

# Designing a National Uniform(ity): The Culture of Sümerbank within the Context of the Turkish Nation-State Project

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This article aims to re-define and re-conceptualize the concept of national uniform(ity) within the discursive framework of Turkish nation-state policies and display its concretization via the culture of the state textile factory Sümerbank, within the context of the Turkish nation-state project itself. On the basis of a comparative analysis of uniformity in the products of Sümerbank, we argue that the ideal of building a unified, collective and uniform(ed) nation-state can be identified at various levels. In the first section, the fundamental Kemalist reforms, policies, institutions and the way they affected the economic, social and cultural practices of Turkish modernization are examined. In the second section, the establishment of a Sümerbank culture peculiar to Turkish modernization and its contribution to the Kemalist ideal of creating a uniform(ed) Turkish citizen are treated. In the final section, the idea of uniformity is considered as expressed through body and space, both analogously functioning as a uniform. Accordingly, the authors provide a comparative analysis of uniform(ity) in the culture of Sümerbank based on disciplinary, conceptual and contextual scales as well as a critique of the Turkish modernization as a state-centred process, and Sümerbank culture as a problem field that exemplifies the local/global dichotomy of Turkish modernity.

**Keywords:** architecture—design culture—fashion design—national identity—uniformity

## Introduction

Between 2006 and 2007, two separate field studies in the Halkapınar and Nazilli facilities of the Turkish state textile company Sümerbank were conducted by academic staff of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design of Izmir University of Economics.<sup>1</sup> The primary goal of these studies was to document the industrial buildings that reflected the early modern architectural character of the Turkish Republic and to collect and preserve typical printed textiles and accessories, as well as textile albums, books and chemicals, most of which had largely deteriorated after the privatization process of Sümerbank after the 1980s. It was determined that there were certain correlations among the textile products and buildings of Sümerbank that reflected the Kemalist ideals of the early Turkish modernization, which prompted the authors to write this interdisciplinary article on this particular period of Turkish design history.

The establishment of Sümerbank facilities was a significant milestone in the transition of Turkish state policies.<sup>2</sup> Conceived as a holding concern, Sümerbank aimed to look after the financing, construction and operation of such diverse products as textiles (cotton and wool), steel, paper, rayon, ceramics, caustic soda, chlorine and cement.<sup>3</sup> It was rapidly organized in line with thorough modern production and marketing



processes<sup>4</sup> with new factories established as per a Five-Year Industrial Plan by the Turkish government in 1933 [1].

Sümerbank factories initially contributed to the nation-state project by producing affordable textile products made of cotton (*basma*, *tobralco*, *poplin*, *divitin*, *pazen*) and wool as well as shoes, carpets, threads and various accessories. In time, these factories turned into educational facilities, vocational schools where textile designers were trained who not only interpreted global fashion into a Turkish style but also produced numerous fabric patterns. The challenging regional socio-economic conditions of the early republican period not only affected the production strategies of these factories (limitation of colour range, use of local raw materials and reduction of waste material) but also shaped the daily consumption habits of the Turkish citizen: to use durable, cheap, accessible and easily made textile products. Correspondingly, these factories led to the development of a national textile design style creating 'a Sümerbank material culture in Anatolia by introducing its own fabrics and distinctive designs'.<sup>5</sup>

The traces of this cultural evolution, which arose from financial poverty, can also be observed in the built environment in which the textile production occurred. The architecture of factories, residences and social amenities at Sümerbank facilities reflects a unique identity peculiar to a regional socio-economic context within Turkish modernity: modular, functional, adaptable, standardized plan layouts and façade treatments; durable, local and accessible construction materials and unisex public spaces promoting a secular and rational life style.

In this article, within the context of the Turkish nation-state project, we consider Sümerbank culture as a field of representation of the Kemalist ideal of national uniform(ity) as expressed through the Turkish citizen uniform(ed) not only 'bodily' by wearing stereotypical Sümerbank products but also 'spatially' in terms of his/her living, accommodating, socializing and working style at Sümerbank facilities. In light of the analyses of the collected data, we suggest a tripartite framework (conceptual, contextual and disciplinary) in which the concept of national uniform(ity) is embodied in the design products of Sümerbank fashion (fabrics and dress) and architecture (buildings and settlements). Considering the Turkish modernization as a state-centered process and its design products as imitations of mainstream global movements of the 1930s, we also argue that the ideal of national uniform(ity) by means of Sümerbank culture was never fully accomplished, creating various modes of non-uniformity.

**Fig 1.** Map showing Sümerbank facilities established in Turkey as per the 1933 Five-Year Industrial Plan. Key—green factory: cotton; dark blue factory: wool; brown factory: clothing; yellow factory: ceramics and chemicals; light blue factory: administrative facilities; red factory: new facilities ongoing investment; red square: bank branch; circles indicate the ability of a factory to invest on its reconstruction (Sümerbank, Devlet Basımevi, İstanbul, 1937 from Himam Photo Archive)

## The Kemalist reforms and uniform(ity)

The establishment of the Turkish Republic, as a nation-state building project, is a specific modernization process that possesses ideological traces of both Western capitalization as a formal model (private ownership, classed society and capital orientedness) and Soviet socialization as an implicit model (classlessness, labour orientedness and equal/extensive use of surplus value). In fact, neither of these models was adapted directly into Turkish political and social life. Instead, the mechanisms of this process were legitimized under the dominance of Kemalist state policies that advocated various modes of uniformity throughout the country's modernization. In a great number of pioneering models and reforms that occurred in the early Republican period, 'a state-centred, national, rational, secular, homogenous and collective' understanding of modernity was adopted. Şerif Mardin has described this process as a 'Turkish solidarity in which various social institutions and vocational communities associate to harmonise and unify the society'.<sup>6</sup>

