea, recognizing its significant cultural value. The new AKM particularly emphasizes the importance of preserving key design features of the old AKM. Based on the argument that there is a direct proportion between the old and the new main volume, this study aims to show that the new AKM has enhanced public-related functions instead of creating only one big opera space. AKM was initially thought of only as an opera house but was re-identified as a 'Cultural Lane' in line with the needs of its time. For this reason, the scope of the study consists of analyzing the design evolution between 1956 and the present. It tries to verify that these architects together with their generational background, the education they received, and the quality of the spaces they created. According to the research, it sees that there is a significant connection between old and new AKM. In this context, the hypothesis derives from that the new AKM, preserving key design features, has evolved beyond its initial role as an opera house, transforming into a 'Cultural Lane' with enhanced public-related functions and more accessibility in terms of socio-economic culture.

KEYWORDS

Ataturk Cultural Center, Tabanlıoğlu, Istanbul, Evolution, design for Inclusivity, Accessibility, Cultural Lane, Socio-economic culture

1. Introduction

Cultural centers serve as public spaces where individuals can engage in their leisure time with various cultural activities. Atatürk Cultural Centre (Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, AKM) was the first building designed as a “cultural center” in Turkey. It was built to hold shows like opera, ballet, music concerts, and theatre, aiming to present things considered as high culture and aligning with the educational goals of the modern era. It was registered as a cultural heritage building by the Istanbul 1st Cultural and Heritage Preservation Board in 1999.¹ Cultural centers, varying in levels of inclusivity and exclusivity, play a crucial role in fostering and maintaining social cohesion among diverse groups. The notion of public space is remarkably adaptable, assuming diverse meanings based on its utilization and open to every citizen regardless of their social or economic standing. In Istanbul, some cultural centers still have some hard-programmed characteristics or strict rules for daily activities and social interactions, while others maintain more flexibility in their architectural program, allowing a variety of social activities.² The general problem with accessibility and inclusion in contemporary public buildings in Istanbul lies in their hard-programmed characteristics and excessive control and policing. This problem challenges individuals seeking to engage with and navigate these spaces freely, limiting the broader public's seamless interaction with these structures.

Addressing this issue is crucial to increasing awareness and fostering a more inclusive approach to public spaces and cultural centers, such as the Atatürk Cultural Centre, ensuring that they truly serve the diverse needs of the community. The main scope of the study consists of analyzing the design evolution between 1956 and the present. This research primarily aims to focus on discussing whether the new AKM has transcended its original function as an opera house, evolving into a 'Cultural Lane' with expanded public-related roles and increased accessibility in socio-economic life. Drawing from archival material, the article meticulously analyses the dynamic between the original and redesigned AKM constructions, aiming to assess how the transformed AKM contributes to a socio-economic impact within the cultural context it serves. This thesis explores the multifaceted impact of the redesign and evolution of the Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM), a contemporary monument, since its inception in 1956. Specifically, this thesis examines how these transformations have addressed crucial aspects of inclusivity, accessibility, and the interplay between public and private involvement. Furthermore, I investigate the broader implications of these changes, particularly their influence on socio-economic backgrounds and the cultural environment.

Following the literature review, the first chapter examines the historical background of the location and decision-makers of an Opera building in Taksim, Istanbul, and moves further on with the historical narrative of the building from 1936 to 1956. The second chapter focuses on the educational background of Tabanlıoğlu generation and both their design process periods of Hayati Tabanlıoğlu and his son Murat Tabanlıoğlu. The last chapter contextualizes the new AKM by examining the new proposed “Cultural Lane” and its impacts on socio-economic life.

2. Literature Review: debates on inclusivity in public buildings

Highlighting the crucial importance of inclusivity in public buildings, redesigning the new AKM has led to fierce debate. In 2013, the demolition of the Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM) was once again on the agenda during the organization of Taksim Square. In his 2013 study paper preceding the design process of the new Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM), Murat Tabanlıoğlu examined the business model for the contemporary building, emphasizing the imperative need to establish a foundation and overhaul the system by implementing public-private hybrid business models.³ This approach aims to avoid a situation where the state holds absolute control, which could potentially compromise cultural development at its discretion.⁴ This hybrid business model promotes a more sustainable economic foundation for AKM and ensures a dynamic and inclusive cultural environment. Khon mentions the hybridization of public and private and providing a shared world.⁵ However, the Turkish Architectural critic Uğur Tanyeli bluntly disagrees with this new business model and he mentions that the Pompidou Cultural Centre had a revolutionary vision it was envisioned to be a "cultural supermarket" that can easily adapt to changing conditions and meet different needs with its flexible spatial layout aiming to make culture accessible to everyone. The new AKM lacks a new, seminal, and epoch-making cultural vision. He emphasizes the fact that the building has not been open to active use even for 50 years, and questions whether the demolition and reconstruction of the building is only to preserve an image.⁶

