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## **A coastal space of the republican modernization: The “Florya Gazinosu (casino)”**

**Cumhuriyetçi modernleşmenin kıyı şeridindeki bir örneği: “Florya Gazinosu”**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the Florya Gazinosu (1938), along the coastline of Florya in Istanbul, through architectural, sociocultural and political lenses. Its location within the emerging coastal resort of Florya reflects the early Republican vision of opening the shoreline to public leisure and modern social life. While existing scholarship has addressed Republican modernism, beach culture, and architectural production, limited attention has been given to how coastal entertainment venues functioned as spatial mechanisms that regulated public visibility and structured modern forms of sociability. This article approaches the Florya Gazinosu not only as an architectural object but as a coastal public space through which modernization was spatially staged. The article analyzes the spatial organization of the Florya Gazinosu, its relationship with nature, and its open to the sea layout from an architectural perspective, while also addressing its place in collective memory. Drawing on interpretive historical analysis that integrates archival documents, newspaper advertisements, visual materials, and spatial reading, the study demonstrates that the casino operated as an active spatial apparatus that normalized mixed-gender presence, modern bodily visibility, and controlled public interaction. The functional transformations, the gradual erosion of its public character, and its ambiguous status today are discussed. These transformations are interpreted not as historical changes but as shifts in regimes of publicity. In this context, the study aims to reinterpret the Florya Gazinosu not only as a product of its era but also as a key case for understanding how coastal leisure architecture contributed to the production of modernization in early Republican Türkiye.*

**Keywords:** *Florya Gazinosu, Florya, Modernization, Ruknetin Guney, Summer, Resorts.*

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## ÖZET

*Bu çalışma, İstanbul'un Florya sahil şeridinde yer alan Florya Gazinosu'nu (1938) mimari ve sosyokültürel bir bakış açısıyla incelemektedir. Gazino'nun, gelişmekte olan Florya sahil beldesi içindeki konumu, kıyı şeridini halkın eğlencesine ve modern sosyal yaşama açma yönündeki Cumhuriyet'in ilk dönem vizyonunu yansıtmaktadır. Mevcut akademik çalışmalar Cumhuriyet dönemi modernizmini, plaj kültürünü ve mimari üretimi ele alırken, kıyı eğlence mekanlarının kamusal görünürlüğü düzenleyen ve modern sosyallik biçimlerini yapılandıran mekânsal mekanizmalar olarak nasıl işlediğine çok az dikkat edilmiştir. Bu makale, Florya Gazinosu'na sadece mimari bir nesne olarak değil, modernleşmenin mekânsal olarak sahnelendiği bir kıyı kamusal mekânı olarak yaklaşmaktadır. Makale, Florya Gazinosu'nun mekânsal düzenini, doğa ile ilişkisini ve denize açık yerleşimini mimari bir perspektiften analiz ederken, aynı zamanda kolektif hafızadaki yerini de ele almaktadır. Arşiv belgeleri, gazete ilanları, görsel materyaller ve mekânsal okumayı birleştiren yorumlayıcı tarihsel analizden yararlanarak, çalışma, gazinonun karma cinsiyet varlığını, modern bedensel görünürlüğü normalleştiren ve kamusal etkileşimi kontrol eden aktif bir mekânsal araç olarak işlediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu dönüşümler tarihsel değişiklikler olarak değil, kamusal alan rejimlerinde yaşanan kaymalar olarak yorumlanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma Florya Gazinosu'nu yalnızca kendi döneminin bir ürünü olarak değil, aynı zamanda Cumhuriyet'in ilk yıllarında Türkiye'de kıyı eğlence mimarisinin modernleşmenin oluşumuna nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu anlamak için önemli bir örnek olarak yeniden yorumlamayı amaçlamaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Florya Gazinosu, Florya, Modernleşme, Rüknettin Güney, Sayfiye Mekânları.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the proclamation of the Republic, the modernization process in Türkiye was not limited solely to political and legal reforms; it also became visible through everyday life practices, body politics, and the production of public space. In this context, Republican publicness did not emerge automatically from reform but was spatially produced through newly designed environments that reorganized sociability, visibility, and bodily conduct. Leisure habits, forms of public gathering, and practices of free time emerged as some of the most legible domains through which this transformation could be observed. Everyday life and entertainment practices gradually moved away from the traditional Ottoman framework and began to undergo a comprehensive transformation across the country. Following the proclamation of the Republic, the daily life practices of the elite were reshaped, and new habits associated with the modernization process were adopted. In this context, activities such as shopping, strolling through stores, attending cinema and theatre, dancing, listening to music, engaging in sports, participating in excursions, and the development of food and beverage culture came to the fore (Eğribel, 2020). During the early Republican period, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, venues such as gazinos (casinos), theatres, operas, cinemas, community centers, and clubs became widespread with state support.

These spaces were designed as shared meeting places that brought modern Turkish women and men together and strengthened social interaction (Ergut, 2009; Lale and Koca, 2023). Rather than functioning merely as entertainment settings, such venues operated as architectural mechanisms through which a new form of public presence was structured and normalized. Through the spatial practices they enabled, these structures materialized the dominance of the new administrative order over the authority inherited from the Ottoman past and served to transform everyday life habits (Önal Özmalatyalılar and Gürel, 2024). The visual and physical representation of modernization goals was shaped particularly through threshold spaces such as coastal zones; coastlines were redesigned as public spaces that provided a setting for the transformation of both the body and society. Coastal leisure environments therefore became strategic sites for the spatial production of Republican publicness, where access, visibility, and interaction were reorganized under state supervision.