How then was the concept of uniform(ity) reflected in various political, social and cultural practices of this unique modernization process? Under the supervision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, leader of the Turkish War of Independence (1919–23) and first President of Turkey, a number of reforms—from lifestyles to women's appearance, from cities to homes and kitchens—were made to concretize uniformity in daily social, educational, cultural practices and products. The Dress Reform (*Kılık Kıyafet İnkılabı*), for instance, included a series of arrangements and regulations such as the hat-law of November 1925 (*şapka kanunu*), by which 'the fez, the turban, and other forms of traditional garb with religious connotations were outlawed',<sup>7</sup> the obligatory use of Westernized clothing such as slim trousers, waistcoats, shirts, ties, jackets, brims, *redingotes* and *bonjurs* for men and 1920s *a la garçon* style shoes, dresses, gloves, headwear (*sıkmabaş*) and accessories for women in governmental and public venues, primary school uniforms (*önlük*) in educational institutions as well as the legal obligation of wearing dresses made from local fabrics (passed by law on 9 December 1925) [2].

The Kemalist reforms also included the foundation of a number of state institutions. With the establishment of the National Economy and Savings Society (*Milli İktisat ve Tasarruf Cemiyeti*) in 1929, for instance, the consumption of imported products considerably declined as the public was encouraged to retrench by using national products and living economically. The Society also had pedagogical missions including 'propaganda posters, the Journal of Economy and Savings (*İktisat ve Tasarruf Dergisi*), preparation of brochures . . . educational materials, the institutionalization and celebration of Savings and Domestic Products Week (*Yerli Malı Haftası*) . . .'.<sup>8</sup> All these practices provided the necessary ground for the formation of a common and uniform style of economical consumption (economical uniformity) to be shared by each member of the public [3].

**Fig 2.** Left: a group of women wearing *sıkmabaş* headwear in the late 1920s (Himam Photo Archive); middle: a couple wearing Westernized clothing of the 1920s (Himam Photo Archive); right: a group of primary schoolchildren wearing *önlük*, 1940s (Pasin Photo Archive)







**Fig 3.** Posters by the graphic designer İhâp Hulusi for the promotion of ‘Domestic Products Week’ (*Yerli Mali Haftası*). Translation of slogans, from left to right: ‘Every Product has a Domestic Equivalent’ and ‘Sportsmen: To Find Everything You are Looking For, Run to Us—Domestic Products Markets’ (Ender Merter Poster Archive)

Public Houses (*Halk Evleri*), founded in 1932 as state institutions, aimed at creating ‘educational uniformity’ among society. The leading functions of Public Houses were ‘to indoctrinate the Kemalist reforms and principles, to erase traces of the past, to accelerate social life, to educate, train and assure the public, and to endorse a national culture’.<sup>9</sup> An educational mobilization programme (1937) for social change, better known as the Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*), aimed to educate the rural public to join the nation along with the urban public.<sup>10</sup> These institutions were founded in anticipation of creating ‘a classless society’ and ‘a fused mass audience’.

Owing to the world financial crisis of the early 1930s, the Turkish government was intensely involved with economical recruitment policies such as Import Substitution Policy (*İthal İkame Politikası*), and began to establish and operate Public Economic Enterprises (*Kamu İktisadi Teşekkülleri*) of various kinds as another institutional framework. As can be seen in the table, the percentage of local production in Turkey significantly increased in the 1930s by virtue of these policies [4]. These enterprises included twenty new factories in various fields, such as Sümerbank Textile Factories (*Sümerbank Basma Fabrikaları*), İzmit Cellulose and Paper Factory (*İzmit Selüloz ve Kağıt Fabrikası*), the Turkish Sugar Refinery (*Türkiye Şeker Fabrikası*) and the Karabük Iron and Steel Factory (*Karabük Demir-çelik Fabrikası*), the construction and management of which were financed by state-sponsored banks such as the Industrial Mining Bank (*Sanayi Maadin Bankası*), Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat Bankası*), *Etibank* and *Sümerbank*, the last two of which took their names from the Ancient Hittite and Sumerian civilizations, respectively.<sup>11</sup>

## The Sümerbank culture and the uniform(ed) Turkish citizen

Although it is possible to observe that most of the aforementioned institutions established in the name of modernity have been modelled after their European counterparts, this adoption does not change the fact that the Turkish modernity has its own unique trajectories, combining European cultural norms with local practices to yield innovative, unique and often much more complex forms and processes.<sup>12</sup> In this regard, Sümerbank Institutions and

**Fig 4.** Production scales of various products in Turkey between 1924 and 1940: the number on the left of each column indicates the amount of total production (imported + local) in 1,000 tonnes, while the number on the right indicates the percentage of local production (Yahya S. Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi*, p. 259–60)

	Iron Steel	Cement	Paper	Glass Products	Cotton Fabrics	Woollen Fabrics	Sugar
1924	87 0	32 75	16 0	11 0	23 4	3,2 19	53 0
1927	92 0	97 42	21 0	9 0	23 13	3,1 19	67 0
1929	163 0	144 49	23 0	6 0	25 12	3,3 24	77 10
1934	132 0	181 99	24 0	5 0	23 52	3,0 93	63 94
1936	147 0	199 97	30 13	5 61	22 55	3,5 86	88 75
1938	203 0	329 87	37 24	8 63	28 57	3,7 81	107 40
1940	38 32	275 97	23 39	8 91	25 85	4,1 98	99 90



products represented a post-colonial national identity that was culturally overloaded by history, memory, geography, industry and ideology.<sup>13</sup>

Sümerbank factories directly or indirectly served for the construction of not only economic but also cultural uniformities, since ‘factory buildings’, as Çağatay Emre Doğan has stated, ‘are not only shelters for machinery but also the tools of introduction and deployment of a new life style and culture’.<sup>14</sup> How then was the life style and identity of a uniform(ed) Turkish citizen constructed by means of Sümerbank culture? Here, our understanding of ‘uniform’, beyond being mere clothing, rests on the appropriation of ‘uniformity’ by means of the Kemalist state policies.