The context of AKM prompts a discussion on the interplay between public space and cultural structure, delving into the past, present, and future of AKM. The redesign, featuring the main opera house and supporting spaces named Kültür Sokağı (Cultural Lane), aims to introduce a new cultural route but faces criticism for appealing to a specific user group and having a limited operating system. The controlled entrance and exit in Taksim Square and AKM hinder continuous public space engagement, contradicting the intended function of the cultural center.⁷ According to Habermas, public space is characterized by its exemption from state authority and its nature as a space accessible to citizens of all levels, distinct from and independent of public authority.⁸ Habermas's study paper emphasizes the importance of spatial quality in creating vibrant and functional public spaces in cities. Through this research it is clear that everyone has different ideas regarding the aspects of accessibility, controlling the entrances, and authority. According to Carmona, the critiques of public space can be categorized into two main perspectives: one contends that public space is excessively regulated, while the other asserts that it lacks sufficient management.⁹ The argument initiates by asserting that both critiques of over-management and under-management lead to a common outcome: the homogenization of public space.¹⁰

Delving into the literature surrounding Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM), an essential aspect to consider is the inevitable outcome of homogenizing public space for the pursuit of greater inclusivity. A potential solution lies in advocating for a balanced approach that incorporates both public and private involvement in the business model. By doing so, concerns about excessive state authority can be appeased. Striking this balance ensures that decision-making processes are more user-inclusive and reflective of diverse stakeholders, expanding a dynamic environment that encourages creativity and cultural innovation. This approach aims to appeal to a wider community and offers a basis for the longevity of AKM's cultural impact.

These studies are generally related to inclusivity and accessibility to the cultural environment of AKM. For this thesis, accessibility refers to the degree to which individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds can engage with and benefit from the cultural environment of the Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM). While the focus of accessibility in this context does not primarily pertain to physical or mobility-related barriers typically associated with disabled individuals, it encompasses broader notions of inclusivity and participation within the cultural space. This thesis embraces these appeals by undertaking two distinct debates. Firstly, it will illustrate how the new design successfully amalgamates users from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, the

thesis will delve into the relationship between the old and new ground floor plans, shedding light on the nuanced evolution of this architectural space. Through archival material, the new architectural dynamics between the outside and inside will be examined as how the newly proposed "Culture Lane" is used in comparison to the first proposal, the "Palace of Culture". These are systematic descriptions of how this paper examines the research question.

3. Methodology: unveiling the evolution of AKM

This study employs a multi-pronged methodology to effectively address the research question and delve into the multifaceted evolution of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM). Archival research plays a pivotal role in uncovering insights into AKM's original vision and subsequent transformations, utilizing historical documents, architectural plans, photographs, and design sketches. Resources like the Salt Research archives and the IFA/AA archive will be invaluable in tracing the design trajectory. The exploration of personal archives belonging to architects Hayati and Murat Tabanlıoğlu provides valuable context regarding their educational backgrounds, influences, and design philosophies. A comparative analysis of old and new AKM floor plans, along with a critical assessment of the "Cultural Lane" concept, allows for an examination of spatial organization and public engagement. Discourse analysis of existing literature and interview videos that have been made with Murat Tabanlıoğlu sheds light on debates surrounding inclusivity, accessibility, and cultural elitism. Furthermore, conducting site visits on December 27, 2023, and January 2, 2024, along with photographic documentation, allows for firsthand observations of AKM's spatial and user dynamics. By synthesizing findings from these diverse research methods, the study aims to present a comprehensive narrative of AKM's evolution and its impact on the cultural and socio-economic background of İstanbul. However, it is important to acknowledge limitations such as the focus on architectural aspects and the timeframe of the study, which may not fully capture all user perspectives and long-term impacts.

4. Historical Background

4.1 History and the site selection: Taksim Square, İstanbul

Taksim Square, located in the heart of Beyoğlu İstanbul, Turkey, boasts a long and rich history dating back to the Ottoman era, serving as a crucial hub for transportation, trade, and political demonstrations. 'Taksim' means 'allocation', and the name derives from distributing the water to surrounding neighborhoods. Taksim neighborhood was named after the Taksim Water Maxim built by Mahmut I between 1732-1733.¹¹ Taksim Square continued to gather and distribute inhabitants, various cultures, and events in that area and continued to function as a maxim. The square has gained renown as a venue for articulating political concerns and socio-cultural aspirations. Also, the square underwent significant changes during the 20th century, with large-scale urban development projects, and became a popular tourist destination in recent years.¹² Also, İstiklal Avenue (Independence Avenue), adjacent to Taksim Square, is one of the significant public streets in İstanbul, Turkey. After declining in the 1970s due to suburbanization, İstiklal Avenue was pedestrianized in 1990 and successfully revitalized in the following years, attributed to its strategic urban location, mixed-use character, and splendid historical buildings.¹³ Since the 1990s, İstanbul Beyoğlu has witnessed a revitalization focused on tourism, culture, and entertainment.¹⁴ İstiklal Avenue continues to serve as the city's vibrant entertainment hub, hosting theaters, cinemas, art galleries, concert halls, as well as numerous exhibitions. Taksim Square and İstiklal Avenue are significant public area in İstanbul which attracts a wide range of users. It serves as a crucial reference

for a sense of belonging, offering both significant spatial and symbolic support. In doing so, the AKM plays a vital role in preserving and perpetuating the concept of public space.

