

A Forgotten Typology: Rediscovery of the “Is Hani” as a Working and Commercial Space

The paper focuses on a forgotten typology of working and commercial spaces that emerged in Anatolia with the modernization process in 19th century and disappeared with liberalization movements in 1980s. “Is Hani” as an anonymous typology had been produced as result of commercial activities and urban life that has been ongoing for years; and it consisted of different layers of multiple commercial units and bureaus. Between 1920s and 70s, various notable examples were built in this geography, especially design approach that was concurring with modernist thought enabled the erection of numerous qualified “Is Hani” buildings and adaptation of the idea locally through this typology. In this context, the research aims to grasp the spatial organization of the typology of “Is Hani” and the contemporary counterparts based on this architectural approach. To discuss the potentials of the typology, paper analyzes notable buildings which were produced in modernist period and focuses on a contemporary “Is Hani” which was designed by author in an Anatolian town as a case. It is considered that being the designer of the building, the controller of the construction process, and the author of the research facilitates to clarify the relation between the design and usage process by being a direct observer in various parts of the process; and it generates the methodology of the study as a kind of post-occupancy evaluation (POE).

Keywords: urban form, typology, commercial buildings, post-occupancy evaluation.

Introduction

Commercial activity has been one of the most important determinants in the development of public spaces, urban forms and human activities in the town centers for centuries. The places in which supply and demand meet each other generate not only a place for commercial activity but also a meeting place, a gathering room, an educational and social exchange spaces for community (Ataman, 2000; Davis, 2012; Gehl, 1971; Geist, 1983; Ozdes, 1953; Rao et al., 2018). In Anatolia, which was located on the main trade routes, especially the Silk Road, before the new world was discovered, the commercial activity and usage habits related to this that have been ongoing for years affected the spatial formation in this context. Building typologies such as “Han/Inn”, “Bedesten/Covered Bazaar” and “Kervansaray/Caravanserai” emerged as the architectural output of the needs of this period in Anatolia and Mesopotamia (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Han, Kervansaray, and Bedesten buildings that are built in different geographies in Anatolia*



Source: Mangut Photo Archive; Drawing Source: Ozdes, 1953)

The differentiated business fields in relation with the modernization process caused alteration in the form of commercial and working spaces. With this change and the potentiality of multi-storey buildings assist by the developments in construction technology, “Is Hani” had been produced as a new typology consisting of commercial units and retail stores on the ground floor and bureaus on the upper floors (Figure 2). In this geography, various considerable examples were built by this typology, especially in the republic era. Between 1920s and 70s, design approach that was concurring with modernist thought enabled the construction of numerous qualified “Is Hani” and adaptation of the idea locally through this typology. In the 1980s, the spread of institutionalization with the liberalization movements that is increased all over the world caused to the change of working and commercial spaces and the increase in the number of corporate office buildings and shopping malls. The inability of this type of organization to meet the spatial supply of small-scale enterprises led to the degeneration of the typology and the degradation of its quality due to the production that became anonymous; and the typology has been forgotten over time.

In this context, the research will focus on the spatial organization of the typology of “Is Hani” and the contemporary counterparts based on this architectural approach. To discuss the potentials of the typology; the adaptation of “Is Hani” to urban forms, interaction of urban public spaces and commercial spaces, and the relation between bureau spaces and various user groups (employees, shoppers etc.) will be explored. The paper will analyze these issues through various notable buildings which are produced in this typology in modernist period and will focus a contemporary “Is Hani” which was designed by author in an Anatolian town as a case. The building, which is the subject of the case study, is the output of an architectural design competition held in 2017; and it was completed and put into service in 2021. It is considered that being the designer of the building, the controller of the construction process and the author of the research will facilitate to grasp the gap between the design and usage process by being a direct observer in various parts of the process. The methodology of the study as a kind of post-occupancy evaluation (POE) is formed through the superposition of the intended use of the building and the actual usage patterns of it simultaneously; and it is conducted by author/designer statements, photos and sketches.