In the most general sense, uniforms are used to socialize individuals to accept basic sociopolitical processes such as ‘hierarchization’, ‘categorization’ and ‘standardization’ generated by statist and capitalist projects.<sup>15</sup> Hence, the dynamics of uniformization is closely linked to the concepts of regime, power, standardization, integration, solidarity, social control and order. Linda B. Arthur has highlighted this with the statement that ‘states have used varied forms of cultural codes to create powerful appearances of state control, nationality and group solidarity’.<sup>16</sup>

In a metaphorical sense, dress/clothing and dressing are themes relevant to a wider set of related phenomena. According to Arthur, the members of a nation-state ‘dress themselves not only through uniforms, but also by way of architecture, street names, postage stamps, monuments and rituals’.<sup>17</sup> The culture of Sümerbank provided such a phenomenological framework in which the dressing style of a Turkish citizen corresponded to the homogeneous, rational and refined characteristics of Sümerbank architecture. Moreover, it affected the daily practices of the Turkish man and the Turkish woman in terms of ‘sexual equality, secularity, collectivity and belonging’, through which their visual and social profiles were unified and desexualized. Both preferred to dress themselves in less-ornamented and plain Sümerbank uniforms while working and socializing in shared public spaces, reflecting the characteristics of both the Socialist and Militarist architecture of the period [5]. Nonetheless, having already conceptualized the Kemalist discourse as a world view partially constructed from any of these ideologies, it should be highlighted that the culture of Sümerbank particularly addressed the idealization of ‘a relatively neutral Turkish citizen’ dressing and living with both global and local awareness of Turkishness.

The Turkish Dress Reform of 1925 was an effort promoted by the government and local media to generate ‘civilized and fashionable’ clothes for men and women, which were neither as explicit as the Western look nor as conservative as the Middle Eastern look. Instead, it was epitomized by a more severe, simple and comfortable clothing style.<sup>18</sup> These products were promoted by various media—posters, magazines and advertisements—emphasizing the expected visual expression of the uniform(ed) Turkish citizen. What is particularly interesting in many of these posters is, as Bozdoğan has mentioned, ‘the harmonious coexistence of the peasant and the city dweller, with the products of industry offering fulfilment of their respective aspirations of life—parallel but never in conflict’ [5].<sup>19</sup>

Sümerbank Industrial Settlements, conceived as small factory towns, comprised not only production facilities (factories) and support facilities (warehouses, workshops, boiler house, water tower, garage and fire station) but also residential (family houses, single houses and dormitories), social/cultural (cafeterias, social clubs, cinemas, guest houses and day-care centres), recreational (parks, swimming pools and sports fields) and educational (kindergartens and primary schools) facilities. Can Arpaç, an eyewitness of the daily life of Nazilli Sümerbank Settlement in 1940s, highlights the significance of



leisure time activities such as 'foreign language courses, theatre plays, roller skating, football, republican celebration balls, picnics, most of which enabled men, women and children from various socio-economic classes to come together as a uniformed populace'.<sup>20</sup> In this way, these settlements could be considered as 'cultural education centres' to teach, especially to the workers, how to behave, inhabit and get dressed as a modern and uniform(ed) Turkish citizen [6].

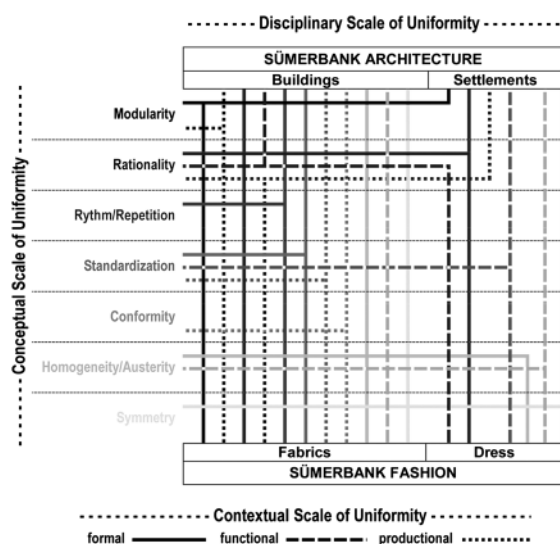
## A comparative analysis of uniformity in Sümerbank fashion and architecture

There are various definitions of the term 'uniform', each of which codifies the display of the uniformed body in space from different perspectives. According to Herbert Blumer, uniformity is reached 'through consensus on a prevailing mode and its association with propriety, an orderly and regulated way to monitor and mark the shifting sands of social life, and the distillation of "common sensitivity and taste" by the sanctioning of new modes and the rejection of old ones'.<sup>21</sup> Teuro Sekimoto's definition is more ideological, that 'uniforms function as signs of the wearer's closeness to the state'. For him, 'wearing uniforms is a convenient way for people on the fringes of the state machinery to distinguish themselves from the anonymous masses that have no uniform and are assumed to have no part in the working of the state and the nation'.<sup>22</sup> Following the enactment of Kemalist state policies, in our interpretation of uniform(ity), we refer to Brian J. McVeigh, who discusses the concept of uniform from a Eurocentric modernist perspective with the

**Fig 5.** Left: a family wearing Sümerbank uniforms and accessories, 1960s (Pasin Photo Archive); middle and right: Sümerbank promotion poster by İhap Hulusi: 'Village and City Dwelling Citizens: All the Fabrics You are Looking for Can be Found in Every Sümerbank Store' (Ender Merter Poster Archive)

**Fig 6.** Left: group photo of women wearing dresses of Sümerbank basma in a ball (Arpaç photo archive); middle: general view of Sümerbank settlement in Kayseri, the pride of Turkish Republican industrialization in the 1930s (Bozdoğan, 2001, p. 125); right: social club in Nazilli Sümerbank settlement (photo by Pasin, October 2009)