4.2 “Palace of Culture”: Decision-making of an Opera Building

In 1937, Henri Prost, a French architect and urban designer who prepared a plan for Istanbul upon Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's request, went beyond an ordinary urban plan and tried to realize the manifesto of the young republic.¹⁵ The Prost Plan was the first to suggest the placement of an opera house in Taksim Square, a concept that remains unchanged to this day (**fig.1**). Henri Prost titled the document he presented to the Minister of the Interior "A Legislative Proposal for Urban Planning".¹⁶ In Prost's proposal, clear definitions were provided for the strategies of "expropriation" and "consolidation," outlining how they would be employed to execute the plan.¹⁷ During the years 1939-1940, Henri Prost advised the Istanbul Municipality to engage the renowned French architect Auguste Perret to design two significant cultural landmarks, namely the Istanbul Opera and the Sishane Comedy Theater, intending to revitalize the area.¹⁸ Auguste Perret, invited to Istanbul, prepared a project for the Istanbul Opera (**fig.2**), yet it remained unrealized due to the Second World War. Rükneddin Güney, who graduated from the Paris Ecole des Beaux-Arts Architecture School and had worked in Auguste Perret's office, was hired by the Istanbul Municipality to complete the unfinished project while he was employed there.¹⁹ The Istanbul Municipality initiated the construction of the Istanbul Opera, Palace of Culture on May 29, 1946, led by Rükneddin Güney and Feridun Kip to address a significant cultural deficiency.²⁰ The construction of the project, which reflected Auguste Perret's style, was initiated but unfortunately remained unfinished. The building's construction originally commenced as a City Opera in 1953 (**fig.3**) and was transferred to the Ministry of Finance in July when it became apparent that municipal resources were insufficient to continue the project.²¹ Between 1953 and 1955, Paul Bonantz, at the request of the Public Works Department, examined the unfinished project and crafted sketches (**fig.4**) for the stage and front facade.²² However, despite Paul Bonantz's efforts between 1953 and 1955 to develop the project, it remained unfinished. His proposal for the facade overlooking the square features a classical monumental style, highlighted by a strengthened colonnade accentuating existing column axes, and a plinth incorporating central entrance steps. This stands in contrast to Auguste Perret's Art Deco architectural style.

The failure to complete the building amidst the rapid reconstruction efforts in Istanbul led by Adnan Menderes after the 1957 elections sparked controversy.²³ The discussion surrounding altering the function or demolition of the building became a pressing issue. Prof. Gerhard Graubner, a distinguished architect specializing in theater architecture and a former student of Paul Bonatz, was invited to Istanbul to provide consultation during this process.²⁴ Graubner, renowned for his expertise, had designed numerous projects in Germany, notably including the Munich State Theatre, and theaters in Trier, Krefeld, Lunen, Lippstadt, and the Stadthalle Mulheim. In Graubner's reports assessing both the revised project by Rükneddin Güney and Feridun Kip, as well as the new proposal put forth by Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, Graubner endorsed Tabanlıoğlu's design for execution.²⁵ Thus, the process of design evolution and reshaping AKM by the Tabanlıoğlu generation began.



FIG 1 Placement of an Opera House in Taksim Square, photograph taken by Henri Prost
Source: Courtesy of IFA/AA archive, Fonds Prost.

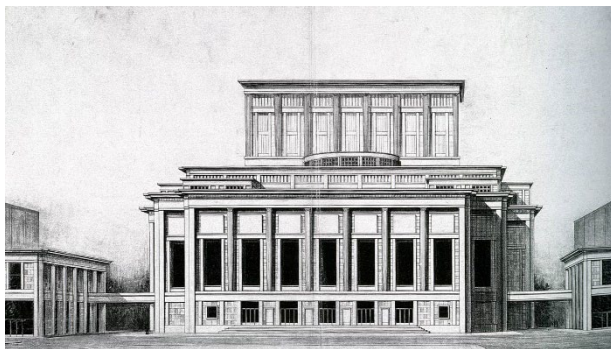


FIG 2 Istanbul Opera Proposal, Auguste Perret, 1939-1940
Source: History - AKM Official Web Site (akmistanbul.gov.tr), accessed on 5 December 2023

