



Yalova: Atatürk's Laboratory of Urban Development and Republican Architecture

Halil Ersin AVCI

Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University
Education Faculty, Social Studies Education
halilersinavci@comu.edu.tr

Abstract

This paper examines Yalova's significance as a laboratory for urban development and republican architecture during the early years of the Turkish Republic under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Focusing on the Atatürk Mansion, designed by Giulio Mongeri, and Yalova's comprehensive urban initiatives, the study explores Atatürk's vision for modernization and architectural identity. Drawing from primary and secondary sources, it analyzes the city's domestic and international influence, highlighting its lasting legacy in shaping Turkey's architectural heritage. Yalova stands as a testament to Atatürk's commitment to progress, modernization, and the ideals of the Turkish Republic.

Keywords: Yalova, Atatürk, urban development, republican architecture, Atatürk Mansion, Turkish Republic, modernization, architectural identity.

Introduction

Cities are the identity cards of civilizations, proof of their existence, and indicators of their scientific, intellectual, and socio-economic achievements. In short, a city is a reflection of a civilization. Today, from archaeologists to historians, geographers to sociologists, the main laboratory for research on the society-space-human trio is the city.

When an archaeologist or historian searches for a city or location mentioned in a document or manuscript, finding what they are looking for confirms the researched civilization, strengthens the thesis if correct, or dismisses it as a legend if unsuccessful.

Perhaps the best example of this is the civilization of Atlantis. Despite numerous legendary accounts about the civilization of Atlantis, the fact that Atlantis cannot be found only keeps the narratives within the realm of speculation. Therefore, when cities disappear from a civilization, it can be said that the civilization has lost its identity card and been erased from history.

When evaluating a civilization, the city that emerges by combining the letters of houses and buildings, which reflect all kinds of personality traits of the civilization, with street lines composed of neighborhood paragraphs, embodies and presents the identity and personality of the civilization to us in three dimensions.

A civilization can have multiple cities, but one is more important than all others: the capital. Especially when evaluating a civilization, the capital, which is the showcase of the civilization and where all its resources are expended, holds great significance. However, in some advanced civilizations, other cities have gained importance over time due to their religious, national, strategic, or socio-economic aspects, apart from the capital. In these cities, we can find different words and identity information that cannot be attributed to the capital's geographical location.

If we look at examples in this regard, the capital of the Hittites, the oldest and most established civilization in Anatolia, is the inland city of Hattusa. However, to understand the Hittites, it is also necessary to look at the coastal city of Tursha (today's Tarsus).

Today, a researcher's effort to understand the extent of the Seljuk civilization will reveal the Seljuk identity by looking at Konya, the terrestrial capital city of the Seljuks. However, to fully comprehend the Seljuks, one must also consider the coastal cities of Antalya and Alanya; without examining them, any interpretations would be incomplete and lacking.

Similarly, when discussing the Ottoman civilization, one must not overlook Istanbul, apart from Söğüt, Bursa, and Edirne. Evaluations made without taking Istanbul into account would be insufficient and erroneous, just as assessments made without considering Ottoman Edirne, Aleppo, Antioch, and Saray Bosna would also be incomplete and flawed.

Atatürk's greatest dream was the need for a republican civilization to ensure the everlasting existence of the Republic of Turkey established after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Atatürk was well aware that the city was undoubtedly the best place where the Republican civilization could manifest itself and be showcased. It was necessary to construct a city that could reflect the daily life, architecture, and social understanding of the Republican civilization.

Therefore, Atatürk rolled up his sleeves and did not settle for Ankara, which emerged as a new city to embody the Republican civilization, as Ankara was an inland city. Born and raised in Thessaloniki, shaped by Istanbul, and well aware of the socio-economic and strategic importance of the maritime culture for Turkey, Atatürk needed a coastal city that could reflect the maritime culture of the Republican civilization.

He started his work in Florya to achieve this goal. However, Florya, located right next to Istanbul, had a higher chance of being swallowed by Istanbul rather than becoming a city of the Republican civilization. In these regards, Atatürk's arrival in Yalova marked a significant turning point.