**Fig 7.** Analytical chart showing the authors' three scales of uniformity

following terms: 'unity, integration, solidarity, social control, order, lack of individuality, institutional face, convenience, standardisation being observed and monitored . . .'.<sup>23</sup>

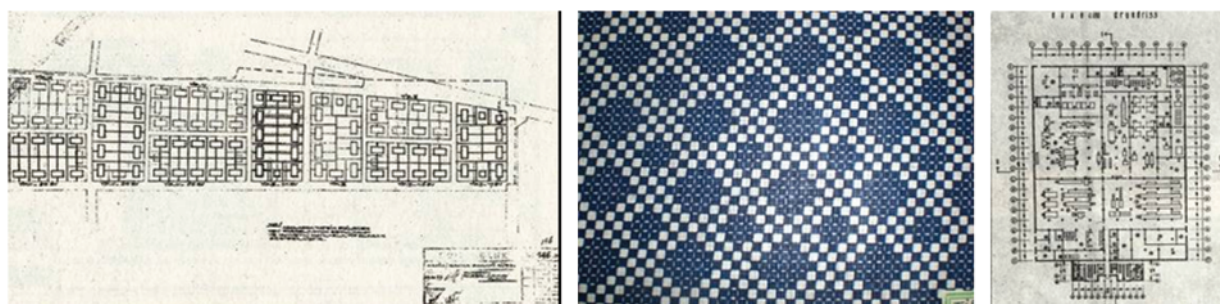
Our comparative analysis of uniformity in the culture of Sümerbank is based on three scales: *disciplinary*, *conceptual* and *contextual* [7]. The disciplinary scale polarizes Sümerbank architecture and fashion, in which the former is presented with sub-scales of 'building' and 'settlement', and the latter with 'fabric' and 'dress.' Addressing McVeigh's terminology, the conceptual scale itemizes the design concepts of uniformity that are common in the products and spaces of Sümerbank culture within a non-European socio-economic context: modularity, rationality, rhythm/repetition, standardization, homogeneity/austerity, conformity and symmetry. The contextual scale provides linear connections (with lines of different types) between the disciplinary sub-scales vertically, and is also horizontally linked to a particular concept of the conceptual scale.<sup>24</sup>

*Modularity*, the first design concept of uniformity, can be analysed in two contexts: formal and productional. In terms of *formal modularity*, it could be identified that in the geometric articulation of both the settlements (grid site planning and spatial organization) and the fabrics (print reports); square modules were used in order to assign a uniform outlook to the idealized Turkish citizen and a similar life style to the inhabitants of these settlements. In terms of *productional modularity*, the use of these modules both in the application of the buildings (with regular axial dimensions and controlled connections) and the production of fabrics (reducing the waste material and minimizing colour use) contributed to economical uniformity by means of appropriate production technologies shared in all Sümerbank facilities [8].

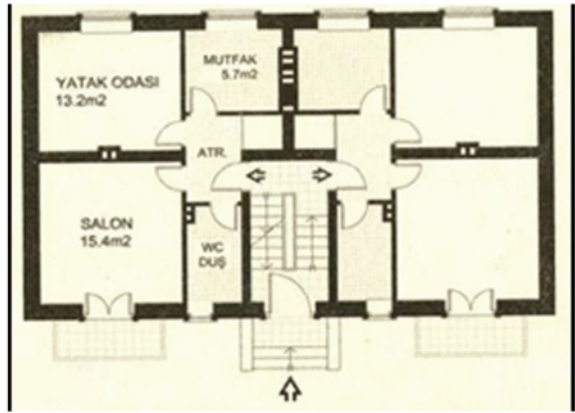
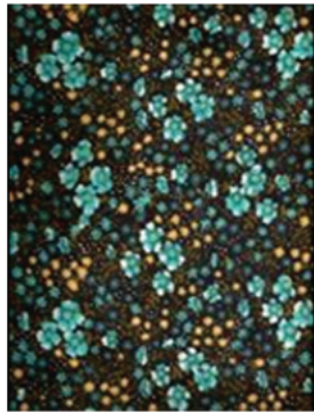
*Rationality*, the second design concept of uniformity, can be analysed in formal, functional and productional contexts. The *formal rationality* of the fabrics and the dresses were enabled with their clear, simple, rational look, free of any religious meanings. It is more usual to see linear geometric compositions and abstract, floral and folkloric adornments representing Anatolian cultural roots. Similarly, Sümerbank architecture does not bear a religious motive transferred from the local Ottoman and Seljuk architecture. Rather, it is based on a secularized orthogonal geometry and refined massiveness that can be identified both at settlement and building scale [9].

*Functional rationality* can be seen in practical and comfortable use of Sümerbank accommodation units (monolithic, cubist and secular plan layouts of both dormitories

**Fig 8.** Left: grid site plan of the workers' housing at Nazilli Sümerbank settlement (Sümerbank Archive, 1970); middle: a sample of Sümerbank fabric with a pattern of square modules (IUE Sümerbank Textile Archive, Fabric Album, May 1956); right: modular plan layout of the weaving section in Nazilli Sümerbank settlement (Nazilli Factory Archive, no date)







**Fig 9.** Left: models wearing simple striped Sumerbank dresses with a modern outlook (Sumerbank Booklet, no date, p. 44); middle: a sample of Sumerbank fabric with standard floral motif (IUE Sumerbank Textile Archive); right: typical floor plan of a single-type housing unit for officers in Kayseri Sumerbank settlement (Asiliskender, 2009, p. 125)