Figure 2. “Is Hani” buildings that are built in different periods and architectural styles



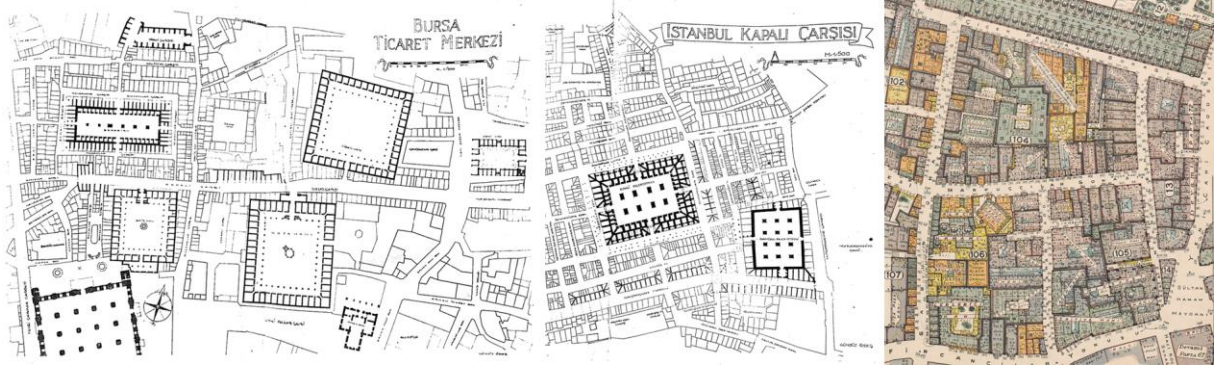
Source: Archives.Salt Research, Mangut Photo Archive

In this scope, the structure of the study reveals the organization of the paper. Initially, the typology of “Is Hani” is focused; terminological explanations, theoretical data, spatial attributes and analysis of notable examples generate the first section of paper. To grasp the issues which are illustrated in the first part of the study, the case study is conveyed in the following.

Typology of “Is Hani”

From a linguistic perspective, it is seen that the word of “Is Hani” has a structure consisting of two words settled in architectural terminology. It has displayed a new meaning by combining the words ‘business/trade’ which has a contemporary expression, and ‘han’ which is a traditional architectural nomenclature. The word is rather integrated with its sub-meanings that the secondary meaning of the ‘han’ in national dictionary defines “Is Hani” as ‘a building with several floors in which self-employed workers in metropolitan areas hold room and work’ (Turk Dil Kurumu, 1998). Moreover, it is obvious that the formation of ‘street-courtyard-building units’ relation which is seen in ‘han’ and ‘kervansaray’ typologies (Ataman, 2000) affect the spatial configuration of contemporary “Is Hani” buildings (Figure 3). However, when the buildings which are built in the 20th century are analyzed, it is seen that the term of “Is Hani” does not describe geometry merely. “Is Hani” buildings are not definable as a singular architectural type in functionally and geometrically. They display a place and management cooperation consisting of a hybrid unity with common ideas.

Figure 3. *Traditional bazaars of Bursa, Istanbul and the pattern of the “Is Hani” buildings that is generated in the early 20th century in Istanbul*



Drawing Source: Ozdes, 1953; Archives.Salt Research

One of the most fundamental attribute of the typology of “Is Hani” is shop/bureau cooperation in one building. The spatial combination of these two basic functions in the city, work and commerce, takes place in logical basis. These usages each being optimized spatially are clustered in the same location according to urban morphological requirements.

“Is Hani” buildings put commercial activity on the ground floors to maintain traditional shop-street relation. The ground-floor zone is not only the first area of transition between the urban space and the buildings to connect inside and outside in eye-level, but also the opportunities for contact between the public and private realm generate a social togetherness (Gehl, 1971; Mangut ve Ozsoy, 2020, van der Ham, 2012; Whyte, 1980). Furthermore, at the basis of commercial activity is the spatial relationship created by the products exhibited in the stores and the pedestrian flow passing by them (Geist, 1983; Rao et al., 2018; Sahinler 1974). Accessibility, visibility of the products, and close contact with the customers are also the reasons why the commercial activity took place on the ground floors as sites of exchange throughout the history (Lowe, 2005; Rao et al., 2018). Moreover, the fact that units such as shops, retail stores etc. that may require pedestrian traffic directly are located on the ground floors on busy streets ensure the spread of urban public life (Figure 4).

