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**LOST IN MEMORY:**

**MARMARA HOTEL IN ATATURK FOREST FARM**

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## 1. Introduction



| Marmara Hotel on the silhouette of AOÇ land, Gazi Settlement

There used to be appeared a 12-storey building in the silhouette of Ankara that had engraved on memories of people. This building distinguished in memories of inhabitants for being unfinished, yet non-continuing construction that has no specific usage. The unfinished construction was a meant-to-be hotel building that situated on Atatürk Forest Farm land. It was also a structure that differentiates with its multi-storey presence and style from other Atatürk Forest Farm (AOÇ) buildings. This building has become “lost” in memories of users with its demolishing in 2013. The story behind the unfinished structure and eventually demolishing of it shelters issues about the governmental policies and legal conflicts that have been continuing since 1980s.

## 2. Marmara Hotel: Lost in Memory

### 2.1. In Process: Tender and Construction Period

In 1980s, AOÇ administration demanded a hotel structure to be run both for recreational and financial purposes. A certain amount of rental income was claimed for the land and the structure. According to the contract between AOÇ administration and one of the construction firms of the time named *Kayalar İnşaat*, owned by a Turkish business man *Tahsin Kaya*, it is

decided to be build a 14-storey (two floors for basement) hotel building in 1985.<sup>1</sup> Starting from June of 1987, it was demanded by *Kayalar İnşaat* to extend the leasing term from twenty to forty-nine years and not to be charged during the construction process due to the expenses. Although AOÇ administration declined this offer and sent written warnings to the contractor firm, they avoided paying the rent. Finally, the construction stopped in 1988 due to this legal conflict. However, suspension of the construction did not mean that this conflict had come to an end. On the contrary, it was a beginning of a twenty-eight years long legal process which left the structure as a rough construction during that time.

This length of this time period was crucial for observing the effects of such “failure” in forming an urban space. The hotel construction was distinguishing from other abandoned buildings due to the sloping topography on which the hotel building located. For being situated one of the highest hills in AOÇ land, the image of the hotel building have become stronger in memories of inhabitants of Ankara.

## **2.2. Process Towards to “Lost in Memory”**

The contractor firm, *Kayalar İnşaat*, sued AOÇ in 1991, since their request for the extension of the leasing term has been rejected. In 1993, the case resulted in favor of contractor firm. It was decided by the Court that the leasing term extended to forty-nine years and approved by the high court of appeal.

As a result, it was an ethical problem that the Court decided the extension of the period since it was a problem of the two parts. It was a situation that should be solved between the parts in accordance with changing circumstances. The decision of the Court was made by not taking into consideration the fact that the total bed capacity exceeded the amount stated in the contract. While in this case the balance between the construction firm and AOÇ was quashed against AOÇ, the decision was revoked as a result of the application made by the institution.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the hotel, which was started to be constructed in 1984 and scheduled to be opened in 1985, remained as a rough construction during the legal process. The contractor, who did not comply with the Court’s decision, refused to pay rent. After this period, the lawsuits lasted between the two sides. As stated in a Turkish newspaper in 2010, AOÇ administration gained

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<sup>1</sup> Atatürk Forest Farm, Annual Report, 1994, pp. 92-95. The information in the paragraph about construction period of the hotel has been taken from this report.

<sup>2</sup> Atatürk Forest Farm, Annual Report, 1994, p. 94.

the overall rental income in the amount of 2,5 million TL.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, due to the 1,5 storey illegal addition to the construction that the contractor intended to do, *Tahsin Kaya* end up in court also with Yenimahalle municipality.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the firm occupied the land and prevented the space to be used by public.



| A Closer Look to Marmara Hotel on AOÇ land, 1 (Photograph: Baykan Günay in 2005)



| A Closer Look to the Rough Construction of Marmara Hotel on AOÇ land, 2

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<sup>3</sup> Erdal İpekeşen. “Ankara Bu Hazin Tabloyu Hiç Haketmedi Ama...”, *Hürriyet*, December 5, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Ender Baykuş. “Kent İçin Yeni Umut”, *Hürriyet*, February 13, 2013.