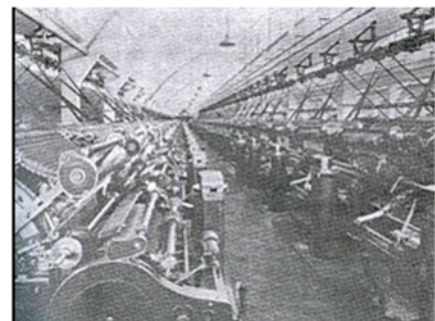
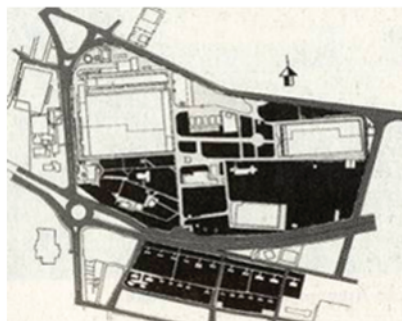
for non-married persons and family-type flats) and Sumerbank dresses (simplified and clear-cut patterns in casual wear, pajamas, as well as school uniforms), controlling the dwelling and dressing style of the so-called uniformed Turkish citizen in daily life [10].

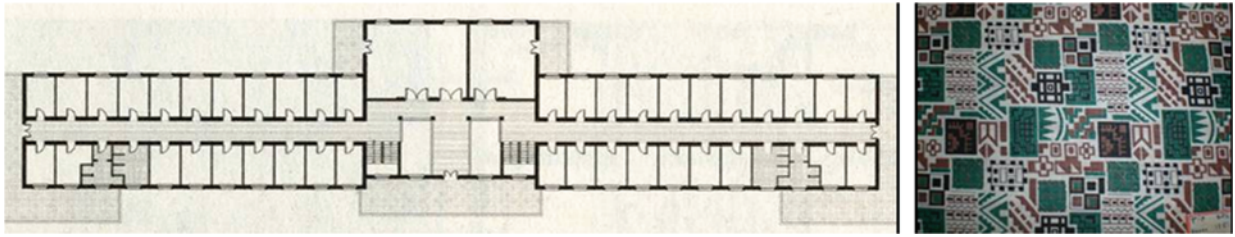
*Productional rationality* is another context that is common in the arrangements of Sumerbank Settlements (two-fold site plans in which production facilities are distant while accommodation, social and recreational facilities are closely connected to city centres) and Sumerbank fabrics (cut and design of fabrics matching with the capabilities of serial production facilities) [10].

*Rhythm/repetition*, the third design concept of uniformity, can be analysed in a formal context. The formal layouts of most fabrics were created by the orderly and rhythmic repetition of organic motifs and geometrical patterns. Similarly, both the linear architectural plan layouts (with orderly repeated accommodation units and dormitory systems) and also the building facades (with rhythmic articulation of openings) enabled a formal characteristic common to both Sumerbank architecture and fashion [11].

*Standardization*, the fourth design concept of uniformity, could be analysed in formal, functional and productional contexts. In terms of *formal standardization*, the typical striped and spotted Sumerbank pyjamas and school uniforms (*önlük*) with their monochrome colours were fair examples of standardized clothing in daily life: ‘an indicator of classlessness’. Similarly, the residential accommodation at most Sumerbank Settlements comprised U-shaped buildings with standard type openings equalizing the spatial quality of interiors, thus uniforming dwelling styles and daily household activities [12].

**Fig 10.** Left: technical drawing of a simplified and clear cut model of a Sumerbank pyjama (IUE Sumerbank Textile Archive), middle: twofold site plan of the Bursa Sumerbank Settlement (Bursa Factory Archive); right: Sumerbank weaving and printing machines for serial production facilities (Sumerbank Journal, 1981, no: 211, p. 31)





**Fig 11.** Left: plan layout of orderly repeated dormitory units at the Kayseri Sümerbank Settlement (Asiliskender, 2009, p. 126); right: a sample of Sümerbank fabric with a repeated geometrical pattern (IUE Sümerbank Textile Archive)

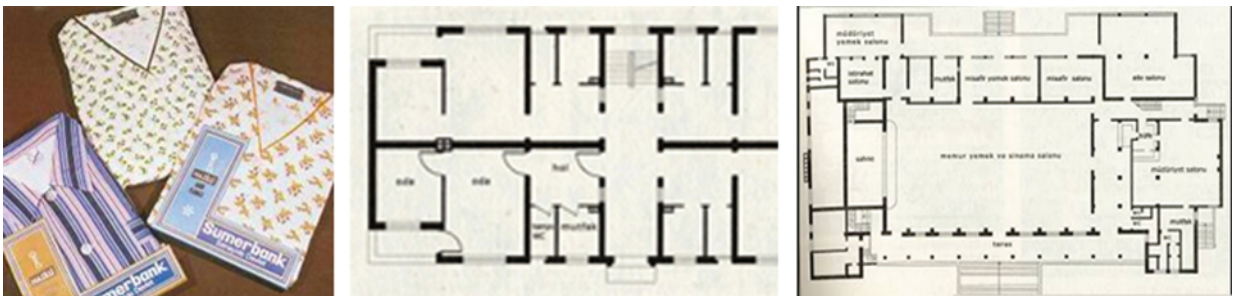
In terms of *functional standardization*, Sümerbank fashion, standing for equality, had destroyed the distance not only between the elite and the lower class but also between man and woman, by means of unified textile patterns. This dimension could also be seen in the shared use of social and recreational units in Sümerbank settlements by both managers and factory workers in a unisex type of use. In addition, the plan layouts of the factory buildings also represent a standardized uniformity in that the placement of the entrance and dressing rooms in the front parts of the factories is unique and common to nearly all Sümerbank Industrial Settlements [12].

In terms of *productional standardization*, the roller printing technique is the common production method for cotton Sümerbank fabrics, most often reproducing small mono-chrome patterns characterized by tiny floral and striped motifs. The similarity of the construction (steel, concrete) and finishing materials (simple stone cladding, plaster, paint for walls, tiling, flooring as well as linear roof sheds) is a reflection of production standardization appropriate for the modular and linear geometry of Sümerbank architecture.

