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Architectures of the Intertwined East and West

'Contact Zone's of the 19th century İzmir House

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Abstract

İzmir, amongst Eastern Mediterranean port cities, has represented compelling architectural and urban developments during the long nineteenth century. Due to their particular geographical position, the port city of İzmir has been considered a place where "East meets West". Building on what Edward Said calls intertwined history, this paper proposes a lens to read cross-cultural architectural practices at entangled territories by closely examining paired determinants from the East and the West. With the duality in mind, this study borrows the concept of "contact zone" from the field of linguistics to identify the correlation of the Eastern and Western norms, knowledge, ethics, values, techniques that led to architectural knowledge production and architectural practices. Mary Louise Pratt coined *the contact zone* as "spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination." This study departs from "asymmetrical relations of power" that exist in architectural practices. Not only does the concept allow us to understand the characteristics and dissemination of architectural knowledge, but also it allows us to address the unspoken and invisible process of decision-making in architectural practices.

To test the concept for architecture, the 19th-century row-house development in İzmir, i.e., İzmir house, is an appropriate concrete case. Dissecting the building and construction process of the İzmir house through the lens of the contact zone reveals how much the West is present in the East, or vice versa. In conclusion, this paper shows that besides material artifacts and explicit architectural knowledge; socio-cultural contexts and values are also embedded in the architectures. By shining a light on the underlying patterns of the social, spatial, cultural encounters, the concept of "contact zone" establishes a better understanding of the specificity of the knowledge that diverse variables have collectively generated.

Key words: Intertwined histories, contact zone, port city architectures, İzmir.

1. Introduction

The scholarship of global history writing has recently become more interested in the complexity of the cross cultural development processes. Until the last decades, the established understanding in the field focused on the import and export model. This model suggests that knowledge produced in the West has been exported to the developing countries;¹ however, scholars began to acknowledge established perspective overlooks the complexity of the process.² In line with the increasing interest, architectural historian and critic Esra Akcan offered to use the notion of the translation to read cross-cultural developments as an exchange between the geographies: between German-speaking countries of Europe and Turkey.³ Akcan brought a deeper understanding of the global exchange of knowledge through analysing the mobility of people, ideas, technology, information, and images from one or more countries to another within the socio-political context of the studied era. By taking into account carefully the agency of mobility of people, ideas, technology, information, and images in the cultural exchanges, she explored the exchanges in the constitution of the modernism in Turkey through the modern house in her book 'Architecture in Translation: Germany, Turkey, & the Modern House'.⁴

Contact zone, another concept borrowed from the field of linguistic, carries ample potential to revealing the complexity of cross-cultural developments. In the book titled "Casablanca Chandigarh: a report on modernization", professor of architecture and urban design Tom Avermaete *et al.* adopted the concept of the contact zone and introduced it to the field of architecture, addressing how "Architects, Experts, Politicians, International Agencies, and Citizens Negotiate Modern Planning"—that was also the title of the exhibition that Avermaete and Maristella Casciato exhibited between 26 November 2013 and 20 April 2014.⁵ The concept initially was introduced by the linguistic scholar Marie Louise Pratt. Pratt coined the term contact zone referring to the social spaces where asymmetrical relations exist.⁶ In the field of architecture, Avermaete considers the contact zones where the transculturation took place in cross-cultural practices.⁷

Avermaete tied the notion of transculturation to the contact zone in order to establish a better understanding of cosmopolitan practices. The Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term transculturation to enhance the understanding of the cultural exchanges between one culture to another.⁸ In this complexity, three associated terms collectively constitute the "transculturation" process.⁹ "Acculturation", as the first term, is defined in Merriam Webster as "*cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another, also: a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact; the process by which a human being acquires the culture of a particular society from infancy*".¹⁰ "Deculturation", as the second term, is related to losing the culture. The third term in this transculturation process is neoculturation, and it is related to forming new cultural practices.¹¹ Ortiz's perspective points out the transculturation is related to simultaneous occurrences. Following Avermaete's theoretical conception for architecture, I attempt to read the contact zones in architecture and the transculturation process in the building practices by keeping the degree of the asymmetrical relationships of the encounters in mind. In this respect, the use of the notion contact zone allows us to identify the human and non-human contacts. Exploring the relationships from the 'contact zone' perspective shines a light on the transculturation process covering the Eastern and Western encounters.