In the Republican era, body politics can be defined as the way power represents itself through the body by shaping its appearance, behavior, movement, clothing, and spatial relations. Michel's approach to reading the body as a political surface is particularly illuminating for understanding how space functioned as an ideological apparatus in the context of the early Republic. This process began with the Hat Law and clothing reforms that targeted male bodies as visible symbols of secular authority and continued through public health campaigns that framed the healthy body as a vital asset of the new nation.

Within this context, Istanbul's Florya coastline stands out as one of the most significant examples containing the spatial manifestations of early Republican ideology. In this reformist environment, the Florya Gazinosu (Casino) emerges as a critical architectural threshold for understanding the social politics of the early Republican period. While the expansive coastal zone provided a ground for leisure, the Gazino itself functioned as a sophisticated "stage of modern life" where the new structure of citizenship could be visibly displayed and normalized. Rather than being an isolated entertainment venue, the building operated as a coherent spatial apparatus designed to exhibit Republican modernity.

The transformation process toward modern urban planning in Istanbul, Türkiye's largest metropolis, gained an institutional framework with the appointment of the French architect and urban planner Henri Prost by the state in 1936 to prepare an urban development plan in collaboration with the Istanbul Municipality (Akpınar, 2003; Gül and Lamb, 2004).

This planning initiative undertaken by Prost can be regarded as one of the most significant steps in redefining the spatial organization of the city and translating the early Republican vision of modernization into space.

The Florya coastal arrangements shaped within the framework of Henri Prost's 1937 Istanbul Master Plan are particularly noteworthy in terms of integrating modern recreational areas into urban life. Prost's plan proposed the reconfiguration of wide coastal strips, gazinos (casinos), sports facilities, and green parks as integral components of the city. Designed in 1938 by architect Rüknettin Güney, the Florya Gazinosu was not merely a summer leisure and recreation building but also an architectural representation of modern citizenship ideals, mixed social relations, and a secular lifestyle. The Gazino transformed Atatürk's symbolic presence in Florya, initiated with the Sea Mansion built in 1935 by Seyfi Arkan, into a socio-spatial practice addressing the public. With its plan scheme extending parallel to the coastline, its terrace structure that integrates open and closed spaces, and its open configuration allowing users to establish direct visual contact with the sea and engage in social interaction, the Florya Gazinosu can be considered both spatially and culturally as a carrier of the period's Westernization ideal (Kandemir, 1952; Dokgöz, 2012). In this respect, the Florya Gazinosu constitutes not only an architectural design but also an ideological production that mediated the transformation of social relations within the city. This production directly reflects the modernization discourse of the Republic, which constructed its vision of the individual through the relationship between body and space (Bozdoğan and Akcan, 2013).

This study aims to examine the Florya Gazinosu as a spatial representative of the early Republican modernization process. The building will be read not only through its architectural form and program but also in relation to the period's body politics, gender roles, and understanding of publicity. The study focuses on the spatial and social roles assumed by the Florya Gazinosu during the early Republican period. Direct comparisons with central entertainment venues in Istanbul, such as those in Taksim or Tepebaşı, are not undertaken. While such a comparison could reveal the diversity of early Republican entertainment culture between coastal spaces and the urban core, this article aims instead to provide an in-depth discussion of Florya's distinctive position within the context of its summer resort character and coastal spatiality.

Although previous studies have examined Republican modernization, beach culture, and the architectural production of the 1930s and 1940s, the spatial mechanisms through which Republican publicness was produced and later transformed in coastal leisure environments remain insufficiently theorized.

By positioning the Florya Gazinosu within this gap, this article argues that the building functioned not merely as a representation of modernization but as an active spatial environment through which Republican publicness was organized, staged, and subsequently redefined over time.

## 1.1 Materials and Methods

This study was conducted using qualitative research methods and aims to understand how the Florya Gazinosu emerged through a specific spatial and social configuration during the early Republican period, how it was represented in the press and visual culture, and how it became embedded in collective memory. The research is structured as an interpretive historical analysis that examines the Florya Gazinosu not only as an architectural artifact but as a historically situated spatial environment through which Republican publicness was produced and transformed. Within this framework, different source types were assigned distinct analytical functions.

Newspaper materials were examined to identify patterns of representation and to trace how publicness was framed, promoted, and periodically withdrawn in the press. Visual materials were interpreted to assess bodily presence, gendered visibility, and modes of spatial interaction within the coastal setting. On site observation of the building in its current condition was used to evaluate the transformation of its public character over time. This differentiation allowed the study to analyze not only what happened historically, but how Republican publicness was constructed, staged, and subsequently redefined through space, representation, and use. Rather than treating these materials as neutral documentation, the study approaches them as discursive and spatial evidence that reveals how visibility, sociability, and access were constructed, normalized, and later reconfigured. Within the scope of the research, the following questions were addressed: How was the Florya Gazinosu constructed as a product of modernization policies and integrated into public life? What kind of image was produced in the press and in the visual materials of the period?

In line with these questions, both primary and secondary sources were examined. First, secondary academic literature on early Republican modernization policies and architectural production was reviewed. The work of Sibel Bozdoğan and Esra Akcan (2013) provided a conceptual and historical framework, while Ceren Hamiloğlu's (2022) research on Florya Beach and the gazino, together with Meltem Ö. Gürel's (2018) studies on beach culture, constituted key reference points for understanding the social context of the building.

Subsequently, archival documents and visual materials were placed at the center of the research. Images obtained from the Istanbul Atatürk Library (n.d.) and SALT Research (n.d.) were examined. Visual materials were interpreted to assess spatial presence, bodily display, and modes of interaction within the coastal environment.