*Conformity*, the fifth design concept of uniformity, can be analysed in its productional context. The *productional conformity* could be assessed in physical, economic and local terms. Sümerbank Institutions, as the symbol of ‘the idealized nationalist industrialization’ aimed to protect and improve domestic production by means of customs and policies as well as production and marketing strategies. Cotton dresses made from Sümerbank fabrics were responsive to context; their materials, pattern making and structural techniques were stereotypically not only used for clothing but also for interior decoration. In addition, cotton fibres, as the main material of Sümerbank fabrics, have a flexible conformity to the annual and regional climatic conditions. *Basma* was used for summer clothing while *pazen*, coarser than *basma*, was used for winter clothing. These fabrics eventually became the signifiers of national values [13].

Locality undermines the ideological purpose of Sümerbank fabrics by means of the use of a national raw material affordable by users of various income levels. Similarly, construction materials (stone, marble, etc.) used for Sümerbank buildings were provided

**Fig 12.** Left: packets of standard Sumerbank pyjamas (Toprak, 1988, p. 101, from Himam Photo Archive); middle: U-shaped housing units for officers in Nazilli Sümerbank Settlement (Doğan, 2009, p. 94); right: plan layout of the Officers’ Club at the Nazilli Sümerbank settlement (Doğan, 2009, p. 101)







**Fig 13.** Far left: samples of *basma* and *pazen* fabrics (IUE Sümerbank Textile Archive); middle left: women wearing comfortable summer dresses made of *basma* (Sümerbank Booklet, no date, p. 44); middle right: men wearing winter shirts made of *pazen* (Sümerbank Booklet, no date, p. 44); far right: local stone-clad facades of the apartment block and electrical plant in the Kayseri Sümerbank settlement (Asiliskender, 2009, p. 119)

from the local market where each settlement was located. It was also significant that one of the basic criteria for site selection was closeness to transportation networks (mainly railways for raw material transport), which in turn made the fabric production process cheaper. Ayhan Akman points out that ‘... constructional honesty, conformity to local materials, climate and resources [observed in Sümerbank architecture] represented some of the basic qualities and criteria that modern architecture sought’<sup>25</sup> [13].

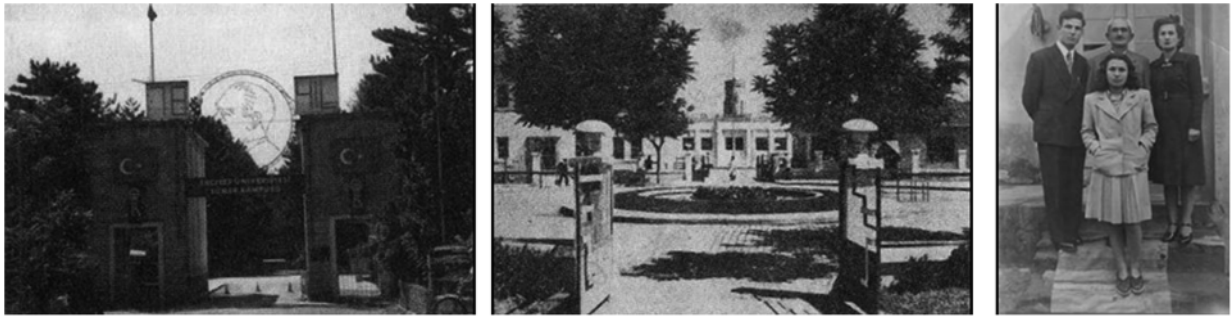
*Homogeneity/austerity*, the sixth design concept of uniformity, can be analysed in formal and functional contexts. Homogeneity and austerity were *formally* conceived in the equalized distribution of simple, undecorated geometric volumes on fabrics and their applications as well as the lack of ornamentation and many other qualities valued by the nation-state-sponsored modernism. The recovery of pure, simple, unadorned, proportional features in Sümerbank architecture was similarly a reaction to the confusion and excess in the Oriental ornamentation of Ottoman architecture. In *functional* terms, the homogeneous distribution of controlled entrances at both the settlement and building scale could be analogous to the equalized use of Sümerbank fabrics and clothing that address a collective uniformity in daily social practices [14].

*Symmetry*, the seventh and the final design concept of uniformity, can be analysed in terms of formal context. Owing to the nature of dressmaking techniques, to provide practicality and applicability, both the fabric patterns and dress cuts were designed symmetrically. In a similar vein, symmetry can also be observed in the formal characteristics of both individual buildings and the layouts of settlements. Sümerbank factory buildings, for instance, always have a symmetrical and massive appearance enhanced by their orthogonal and balanced plan arrangements. Moreover, the main entrances of the settlements were designed as industrial monuments and symmetrically placed like a micro-scale version of a ceremonial urban plaza/square or a protocol boulevard, representing the new modern Turkish Republic [15].<sup>26</sup>



**Fig 14.** Left: sample Sümerbank fabric with a homogeneous pattern (IUE Sümerbank Archive); right: the management building of the Bursa Merinos Sümerbank settlement, showing the homogeneous distribution of openings (Antan Archive)





**Fig 15.** Left: symmetrical and monumental main entrance of the Kayseri Sümerbank settlement (Aritan, 2009, p. 186); middle: view of the Atatürk Square in the Malatya Sümerbank settlement (Aritan, 2009, p. 179); right: a family wearing stereotypical Sümerbank symmetrical pattern cut clothing (Pasin Photo Archive)

## Conclusions

In this article, which is based on the authors' comparative analysis of uniformity in the culture of Sümerbank, it has been argued that the Kemalist ideal of building a unified and collective nation-state as well as a uniform(ed) Turkish citizen can be identified in various disciplinary, conceptual and contextual scales. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that finding the reflections of these scales in modern Turkish daily life was not as easy and straightforward as expected, since there were certain oppositional cases (non-uniformities) that limited or decreased the dynamics of the political, social and cultural uniformization of the Turkish citizen.