1 **Figure 4.** *Shops on the Ground Floors and Relation with Upper Floors: Esnaf Is*
 2 *Hani, Eskisehir; Salepcioglu Is Hani, Izmir, Moda Is Hani, Ankara*



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 4 Source: Mangut Photo Archive
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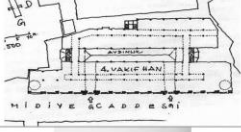


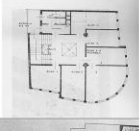

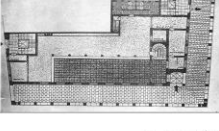
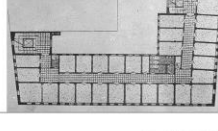

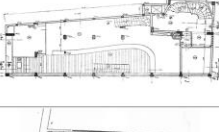
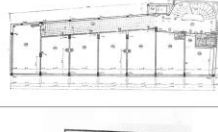

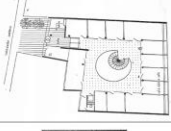








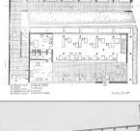
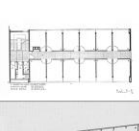


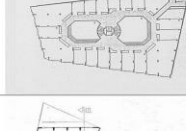

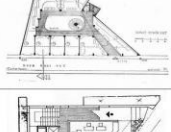







6 On the upper floors of the “Is Hani” buildings, that are not adequately
 7 accessible for pedestrian interaction, bureaus are located. Bureaus for lawyers,
 8 engineers, architects, traders, brokers, real estate agents, newspaper reporters etc.;
 9 clinics for doctors, dentists, chemists; ateliers for tailors, photographers, artificers
 10 etc. are the usages that appear on the upper floors of the “Is Hani” buildings in
 11 various geographies. These spatial organizations especially meet the needs of
 12 small enterprises, agencies that work directly with customers, newly graduated
 13 professionals etc. As a design and planning issue, clustering of small working units
 14 on the upper floors of shops raises the problem of stacking and vertical
 15 organization of units (Figure 5). The basic statement of planning in this type of
 16 spatial organization is based on the determination of the principles about
 17 articulation of units and development of the circulation network between units.
 18 Taking these decisions reveals the built form and mass organization of “Is Hani”.

19
 20 **Figure 5.** *Bureaus on the upper floors: Karagul Is Hani, Istanbul; Vakif Is Hani,*
 21 *Istanbul, Merzifon Is Hani, Amasya*



22
 23 Source: Mangut Photo Archive

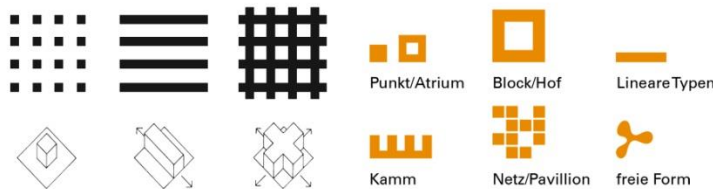
1 **Table 1.** “Is Hani” buildings which were published in Arkitekt magazine

information	photograph	ground floor plan	typical floor plan
4th Vakıf Han Mimar Kemaleddin Istanbul 1918		not found	
Karakoy Is Hani Orhan Sefa, K. Ahmet Aru Istanbul 1947			
Vakıf Is Hani Demirtas Kamcil, Fatih Metigil Istanbul 1949			
Turkish Trade Bank Is Hani Ercumend Bigat, İlhan Bilgesu Gaziantep 1960			
Tahtakale Is Hani Dogan Tekeli, Sami Sisa Istanbul 1961			
Emlak Kredi Is Hani Muhtesem Giray, Bedri Kokten Istanbul 1962			
Findikli Is Hani Zeki Sayar Istanbul 1962			
Emlak Kredi Is Hani Muhtesem Giray, Engin Cetiner Edirne 1963			
Babadaglılar Is Hani Cengiz Bektas Denizli 1973			
Diri Is Hani Orhan Sahinler Istanbul 1974			
Altıyol Is Hani Baki Aktar Istanbul 1978			
Moda Is Hani Demirtas Kamcil, Rahmi Bediz Ankara 1980			

Source: Arkitekt Magazine and Mangut Photo Archive; Drawing Source: Arkitekt Magazine