The survey of the written press formed another major component of the study. Newspapers published between 1930 and 2000, including *Akşam*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Haber*, *İkdam*, *Sabah Postası*, *Kalitarya*, *Kurun*, *Milliyet*, *Posta*, *Son Posta*, *Son Telgraf*, *Tan*, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, *Ulus*, *Vakit*, *Vatan*, *Yarım Ay*, *Yeni İstanbul*, *Yeni Sabah*, *Zafer*, and *Zaman*, were examined.

Visual materials such as advertisements and promotional content were accessed primarily through *Cumhuriyet*, *Haber*, and *Akşam* newspapers. These newspapers were analyzed not only to trace historical events but to identify patterns of representation, public framing, and shifting narratives of visibility associated with the Gazino.

The study also evaluates the existing architectural features of the building in relation to its spatial characteristics. Although original plans could not be accessed, inferences regarding the spatial organization of the structure were made based on contemporary visual documentation. This limitation reinforces the interpretive nature of the analysis, which prioritizes lived spatial experience and representational evidence over technical drawing documentation. In addition, the building's current function as a restaurant was observed on site in order to identify the transformations it has undergone over time. Through this approach, the gazino was evaluated not merely as an entertainment venue but as a "stage of modern life" within the context of early Republican modernization.

The research is supported by theoretical discussions on modernization, publicness, spatial identity, and memory, enabling a holistic examination of the historical, architectural, and socio-cultural dimensions of the Florya Gazinosu.

It is also possible to argue that this area within the boundaries of Florya was conceived not merely as a leisure destination but simultaneously as an instrument of the nation-building process. According to Hamiloğlu (2022), modernist architecture was addressed not only as a representation of Westernization but also as an instrumental extension of modernization, rendered visible within the individual's everyday life. From this perspective, the Florya Gazinosu should be evaluated as a space that enabled the public visibility of the body and the adoption of a secular lifestyle. The building can also be interpreted as a spatial threshold through which mixed-gender leisure practices gained public legitimacy.

While Ceren Hamiloğlu's (2022) assessments reveal the ideological and social role of the Florya Gazinosu during the early Republican period, this discussion becomes further enriched when considered alongside Sibel Bozdoğan and Esra Akcan's (2013) interpretations of the function of modernist architecture in Türkiye. Bozdoğan and Akcan (2013) emphasize that modernist architecture was not merely a formal preference but also a spatial embodiment of ideology, nation-building, and state authority.

This perspective suggests that the Florya Gazinosu can likewise be understood as a symbol representing the revolutionary character of the Republic through claims of rationality and progress. Accordingly, while the building functioned as an instrumental extension of modernization within individuals' everyday lives, it simultaneously became the spatial counterpart of the early Republic's strategy of presenting itself as a modern state.

## 2. FLORYA GAZINOSU (CASİNO)

It is insufficient to view the Florya Gazinosu solely as a showcase of the state's modernization project. The meanings the building acquired in everyday life, the relationships it established with its users, and the traces it left in collective memory position the space within a more pluralistic register. Florya can be considered a threshold where different social and cultural groups were able to come together and where the experience of modernity was internalized through ordinary practices (Figure 1). Thus, beyond providing a setting for the representation of secular lifestyles, the Gazino should be read as a dynamic urban space that transformed individuals' relationships with the city and with one another, woven through both the power discourse of modernity and the multilayered experiences of everyday life.



**Figure 1.** A woman in Florya Beach, with the Florya Gazinosu in the background, 1956 (Personal Collection)

Florya is located on the western side of Istanbul, along the coast of the Marmara Sea, and is considered one of the first beaches in the city. When Istanbulites began to adopt swimming practices pioneered by Belarusians, Florya became one of the earliest beach destinations in Istanbul (Türk Tarih Vakfı, 1994). During the 1920s, it was known as a summer resort area largely characterized by beaches operated predominantly by non-Muslim proprietors.

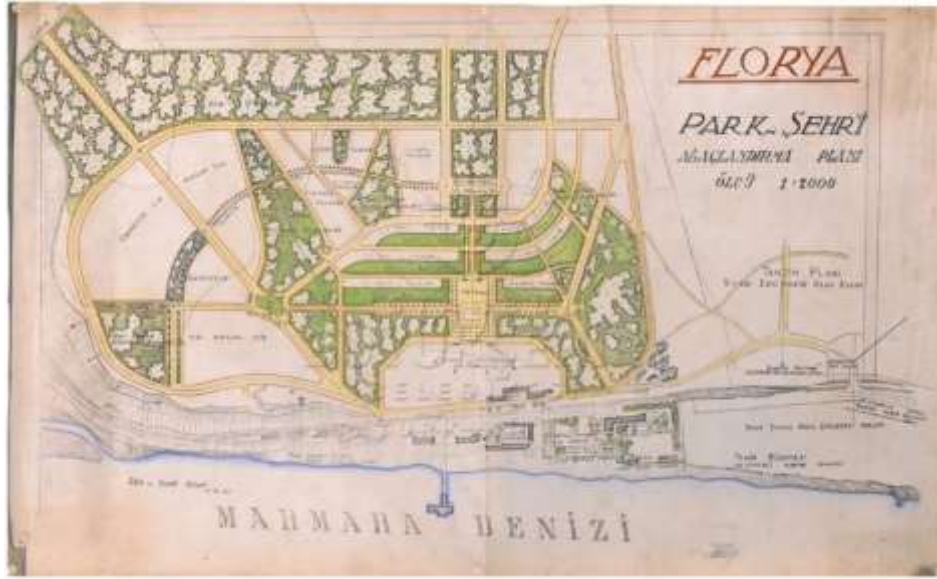
During this period, the Solaryum and Haylayf beaches in Florya were among the limited number of privately operated coastal areas where women and men could swim together (Figure 2). However, in the early Republican period, state-supported initiatives were launched to nationalize these coastal areas and open them to Muslim-Turkish citizens. The process of reconfiguring Florya as a modern beach and summer resort gained symbolic significance with the construction of the Florya Deniz Köşkü for Atatürk in 1935.