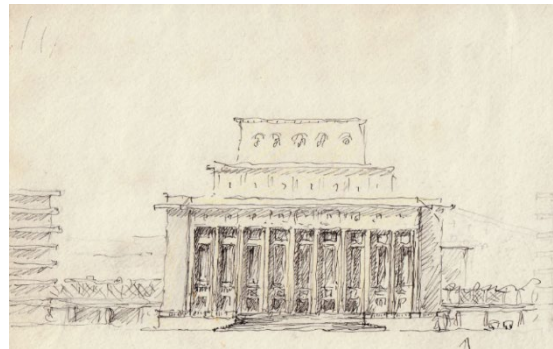


FIG 4 Initial Sketch, Paul Bonantz for Istanbul Opera
Source: Salt Research: Sketches by Paul Bonantz regarding the Istanbul Opera House, accessed on 5 December 2023



FIG 3 The first construction of the Palace of Culture
Source: History - AKM Official Web Site (akmistanbul.gov.tr), accessed on 5 December 2023

5. Tabanlıoğlu Generation: the father-and-son continuity in design

5.1 Educational Background of Tabanlıoğlu Generation

Understanding the educational background of Hayati and Murat Tabanlıoğlu is essential in this thesis as it provides insights into their architectural philosophies, influences, and expertise, which directly contribute to the evolution of the Atatürk Cultural Centre's design from its inception to the present reconstruction phase. During his time at the Istanbul Technical University Faculty of Architecture, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu studied alongside prominent architects like Emin Onat, Paul Bonatz, and Clemenz Holzmeister and graduated in 1950. Following graduation, he worked in Germany and Switzerland until 1955, serving as an assistant at Zurich E.T.H. He returned home in 1954 after completing his doctoral studies in opera and theatre buildings at Hannover Technical University under the supervision of Prof. Gerhard Graubner, a prominent German architect of that era. Tabanlıoğlu was influenced by the teachings of German architects at Istanbul Technical University and by the design of Emin Onat who worked on a theatre building during the 1930s.²⁶ Following these formative experiences, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu amassed a wealth of knowledge and expertise, culminating in his ability to envision and design a culturally significant center that would leave a lasting impact. Murat Tabanlıoğlu obtained his architecture degree at Vienna Technical University and graduated in 1992. In 1990, Murat Tabanlıoğlu co-founded Tabanlıoğlu Architects with his father, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, in Istanbul, continuing the family tradition in architecture that began with Dr. Hayati Tabanlıoğlu in 1950.²⁷ The educational journeys and career trajectories of Hayati and Murat Tabanlıoğlu have profoundly influenced their architectural approaches forming a continuum of innovative design that reverberates throughout their contributions to the transformation of the Atatürk Cultural Centre.

5.2 Period of Hayati Tabanlıoğlu: From Istanbul Opera House to Atatürk Cultural Center

In 1956, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu was appointed as the manager of the office established by the Ministry of Public Works focused on this issue, and the final process of the building began.²⁸ Hayati Tabanlıoğlu believed that the decision to make the program multi-purpose in 1956 by incorporating the Concert Hall, Studio Theatre, Children's Theatre, and Art Gallery was highly accurate. However, his aspiration is for the facility to overcome significant operational challenges and operate harmoniously, adhering to its founding principles while providing valuable services to society. Hayati Tabanlıoğlu constructed the building and subsequently transferred ownership to the State.²⁹ This is a critical point that he is offering new cultural functions to the building to go beyond its initial role of being only an opera house, but he is not considering the business model of the complex. Murat Tabanlıoğlu, his son, criticizes the approach by emphasizing that this was the biggest problem of the old AKM, there was only one manager and the businesses such as Istanbul State Opera and Ballet Directorate and Turkish State Theatres were working disconnected from each other.³⁰ He also mentions that the former AKM director would close the building's doors when there were no cultural events, thus preventing its use. Despite its ample capacity, the building's bulkiness and central location hindered its full utilization.³¹ In essence, the artists and administrators of AKM will hold ownership of this building.³² The construction of the project was halted for three years due to the coup on May 27th, 1960. In 1969, the Grand Hall was finished and inaugurated as the "Istanbul Palace of Culture," subsequently placed under the management of the General Directorates of State Opera Ballet and State Theatres.³³ In November 1970, during a performance of 'The Crucible', the building suffered extensive damage from a fire caused by negligence (**fig.5**). Architect Hayati

Tabanlıoğlu initiated the restoration process. Initially conceived as an opera house, the building was later redefined as a "cultural center" to better suit the evolving needs of its era. After the restoration, the Istanbul Culture Palace reopened as the Atatürk Culture Centre in 1978. It then became the permanent venue for the Istanbul State Theatre, Opera and Ballet, and State Symphony Orchestra.³⁴ The building exemplified the architectural mindset of its time under Hayati Tabanlıoğlu's direction, particularly notable as one of the few projects conceived by a Turkish architect.



