

# **IDEOLOGICAL READINGS ON ARCHITECTURE COMPETITIONS**

## **ABSTRACT**

Architectural competitions support intrinsically different ideas, provide the closest results to the needed function, create a competitive environment and provide interactive relation between establishment which stage a competition, the jury, the competitors, colloquium participants, the users of the building. This makes the competitions multi-directional field. This multi-directional field creates a environment in which architects develop themselves and ensure obtaining qualified designs. Therefore, competitions can be evaluated under the different titles, like the process of competition, specification, jury, competitors and the process of the design, project assessment, consequence assessment, project implementation, the process of the building use. Differently from these titles, this study based on the hypothesis that architectural project competitions relay information about the ideological approach of a structure (political, military, social) and it is possible to read these ideological thoughts through competitions.

In the study that started for this purpose, was handled the competitions which started in 1930's in Turkey. For this reason, in the study were examined the competitions between 1930 and 2015. The examination was carried out in periods of ten years, because of the rapid change of Turkish political structure and specified the competitions in these periods. It has been determined that certain buildings type were obtained with either a considerable amount or insufficient number of competitions, or obtained without opening any architectural project competition at certain historical intervals. When the researches have been evaluated, it has been determined that the political or military power of underresearched period changed or renewed its policies that affected a building type or developed a method that supported creative thinking or non creative thinking in the process of obtaining an architectural project. The relationship between competitions and ideologies shows that competitions are not only competitions but also can used as a tool by which ideological readings can be made and social and political informations can be collected. This study shows that competitions seem as a result of an ideology and emphasizes that all actors (establishment which stage a competition, the jury, the competitors, colloquium participants) should approach the competitions carefully in this context.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The term ideology has been a subject of discussion in many scientific fields. The origin of the word is French *idéologie*, and it is defined by the Turkish Language Society (TDK) as “The body of political, legal, scientific, philosophical, religious, moral, and aesthetic ideas, which constitute a political or social doctrine, and guide the actions of a government, a political party or a social group.” [1]. Andrew Heywood lists various meanings of the word as “a political belief system, a group of action oriented political ideas, ideas of the ruling class, the world view of a social class or group, political opinions that contain and express class or social interests, ideas that encourage consciousness among exploited or oppressed people, ideas that place an individual in a social context and create a collective feeling of belonging, a group of ideas that is used to legitimize a political system and is imposed with public force, an all-inclusive political doctrine that claims to contain the basis of truth, an abstract

and largely systematized group of political ideas [2].” In this study, the term will be used in accordance with TDK’s definition to identify a group of political ideas oriented for action.

Ideological approaches adopted by different political parties or military structures that held power at different times can be analyzed with many tools in various disciplines and architecture is one of them. The embodiment of an ideological structure via architecture makes it possible for ideological structures to be read through architecture. Urban planning examples, building cluster designs, singular buildings, green area and public park designs etc. are all elements of this reading. This study questions whether an ideological reading is possible through architecture competitions as a means of acquiring projects, just as it is possible through the projects and the buildings. The main reason for this subject being deemed important is the fact that competitions have an important place in the field of architecture. Structurally, architecture competitions is a method of acquiring projects that promotes free thought. Regardless of the personal characteristics of a designer (ideology, educational background, connections in the sector etc.) only an idea or a design is expected to be taken into consideration. “Due to the principles of competitiveness, authentic production, comparison and rewarding that they hold, competitions are exclusive practices in this field. Perhaps the most effective aspect of this practice is that it provides a ground for criticism, trial and even challenge that includes almost every dimension of our profession.” [3] When projects acquired with this method are implemented, they draw attention from architects, users and the public on a project that was successful under a comprehensive evaluation. This grants architecture competitions an important position. For the same reasons, ideological approaches that lead to these competitions influence the actions of actors such as the host, the jury members and the competitors.