Designed by architect Seyfi Arkan, the structure was positioned on a platform that allowed Atatürk direct access to the sea. While its modernist lines and minimalist form reflected the aesthetic understanding of the period, the building was also conceived as a symbolic representation of Atatürk's proximity to the public and his relationship with nature (Gürel, 2018; Hamiloğlu, 2022; Tulum, 2012).



**Figure 2.** Florya (Haylayf) Beach, 1930s (Personal Collection)

Within the framework of the Istanbul Master Plan prepared in 1937 by the French urban planner Henri Prost, the city's coastal areas began to be re-envisioned with recreational and health-oriented functions. In this plan, Florya was designated as a "modern sea bathing and holiday area," equipped with extensive green spaces, sports facilities, beaches, and casinos (Figure 3). Prost's proposed infrastructure works and transportation networks strengthened Florya's connection to the city center, facilitating access via railway and road networks (Akpınar, 2003; Bilsel, 2011).



**Figure 3.** “Florya Park City,” Henri Prost, 1937 (Atatürk Library Collection, Istanbul)

The 1930s, when the Florya Gazinosu was constructed, correspond to a period when the newly established Turkish Republic sought to make its modernization and Westernization ideals visible through spatial practices (Çelebi Yakartepe and Binan, 2011). During this era, public spaces in cities functioned as carriers of Republican ideology, while recreational environments such as coastal zones, parks, casinos, and sports facilities were planned and constructed under state supervision (Figure 4). The Florya coastline was similarly integrated into both Istanbul’s urban structure and the new regime’s vision of public life (Gürel, 2016).



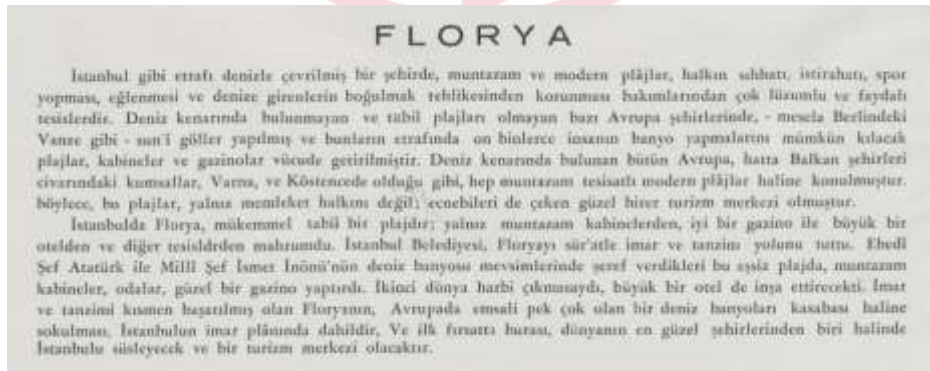
**Figure 4.** Florya Coastal Plan (Atatürk Library Collection, Istanbul)

Rüknettin Güney, who worked for the Istanbul Municipality during the 1930s, played a significant role in shaping the public entertainment typology of the early Republic through buildings such as the Taksim Belediye Gazinosu (Figure 5) and the Florya Gazinosu. Although these structures were built in different contexts, namely the city center and the coastal zone, they shared a common approach in making modern citizenship ideals visible (Özkul, 2016).



**Figure 5.** Taksim Belediye Gazinosu (Municipal Casino) (Daver, Günay, and Resmor, 1944)

In line with Istanbul's identity as a city surrounded by the sea, Florya was defined as a coastal area that met public needs for health, leisure, sports, and entertainment through its well-maintained and modern beaches (Figure 6, Figure 7). The beach arrangements, supported by well-kept bungalows, gazinos, and accommodation units, proposed a holistic public use aimed at attracting not only local users but also foreign visitors. Comparisons with seaside settlements in European cities indicate that Florya was positioned as a contemporary tourism and recreation center. With the direct support of İsmet İnönü and urban development initiatives carried out during the tenure of Lütfi Kırdar, Florya was transformed from a natural shoreline into a planned, controlled, and representative public space. This transformation demonstrates that Florya gained a privileged position within Istanbul's modern urban vision (Daver, Günay, and Resmor, 1944).



**Figure 6.** Florya in Güzelleşen İstanbul<sup>3</sup> (Daver, Günay, and Resmor, 1944)

<sup>3</sup> In a city like Istanbul, which is surrounded by the sea, orderly and modern beaches are extremely necessary and beneficial in terms of public health, rest, sports, entertainment, and protecting those who swim from the danger of drowning. Along the seashores, in some European cities that lack sheltered and natural beaches, such as Berlin with its lakes, beaches have been created where hundreds of thousands of people can bathe, complete with cabins and gazinos. Along the coasts of Europe, and even in Balkan cities such as Varna and Constanța, these well-organized facilities have been transformed into modern beaches. Thus, these beaches have become attractive tourism centers not only for the local population but also for foreigners.