In this research, I aim to explore contact zones that coexist at the intersection of multiple levels of the building process of architecture (i.e., urban planning, architectural design, and construction phase). Pratt's definition refers to the social spaces where asymmetrical relations exist. Architectural practice by nature is based on decision making. Decision-making for multiple occasions is related to the asymmetrical relations of the present contacts in the given situation. These contacts are not limited to individuals or groups of people. Contacts could also be between ideas, between building techniques and materials, and between values. By exploring the paired relations between the contacts and their influences in architecture, I hope to bring underlying yet unseen and unspoken patterns of cross-cultural exchanges to the surface. In doing so, I aim to add the focus of the concept of contact zone from the social encounters to the entangled relations of human and non-human contacts simultaneously present in the architecture.

For this inquiry, I study the development of the 19th-century row house, also known as İzmir house (*İzmir Konutu*). The Eastern Mediterranean port city of İzmir is on present-day Turkey's west coast. The development emerged along the shore of İzmir in a particular era when the multinational, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural co-existence reached its peak in the Ottoman İzmir. Thus, house is a significant case as a material expression of cross-cultural exchanges that occurred in the intersection of the social, cultural, political, economic developments. Additionally, the city's specific location on the globe makes the case more appropriate for this research. To understand how much West presents in the East, and vice versa, I order the paper as follows: first, I explain in which context and under which conditions the row-house has emerged in İzmir. I start by providing the background information of İzmir in the 19th

century. Then, I continue with dissecting the building through its building elements to understand how the building arrived at its final form: the urban planning, the façade order, the spatial organization, building techniques. I conclude by analysing the contact zones that coexist in the building process to show how the locals and migrant European upper-class society have negotiated. Reading the architectural developments in the 19th century through the lens of the contact zone allows us to bring the underlying patterns to the front.

This paper has a methodological ambition to use the lens of the contact zone to identify the contacts in two levels—macro and micro levels. The building of the 19th-century row house is a result of local and global developments. In this development, economic, political, and technological developments were the main drivers to create conditions for architectural and urban practices. The first level of the contact zone is at the macro level, given the contact zone was often established between empires, states on a global scale. At the macro level, the first level of contact zone has been set through the uneven conditions provided by the governments or the empires and based on their mutual interests in the city and its regions. These encounters were the main impulse for creating the fundamental conditions for social, spatial, and cultural situations. Following this, the encounters between diverse social groups and individuals have provided room for cross-cultural exchanges. These intersecting contact zones created an optimal situation for the İzmir house. Following this, I move on to the second level of the contact zone. Within this paper's scope, I consider every architecture project has an outcome of the situations in the micro-level. Establishing the relation between the first level, I wish to explore the second level in the micro situation through the selected case İzmir house. Outcomes of cultural encounters manifested themselves on buildings and their elements. In this regard, I dissect the 19th-century house into its components (e.g., spatial organization, façade orders, ornaments, roof, building materials, building techniques) to reach and discover the underlying patterns of the contact zones that have collectively built the residential blocks. Reading the city through the contact zone allows us to understand how the East and West coexist in architecture.