To grasp the issue, significant examples of “Is Hani” buildings are analyzed. The selection of the sample is made with reference to the publications in the national literature. “Arkitekt” magazine, in which national architectural projects were published, generates the basis for the analysis. The magazine, which started to be published in the end of the 1920s and ended in 1980, was publishing built projects and competition projects merely. Despite the fact that there are many qualified anonymous “Is Hani” buildings in various cities of Turkey, since there is no any information about the architects, plan drawings etc., the examination is made on the basis of Arkitekt’s publication. In this scope, it is determined that 12 “Is Hani” buildings were published in Arkitekt magazine. It is seen that these buildings were planned in various architectural styles and most of them built in 1960s and 70s. These buildings are listed chronologically and to clarify their spatial organization ground-floors and typical floor plans are charted (Table 1). In urban morphological context, the sample group has various built forms and spatial organizations. There are monolith, urban infill, and parallel rows; most of them are located in the corners of the urban blocks which are more adequate for visibility. The articulation of shop/bureau units generates the mass organization of the built forms; point blocks (Karakoy Is Hani, Trade Bank Is Hani, Altıyol Is Hani), single or double-loaded corridor blocks (4th Vakif Is Hani, Vakif Is Hani, Emlak Kredi Is Hani, Moda Is Hani), and blocks organized around an atrium (Tahtakale Is Hani, Findikli Is Hani, Babadaglilar Is Hani, Diri Is Hani, Moda Is Hani). When these buildings analyzed in principles of stacking in urban morphology context, it is grasped that point, linear and courtyard building forms are displayed according to Martin and March’s categorization (1972), and punkt/atrium, lineare typen and freie form types are portrayed according to Gasser et al.’s classification (2012), (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Stacking principles and built forms



Source: Martin and March, 1972; Gasser et al., 2012

As a secondary determinant, relation between units and circulation network has considerable affects on spatial attributes of “Is Hani” buildings. This interaction displays an active ‘shopfront interface’ for shops and retail stores on the ground floors, but it generates a distinctive separation between private bureau units and public circulation areas on the upper floors. In conciliation of this duality, it is obvious that the relationship between central void/courtyard/atrium and gallery which takes place in the morphology of traditional inns, covered bazaars, and caravanserais, is taken as reference. The corridor/gallery provides interaction with the bureau units and also meets the needs of light, ventilation, privacy etc. as a buffer zone. Moreover, the architects of most of the projects in the sample group put the vertical circulation related with this central void by

1 articulating the gallery and prioritized to take the entrance of bureaus from the
2 subsidiary street.

3 In the following part of the paper an “Is Hani” building which was designed
4 by author in an Anatolian town will be analyzed as a case study.
5
6

7 **Case Study: Merzifon is Hani**

8
9 To represent the theoretical data and the analysis of these outputs from a
10 holistic point of view, there is a case study consisting of three parts. Initially,
11 statements and descriptions of the context in which the building is located are
12 made. Information about the town, built environment, and morphological analysis
13 of the historical urban pattern are conveyed. Secondly, firsthand experiences
14 related to the design and competition process in various scales are displayed. This
15 part consists of the thoughts and drawings about the competition process, and the
16 principles regarding the drawing of application project. In the last part, the
17 relations with the contractor, owners of the units, and municipality as employer
18 during the construction process and the facts related to using of the building are
19 revealed to grasp the relation between the designer’s intention and usage processes.

20 The building, which is the subject of the case study, is located in Merzifon an
21 historical commercial town on the Silk Road. It is settled at the north of the central
22 Anatolia behind the north Black Sea mountain range. The town was part of a trade
23 network focused specifically on the salt trade. In this scope, there are a few inns, a
24 covered bazaar, and a caravanserai that have survived to the present (Figure 7).
25 These traditional architectural elements affect the design of Merzifon Is Hani that
26 is examined in the case study both semantically and morphologically.

27 Merzifon Is Hani is an output of a national architectural design competition. The
28 process started with a competition opened by the Municipality of Merzifon in
29 2017. The administration aimed to demolish an old two-storey warehouse building
30 of its own from the 1960s in order to build an office building in its place with
31 rentable and sellable units.