In Istanbul, Florya is an excellent and complete beach; however, it has been deprived of orderly cabins, a good gazino, and a large hotel, and has remained lacking in facilities. The Istanbul Municipality has therefore rapidly embarked upon a program of development and organization in Florya. Under the eternal guidance of our Great Leader Atatürk and National Chief İsmet İnönü, during the bathing seasons, an unparalleled beach was created, complete with orderly cabins, rooms, and a beautiful gazino. Although the Second World War has not yet ended, a large hotel will be added in the future. From the perspective of development and organization, Florya has been incorporated into the Istanbul master plan and, at the first opportunity, will be transformed into a seaside resort town comparable to those in Europe, becoming one of the most beautiful cities in the world and a tourism center that will embellish Istanbul.

4 ağuştos 1939 tarihinde halka açılan bahçe ve gazino büyük bir şehrin medenî ihtiyaçlarına tam manasiyle cevap verebilecek bir haldedir.

**Figure 7.** Information on the Florya Gazinosu and Its Surroundings in *Güzelleşen İstanbul*<sup>4</sup> (Daver, Günay, and Resmor, 1944)

Women observed at the Taksim Gazinosu in 1947 were described as elegant and prominent figures within the urban social scene of the period (Akçura, 2022). These women, who socialized alongside men in such venues, largely came from upper socio-economic and cultural circles. Meanwhile, events such as balls organized in parks and summer resort areas during the summer months also provided leisure opportunities for middle-income groups (Raik, 1926; Şenol Cantek, 2003). During this period of the Republic, entertainment venues became spaces where modern individuals learned social etiquette, adopted new habits related to dining, dress, and music, and developed social relations between women and men (Girgin Akın, 2005).

Within this context, where the ideal of modernization has been materialized through architecture, the decision to construct the Florya Gazinosu was taken in 1938. The architectural design was commissioned to Rüknettin Güney, one of the permanent architects of the Istanbul Municipality at the time. Alongside the Florya Gazinosu, Güney also designed other public entertainment buildings such as the Taksim Gazinosu (Figure 5) and contributed significantly to Istanbul's architectural memory through works including the Kadıköy Community Center (1938), the Beyoğlu Marriage Office, now the Tarık Zafer Tunaya Cultural Center (1948), and the Divan Hotel (1956), which he designed in collaboration with Avedis Hubeser.

The Florya Gazinosu was located within walking distance of Atatürk's residence and directly on the coastline. It was designed with changing cabins, storage, and service areas on the lower level, and a large terrace, restaurant, and seating areas on the upper level. This two-story plan organization aimed to provide users with differentiated experiences in terms of privacy, views, and social interaction (Hamiloğlu, 2022). Combining the public entertainment culture of the 1930s with modernist architectural aesthetics, the gazino became an important component of everyday life through open-air concerts, dance events, and mixed-gender social gatherings (Figure 8).

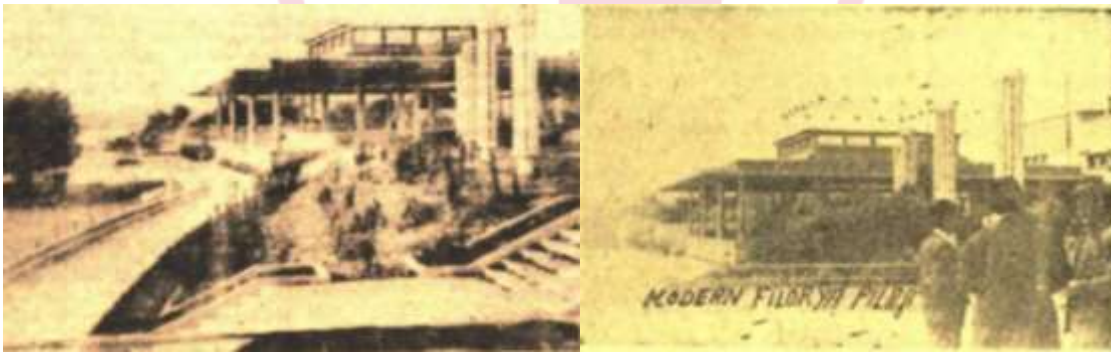
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<sup>4</sup> The garden and gazino, opened to the public on 4 August 1939, are in a condition that can fully meet the cultural needs of a large city.



**Figure 8.** Visuals of the Florya Gazinosu (Çobanoğlu, 2023; Hitit Seramik, n.d.)

The daytime use of the Florya Gazinosu as a beach within its summer resort identity and its nighttime activation through concerts and various events within the context of the coastal space demonstrate that the early Republican modernization discourse became visible not only in entertainment venues located in the city center but also in open areas integrated with nature, such as the seashore. This dual mode of use endowed the building with an identity that enabled multilayered public experiences and the enactment of the ideal of modern life. In other words, through its multifunctional use extending across day and night within the coastal setting, Florya can be evaluated as a distinctive example that materialized the modern life ideals of the early Republic.



**Figure 9.** Newspaper Images Related to the Florya Gazinosu (Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 1948; 1950)

Both the physical presence of the building and its media-circulated images (Figure 9) transformed the Florya Gazinosu into a powerful symbol that spatially and physically represented the Republic's modern citizenship ideal. In this sense, entertainment venues functioned not merely as places of leisure but as spaces where modernization became visible and Republican ideology permeated everyday life.