## **2. THE METHOD OF THE STUDY**

The study aims to identify whether there is a connection between competitions and ideological approaches and to identify the form of this connection if there is one. After this connection is identified, it is hoped to guide the hosts, the jury members, the competitors and the users to consider these projects in this context.

The study examines architecture competitions held in Turkey between 1930 –when the first competition was held- and 2015. These competitions<sup>1</sup> are first categorized by theme and then divided in to 10 year periods – according to the rapidly changing political life in Turkey and some important milestones) in order to determine whether they allow an ideological reading. This categorization shows that there has been significant changes in the numbers of certain types of competitions (lower or higher numbers or no competitions at all) in certain periods<sup>2</sup>. These periods are examined to determine if these changes were related to the ideological approaches of these periods, which involved an examination of the constitutions, decisions of political or military administrations, statements by political parties, new laws, by-laws, statutes and other documents from these periods.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on competitions was compiled from *Yarışmalar Dizini 1930-2004* published by UCTEA Chamber of Architects Headquarters and Ankara Branch, *Arkitekt* journal, *Mimarlık* journal, *Arredemento Mimarlık, Yapı* journal, [www.arkitera.com](http://www.arkitera.com), and [www.kolokyum.com](http://www.kolokyum.com).

<sup>2</sup> The analysis started with all of the competitions in this period, later focusing on competitions that show quantitative significance, omitting other competitions from the study.

### 3. FIELD STUDY

The beginning of architecture competitions in Turkey dates back to the 1930s and this history starts with disputes on foreign versus Turkish architects. The efforts of Turkish architects to gain a footing, to show their ability and to challenge foreign architects were manifested in competitions. Also in this period, Zeki Sayar started to publish *Arkitekt* journal for the same reasons and the journal argued that competitions were crucial for Turkish architects to prove themselves and be noticed:

“The artists of this nation strongly and rightfully hope that the projects for the ministry buildings that will be built in Ankara will be acquired through competitions where Turkish architects are allowed to compete. The drawbacks of entrusting these projects, which can be an important and concrete field of experience for Turkish architects that would like to improve themselves, to a foreigner with a random and inaccurate selection process are obvious. Acquiring these projects via competitions is necessary and beneficial for acquiring better projects, for encouraging foreign participants to work more diligently, and for proving and concluding that Turkish architects have a right to live and work in their own country.” [4]

In 1933, the National Economy and Savings Society (*Milli İktisat ve Tasarruf Cemiyeti*) held the “Ankara Exhibition House” competition and of the 26 projects that were submitted, 10 were submitted by foreign architects. However the winner was Turkish architect Şevki Balmumcu. *Arkitekt* commented on this opportunity that was given to Turkish architects and how they proved themselves in a competition against foreigners in Turkey: “The architectural community is thankful to the National Economy and Savings Society for its intelligent decision to hold a competition that allowed our national architecture to compete with foreigners instead of directly commissioning its exhibition house to a foreign architect, unlike what some institutions would do.” [5]

Yasemin Sayar explains the significance of the Ankara Exhibition House building for Turkish architects and for the profession itself in the 1930s:

“Another important characteristic of the Exhibition House is being a structure that superlatively represents the modernist aesthetics of the period. The major axis of debate in the Turkish architecture circle in the 1930s was ‘What kind of architecture would best represent the Turkish reforms, without falling outside the modern architectural and revolutionary paradigms?’ The clause that ‘The building will have a modern architectural style,’ in the competition’s specifications was significant in demonstrating the tendency to ‘define contemporary Turkish architecture with a modern architectural approach’ and the determining/intervening powers of governmental elites in the field of architecture. Balmumcu’s Project had the three main qualities –secular, modern and Turkish- that the government was promoting. Another important aspect to point out is that Turkish architects shaped their ‘modern architectural style’ in reference to Europe’s pioneering modernists, as opposed to the conventional modern architecture approaches of foreign architects that were manifested in big government buildings.”[6]

1930s was an important period for Turkish architecture, not only in terms of the First National Architectural Movement that emerged after the proclamation of the Republic, but also in terms of the first architecture

competition in the country that was followed by 38 competitions within the following decade. The process of launching the Exhibition House competition mentioned above and the way architects viewed it demonstrate that these competitions resulted from an ideological approach.