FIG 5 AKM after the fire, 1970 Salt Research, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu Archive

Source: Salt Research: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi: Yangın esnasında ve sonrasında çekilen fotoğraflar - Atatürk Culture Center: Photographs taken during and after the fire, accessed on 5 December 2023

5.3 Period of Murat Tabanlıoğlu: From Cultural Center to Cultural Lane

The Minister of Tourism, Professor Nabi Avcı, called Murat Tabanlıoğlu and asked him whether he would like to rebuild AKM, and Murat Tabanlıoğlu replied that he would accept this offer if he was completely free to realize the ideas he had been realising for years as an architect.³⁵ He decided to redesign the AKM. The new AKM project aims to handle the architectural challenges of the 1960s, particularly in managing complex functions like opera, while also integrating contemporary art, architecture, and urban planning principles. It emphasizes modern technical infrastructure and spatial design to meet current needs, while also respecting and preserving the aesthetic, physical, and social values passed down from previous projects.³⁶ One of the users in Taksim criticizes the old AKM for the stage performances that are too classical and disconnected from the public and the user believes the old AKM fails to cater to the public's interests and lacks genuine engagement.³⁷ Another user in Taksim, a 69-year-old male artist who has lived in Istanbul since the age of 11, believes that AKM was not effectively utilized for its intended purpose and he argues that it never became a popular destination regularly frequented by people because it predominantly hosted elitist events such as opera, ballet, and, to a lesser extent, painting exhibitions.³⁸ These approaches can be seen as a manifestation of the criticism of "elitism" aimed at the Turkish Republic and its reforms in recent years, especially prominent among individuals with liberal perspectives. The new cultural structure aimed to achieve common goals in a way that departed from the elitist and exclusive approach of the past century. Embracing the notion that "the city and its citizens evolve together," it prioritized the ideal of inclusivity, striving to be accessible to all.³⁹



FIG 6 A view of the old AKM from Taksim Square, presenting the proportion of the main facade.
Source: Salt Research: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, Ön Cephe: Fotoğraflar - Ataturk Culture Center, Front Facade: Photographs, accessed on 5 December 2023

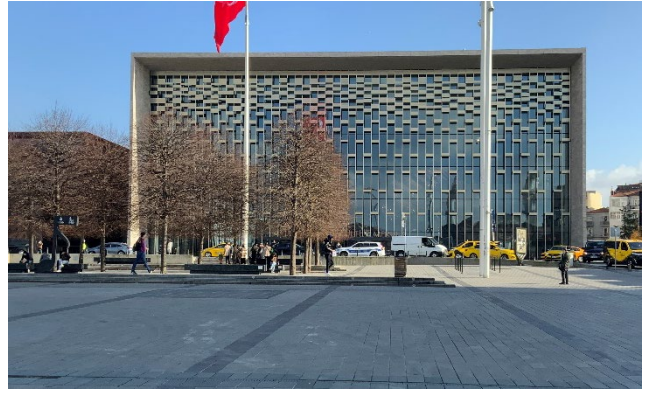


FIG 7 A view of the new AKM from Taksim Square, presenting the new design preserved the exact proportion of the old facade.
Source: author, 2023

In the new design of AKM, Murat Tabanlıoğlu preserved the essence of the building with its main dome, third-dimensional aspects, and facade, (**fig.6 – 7**) while completely rearranging the interior. In the old AKM arrangement, the main opera hall had a capacity of 1300 people and the other small halls were overshadowed by the main hall, and the art gallery, which constantly changed and lacked full acoustics, posed challenges, particularly in accessing upper levels due to its column layout (**fig.8**). In modernizing this concept, consolidating spaces on a single floor emerges as a significant design decision.⁴⁰ Through that concept, the most significant change is that the complex transformed into a single main space, and all other function units moved to the new axis defined as “Cultural Lane” (**fig.9**). This decision was made to expand the capacity to accommodate 2000 people, as opposed to the previous capacity of 1300 people.⁴¹ The building site features an 8-meter level difference. The remaining functional units are organized in a horizontal order, accommodating this difference in levels, and seamlessly connected to the main building. This cultural lane consists of a theatre with a capacity of 804 people, a music platform, a library, art galleries, a children's center, a multi-purpose hall, a cinema, and workshops: with a design shop, a bookstore, cafes, and restaurants. The integrated units of the complex are interconnected yet acting independently.⁴²