### 3. FINDINGS

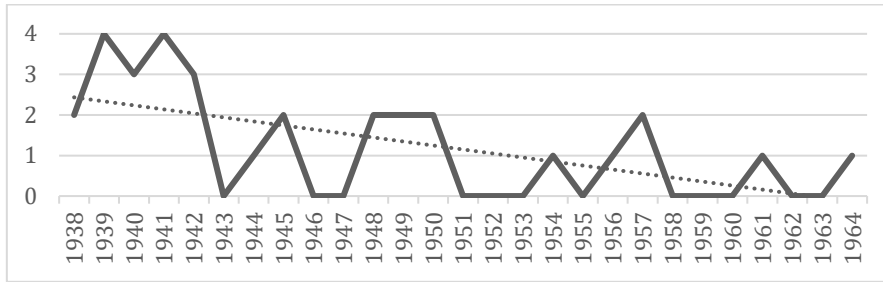
The findings are organized around two dimensions: first, the spatial and representational production of Republican publicness through architectural configuration and media visibility; and second, the gradual transformation of this publicness through functional change, shifting narratives in the press, and alterations in patterns of access and use. This structure allows the study to move beyond descriptive chronology and instead trace how publicness was constructed, stabilized, and later redefined across time.

#### 3.1 Production of Publicness in the Press

Findings obtained from the newspaper survey conducted within the scope of this study reveal that the visibility of the Florya Gazinosu in the press was shaped largely through advertisements. A total of 31 newspaper clippings were analyzed: 9 related to the construction and operation of the building, 13 advertisements, 5 articles concerning events held at the gazino, and 4 texts referring to other projects in Florya. Rather than functioning merely as informational notices, these advertisements and reports operated as instruments through which Republican publicness was framed and circulated. These documents reveal how the gazino was represented in the press, the language employed, and the dominant public discourses of the period. Eleven advertisements published in Cumhuriyet newspaper indicate that the gazino was promoted through summer concerts, dance nights, and various entertainment programs. The repetitive emphasis on modern music, mixed gender gatherings, and organized leisure constructed the Gazino as a legitimate space of visible sociability.

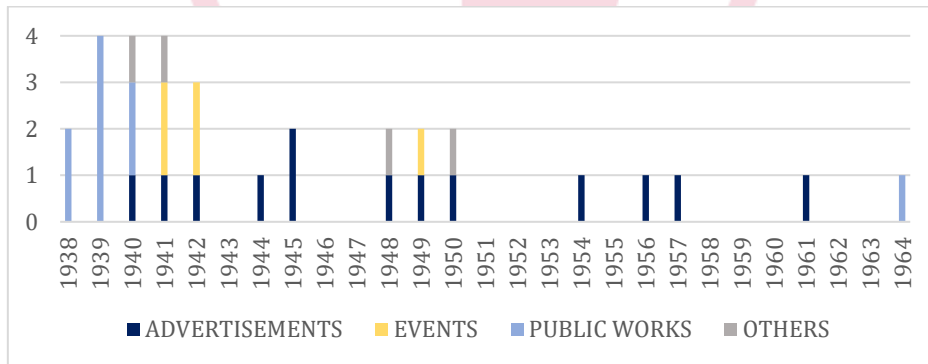
The language of these advertisements positioned the building as a modern and elite entertainment venue, transforming the Florya coastline into a prominent showcase of contemporary urban lifestyle. In this sense, press representation did not simply reflect the existence of the Gazino but actively contributed to the normalization of modern public presence along the coast. Other clippings include indirect references to beach culture, summer living practices, and Florya's role in Istanbul's urban memory. Thus, press data demonstrate that the Florya Gazinosu gained visibility as part of both popular culture and the modernization discourse of the early Republican period. The distribution of these newspaper clippings by year indicates that the casino's press visibility was not continuous but fluctuated over time (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Number of Newspaper Clippings Related to the Florya Gazinosu by Year (Pro.by author)



The fluctuation in the number of advertisements across different years further reveals that publicness was not stable but periodically intensified, suspended, and reconfigured. The increase in advertisements immediately following the opening in 1939 and 1940 indicates the strengthening of the building’s identity as a modern entertainment venue. However, between 1941 and 1944, the gazino became entirely invisible in the press due to the social and economic conditions created by World War II. Although visibility increased again after 1945, news and advertisements were published irregularly, appearing prominently in some years while disappearing entirely in others (Table 2). This temporal instability suggests that Republican publicness was not a fixed achievement but a historically contingent condition shaped by political, economic, and cultural shifts.

**Table 2.** Types of News Related to the Florya Gazinosu by Year (Produced by the author)



With the Democratic Party’s rise to power in the 1950s and the resulting revitalization of Istanbul’s cultural life, the gazino’s press representation was also affected. The peak in advertisement numbers in 1957 and 1959 indicates that the casino continued to play a significant role in urban entertainment life. Although it became visible once more in 1961, the disappearance of advertisements and news after 1962 suggests a decline in the building’s popularity in this context.

The planning, construction, operation, and transformation processes of the Florya Beach and Gazino can be traced through continuities and ruptures observable in newspaper reports and advertisements (Figure 10). Early reports present Florya as a holistic summer resort and public recreation area designed in accordance with the master plan, incorporating afforestation, hotels, swimming pools, gazinos, and residential developments. Debates surrounding the possibility of the casino's construction remaining unfinished indicate that the project was regarded not only as a local investment but also as a public project of national importance within the context of modernization and tourism policies. Following the completion of construction, the focus of press coverage shifted toward operation, service quality, and representational value, positioning the Florya Gazinosu as a regulated and visible space of urban social life through orchestras, balls, and mass entertainment events. Over time, the strengthening of the facility's institutional structure and its shift toward a tourism-oriented operational model indicate the redefinition of Florya as a public entertainment area, while the municipality's withdrawal from operation reflects a transformation of the space's public character based on economic rationality.