The records show that, since the Exhibition House competition, 909 competitions have been held in Turkey between 1930 and 2015. Table 1 lists these competitions and indicates certain quantitative differences between different time periods and competitions types.

Table 1: Distribution of Architecture Competitions that Show Quantitative Significance between 1930 and 2015

<b>Architecture Competitions Held between 1930 and 2015 in Turkey</b>										
<b>Building Type/Year</b>	<b>1930-1940</b>	<b>1940-1950</b>	<b>1950-1960</b>	<b>1960-1970</b>	<b>1970-1980</b>	<b>1980-1990</b>	<b>1990-2000</b>	<b>2000-2010</b>	<b>2010-2015</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Monuments</b>	2	4	6	6	5	7	11	1		42
<b>Banks</b>			6		1					7
<b>Science and Research Centers</b>				3			1	1		5
<b>Religious Buildings</b>		1	1	2				1	4	9
<b>Educational Facilities</b>	2	8	11	34	17	10	3	8	5	98
<b>Embassy Buildings</b>				10		1		2		13
<b>Ideas</b>						4		11	30	45
<b>Administrative Buildings</b>	9	10	22	28	32	27	17	25	29	199
<b>Urban Planning</b>	1	3	7	6	3	14	14	40	11	99
<b>Healthcare Facilities</b>			4	29	15	4	16	1	3	72

The data given in Table 1 shows that the number of competitions for certain types of buildings have been higher in certain periods than others. These building types included monuments, banks, science and research centers, religious buildings, educational facilities, embassy buildings, ideas, public administration buildings, city gates, urban planning, culture and arts buildings and healthcare facilities. The rest of the study will examine these building types and the indicated time periods together to identify the changes that influenced competitions.

**Monuments:** Monuments have been manifestations of various artistic, ideological and political factors throughout Turkey's and the world's history. In an article, Yasman indicates that monuments and sculptures in parks and squares became very important in cities that were planned by European professionals for the modern,

pro-western Turkish Republic that succeeded the Ottoman Empire. [7] It is very clear that monuments and sculptures commissioned in Turkey in different political periods are influenced by different ideas. The most common monuments and sculptures in Turkey portray Atatürk together with social groups such as children, teachers and workers, who are expected to contribute to the development of the country. Looking at the development of monuments commissioned by the state, it can be observed that they became a political propaganda tool between 1930 and 1950, in visualizing and imposing the principles of the Republican People's Party (CHP), and that it was a major activity in the period of Atatürk and the national independence struggle. [7]

Between the 1950s and the 2000s monuments were commissioned mostly through competitions. These competitions focused mainly on martyrs' memorials and mausoleums between 1950 and 1960, and on monuments that portray Atatürk and the triumphs of the national independence struggle in the 1960s. This was in parallel with the ideological structure of the political administration of the 1950s. Yasman emphasizes this by explaining how the Kemalist ideology that the political elites represented in the 1950s eroded considerably. [7] In the 1960s, after the military coup, the revival of Atatürkist ideas had implications for monument design competitions as well. In the 2000s however, there were almost no competitions for monuments, which is consistent with the way the ruling party officials' commented on sculptures, calling them "monstrosities".