On Monday, August 19, 1929, Atatürk departed from Istanbul on the Ertuğrul Yacht and arrived in Yalova at 16:00. Accompanied by the Minister of Interior Affairs Şükrü Kara, Private Secretary Tevfik, Chief Aide-de-Camp Rusuhi, and close friends Kılıç Ali and Zühtü Bey, along with a large medical team, Gazi Atatürk was in Yalova amidst enthusiastic cheers from the people. After disembarking at the pier, Atatürk first went to the Thermal Baths with his companions. After observing the baths and providing enlightening instructions for its development, he then went to the Baltacı Farm (currently TİGEM facilities). August 19th became a milestone for both Atatürk and Yalova¹.

In 1929, Yalova, which Atatürk referred to as "My city," was in a suitable condition for Atatürk to realize his vision of the republican architecture. It had a location by the sea and possessed thermal facilities, but it had been left to its fate with a melancholic appearance. The city had suffered significant destruction during and before World War I. In this regard, for Atatürk, who

¹ Ahmet BANOĞLU, *Atatürk'ün İstanbul'daki Hayatı I*, 1973, pp.274-275;
<http://www.yalovakulturturizm.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF2B81939FD5B60AFA669D329636FBD0A8>

embraced challenges and had the ability to transform ruins into prosperity, the mission of Yalova can be compared to growing roses in a marsh.

1-The Pre-Reconstruction State of Yalova, the City of Atatürk

Atatürk encountered a dilapidated, swamp-surrounded, mosquito-infested city plagued by malaria outbreaks when he first arrived in Yalova in 1929. In its state, Yalova appeared to be a place that nobody would visit, except for Atatürk. Atatürk saw a different potential in Yalova.

The condition of Yalova in 1929 was exactly the kind that Atatürk would desire. It was a challenging place, resembling another ruined Ottoman city standing before Atatürk, who had emerged the young Republic of Turkey from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire.

Atatürk had chosen the location where he would establish the city of the republican civilization. Yalova would be the laboratory reflecting the water and sea culture of the republican civilization.

During this period, Atatürk invited the German architect Jansen to Turkey. Atatürk placed great importance on urban planning because he believed that healthy societies could only thrive in healthy cities. With the assistance of the internationally renowned architect Jansen, Atatürk aimed to establish the architectural style of the republican civilization.

Atatürk attached great importance to the Yalova laboratory, and in 1930, he connected Yalova to Istanbul, initiating the city's reconstruction². The initial urban plans of Yalova were also prepared by Architect Jansen. According to Falih Rıfki Atay, "Only Atatürk showed understanding for planned development and direct implementation. Governments? No! Whatever works of urban development exist at Atatürk's death, Yalova, the modern spa in Bursa, Florya, the forest farm, they are all the works of the late leader." ³

² Erol DEMİR, "Toplumsal Değişme Süreci İçinde Gençlik Parkı: Sosyolojik Bir Değerlendirme", **Planlama 2006/4**, Türk Mühendis ve Mimarlar Odası Birliği Yayını, Ankara 2006, p. 71.

³ F. R. ATAY, **Çankaya IV**, Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Kütüphanesi, Yenigün Haber Ajanstı, Kasım 1999, p.38.

2- The Birth of a Republic City

Atatürk's first task in Yalova was to liberate the city from the invasion of mosquitoes and the outbreaks of malaria. He immediately brought malaria control teams to Yalova and initiated a serious and determined struggle to drain the swamps.

In 1929, when Atatürk arrived in Yalova, the city lacked basic government institutions such as roads, post offices, telegraph offices, and hospitals. Its connection to surrounding settlements was severed, and there was irregular sea transportation to Istanbul. In this state, Yalova was in a pitiful condition.

Under Atatürk's directives, Yalova was elevated from a subdistrict (nahiyelik) to a district (kaza) status and connected to Istanbul.