2. The pre-conditions: Brief History of İzmir

Trade acts and economic treaties provided safe mobility for the elite traders and upper-class migrants from Europe to İzmir, particularly in the 19th century. Political unrest in Europe was one of the main drivers for the migration of international traders to the Ottoman Empire particularly since the 16th century.¹² The leading sea-traders of France, England, the Netherlands, and Venice perpetuated steady economic relations with the Ottoman Empire during the 18th century.¹³ Holland was much impoverished, and England became the more dominant maritime power after Napoleon's defeat in 1815. In the late 1830s, the Ottoman Empire was struggling with the revolt by the governor of Egypt.¹⁴ It was difficult time for the empire.¹⁵ In 1838, the *Balta Limani* Trade Treaty was signed between the UK and the Ottoman Empire. Later, the treaty has bound to other European Countries e.g. France in 1839, Hansa Cities Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg; in 1840, Sweden, Norway, Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium, Zolverein Countries Prussia, Bayern, Saxony, Grand Douches, Thuringen, Nassau Union, Free City of Frankfurt; in 1841 Denmark, in 1843 Portugal and lastly in 1846 Russia.¹⁶ According to *Balta Limani* treaty signed in 1838, the 8% tax for foreign traders who used İzmir as Transit region, was removed.¹⁷ As a consequence provided with main drivers, the upper-class European migrants arrived in İzmir in the 19th century.

Building port, quay, a new custom-house, and railways, were essential for İzmir. Because port facilities must be in sync with one another to function efficiently in line with global premises: standardized in terms of measurement,¹⁸ capacity of ships, wharves, docks, warehouses.¹⁹ Large infrastructure works and new establishment of the industrial facilities have often led to the migration of the upper class that included engineers and developers. Working-class or sub proletarian Europeans have immigrated to the Ottoman Empire in particular working in major ports or in large-scale infrastructure projects such as railway or port construction or operation.²⁰ Migration was reinforced with the land ownership rights given to the foreigners in 1856. The population has increased from 15000 to 50000 between the years 1847 and 1880. Upper-class consisted of diverse professions. Due to presence of the merchants and the increasing population in the city, the European social groups' needs have grown. For instance, the social groups began to have their own hospitals, schools (French Hospital, Muslim Hospital), -physicians like M. Michel physician in the French Hospital, French Architect Raymond Charles Pére who was French teacher and designed the Clock Tower in the city— have worked in those places.²¹ 1856 dated *Islahat* Firman allowed opening schools individually for the societies living in İzmir. European families have educated their children in the French and Italian schools in line with their own cultures that is applied in those schools.²²

In the nineteenth century, the Eastern Mediterranean was strongly inter-connected with Western, Central and Southern Europe.²³ Historian Malte Fuhrmann sheds the light how upper-class Europeans lived in the Ottoman Empire. He discusses upper class' spatial presence in terms of "locality" in spatial,

legal and subjective dimensions. According to Fuhrmann the locality is "where a certain person stays the *de facto* largest amount of his or her time (the spatial dimension)", secondly, he continues, "locality that recognizes the individual as a legitimate user of a particular space (the legal dimension)"; thirdly, "the locality to which the individual attaches a predominant degree of his sense of belonging (the subjective dimension)". This belonging to the locus is an outcome of the transculturation process which manifested in the architecture. In particular this engagement was visible in domestic spaces (e.g. row house along the waterfront) and in downtown, and social spaces of their daily life. In the 19th century developments, the society was in the heart of the social, spatial, and cultural developments. Pre-existing condition was based on high respect of the society to one another. The simultaneous developments have created a peaceful, high respected and tolerated condition for societies to develop the city further.

3. The Nineteenth Century İzmir House



Fig. 1

Scholars often refer to the houses along the waterfront of İzmir from to the 19th century as "another house". According to the author Şeniz Çıkış, the row-house development in Izmir stands as an example of the early modern housing in the Ottoman Empire. In fact, this house and spatial typology belong to the unique intersection of local and global. The idea of row-house migrated from Europe reminding its precursors such as apartment blocks in London or Paris.²⁴ The new typology was determined with the local characteristics. There has been already Anatolian house, also known as Chios Type House in the region.²⁵ Thus, houses in İzmir in the second half of the 19th century was between the tradition and modern. The spatial organisation of these houses has consisted of three main spatial elements, a garden or yard, service and living spaces. An entrance hall and daily life spaces were organised in the ground floor asymmetric or symmetric axis. These houses often have asymmetrical plans matching with asymmetric façade orders. In the backyard of the houses there has been located at small backyards surrounded with high walls. Service spaces were articulated to the main building as being located on the garden's corner.²⁶ In some cases, construction system was combined with timber and masonry construction.²⁷