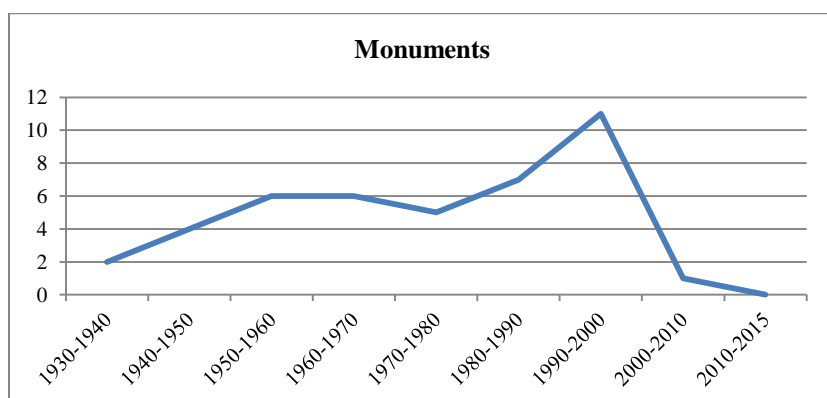


Figure 1: Number of monument design competitions by year

**Banks:** The replacement of economic statism with the promotion of the private sector to speed up economic development as an industrialization strategy was a significant aspect of the period between 1945 and 1959. The main reasons for this policy shift were the emergence of a wealthy private sector in agriculture and commerce, thanks to the high inflation and speculation of wartime, and the principle of economic liberalism adopted by the government that came to power in 1950. The empowered private sector and the changes in the industrialization policy had an impact on the banking sector and promoted private banking. [8] Yapı Kredi Bankası, Garanti Bankası, Akbank, Pamukbank and Türk Sinai Kalkınma Bankası were all established in this period. In this period, six bank building competitions were held. Bank building competitions were not held in any other period.

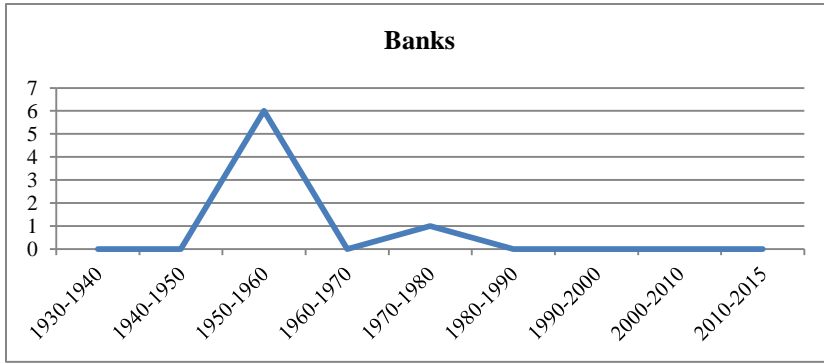


Figure 2: Number of bank building competitions by year

**Science and Research Centers:** The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBİTAK) was established by the government on July 17, 1963, with an exclusive law numbered 278. In this period three science and research center competitions were held. The idea of the time to promote scientific research was reflected in architecture competitions.

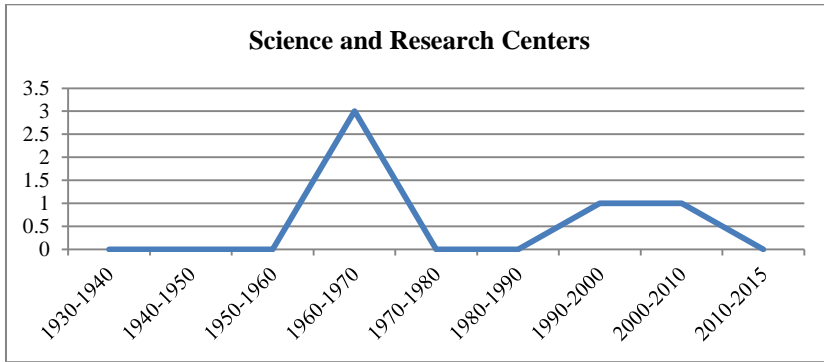


Figure 3: Number of science and research center competitions by year

**Educational Facilities:** A study by Aytaç, K. points out that the most important characteristic of the period after the 1960 military coup was the idea that the society was underdeveloped and the reason was the economic and social structure, which led to a planning initiative for the next 15 years. The social objectives of this period included the removal of social and geographical obstacles that limit access to educational services and 7.1% of government investments for the following five years were allocated to education. [9] In this period 34 educational building competitions were held, which is a significantly high number compared to other time periods.