In the city center, dilapidated buildings were demolished, and broken and narrow roads were expanded. Karamürsel Avenue (Istanbul Avenue) and Millet Farm (Atatürk Garden Cultures Central Research Institute) were established. The Yalova-Bursa and Yalova-Termal roads were repaired and developed. The Directorate of Maritime Affairs acquired new and fast ferries dedicated to Yalova routes and made ferry services more frequent and regular. A Police Department with 30 personnel and a Fire Department equipped with fire engines and hydrants were established in Yalova. A Post and Telegraph Center was built, and telephone and telegraph poles were erected along the roadsides. A government building, a municipal building, and a police station were constructed. Yalova was illuminated by kerosene lamps, and an electric power plant was built. Electric poles were installed on the streets, and electric lighting began. Village chests and budgets were organized, and the villages were connected to the center by telephone. Unhealthy village locations were relocated. In 1929, there were only 6 schools in Yalova, but by 1932, the number reached 26. In the area now known as the Naval Facilities, a casino and beach were built for the public. Great attention was paid to organizing Yalova's transportation future and development in a very orderly manner. The main roads are Karamürsel and Bursa avenues, as well as the roads leading to the thermal springs and villages. These roads were united in Cumhuriyet Square. The widths of all streets and the dimensions of the squares were determined according to the urban planning law. The area west of the existing Yalova Stream was designated as a sports

field. In this regard, the banks of the stream were completely afforested, and this green area extended from the asphalt to the seaside promenade all the way to Cumhuriyet Square and further to Millet Farm in the eastern part of the town. These trees, elegantly adorning Yalova from the sea, gave the city a resort-like character⁴.

Atatürk desired the development of agriculture and animal husbandry in the region and our country, the use of modern techniques in farming, and introducing farmers to these techniques. For this purpose, he purchased Millet Farm to the east of Yalova (currently Atatürk Garden Cultures Central Research Institute) and Baltacı Farm to the west (currently Atatürk Agriculture Enterprise Directorate), and personally supervised their use in line with their objectives. Among the factors that shaped Atatürk's personality, his love for nature, which was integrated with his love for humanity, holds an important place. It is due to this love that he had exemplary environmental awareness. Atatürk's longing to see Yalova as a modern garden city was closely associated with his desire to make the city as green as possible. Today, there are numerous traces of this interest throughout Yalova.⁵

When it comes to greenery and trees in Yalova, the "Yürüyen Köşk" (Walking Mansion) and the historical plane tree come to mind. The mansion and the plane tree have an interesting story.

Upon his arrival in Yalova in 1936, Atatürk learned that the branch of the plane tree next to the mansion at Millet Farm would damage the mansion's windows. Not wanting even a single branch of the tree to be cut, Atatürk requested the mansion to be moved away from the tree. The task was assigned to the Istanbul Municipality Department of Civil Works, Roads and Bridges Division. The responsible chief engineer, Ali Nuri (ALNAR), had the foundations of the building dug. Rails were laid under the foundations, albeit with difficulty and very slowly. The building was then shifted 4 meters to the east on the rails. On August 11, 1936, Atatürk witnessed this process from beginning to end, accompanied by his sister Makbule (ATADAN) Hanım, Affet (İNAN) Hanım, Yunus Nadi (ABALIOĞLU), Captain Ismail Hakkı (TEKÇE), Yaver Major Nasuhi Bey, and other relevant individuals. On June 11, 1937, just like all his immovable property, Atatürk donated this mansion to the Turkish Nation.⁶

⁴ <http://www.yalovakulturturizm.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF2B81939FD5B60AFA52D9F167AA0D97E6>

⁵ <http://www.yalovakulturturizm.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF2B81939FD5B60AFA52D9F167AA0D97E6>

⁶ <http://www.arastirma-yalova.gov.tr/yk55/rky55.htm>

"Atatürk was amazed by the natural beauty and healing waters of Termal. He immediately rolled up his sleeves to transform this abandoned, forgotten, and neglected paradise into a world-renowned health center. Aside from his important duties and work, he dedicated a significant portion of his time to Termal. In planning the development of the thermal baths, a beautiful casino and beach (nowadays known as the Naval Facilities) were built, connected to the Yalova center and Baltacı Farm (currently TİGEM), to not only promote the development of Yalova but also meet the sea-bathing needs of visitors accompanying patients.