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/21675841.asp>

Consequently, the hotel has stand as an abandoned rough construction on AOÇ land for twenty-eight years, affecting the silhouette of the city with its height of 12-storey.

The space once had played an important role in the social life of the citizens was left un-habited for decades. The fact that the military deployed the site after 1980 military coup, the ongoing legal process prevent construction to continue, and rotten construction causing danger erased the original purpose and usage of the site from the users' memory over years. Finally, with the demolishing of the hotel construction in 2013, the site has become totally lost in memories. The story behind this demolishing involves rather complicated political relations.

For years, both AOÇ administration and Chambers of Architects-Ankara Branch made an endeavor to demolish that abandoned 12-storey rough construction due to the danger it creates and its effects on the silhouette of Ankara. As a result in 2013, with the decision of the government that constructing a new ministry building on the land which Marmara Hotel was also stand on, the whole demolishing process started to gain acceleration. As the experts have expressed the opinion that the hotel building constitutes a hazard for the new Ministry complex, the demolishing decision took its place on the agenda again. The statement of the Prime Minister as “Complete the construction until 2013”<sup>5</sup> was also effective on the demolishing. Eventually the hotel building was demolished in February 2013.



| Demolishing Process of the Hotel

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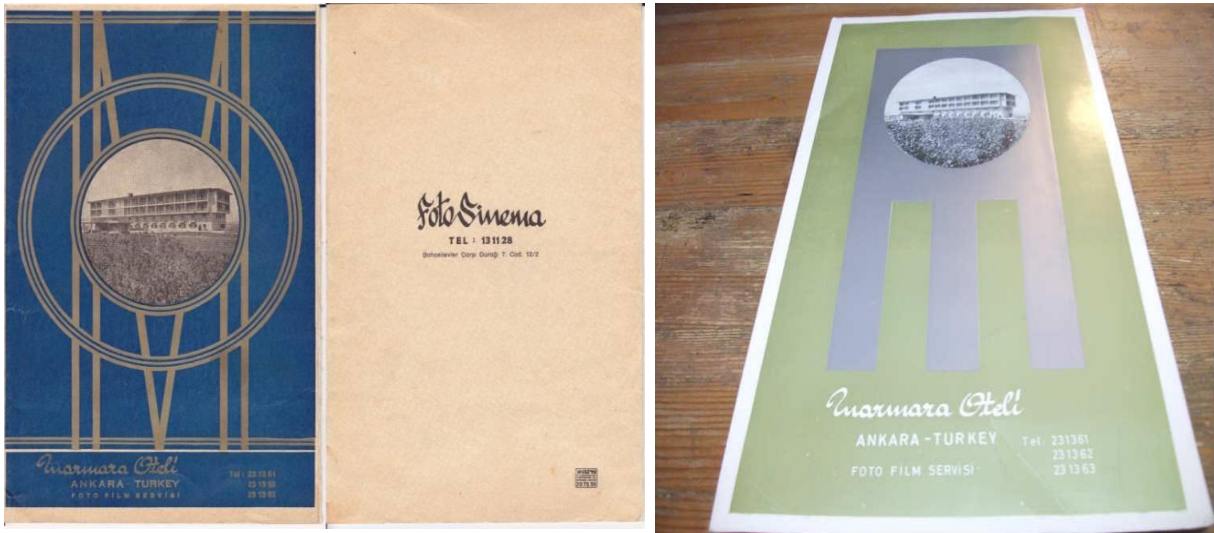
<sup>5</sup> Ender Baykuş. “İşte Başkent'in Ucubeleri”, *Hürriyet*, September 29, 2012. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ankara/21579197.asp>

However, even if this is the main course of event come forward about Marmara Hotel, the story has a background that many people are not aware of. The history of hotel actually contains two critical phases that could be considered as the space is now “lost in memory”.