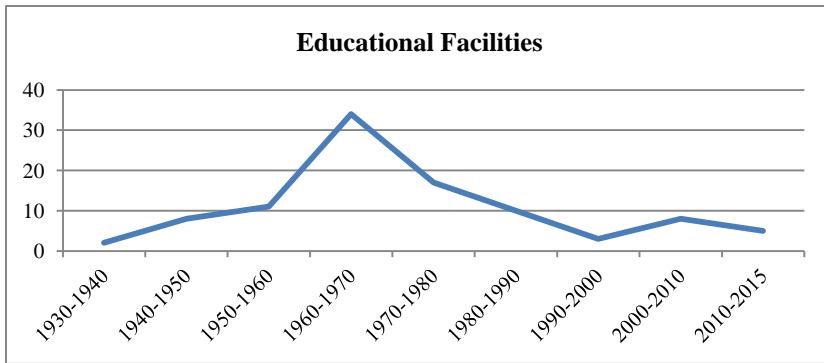


Figure 4: Number of educational facility competitions by year.

**Embassy Buildings:** 1960s was a period of foreign policy change. The military regime promoted a multidimensional foreign policy, arguing that the country should not only look to the West but to the whole world. In accordance with this shift, competitions were held for embassy buildings in New Delhi, Bonn, Kabul, Nicosia, Lisbon, Islamabad, Brasilia, Warsaw and Beirut in this period.

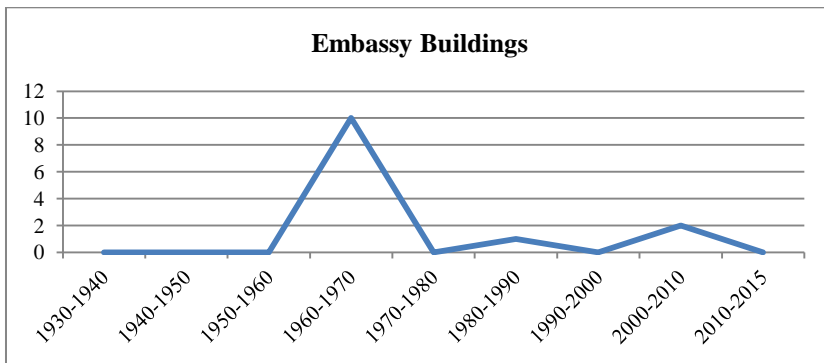


Figure 5: Number of embassy building competitions by year

**Ideas:** The 2000s and especially the period between 2010 and 2015 was when the number of ideas competitions were higher than other types. Ideas competitions are defined in the UCTEA Chamber of Architects By-Law as competitions that aim to promote innovative inquiries, methods, new research, planning and design approaches; to reveal ideas, concepts and conceptions that can provide a basis for an investment or a competition; to acquire basic data and programs or to create public opinion on professional subjects. In this context, the purpose is not to acquire architectural projects. [10] Ideas competitions are considered positive in promoting new ideas while there is concern for them being open to abuse. Stocking ideas in archives without turning them into architectural projects seem against the principles of the discipline. It has been a subject of dispute in recent years that these competitions allow hosts to keep rewards low and they lift the obligation to implement the winning project.<sup>3</sup> This concept has been abused by the current political regime and associated institutions.

<sup>3</sup> According to discussions on [www.arkitera.com](http://www.arkitera.com) and [www.kolokyum.com](http://www.kolokyum.com).