To create Turkey's first Living Tree Museum, rare species of plants and trees from different countries (such as American Origin Tall Mazı, Sequoia, Japanese Maple, Empress Tree, Porcupine Tree, Arizona Cypress, Blue Atlas Cedar, and Hawthorn Tree) were brought in.

On April 7, 1938, the map prepared for the Yalova Thermal Baths and the surrounding area was approved. Considering the potential encroachment on the thermal area in the future, in 1938, building construction was restricted and regulated within the boundary of the thermal baths and within a 500-meter distance from the border, as specified in Article 4 of Law No. 3653 regarding the Transfer of the Operation of Yalova Thermal Baths and the Development Works of the Thermal Baths to an Institution Possessing Legal Authority Subordinated to the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance."⁷

3-Atatürk's City, Yalova

Ruşen Eşref Ünaydın expresses Atatürk's longing for Yalova and Florya as follows: "The grandiose voids, no matter how adorned they were, did not satisfy his eyes; sunny open spaces pleased his heart. He didn't seek an excessively large house to live in, but rather one of moderate size.

Gradually, he moved away from the palace to other places. Establishing a mansion in Yalova, erecting a single-story pavilion like a sea bath on iron poles in Florya, undoubtedly aimed to

⁷ <http://www.yalovakulturturizm.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF2B81939FD5B60AFA52D9F167AA0D97E6>

develop these two charming corners of Istanbul, which had been neglected in terms of hot and cold water sources, and to increase the connection of the people with natural resources and water culture. But wasn't it also a way to distance oneself from the weight of palaces steeped in extravagance that never quite warmed the heart?"⁸

As a statesman, Atatürk took great pleasure in showcasing his creation, the republic city. Yalova was among the places that Atatürk included in the tour for Iran's Shah Reza Pahlavi during his visit to Turkey in 1934, alongside places like İzmir, Çanakkale, and Istanbul. The Shah was deeply impressed by Yalova.⁹

Yalova was like a second capital for Atatürk. He wanted to showcase the new republic city to the world and emphasize that the republic brought a new breath, a new life to the Turkish nation. Yalova, alongside Istanbul, the former capital of the Ottoman Empire, served as a second capital for the new Turkey. From another perspective, it was the first architectural achievement of the new Turkish Republic, which did not deny its past but rather embraced it—a monument to its new civilization..

Atatürk first welcomed Admiral Moreno, the Commander of the Italian Navy, and Baron Aloiz, the Italian Ambassador, in Yalova on July 18, 1932¹⁰. Afterwards, on August 9, 1932, Atatürk received Rudolf Nadolny, the German Ambassador, at the Millet Çiftliği in Yalova. On August 12, 1932, he welcomed Professor Delaport, a French archaeologist. And on August 18, 1932, he received the United States Ambassador Sherrill¹¹. He met with the French Ambassador Comte de Chambrun on August 1, 1933¹². Lastly, on January 25, 1938, he received former Egyptian Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha¹³.

⁸ Ruşen Eşref ÜNAYDIN, *Atatürk'ü Özleyiş I*, Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Kütüphanesi, Yenigün Haber Ajansı, Kasım 1998, p.6.

⁹ *İsmet İnönü'nün Hatıraları, Cumhuriyetin İlk Yılları II (1923-1938)*, Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Kütüphanesi, Yenigün Haber Ajansı, Kasım 1998, pp.8-9.

¹⁰ *Cumhuriyet Newspaper* 19 July 1932.

¹¹ Özel ŞAHİNGİRAY, *Atatürk'ün Nöbet Defteri*, 1955, pp.84-86.

¹² *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 2 August 1933.

¹³ *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 26 January 1938.