### 3. Marmara Hotel: Primary Phase of Lost in Memory

“I was born in 1980. I only remember the unfinished construction of the extensional building. I have no further memory of the hotel.”<sup>6</sup>

The well-known critical phase of the hotel has begun with the privatization policies of government in tourism sector. However, prior to that there was a small hotel building constructed in 1955 on Gazi Settlement, AOÇ. The location was decided according to the overall settlement of AOÇ. This settlement was established in 1925 as a place representing new actions and policies of the new Turkish Republic. The farm was planned as an urban space for the new society that brings new agricultural techniques and recreational facilities together. The goal of the recreational spaces in the farm was to represent the social behaviors of the new society. Many of the recreational facilities, such as; Karadeniz Pool, Marmara Pool, Marmara Köşk of Mustafa Kemal, located in Gazi Settlement in AOÇ. The first hotel was also constructed here, named after Marmara Pool.



| Photograph Album Covers from the first Marmara Hotel

(Collector's items)

<sup>6</sup> From the authors' interview with the personnel of AOÇ. December 2013. See also *Notes*.

The settlement was planned by Hermann Jansen (1869-1945) in collaboration with Swiss architect Ernst Egli (1893-1974) in that time. Marmara Hotel, which was designed by Ertan Balin in 1955, was in harmony with rest of the buildings on AOÇ land in terms of its architectural language.

The hotel building was begun to be constructed by *Türkiye Emlak Kredi Bankası* in 1955. It consisted of a basement, a ground floor, a mezzanine, and two upper floors. When the construction process ended on 27 May 1960, it had eighty-five bed capacities in its fifty-two rooms. On the lower ground floor, there were a pavilion and an American bar and on the upper ground floor there were a lounge together with a reception hall. The rooms were located starting from the mezzanine and placed on the upper floors.<sup>7</sup>

Beginning from the year it was constructed to end of time that it was used actively, the Hotel became an important part of the social life of Ankara. As it mentioned by Erdal İpekeşen in one of his articles, Marmara Hotel made its name with the organizations that took place in the ball-room of the building which were accompanied by the renowned people of the time.



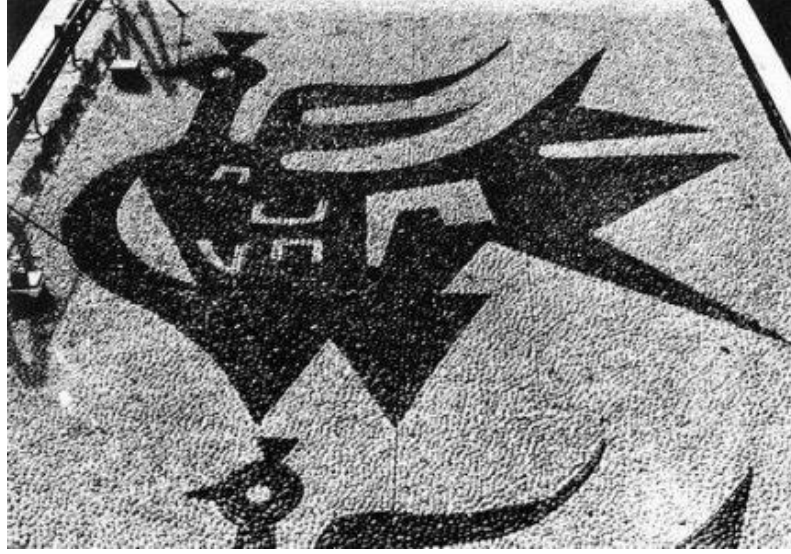
| Some Invitations From to the first Marmara Hotel

Apart from its presence in the social life of Ankara, the Hotel building was also distinguishes with its attentive interior design. There were mosaic art works from Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu and Eren Eyüboğlu respectively on the entrance canopy and on the wall across the lounge. There was also a ceramic table in the lounge section which was designed by Füreya Koral in 1960.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (BCA), Fon No:30, 1 0 0 – Kutu No:104 – Dosya No:651 – Sıra No:9

<sup>8</sup> Ali Cengizkan. *Modernin Saati 20. Yüzyılda Modernleşme ve Demokratikleşme Pratiğinde Mimarlar, Kamusal Mekan ve Konut Mimarlığı* , Ankara: Mimarlar Derneği 1927, Boyut Yayın Grubu, 2002, pp. 231-232.