32 The project area is located in the commercial center of the town next to the
33 historical urban pattern formed by a covered bazaar and inns (Figure 8). The habits
34 which are generated by the ongoing commercial uses in the town center had
35 prepared the transformation of the vehicle roads around the area into pedestrian
36 spaces. The pedestrian streets which are located in the north and east of the parcel,
37 the urban open spaces associated with the town square and the historical district
38 are the elements that shape the spatial and mass organization of the built form of
39 the project. The area is located between the perimeter blocks which are formed by
40 the clustering of separate buildings produced on small parcels (Figure 8). Although
41 it is an operation that was planned to be designed and built in one stage merely,
42 like the old warehouse building, contemporary urban and spatial conditions have
43 affected the mass formation of the building. In this context, one of the basic
44 principles in the design of the project was could be articulated morphologically to
45 the urban form that is generated by the surrounding parcel layout, rather than a
46 monolithic composition independently from the layout of the relatively small
47 parcels around it (Mangut, 2021).

1 **Figure 7.** *Salt Inn, Merzifon covered Bazaar, Grand-mosque of the Town and*
2 *Project Area at the Upper Left Corner*



3
4 Source: Merzifon Municipality Photo Archive
5

6 **Figure 8.** *The location of old warehouse building and relation with the historical*
7 *pattern of the town*



8
9 Source: Mangut Architectural Workshop Archive
10

In this scope, 249 proposals applied to the national architectural design competition. As a result of three-week evaluation, the jury group consisting of professionals and academics selected the project designed by the author and his team for the 1st prize for realization. In the jury report it was stated that two basic design principles were effective for selection of the project as 1st prize;

- Designing a flexible open plan system in the typology of “Is Hani” instead of a “closed office block” and the effective relationship between the articulation method of shop/bureau units and open spaces.
- To generate a relationship both semantically and morphologically between the project and the historical urban pattern, established by the traditional architectural configuration such as hardscape courtyard, portico/colonnade etc. and the use of local stone on the façade.

In this circumstance, the jury group conveyed their recommendations to the municipality for the realization of the 1st prize-winning project. Within a month, after the announcement of the results of the competition, the contract was signed with the municipality for the drawing of the application projects (Figure 9).

Figure 9. *The perspective drawing for competition and the photograph of the building*



Source: Mangut Architectural Workshop Archive

The design is primarily based on supporting the urban public activities and rationality/functionality. A restaurant and cafeteria, shops, traditional retail stores such as cobblers, tailors, barber etc. that require close contact with pedestrian streets are located on the ground-floor and clustered around the courtyard. Portico/colonnade on the south facade of the Merzifon Is Hani provides urban comfort for pedestrians that ensure active shopfront interface for shops and retail stores on the ground-floor. Bureaus of various sizes, a seminar hall and related spaces are located on the upper floors around an atrium and passage. The bureaus are articulated alongside in the direction of a linear axis. This manner not only allows for larger bureaus by removing non-bearing walls between units, but also despite clustering around a courtyard eliminates corner units that require special design solutions and cost increase, and generates units with direct and equal relation with open corridor circulation system (Figure 10).



Figure 11. *The east-west and north-south section of Merzifon Is Hani*



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configurations that will support the user habits in the town center. The integration of these configurations to the open space network of town enhances both spatial continuity in urban scale and urban memory (Figure 12).

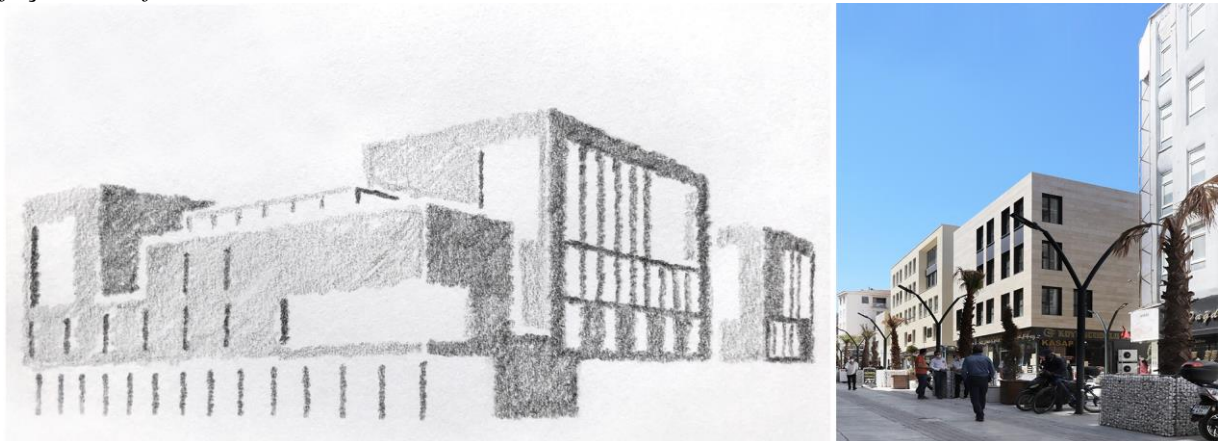
Figure 12. *The hardscape courtyard, passage and colonnade of Merzifon Is Hani*