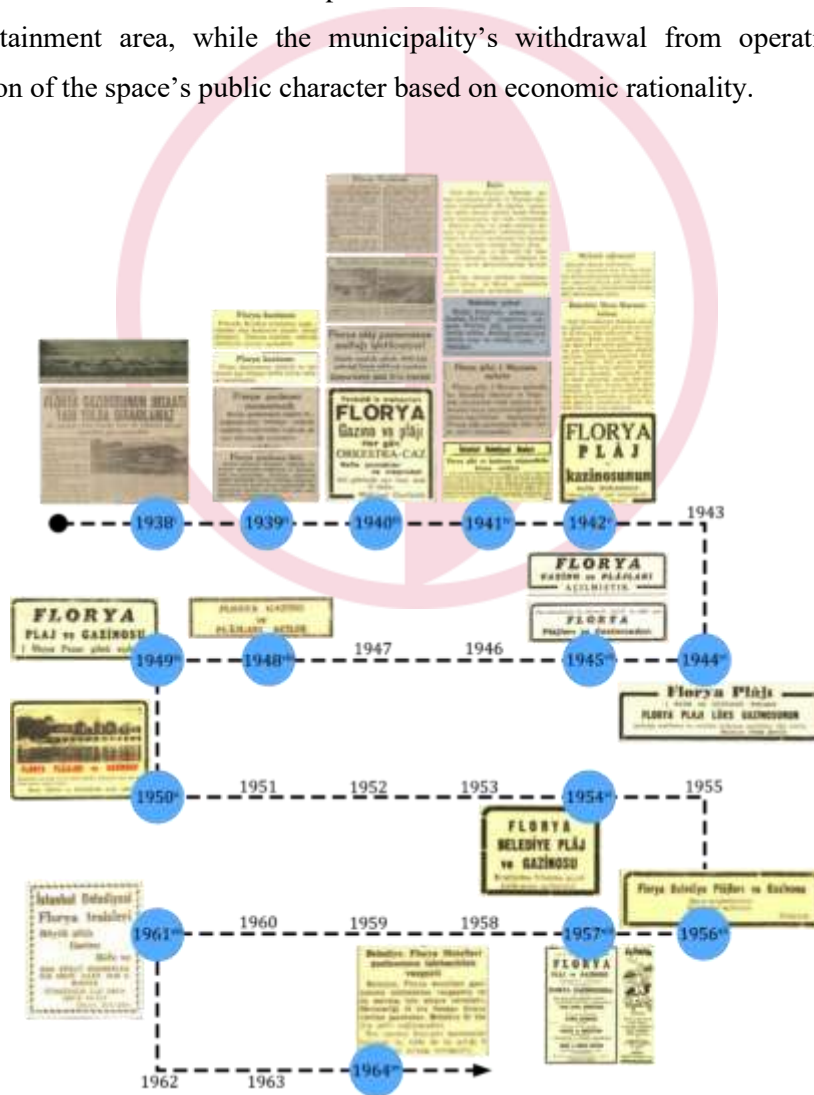


Figure 10. News Related to the Florya Gazinosu (Produced by the author)

Overall, the visibility of the Florya Gazinosu in the press was shaped by periodical ruptures, disappearing during wartime and re-emerging during periods of political and cultural revitalization. This pattern demonstrates that the casino's popularity was closely related not only to its spatial characteristics but also to the broader social and political context of the period. More significantly, these fluctuations reveal that Republican publicness was neither stable nor continuous, but historically contingent and dependent on shifting political priorities and cultural investments. The press did not merely document the casino's presence; it actively participated in amplifying, suspending, and redefining its public significance. In this sense, the changing visibility of the Florya Gazinosu reflects the dynamic production and reconfiguration of publicness rather than a simple trajectory of rise and decline.

### **3.2 Spatial Configuration and Visibility**

The spatial configuration of the Florya Gazinosu stands out as a concrete embodiment of the early Republican ideals of modern public life. With its layout parallel to the coastline, the building maintains direct contact with the shore, while its horizontally extended and vertically restrained mass reflects a spatial approach prioritizing accessibility and public use (Figure 11). Beyond responding to the coastline, this organization structured a continuous field of visibility in which users could see and be seen within the coastal setting.

This positioning enabled uninterrupted visual relationships with the seascape and created an integrated circulation experience along the coast. While the changing cabins and service spaces on the lower level formed a functional base supporting beach use, the expansive terrace and restaurant areas on the upper level brought together socialization, dining, and entertainment practices. This vertical arrangement did not only separate functions but also organized varying degrees of exposure, guiding users from preparatory spaces toward more publicly visible platforms. Thus, the building was functionally layered to serve different user groups simultaneously, with technical and service spaces concentrated below and the public experience directed toward the upper level.



**Figure 11.** Florya Gazinosu Images under the Title “Florya Beach” (Daver, Günay, and Resmor, 1944)

As evident from visual sources, the upper terrace not only offered scenic views through its sea-facing openings but also became a public platform where users gathered collectively and engaged in social interaction (Figure 12). This spatial arrangement aligns with the coastal policies of the period, proposing a modernist everyday life structured around social relations. The stair connections between the lower and upper levels integrated beach culture with the casino function, enabling seamless transitions between coastal activities. Through these transitions, leisure became a publicly staged sequence of movement and interaction rather than a purely private experience. This integrated circulation scheme demonstrates that engagement with the sea became not merely a visual experience but an integral part of everyday life.