3.1 Urban Planning: The application of the Grid Plan

Infrastructure construction like train, tram, and quay along the shore were the agencies of the development and opened up new possibilities for the building plots in the city. According to the insurance maps, the first housing parcels were established between 1837 and 1856.²⁸ Developers owned the land and sold the plots for the further development. When the French company or developers built quay around the waterfront, they gained some spaces when the sea was filled. On these sites, French company produced parcels.²⁹ The same happened when the Belgian tram company produced other islands for buildings on the avenue on which they established a tramline and sold plots.³⁰

The Tanzimat reformers established a new understanding on urban administration. Before the Tanzimat Charter municipal rules and regulations were based on imperial orders, juridical rules as well as customs and traditions. Internal recognition in the underdevelopment in the empire prepared a common ground for the modern development in İzmir. Narrow streets, wooden constructions have led to multiple fires in İzmir. For instance, Armenian neighbourhood was torn down in the Great Fire of 1845. İzmir was not the only city that suffered from these fires, it was the same in Istanbul, the capital city of the empire. Thus, the Ottoman Empire followed new planning approaches for the burnt plots in the city. In 1845 the first planning approach was applied in the burnt area in İzmir. Luigi Storari applied the first grid in İzmir

in the Armenian neighbourhood. Storari introduced the square in the modern sense to the Ottoman Empire.³¹

Luigi Storari was an important transnational actor in the modernization of İzmir and was one of the migrants who arrived in İzmir. The reason of his arrival to İzmir was political unrest in Italy. The Papal State was not a comfortable environment for Storari given he was a member of a revolutionary group called *Carboneria*.³² He worked in the Italian army and developed knowledge on modern urban mapping techniques.³³ He arrived in İzmir in 1849 and collaborated with the Ottoman officer Ali Nihat Efendi.³⁴ In addition to the grid-based urban plan that he also applied in the Armenian Quarter, he wrote and published a guide as well.³⁵ His text included an extensive description of the Ottoman urban fabric based on his surveys in the city. He noted that the city was lacking squares, public spaces for entertainment, and promenade.³⁶ His views on the public and social spaces were influential in the further development in İzmir. The developer of the Kasaba-Smyrna Railway granted rights through the treaties and agreements for the site of the house block along the waterfront. Accordingly, Luigi Storari developed an urban plan for the urban development based on the grid system. In this way, the first modern urban planning emerged to city's waterfronts.

3.2 The Spatial Organization and the Façade Order

The collaboration with Luigi Storari is a testimony to the emergence of modern developments on the shores of İzmir, and also to the acceptance of a new life style. Until the 19th century, the urban fabric of the Ottoman Empire mostly consisted of the dead-end streets. The development of the urban pattern is an expression of the value system of the local Ottomans. The Anatolia is the cradle of the civilizations, the grid plan was already applied in the Asia Minor, in this very place of the developments in the region of Izmir. Ancient cities *Miletos* and *Priene* are great examples of the grid planning.³⁷ The introverted, conservative, and humble lifestyle complemented with the family relations in the Ottoman period led to web of streets with dead-ends. The dwelling of the human being, particularly in Anatolia, initially developed by learning from the existing built environment, accepted, rejected, or developed certain principles of the existing codes that were inherited from the previous civilizations. The spatial composition took its source from the existing typology in the region and remained and adjusted in the design process. The choice for the spatial organization was also very much in line with the local climate condition.