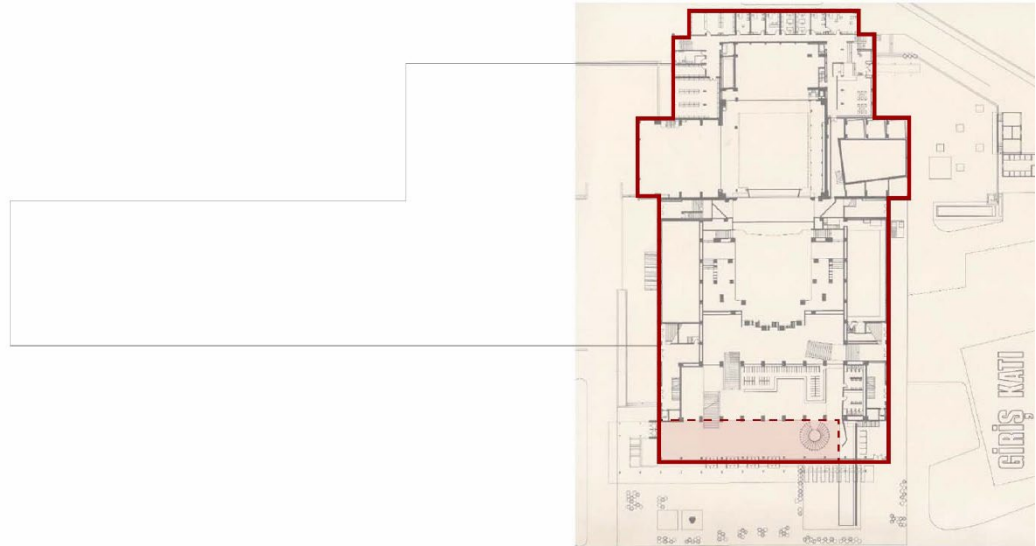


FIG 8 The date of the old plan of AKM was not mentioned in the archive but it was drawn by Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, the red line indicates the area of the ground floor, and the red dotted line with a light red hatch indicates the foyer space.

Source: adaptation by and available at <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/214787>, accessed on 5 December 2023

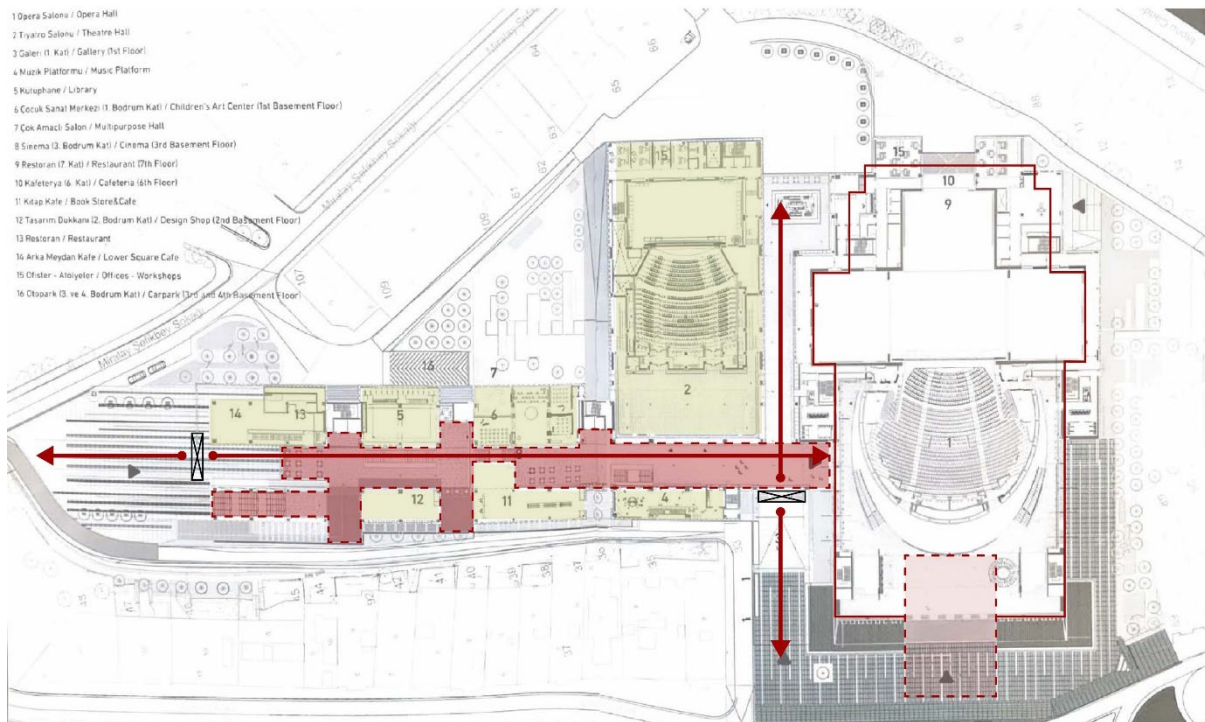


FIG 9 The current plan arrangement of the new AKM, light red emphasizing the cultural lane and it is an extension with semi-open terraces, light yellow emphasizing the additional spaces/programs, black rectangular with a cross line emphasizing the security control barrier, and the continuous red line represents the volume of the old AKM, which is mostly the same with the previous volume, lastly, red dotted line with light red hatch shows the foyer area which is now working differently than before.