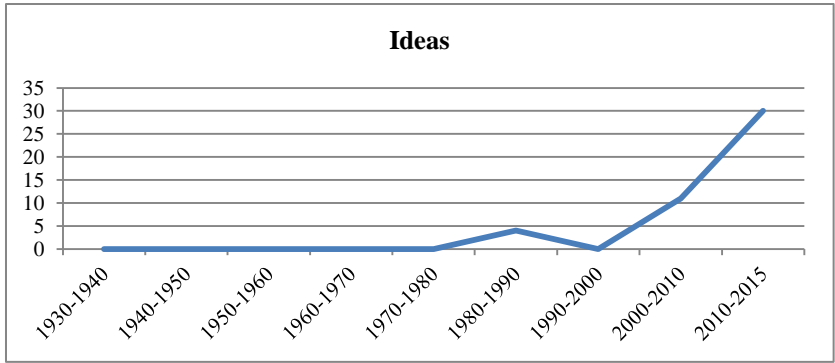


Figure 6: Number of ideas competitions by year

**Public Administration Buildings:** An examination of competitions in this category show that buildings that will represent the political power in every new political era are acquired through competitions held by government agencies.

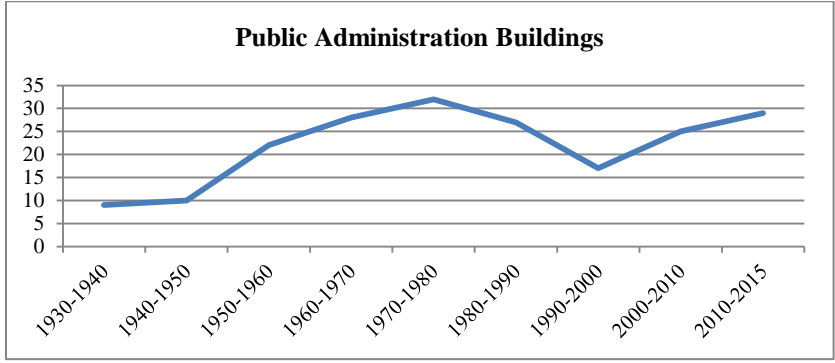


Figure 7: Number of public administration building competitions by year

**Urban Planning:** Ataöv and Osmay argue that the most important aspect of the post-2000 period is the fact that urban transformation is mentioned in legislation, and that participatory approaches and methods –which used to be utilized in local initiatives- are now discussed in urban planning, leading to the spread of efforts such as strategic planning, participatory conservation policies, multi-actor decision making processes and civic empowerment. They also mention that the ongoing rate of migration and the socio-economic polarization that is reflected by settlements are the justifications for urban transformation. [11] These changes were supported by various laws and by-laws <sup>4</sup> and there have been 40 urban planning competitions in this period.

<sup>4</sup> Law on Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk no 6309, Metropolitan Municipalities Law no 6309, Municipalities Law Law no 5393, Special Provincial Administration Law no 5301, Law on Renewal, Conservation and Use of Deteriorated Urban Fabric no 5366, Conservation of Cultural and Natural Properties Law no 2863, By-Law on the Rules and Procedures for Establishment of Site Administration and Monumental Artifact Commissions and Their Duties and Jurisdictions no 26006.



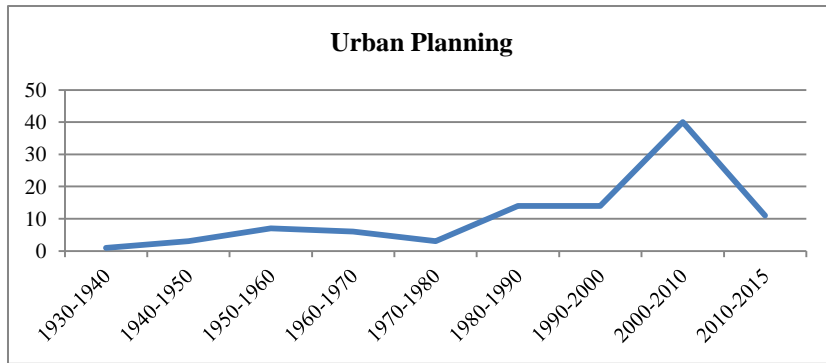


Figure 8: Number of urban planning competitions by year

**Healthcare facilities:** The concept of social state was adopted in Turkey with the 1961 Constitution and the right to healthcare services was included as an exclusive article. In the 1961 Constitution, in Article 49, it is indicated that “It is the duty of the State to ensure everyone lives in a state of physical and mental health and that everyone is provided with healthcare services. [12] In the following 10 years, 29 hospital projects were acquired through architecture competitions.