The architectural elements on the façade reveal overlapping patterns of the social and cultural encounters. Interaction between diverse societies was key in the urban cultures of İzmir. The balconies, called *cumba* in Turkish, shows the maintenance of the local practices and migrant social groups' acceptance. The form of the balcony, extended towards to street, establish relationship with the street and allowed to be in contact with the neighbour. Having good relations with the neighbors was one of the important pillars of the local cultures, particularly amongst Turks. Additionally, three sides of the special balcony allow occupants to benefit from the light and fresh air at its best.³⁸ Climate, topography, and existing building materials in the region have been important determinants in the building techniques and spatial organizations for the development of the residential types. The ornament was not the fundamental concern of the artisans, although it was appreciated.³⁹ The circulation of iron samples and cast iron for buildings through the railway construction has been a part of the façade of the building. Particularly the balconies' constructions have been altered. Local houses had wooden supporters underneath of extensions as a part of the structure. In the İzmir House, the irons replaced the wooden supporting materials and became an ornament in the façade as a reflection of the social status associating with the contemporary developments. It was also a reflection of the modern as a counter part of the traditional.

The façade orders and ratio of the windows and doors show the respect between different cultures. Amongst the other values of the society, the notion of respect was an important actant in the decision making. Respect for one another was a key of the Ottoman multi-religious, multi-ethnic and social structure. Due to the spatial organization, façade orders, the governance and office service have accepted the development by considering that it is suitable for the Turkish family traditions.⁴⁰ The introverted and conservative lifestyle of local Turks strongly separates the in- and outside in their houses. Thus, the local preferences have been maintained. Local and European cultures have together determined the final project of the row house. Rather than dependency to one another, the formation of the modern row house reflects mutual tolerance to the cultures, beliefs, values between the multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies of İzmir.

4. Building Techniques

Building techniques in the 19th-century İzmir house include the knowledge of both locals and the imported ones. Traveller and writer Francis Vyvyan Jago Arundell wrote in 1834 "The wooden framed house, though gaudily painted without, was considered the indispensable protection against the desolating earthquake, which might occur once in a century, but against the fires of every day, stone was never thought of."⁴¹ The development shows the adaptation of the advancing building techniques and the negotiation on using the materials against the fires. A modernist understanding has been developed through mass, serial, and faster production that created more rational building systems.⁴² For instance, polygonal stones that were used in station and workshop buildings of the Aydın-İzmir Railway, was rapidly applied in the houses on Punta. The non-human agency of this development of the row house was seemingly the Aydın-İzmir railway construction in the region.⁴³ The building of the station itself, consisting of station building workshops, hangars, house for officers and others social places, is a turning point for applying the advanced building techniques imported from the Europe. It was the first project that had informed the further building techniques in the city.⁴⁴ Iron beams have been used in the new houses right after the application in the service buildings of the station. Standardized and mass building materials were often produced in the factories [cast-iron factories, iron foundry] that were established after the Alsancak Train Station project began to be realized. In these factories cast-iron console under the balconies called *cumbas*, door knob, tiles (*karosiman*), iron beams, nails were produced.⁴⁵ Maltese bricks and cast-irons have been ornamented to emphasize the class differences of the residents.

The building guild of the Ottoman Empire secured the house typology, its spatial organization, development and diffusion in the Ottoman Empire. The building in the vernacular architecture was based on the stone masonry and wooden frame traditional structures. In the building guild and buildings, the artisans and their craftsmanship were important in architectural and urban design.⁴⁶ The Ottoman Empire initially set its craftsmanship by benefitting from the inherited knowledge on the building technique since the middle ages that were developed in Balkans, Cappadocia and Syria.⁴⁷ The Ottoman Urban Culture was a result of cross-cultural exchanges between the regions. For instance, Masons, stonecutters and carpenters from Anatolian and Balkans.⁴⁸ Stonecutters were from Kayseri, Konya and Aegean Islands, whereas carpenters were from the Balkans, Pontus region, Macedonia, and Anatolia's wooded areas. The multinational and multi-ethnic, multi-religious structure allowed master-builders to work and produce together. Meaning, Turkish, Greek, Rhodopean, and Pontus carpenters, Albanian, Armenian and Walachian hydraulic craftsmen worked together in the building site for the construction. The master builders designed public and private buildings.⁴⁹