**Figure 12.** Florya Gazinosu (Özkuş, 2016)

Façade arrangements further reinforced the building’s spatial character. Large openings and terrace surfaces created an experience intertwined with open air, in contrast to the enclosed and inward-oriented configurations typical of indoor entertainment venues.

This characteristic can be interpreted as an architectural reflection of the early Republic's ideals of openness, transparency, and public accessibility. Consequently, the Florya Gazinosu functioned not only as an entertainment venue but also as an interface where the relationship between nature and modern life was rendered visible. In this respect, its architectural configuration contributed to the spatial production of Republican publicness by materializing controlled openness, collective presence, and regulated visibility along the coast.

A comparison with the Taksim Gazinosu (Figure 5), also designed by Rüknettin Güney during the same period, reveals that both structures reflect early Republican modernization policies. However, while the Taksim Gazinosu addressed nightlife and socio-cultural diversity within the city center, the Florya Gazinosu foregrounded summer living, modern body representation, and the summer resort experience within the coastal context. In this sense, Florya represented a nature integrated and daytime oriented face of public modernity, whereas Taksim embodied the spatial counterpart of nightlife at the urban core, marked by class and cultural intersections (Yapar, 2014).

This comparison clarifies that Republican publicness was not spatially uniform but produced through differentiated urban settings, each organizing visibility and sociability in distinct ways. According to Uğur Tanyeli (1996), Rüknettin Güney's notable designs from the late 1930s, particularly the Taksim and Florya Gazinosu, were not modernist but rather classicist structures stripped of ornamentation. Indeed, Tanyeli (1997) described the dominant architectural approach of the 1930s and 1940s as a form of hesitant modernity. Read within this framework, both gazinos can be understood as architectural mediators of modernization that negotiated between formal restraint and new modes of public life.

Visual materials also document the transformations the building has undergone. Although the main mass of the structure, currently used as a restaurant (Uludağ Et Lokantası), has largely been preserved, the interior organization and furnishings have changed, the gazino's public character has weakened, and a consumption-oriented mode of use has come to the fore (Figure 13).



**Figure 13.** Uludağ (Et Lokantası) Meat Restaurant (Personal Collection)

The visual materials reveal that the spatial scheme conceived in the early period remains legible and that the building's relationship with the sea continues to define its fundamental character. This continuity has also shaped the building's representation in collective memory: while it initially functioned as a public space that made visible the populist ideals of the modernization process, it has gradually transformed into a privately oriented, gastronomy-focused venue associated with nostalgia. Despite this transformation, the spatial configuration of the building and its connection to the coastline clearly demonstrate the continuity of the Florya Gazinosu from the early Republican period to the present day.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Architecture cannot be reduced solely to its functional or structural attributes; it also embodies the aesthetic, cultural, and ideological values of its time. In this sense, buildings operate as spatial records through which collective memory and political aspirations become materially visible. Beyond formal organization and material choices, the way a structure mediates social practices and public life constitutes a central component of its architectural significance.

Urban memory, similarly, is sustained when past spatial references remain legible within present conditions. Rather than functioning as static remnants, such spaces become active carriers of identity when their historical layers continue to shape contemporary experience (Elhan, 2009; Saylan, 2016). The case of the Florya Gazinosu demonstrates how adaptive reuse can both preserve spatial continuity and simultaneously transform the meanings attached to a place. While the building's survival maintains a tangible link to early Republican modernization, its altered function reveals how regimes of publicness and collective use evolve over time.

Within this theoretical framework, the Florya Gazinosu can be understood not merely as a reflection of early Republican modernization ideals but as an active agent in the transformation of everyday life. The language of its advertisements articulated the period's vision of public life and Western oriented entertainment culture. Advertisements published in Cumhuriyet newspaper and other press outlets highlighted modern dances, concerts, and mixed gender leisure activities, thereby legitimizing the visible coexistence of women and men within the same space as an accepted social practice. This aligns closely with the early Republic's body politics and its objectives for a secular public life. Gazinosu functioned as spatial interfaces through which the modern body was rendered publicly visible and socially normalized. Thus, the transition from Ottoman codes of the concealed body to the Republican representation of a dynamic body that appears in public space, sunbathes, and engages in sports was spatially mediated through such structures.

Architecturally, the gazino transformed the public experience of the modern citizen through its open spatial configurations. Its placement parallel to the coastline, expansive terraces, and plan scheme integrated with the sea reorganized users' visibility and their relationship with nature within a new aesthetic and ideological framework. The frequent depiction of the gazino together with the beach in visual representations indicates that modern life was imagined as a unified coastal experience combining leisure, visibility, and sociability. In this respect, the building did not simply symbolize modernization but materially structured the spatial conditions of Republican publicness.

The public role assumed by the Florya Gazinosu during its early years gradually weakened due to functional transformations. While initially operated by the municipality and accessible to broad segments of society, its later transfer to private management redefined the conditions of access and participation. Although the building continues to function as a publicly accessible venue, its transformation into a privately managed restaurant has shifted public presence toward consumption based participation. Changes in visual representations further support this process: whereas the gazino was initially presented as an integral whole together with the beach, later depictions became confined to interior spaces and private events. This shift signals not the disappearance of publicness, but its contraction and restructuring within market oriented frameworks.

The case of the Florya Gazinosu ultimately demonstrates that Republican modernization was not merely expressed through architectural form, but spatially enacted through coastal leisure infrastructures that organized visibility, sociability, and bodily presence. By tracing both the production and the reconfiguration of publicness, this study positions the Florya Gazinosu as a critical example for understanding how modern public space in Türkiye was constructed, negotiated, and gradually transformed.

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