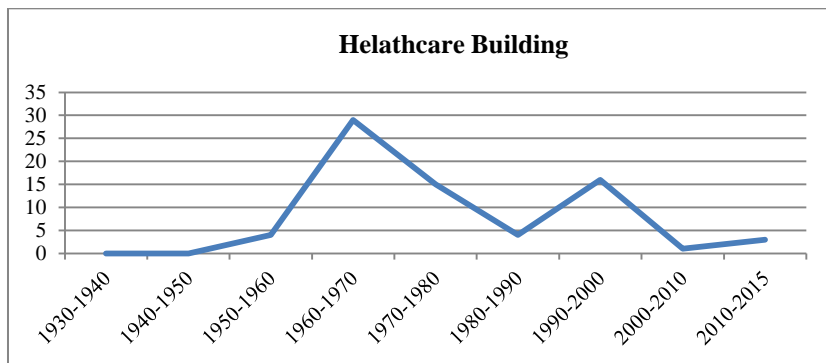


Figure 9: Number of healthcare facility competitions by year

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS

The analysis confirms the hypothesis that architecture competitions convey information on the ideological approach of a political regime and that it is possible to read these ideologies through competitions. The results of the analysis are evaluated below.

- Different political and military administrations that ruled the country between 1930 and 2000 acquired some buildings that are designed according to their ideologies through competitions. Therefore it is appropriate to say that architecture competitions are influenced by ideologies.
- A quantitative analysis of architecture competitions gives us clues about critical decisions made in certain periods.

- Between 1930 and 2000, government agencies decided to acquire architecture projects for some of the new buildings that will promote their ideologies. This can be considered to promote creative thought.
- However this was not the case in the 2000s. In this period the political administration launched many projects such as school campuses, educational facilities, sports centers, stadiums, hospital campuses, healthcare facilities, increasing social housing and producing projects for every socio-economic level, police stations, facilities for disabled people, community centers, rehabilitation centers and increasing numbers of mosques for the social housing developments that are in the form of complete neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup> Interviews with architects that work with various agencies, and research on project acquisition processes<sup>6</sup> imply that these projects are acquired through methods such as invitational competitions, invitational service procurement, open or closed bidding and are then contracted to various construction companies. In this period of search for new project types, the number of architecture competitions is considerably lower than expected. Some competitions were held for school campuses in this period. However they did not comply with the general principles of architecture competitions and in interviews with the Ministry of Education we were informed that these projects will not be implemented. While competitions in other categories were also found, with the exception of urban planning and ideas competitions, prominent architecture projects of the period have been acquired with other methods. This implies that creative thought was no more supported in the 2000s and that employers chose methods that protected their interests and that allowed them to influence the content of the projects.

Architecture competitions are not merely opportunities for architects to design liberally. Institutions that hold architecture competitions, the ideological structure of the period, the target group that will be influenced by the competition and the nature of this influence are aspects that interest both jury members and the participants. Since every architectural product effects individuals and the society as a whole, the ideological context of competitions, the ideology that the products will serve and how these products will be produced should be taken into consideration as important factors that effect the process of creating competition specifications and acquiring projects, and future specifications and projects should be formulated in this context.

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<sup>5</sup> Criticism of the contents of these projects is omitted for being beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Project acquisition methods of government agencies, such as the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ), the Ministry of Environment and Urbanism, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health.

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