Source: Mangut Architectural Workshop Archive

The stone architecture, which also dominates the codes of traditional architectural production in the region, affects the shaping of the building envelope. The composition of the volumes/gaps in the façade and fenestration are designed to overlap with the nature of the stone material and to strengthen its tectonic effect (Mangut, 2021). While there are vertical window strips and large gaps on the upper floors; the ground-floor is more permeable in order to support the interaction with the urban public spaces (Figure 13). The use of local stone material in façade that is the main constructional material of the inns, covered bazaar, caravanserai, and old public bath of the town display an architectural integrity with historical urban pattern.

Figure 13. *One of the first sketches of the building and relationship between stone façade and fenestration*



Source: Mangut Architectural Workshop Archive

The design principles that were stated positively by the jury group were tried to be preserved both during the drawing phase of the application projects and construction process. The fact that being the municipality's first experience on procurement of architectural service in contemporary period necessitated the establishment of a new type of communication beyond the conventional employer-architect relationships. Moreover, these factors affected the complication of the application and construction process;

- Due to the limited financial resources, the construction cost of the building had to be compensated largely by the income that would be obtained from the sale of the shop/bureau units in it.
- The increasing number of owners of the units and diversified spatial needs require re-designs and revisions in the construction process.
- As a small-scale district far from the city center, the transportation and logistics problems were important factors that increased construction cost and also limited advanced structural production technologies.

Therefore, in the role of an actor who would manage municipality's limited capital, the architect had sincerely and transparently conveyed the design/application stages and requirements in order to ensure the trust of administration to him. Initially, the stone material which is intended to be used as façade material of the building has been minimized. In this way, the effects of mechanical façade cladding system on the construction cost have been reduced. Secondly, the solution related to varied needs of users was sought in simple construction techniques. The positioning of non-bearing and non-plumbing walls during the drawing phase of the application projects was designed for the possibility of the articulation of the modules together for larger shops and bureaus. Finally, the functional advantages and operational benefits of courtyard, passage and colonnade which were seen as 'sloop' (space left over after planning) by the administration were indicated. Although the fragmental composition of the buildings increase the construction costs, its effects on spatial quality in this case were undeniable.

The construction of the building ended in 2021 and put into service. Some of the shop/bureau units were sold during the construction process. However, the pandemic and national economic crises have delayed the sale of the whole units and usage of the building entirely until 2023. In this two-year period after the completion of the building, as a researcher and observer various kinds of investigations were made in different time periods. Two main topics base the investigation;

- To understand how users react to the physical environment that is designed according to architect's intention and decisions.
- To prevent and fix the faults in the layout that will be generated a basis for the architect's future designs.

In this scope, observations in and around the building and personal interviews with the actors in the construction process and current users' were made.

The minimization of the stone surfaces on façade satisfied the architect, employer and contractor. Besides the intention to reduce the construction cost, the decision was executed to establish a strong morphological relation with the urban form that is generated by clustering of separate buildings on surrounding parcels. This attitude, which could not be displayed adequately during the competition process, strengthened the fragmental composition of stone and stucco masses; and the designer's desires were overlapped with the other actors' (Figure 14). Moreover, the local stone which is used to ensure a semantic relation and support the sustainability of the construction economy has re-valued and became a popular construction material for façades in the region. The contractor stated that many employers in the town center have requested to renovate their façades with this local stone in this two-year period.