One case is the dominance of the formal context among its many connections to the conceptual scale of uniformity. That is, the design concepts of uniformity were mostly reflected by 'visual' means, emphasizing the formal language of Sümerbank culture. In comparison, the functional and productional contexts were more likely to occur in relatively more implicit concepts such as 'rationality', 'standardization', 'homogeneity/austerity' and 'conformity'. This may be because the designers of the Turkish nation-state project tended to imitate many of the formal features of the capitalist and socialist design products of the period. This led to a contradictory situation: while the production and daily use of Sümerbank textiles and spaces were largely affected by regional socio-economic conditions (financial nation-state policies, site selection criteria for industrial facilities and easy transportation of textiles and construction materials), the global modern movements of art and design (Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Abstraction, Socialist Realism, Bauhaus, Constructivism, Minimalism, Cubism) of the period were accepted as referential models for the construction of a uniform(ed) Turkish citizen. It is comprehensible that the visual codes and stereotypes created by these movements could be internalized by the Turkish elite more smoothly than by the lower- and middle-class populace, who were striving to adapt to the new life style of Turkish modernity.

Another oppositional case to the uniformization is based on the existence of a distinctive concentration of contextual links between the disciplinary sub-scales of building and textiles, while there are few between settlement design and clothing. This may be due to reasons specific to the two disciplines themselves. In terms of Sümerbank architecture, it could be claimed that, in spite of their closeness to city centres, most Sümerbank Settlements functioned as gated-community areas that could not be fully assimilated by the various sections of the public.<sup>27</sup> Sümerbank clothing, on the other hand, was affected by the rapid changes of fashion trends but the construction of a uniform(ed) Turkish citizen necessitated a more gradual process. High-income groups following these trends especially isolated themselves from the medium- and low-income groups of the uniform(ed) Turkish citizens wearing Sümerbank clothing.<sup>28</sup>

Above all, it could be said that institutions and practices that constitute modernity in Turkey could be considered as imports from Europe and Soviet Russia as much as authentic products of the local context. In this way, Turkish modernity can also be seen as an imitation that has never really taken root in society and has always suffered from incongruity with local practices and lack of popular support. The appropriation of a national uniformity by means of Sümerbank culture is a problem field that exemplifies this local/global dichotomy of Turkish modernity. Although the genealogical diversity of Anatolian culture was available to create a more participatory, pluralistic and polychromatic Turkish modernization, it was defeated by a Western-dependent consumer culture, promoted by liberal political parties against Sümerbank culture. Since neither the bodily nor the spatial Sümerbank uniforms could adapt to the changing conditions of modernity and update themselves accordingly, the Kemalist ideal of the uniform(ed) Turkish citizen was never fully accomplished.

In spite of particular oppositions to the state-centred construction of uniformity by Sümerbank culture and its institutions that served in various fields for nearly seventy years, it played a significant role in the modernization process of the Turkish Republic. Along with the privatization process that started in 1987, some of the settlements (İzmir Halkapınar, Eskişehir, etc.) have been demolished, some have been handed over to the private sector, municipalities or universities, and most of the products (fabrics, machinery, print rolls, etc.) have been destroyed. In other words, a state-centred termination of the state-centred Sümerbank culture has been paradoxically realized. Considering the rapidly changing socio-economic conditions of the Turkish Republic for the last thirty years, this termination might be considered as a natural process. As researchers of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design of İzmir University of Economics, who have partially saved and documented the heritage of this culture, we believe that this analysis could be further improved to offer designers, students and scholars a design-erly insight into this remarkable period of the Turkish design history.

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## Notes

- 1 The first study was conducted at the Sümerbank Settlement of Halkapınar (İzmir Basma Sanayi Müessesesi) in September 2006 and the second one at the Sümerbank Settlement of Nazilli (Nazilli Sanayi Müessesesi) in March 2007. During both these studies, the industrial buildings were photographed and 7,456 albums of printed textiles, rolls and textile books

were collected. These materials are kept in the archives of the Fashion Department of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design of İzmir University of Economics.

- 2 Sümerbank was established on the 3 June 1933, by incorporating factories of the *Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası*, which is considered the