| The Mosaic Art-Work from Bedri Rahmi Eyüpoğlu on the Entrance Canopy

With the demolishing decision, firstly the subsequent fourteen-storey building was pulled down at the beginning of 2013. The initial Marmara Hotel, which was constructed in 1955, wasn't demolished together with the subsequent one due to the fact that AOC administration intended to renovate it. At the end, according to the damage report of the building, it was understood that the structure is irrecoverable and it was decided to demolish. As a result in August of 2013, both buildings were demolished.



| The Initial Marmara Hotel Building on the Demolishing Process

#### 4. Hotels Meet “Privatization”: Privatization Policies in Turkey

The initial and unknown critical phase of the Marmara Hotel was occurred due to the political strategies of Turkey. These strategies were resulted in building to be lost in memories completely.

As *İpekeşen* states, hotel tourism in Turkey has started with the İstanbul Hilton Hotel in 1955.<sup>9</sup> He says, after Ministry of Tourism has established in 1963, two firms founded by the government namely; *Emekli Turistik Tesisleri* (later distinguished for city hotels) and *Turban* (focused on resort hotel).

He mentions that, in 1980s, government adopted a policy about privatizing the hotels. Some of the privatized hotels were regained in terms of touristic usage namely Hilton Hotel, Tarabya Hotel, Maçka Hotel in İstanbul; Stad Hotel, Büyük Hotel in Ankara; Büyük Efes Hotel in İzmir, and Çelik Palas Hotel in Bursa. However, Marmara Hotel, which was privatized with the same policy, remained inactive due to legal conflict that is mentioned above.

#### 5. Conclusion

All these political and legal conflicts, mostly based on economic reasons, resulted in loss of an urban space and architectural value for inhabitants of Ankara. Throughout the research about the Marmara Hotel, it is realized that erasing from the memories did not just occur with demolishing. The subsequent fourteen-storey building, that occupied the land for decades, had already erased the memory of the initial hotel form the inhabitants’ minds. Moreover, even in professional extent, the initial building does not exist in the memories. For instance, despite their effort for demolishing the fourteen-storey building with the idea that it damages the urban tissue, Chambers of Architects-Ankara Branch was not aware of the initial building and the story behind it.<sup>10</sup> Since the foundation is well known for their critics and struggles against recent regulations and actions which may cause loss of architectural values, it is reproachable that Chamber of Architects was oblivious of the issue. Today any sort of information about phases or values of the first hotel building constructed in early 50s seems to be documented

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<sup>9</sup> Erdal İpekeşen. “Ankara Bu Hazin Tabloyu Hiç Haketmedi Ama...”, *Hürriyet*, December 5, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> From the authors’ interview with the officials of the Chambers of Architects-Ankara Branch, December 2013. See also *Notes*.

neither in Chambers of Architects-Ankara Branch's archive, nor in any publication in an academic manner.

Currently, there exist a couple of generations who have different memories about the land and the hotel building. And yet, there is an upcoming generation who will have no further memories about the functions in the settlement. In the memories of the first generation, the settlement appears as a symbol of the modern life brought by the republic with its recreational facilities and receptions and entertainments hosted by the hotel. For the second generation, the hotel represents an abandoned 12-storey structure in a deserted land which penetrates the silhouette of Ankara. And lastly, for the upcoming generation, "Marmara Hotel" does not form any image in the memories apart from the Prime Ministry building constructed at the full speed.



| Towards lost in memory (Photographs: Firm that in charge of the destruction)

This research on the case of Marmara Hotel initiates further discussions on space with regard to the effects of politics and legal conflicts. It sets forward questions such as: What forms a space, and what shatters it? How does the transformation of a space become a part of the memories of inhabitants? Does memories effective in continuation of a space? Even these questions can be diversified in relation to remembering and forgetting of a space, it is not possible to find answers to all those questions since it is an ongoing process with its political and legal conflicts. However, this paper aims to construct a new spatial perception of a space via memories which are lost and extant. In other words, it intends to reproduce the space which is no longer presence with words.

## Notes

The source of the informations cannot be announced due to the ongoing political and legal process.

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