5. Conclusion

The concept contact zone provides a deeper understanding for studying architectural, spatial, and social productions, particularly in port cities. Moreover, it shines a light on unseen patterns that triggered, fostered, or inhibited architecture and urban interventions. As the case of İzmir house has shown, the co-existence of the East and West were dependent on the macro and micro levels of the entangled contact zones. Exploring contact zones at macro- (political, economic, technological) and micro-levels (social, spatial, and cultural developments within the given situation) provided a detailed understanding of the building as a social, cultural, economic, and political constitution. These contacts were manifold, as also their relations with one another. Technological, economic, and political developments that occurred simultaneously allowed the emergence of multiple situations in İzmir. The 19th-century house is one of the situations that occurred within the condition. Treaties and agreements defined taxation, land ownership, and land use. Besides the provided frameworks for developments, encounters between social groups were of great importance to enhancing the capacity of the cross-cultural exchanges. In other words, the situations were bound with treaties, legal frameworks for the obtained rights. But the unique character and outcomes of each situation depended on social groups and their interaction with one another. The acceptance, rejections, negotiations and co-existence occur within this frame. In this respect, investigating different situations through the lens of contact zone may bring different underlying patterns of the intertwined history.

Notes

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- 8 Ortiz, Fernando (1947), *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press. An important quote is: "I am of the opinion that the word transculturation better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word acculturation really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation."
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Image Captions

Fig. 1. The 19th-century Izmir house (İzmir Konutu), (source: Dinçer, Kaya, Daniel Goffman, and Doğan Kuban. *İzmir ve Ege'den Mimari İzlenimler - Kaybolan Bir Geçmişten Görüntüler*. 1994).

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Biography

Fatma Tanış (Dalyan, 1990) trained as an Architect in Istanbul and Stuttgart. She holds Master's degrees in Architectural History (ITU), and Restoration-Evaluation of Historic Urban Sites (MSGSU). After living in Bodrum, İzmir, Porto, and Hamburg, where she deepened her interest in port cities, she has started her doctoral research on port city culture in İzmir in the Department of Architecture at the Delft University of Technology. Building on her interdisciplinary background, she has explored her home city Izmir from the cross-cultural perspective.

Minor Architecture as Major Architecture

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Abstract

Based on a supposed conceptualization found in Manfredo Tafuri on the notion of "Major Architecture", which only appears only in one of his books and in a way not explicitly developed, a whole series of authors compare the openings of a contrary notion, "Minor Architecture", which would serve to counteract the excesses that the discipline has historically perpetuated. In particular, the term "Minor" goes back to Deleuze/Guattari's interpretation of Kafka's work as "Minor Literature".

The temporality of the discussion between a major and a minor architecture starts in the field of the relationship literature/architecture in the American universities, at the end of the 1990s within the peak of the deconstruction. It should be remembered the definition of *différance*, where an economy of oppositions scans our language, as Derrida wrote. Jennifer Bloomer is the first to see such a concept "Major" but, in our opinion, with the little development that Tafuri makes, compared to others such as "incomplete architecture", it does not justify the comparison of all those who did not doubt that Tafuri developed it. From J. Stoner's book (2012) to the epigonal comparisons of courses at Yale (2015), with respectable academics such as F. Scott or J. Till, they have aimed to move from the minor in the literature to any other ways of making in culture, that deconstruction of the architectural sense.

Following a genealogical review of the writings that are linked to each other with the same fragile foundational condition in Tafuri, the aim is to determine if there is a weak argument and to evaluate the possibility that the lesser is comparable to the greater, for its usurpation. At the same time, we intend to elucidate whether when "architecture" is spoken of, it is understood on the contrary it is "space" and to promote an extension to counter-spaces and heterotopias.

Keywords: Major Architecture, Minor Architecture, Deconstruction, Architectural Research, Oppositions.