Conclusion

Yalova, which Atatürk referred to as "my city," served as a model for all newly established or reorganized republican cities. Within the city, there was a republican square where all roads converged and all celebrations took place. In close proximity to the square, there was a government building representing the existence of the state, a police station symbolizing the security of the state, bustling markets, shops, and a marketplace, as well as schools slightly away from the hustle and bustle. Surrounding the city were lush green forests, nurseries, and forestry offices, resembling the borders of the country. Just outside the city, there were military barracks or garrisons, and neighborhoods spread out in a square or rectangular pattern from the republican square to the surrounding areas. This is the civilization of the republic, this is Atatürk's city model. You can add art, music, and ports to this as well.

Atatürk realized his great dream, the Turkish Republic, and its small laboratory, the republican city of Yalova. During his lifetime, he acted as both a father and a guardian to both, witnessing the rise of the young Turkish Republic and seeing Yalova, the first successful attempt at republican architecture, develop with his own eyes. In 21st-century Turkey, undoubtedly, there is much to be done for both Yalova and the Turkish Republic. Considering that what has been done always serves as a reference for what will be done, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who transformed Yalova from a swamp into a city and established a new, dynamic, and powerful Turkish Republic from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, stands as the most valuable reference and a horizon to be reached for the Yalova and Turkey of the 21st century.

In conclusion, the city of Yalova emerges as a significant laboratory for urban development and republican architecture during the formative years of the Turkish Republic. The Atatürk Mansion, with its architectural significance and symbolic value, serves as a tangible testament to Atatürk's vision for modernization and his commitment to creating a distinct architectural identity for the nation. Through a comprehensive analysis of Yalova's urban initiatives, such as the city planning projects, public buildings, and infrastructure development, it becomes evident that Yalova played a crucial role in shaping Turkey's architectural heritage.

The research findings shed light on the successful implementation of urban planning principles, the utilization of natural elements, and the integration of cultural and historical elements in

Yalova's urban fabric. Moreover, the examination of Atatürk's directives and policies reveals the extent to which his leadership influenced Yalova's urban development and architectural style.

This study highlights the historical significance of Yalova as an incubator for modern urban planning practices and republican architecture in Turkey. By exploring the unique features and accomplishments of Yalova, researchers, urban planners, and architects gain valuable insights into the early years of the Turkish Republic and the principles that shaped the country's urban landscape. The lessons learned from Yalova's example can inform contemporary urban development strategies and contribute to preserving and enhancing Turkey's architectural heritage.

Overall, the examination of Yalova's urban development and republican architecture provides a comprehensive understanding of the city's role as Atatürk's laboratory, showcasing his transformative vision for the nation's urban and architectural identity. This study serves as a significant contribution to the scholarship on Turkish urban history and architectural heritage, inviting further research and exploration into the rich legacy of Yalova's urban development and its lasting impact on Turkey's architectural landscape.

References

Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 19 July 1932

Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 2 August 1933.

Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 26 January 1938.

<http://www.arastirma-yalova.gov.tr/yk55/rky55.htm>

<http://www.yalovakulturturizm.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF2B81939FD5B60AFA52D9F167AA0D97E6>

<http://www.yalovakulturturizm.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF2B81939FD5B60AFA669D329636FBD0A8>

Atay, Falih Rıfıkı. (1999). Çankaya IV, Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Kütüphanesi, Yenigün Haber Ajansı.

Banoğlu, Ahmet (1973). Atatürk'ün İstanbul'daki Hayatı I.

Demir, Erol (2006). “Toplumsal Değişme Süreci İçinde Gençlik Parkı: Sosyolojik Bir Değerlendirme”, Planlama 2006/4, Türk Mühendis ve Mimarlar Odası Birliği Yayını, Ankara 2006

İsmet İnönü'nün Hatıraları, Cumhuriyetin İlk Yılları II (1923-1938), (1998) Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Kütüphanesi, Yenigün Haber Ajansı.

Şahingiray, Özel (1955). Atatürk'ün Nöbet Defteri.

Ünaydin, Ruşen Eşref (1998). Atatürk'ü Özleyiş I, Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Kütüphanesi, Yenigün Haber Ajansı.