Figure 14. *The sketch for minimization of stone on the façades and the fragmental composition of stone and stucco*



Source: Mangut Architectural Workshop Archive

In response to the diversified spatial needs as a result of the sale of independent commercial units, the task of the architect was to establish the balance of communication between the increasing numbers of the owners of units-contractor-municipality. Specific revisions according to users' requests were executed in the plans of the shops and bureaus during the construction process. This manner of communication and flexible design approach enabled settling of a wide variety of usages in the building: coffee shops, jewelry store, butcher shop, newspaper seller etc. on the ground-floor; a new graduated architect, an agricultural engineer, a political party bureau, stationery store etc. on the upper floors (Figure 15). Interviews with the users have shown that they are pleased with this diversity of the building and spatial layout of the units.

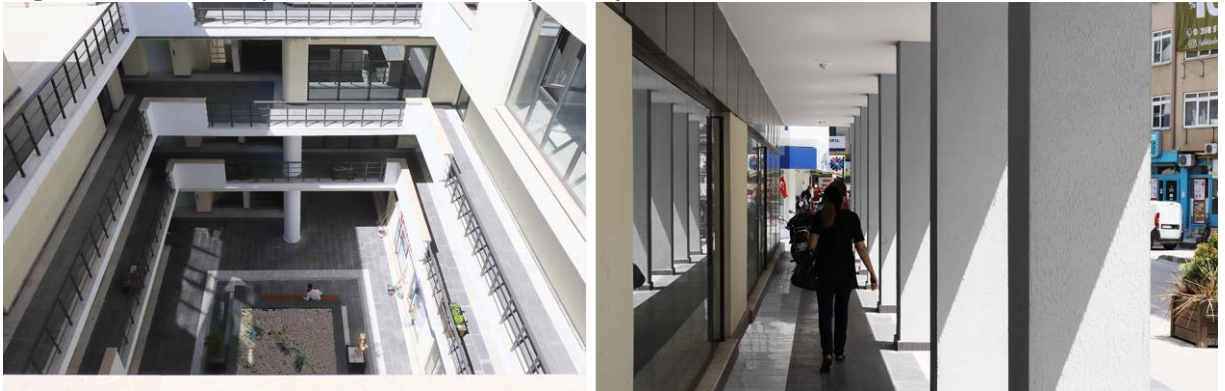
1 **Figure 15.** Various types of shops and active shopfront interface on the ground-
 2 floor of building



3
 4 Source: Mangut Architectural Workshop Archive
 5

6 The non-structured observations made in the intersection of the building and
 7 urban public spaces displayed that courtyard, passage and colonnade is used
 8 intensely in various hours of the day and various days of the week (Figure 16).
 9 Especially the optional and recreational activities in the hardscape courtyard
 10 except the necessary activities in peak hours reveal that the desire for integration
 11 of the building with open space network of historical urban pattern generates not
 12 only a semantic relation but also a functional one. Additionally, weekly meetings
 13 of the municipal council are held in the seminar hall of the building. Appearance
 14 of the members of the municipal council in the urban public spaces of town center
 15 also supports the political transparency. These data display as positive factors
 16 about the adoption of the architectural work by the society and the employer.
 17

Figure 16. *The courtyard and colonnade of Merzifon Is Hani*



Source: Mangut Architectural Workshop Archive

Conclusion

Analysis of the formal structure of an architectural work does not necessarily reveal the quality of the building or how it makes its effect.
Juhanni Pallasmaa, 1986

The paper aims to rediscover the typology of “Is Hani” which has been produced in this geography in the last century and successfully adapted to the urban life. It is considered that it is valuable and reputable to re-discuss the potential of typology and to interpret it through a built architectural work.

It is important to re-indicate that the typology of “Is Hani” does not describe geometry merely. The sample group which is analyzed in the first part of the paper reveals the variety of spatial and geometrical configurations. The architects of these buildings find the notable solutions about spatial organization, circulation network etc. in traditional interpretations which is developed for centuries. This manner portrays that the answers/references taken from previous works can be adapted to contemporary ideas effectively. Moreover, the changing shopping and working conditions of today after epidemic and the increase of small-scale enterprises that work mostly online display the need for this forgotten typology. The case study reveals that the relation both morphologically and semantically between an architectural work and the urban pattern has important effects on the interaction of the building with town. The hybrid solutions by combining of different types of built form, mass organizations and architectural configurations in a consistent character generate a more stable architectural work. Finally, as the architect of the building and researcher of the paper, it is thought that following the architectural work with an individual post-occupancy evaluation will close the gap both between the designer and the product, and between theory and practice.

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