Source: adaptation by the author of Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, Atatürk Cultural Center/Murat Tabanlıoğlu, Salih Yılgörür, Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2021, 138-139

6. Inclusivity and Accessibility of New AKM

6.1 “Cultural Lane” : Enhanced Public Functions and Inclusivity

How could a new AKM building, constructed in the heart of Taksim Square, be utilized every day of the year? It is important to identify the current limitations to dive into that question. Over the years, shopping malls have served as quasi-public spaces, attracting young people due to a lack of alternative gathering spots. However, the new AKM offers some cultural amenities and draws attention to other people from different socio-economic backgrounds. The new AKM is envisioned as an urban and cultural complex, offering venues for concerts, theaters, and exhibitions, while also serving as a public space for people to gather and engage. New AKM provides a new cultural axis (cultural lane), public flow, between the main volume, facing the Taksim Square, towards the existing street where you can end up with Atatürk Library, Istanbul Technical University, and Gezi Park. Creating a street in the new design of AKM also rebuilds gathering places like an alternative for İstiklal Avenue. Aligning the main hall and smaller halls with Taksim Square facilitates easy access, creating a more welcoming entrance. Murat Tabanlıoğlu embraces this design approach for the new Atatürk Cultural Center's relationship with Taksim Square.⁴³ Although there is a security barrier to entering the cultural lane, where the users go for other utilize other functions instead of the opera space. Having controlling management in the AKM does not provide inclusivity that much (**fig. 10**). The proposed additional structures can offer a fresh environment for users flowing from the Atatürk Library and the Technical University through the Cultural Center. Apart from the Marmara Hotel and a few dining establishments, Taksim Square lacks adequate gathering spaces. Similarly, the old AKM failed to provide such a distinctive public space.

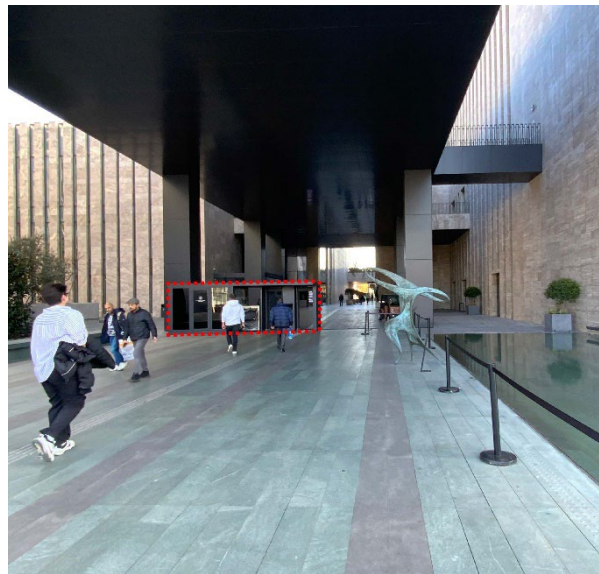


FIG 10 The entrance of the “Cultural Lane” from the Taksim Square axis is a security barrier, controlling the entrances.
Source: author, 2023

The cultural complex creates a system that seamlessly integrates with the city, allowing every citizen to feel connected and included. Physical and economic barriers should be minimized. Public spaces should reflect the diverse identities and cultures present in the community.⁴⁴ Accessibility should be prioritized by minimizing admission fees, program costs, and other economic barriers, thus enabling widespread participation.⁴⁵ Within the 'Cultural Lane,' there is a pocket cinema room ideal for watching movies at an affordable price. Programming and activities should offer a diverse range of

programs and events that cater to a variety of interests and cultural backgrounds. In addition, staffing and leadership should prioritize diversity in recruitment to reflect the community being served. Designing multifunctional spaces that can accommodate various activities and events is essential for promoting interaction and exchange among different groups. It is important to create spaces that cultivate conviviality and shared experiences, fostering a sense of belonging, social interaction, and relationship-building. Promoting intercultural dialogue and education through programs and events aimed at fostering understanding between cultures, challenging stereotypes, and celebrating diversity is crucial. Collaborating with community organizations, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders to develop inclusive programming and outreach initiatives is essential for fostering partnerships and promoting inclusivity.⁴⁶

