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Alessandro Ippoliti
Elena Svalduz

AISU Aisu International
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di Storia Urbana

Pelin Bolca

«ARKITEKT»: IL CATALIZZATORE DI ISTANBUL PER LA TRASFORMAZIONE URBANA E LE REAZIONI LOCALI DURANTE IL PERIODO REPUBBLICANO E L'INTERBELLICO

«ARKITEKT»: ISTANBUL'S CATALYST FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION AND LOCAL REACTIONS DURING THE REPUBLICAN AND INTERWAR PERIODS

Questo contributo mette in evidenza come la rivista "Arkitekt" abbia funzionato come una piattaforma che evidenzia la natura interdisciplinare degli studi urbani in Turchia. L'obiettivo principale è esplorare come il giornale abbia svolto un ruolo di strumento propagandistico, guidando il pubblico nella modernizzazione di Istanbul, offrendo al contempo un forum di discussione per i professionisti per esprimere le reazioni locali negli anni '30.

Parole chiave

Urbanistica, reazioni locali, Istanbul, periodo interbellico, Arkitekt

Keywords

Urbanism, local reactions, Istanbul, interwar period, Arkitekt

The proclamation of the Republic in 1923 marked a significant turning point in Turkish history, initiating a new era of reforms. The long-standing Ottoman rule, deeply rooted in Sharia law, began to undergo revision and replacement by a series of modernist reforms based on secular, independent, and contemporary principles enacted by local authorities. Within this reformist ideology, architecture and urbanism were seen as instrumental in transforming cities and shaping the social, cultural, and economic fabric of society during the postwar recovery period.

The first decade of the Republican Era witnessed numerous immediate urban planning actions, collaborative initiatives with European stakeholders, and legislative regulations. Consequently, the urban plan for Istanbul, the former Ottoman capital, did not feature prominently on the agenda of local authorities during this period. However, in 1931, Turkey's first architecture journal, "Arkitekt", was established by local architects, with its inaugural issue titled "Istanbul and Urbanism." Two years later, an international urban competition was launched, inviting foreign actors to submit proposals for the urban planning of Istanbul. This competition ultimately led to the appointment of French architect-urbanist Henri Prost as the chief urbanist for the Istanbul Urban Plan in 1936.

Throughout its publication period from 1931 to 1981, "Arkitekt" delved into the intricate relationship between the city and the principles of urban planning. Its influence extended beyond shaping Istanbul's urban transformation to impacting various cities in Anatolia. This paper explores the emergence of "Arkitekt" as the first journal on architecture and urbanism, examining its early content. During the interwar period, Istanbul experienced significant social and physical urban transformations as a result of decisions made by Prost and his team. "Arkitekt" chronicled these changes, providing a platform for local architects, urban planners, and intellectuals to exchange ideas and propose innovative solutions to urban challenges. The journal became a critical source of knowledge, fostering dialogue on modernization, urban planning, and architectural aesthetics. For instance, it not only published the jury report on Istanbul's urban competition results to inform the public but also served as a platform for local architects to strongly critique the report, arguing that the ideas did not align with the country's local values. In other words, it became a space where local architects expressed their perspectives on Istanbul's transformations, and even criticized and opposed Prost's decisions.
This paper highlights how "Arkitekt" functioned as a platform showcasing the interdisciplinary nature of urban studies, where architecture, urbanism, and social dynamics converged. It emphasizes the significance of historical analysis in comprehending the modern city. The main focus is to explore how the journal served as a propaganda tool, guiding the public in the modernization of Istanbul, while also providing a discussion forum for professionals to express local reactions in the Early Republican Period.