- beginning of the controlled and programmed operation of the Turkish Republic in terms of economic development. From the inception of the Five-Year Industrial Plan of 1933, Sümerbank's publications reported the construction of fifteen textile factories including Bakırköy (1934), Kayseri (1935), Bursa (1935), Ereğli (1937), Nazilli (1937) and Malatya (1937).
- 3 O. Okyar, 'The Concept of Etatism', *The Economic Journal*, vol. 75, no. 297, 1965, p. 101.
  - 4 In 1933, 'Domestic Goods Bazaars (Yerli Mallar Pazarları)', devoted to the marketing of national Sümerbank products, were established. The number of these reached 228 within 40 years (E. Dölen, *Tekstil Tarihi (History of Textile)*, Marmara Üniversitesi Teknik Eğitim Fakültesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992, pp. 437–8).
  - 5 Ç. Ormanlar, *Giyim Kuşam Modaları (Fashions of Clothing)*, 75 Yılda Değişen Yaşam, Değişen İnsan, Cumhuriyet Modaları, Bilanço 98, Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, 1999, p. 51.
  - 6 Ş. Mardin, *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset: Makaleler 3 (Politics and Religion in Turkey: Articles 3)*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008, p. 67.
  - 7 Unlike their Western modernization counterparts, Kemalist models aimed to 'otherize' its precedents, by discrediting the Ottoman Period as 'old and the traditional' (Z. Toprak, *Sümerbank*, Creative Yayıncılık, Alaş Ofset, 1988, pp. 443–4). See also S. Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, the University of Washington Press, printed in Singapore, 2001, p. 58 to further understand how Kemalist reforms enacted to clear of the Turkish daily life from religious connotations.
  - 8 Bozdoğan, op. cit., p. 137.
  - 9 N. G. Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri: İdeoloji ve Mimarlık (Public Houses: Ideology and Architecture)*, İletişim Yayınları 520, Araştırma-İnceleme Dizisi 83, İstanbul, 1999, pp. 72–8.
  - 10 B. Güvenç, 'Secular Trends and Turkish Identity', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1997–98, pp. 8–9.
  - 11 The naming of two of these state industries after the ancient civilizations of the region, Hittites and the Sumerians, is particularly representative of how nationalist narratives operate. Ayhan Akman highlights two aims that nationalists sought to accomplish by providing a new genealogy for the Turkish nation: 'to demonstrate how the Turkish nation had ancient roots in Anatolia (which in turn justified the Republic's claims to that same territory)' and 'to show how Turkish culture was compatible with modernity' (A. Akman, 'Ambiguities of Modernist Nationalism: Architectural Culture and Nation-Building in Early Republican Turkey', *Turkish Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2004, p. 105).
  - 12 Observing the experience of modernity in different non-Western contexts, Dilip Gaonkar notes that 'modernity is more often perceived as lure than as threat, and people (not just the elite) everywhere, at every national or cultural site, rise to meet it, negotiate it and appropriate it in their own fashion' (A. Çınar, *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places and Time*, Public Worlds, volume 14, University of Minnesota Press, London, 2005 quoting Gaonkar, pp. 1–2).
  - 13 Françoise Georgeon states that 'the Turkish nation-state project could be considered as a unique identity-construction process that differs from Western modernization, which was considerably slower and took a longer period' (F. Georgeon, *Osmanlı-Türk Modernleşmesi: 1900-1930 (Ottoman-Turkish Modernity: 1900-1930)*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2006, pp. IX–X).
  - 14 Ç. E. Doğan, 'Nazilli Basma Fabrikası Yerleşimi: Tarihçe ve Yaşamı (Nazilli Basma Factory Settlement: History and Life)', in *Fabrika'da Barınmak: Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde Türkiye'de İşçi Konutları: Yaşam, Mekân ve Kent*, A. Cengizkan (ed.), Arkadaş Yayınevi, Ankara, 2009, p. 78.
  - 15 B. McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*, Berg Publishers, Dress, Body, Culture Series, UK, 2000, p. 11.
  - 16 L. B. Arthur, 'School Uniforms as a Symbolic Metaphor for Competing Ideologies in Indonesia', in *Undressing Religion Commitment and Conversion from a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, L. B. Arthur (ed.), Berg Publications, Oxford, 2000, p. 201.
  - 17 Arthur quoting Nordholt, ibid., p. 201.
  - 18 İ. Özer, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Yaşam ve Moda (Life and Fashion from the Ottoman to the Republic)*, Truva Yayınları, Yayın No: 117, İstanbul, 2006, p. 115.
  - 19 Bozdoğan highlights that 'nowhere is this emphasis on consumer goods produced by state enterprises for the well-being of a thoroughly unified nation seen better than in posters by İhâp Hulusi, the most prolific graphic designer of the early republican period and the maker of Sümerbank's corporate image' (Bozdoğan, op. cit., p. 133). In the preface to his comprehensive history of Sümerbank, Toprak emphasizes the priority that was placed on consumer goods in the 1930s. 'The initiatives taken by Sümerbank' he writes, 'opened the closed village economy, created unity between urban and rural communities, and played an important role in unifying the villager with the market' (Toprak, op. cit., p. 7).
  - 20 C. Arpaç, Interview conducted by the authors, 5 November 2010, İzmir.
  - 21 H. Blumer, *Fashion*, *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vol. 5, edited by David Sills and Robert King Merton, New York: Macmillan, 1968, p. 344.
  - 22 Arthur quoting Sekimoto, op. cit., p. 207.
  - 23 McVeigh, op. cit., p. 81.
  - 24 Here, it is significant to note that this tri-scalar analytical framework cannot be generalized for all Sümerbank design products. Rather, the comparison of the two disciplines in our analysis is limited to the existing materials that represent Sümerbank culture best, by means of the selected concepts and contexts. Moreover, the set of design concepts of



uniformity commonly addressed in both disciplines shows a peculiarity to Turkish modernity, so cannot be generalized for all cultures of modernity.

25 Akman, op. cit., pp. 106–07.

26 Symmetry, together with the design concepts of rhythm and repetition, has also been utilized in state buildings of the early republican Turkish architecture representing the fascist ideologies of the post-war period: order, rigidity, authority, hierarchy, power, etc. In this way, fascism in addition to capitalism and socialism further enhances the hybrid ideological structure of Turkish modernity.

27 C. Arpaç, on the basis of his childhood memories of Nazilli Sümerbank Settlement, mentions that ‘although this new factory life accelerated the transformation of social conventions and the adoption of a modern life style in the agriculture-based rural areas nearby, access to these set-

tlements was rather controlled and few facilities were open to outsiders, which made class distinctions more clear’ (Fer, interview).

28 Concerning class distinction in the use of Sümerbank clothing, L. Baydar shares the following anecdote from her childhood, which she spent in Ulus, Ankara in 1930s: ‘Sümerbank dresses were promoted as fully as possible by using various tools of communication. There were even propaganda balls where ladies of low-income groups wore evening dresses made of *basma*. However, the use of Sümerbank cotton fabric (*basma*) was not equally widespread among all social classes. For instance, as a child of a high-income family living in a luxurious apartment block in Ulus, I was wearing expensive export shoes with taffeta ribbon at school whereas my classmates living on the opposite region were wearing Sümerbank shoes’ (L. Baydar, an interview conducted by the authors, 26 May 2007, Izmir).