6.2 Socio-Economic Impact of the new AKM

Beyoğlu has been Istanbul's cultural and economic center since the 19th century. Its mix of European and Levantine influences, architecture, and numerous hotels, theaters, and cafes make it a lively place for everyday life.⁴⁷ The criticism leveled at Istanbul's recent cultural development revolves around the perceived lack of originality and authenticity in its creative output. Yardimci observes that Western values and culture serve as the benchmark for assessing the quality and standards of creative productions, while alternative artistic endeavors receive little attention.⁴⁸ Consequently, Istanbul finds itself influenced by Western culture rather than influencing the global cultural landscape.⁴⁹ Moreover, culture becomes another means through which economic and social disparities are reinforced in the already fragmented city, giving rise to a new elite that dominates cultural production and consumption.⁵⁰ The waitress underscores the challenge posed by pronounced socio-economic disparities, suggesting that communication between people of different social classes is unlikely, even in public spaces like Taksim Square.⁵¹ In response to these challenges, collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors can leverage resources and expertise to create more inclusive and sustainable public spaces.⁵² This approach aligns with the proposal of the new 'Cultural Lane,' which aims to mitigate socio-economic tensions by providing a space where individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds can interact and engage in cultural activities. These projects like AKM can create jobs, attract tourists, and stimulate local businesses. However, it is crucial to ensure that the benefits are distributed equitably and reach local communities. Cultural events and facilities can foster a sense of community, promote social interaction, and enhance the cultural vibrancy of a city.

7. Conclusion

This study has meticulously examined the architectural evolution of AKM, revealing a deliberate effort to enhance inclusivity and accessibility. The interventions by the Tabanlıoğlu generation have expanded AKM's scope beyond traditional boundaries, embracing a diverse array of cultural expressions. The introduction of the "Cultural Lane" concept, with its integrated public spaces and diverse programming, actively encourages participation from individuals of all socio-economic backgrounds. However, it is essential to acknowledge a significant consideration: the presence of physical security controls at the entrance of the "Cultural Lane" creates a barrier that contradicts the intended welcoming environment. This measure raises questions about accessibility and inclusivity, potentially deterring individuals and fostering a sense of exclusion. Despite this challenge, the new AKM represents a significant stride towards democratizing access to culture in Istanbul. The center's integration with the city and the range of activities within the "Cultural Lane" contribute to a more vibrant cultural ecosystem. AKM's evolution offers valuable insights into the role of cultural institutions in fostering social cohesion and enriching the socio-economic fabric of a

city. It underscores the importance of adaptability while preserving cultural heritage. Looking ahead, addressing the issue of security controls and finding alternative methods to ensure safety without compromising accessibility will be crucial. Continued efforts to ensure affordability, diverse programming, and community engagement are also necessary to solidify AKM's position as an inclusive cultural hub. Long-term studies assessing the socio-economic impacts of the center will provide valuable insights for future development, ensuring that AKM remains a catalyst for positive change in Istanbul.

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1.** Placement of an Opera House in Taksim Square, photograph taken by Henri Prost
Source: Courtesy of IFA/AA archive, Fond Prost.
- Figure 2.** Istanbul Opera Proposal, Auguste Perret, 1939-1940 Source: available at <https://akmistanbul.gov.tr/history>, accessed on 5 December 2023
- Figure 3.** The first construction of the Palace of Culture
Source: available at <https://akmistanbul.gov.tr/history>, accessed on 5 December 2023
- Figure 4.** Initial Sketch, Paul Bonantz for Istanbul Opera
Source: available at <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/214785>, accessed on 5 December 2023
- Figure 5.** AKM after the fire, 1970 Salt Research, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu Archive
Source: available at <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/214889>, accessed on 5 December 2023
- Figure 6.** A view of the old AKM from Taksim Square presents the proportion of the main facade.
Source: available at <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/214877>, accessed on 5 December 2023
- Figure 7.** A view of the new AKM from Taksim Square, presenting the new design preserved the exact proportion of the old facade. Source: author, 2023
- Figure 8.** The date of the old plan of AKM was not mentioned in the archive but it was drawn by Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, the red line indicates the area of the ground floor, and the red dotted line with a light red hatch indicates the foyer space.
Source: adaptation by and available at <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/214787>, accessed on 5 December 2023
- Figure 9.** The current plan arrangement of the new AKM, light red emphasizing the cultural lane and it is an extension with semi-open terraces, light yellow emphasizing the additional spaces/programs, black rectangular with a cross line emphasizing the security control barrier, and the continuous red line represents the volume of the old AKM, which is mostly the same with the previous volume, lastly, red dotted line with light red hatch shows the foyer area which is now working differently than before.

Source: adaptation by the author of Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, Atatürk Cultural Center/Murat Tabanlıoğlu, Salih Yılgörür, Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2021, 138-139

Figure 10. The entrance of the “Cultural Lane” from the Taksim Square axis is a security barrier, controlling the entrances. Source: author, 2023

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