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TRACES OF PETER MULLER-MUNK ASSOCIATES IN THE HISTORY OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN IN TURKEY

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PAROLE CHIAVE
Handicraft Development Program, Industrial Design, Peter Muller-Munk Associates, Turkey, U.S. Technical Aid

This article is based on a wider research study on the handicraft development programme conceived by Peter Muller-Munk Associates in the second half of the 1950s in Turkey. The aim is to document the progress and outcomes of the programme and to reveal the archival research practices involved in the research. To this end, records of major governmental and professional U.S. institutions, located in the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park (Maryland) and Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Libraries, are analysed to elucidate the context within which the project took place, as well as its preliminary preparations, project proposals, work plans, problems and termination. The article concludes by discussing the relevance of the findings to the broader study of the advancement of industrial design in developing countries.

1. Introduction

Studies on the historical development of industrial design as a professional field in Turkey mark the design aid program conducted by Peter Muller-Munk Associates in the second half of the 1950s as the moment that introduced the country into the concept of industrial design, while also acknowledging its ultimate failure (Balcıoğlu and Emgin, 2014; Düzakın, 2000; Er, Korkut, Er, 2003). According to Er, Korkut & Er (2003), who provide a general overview of the project by describing its context and objectives, Peter Muller-Munk Associates was assigned by the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) of the U.S. government as part of a comprehensive technical aid program to be implemented in various developing countries in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East by several design agencies. In line with the program's broader aim, representatives from Peter Muller-Munk Associates dealt in Turkey with improving traditional craft products, including ceramics, meerschaum and copperware, so as to introduce them to the international market (Er et al., 2003, p. 26). The story in the literature ends abruptly at this point by noting its failure. However, this unexplored failure leaves many unanswered questions regarding the scope, organization, execution, actors and complications of the project.

This article derives from a wider research project I conduct to uncover details of the design aid program, its failure and its possible influence on the development of design in Turkey. In what follows, I share the initial findings of the archival research and shed light on the

research process that led to the particular outcomes presented here. Thus, I aim at both documenting the experience of Peter Muller-Munk Associates in Turkey and "opening the black box" (Stanley, 2017) of the research work beyond it.

The manual and intellectual labor process involved in archival studies has attracted a good deal of attention in the last decade from various social science disciplines (Kirsch & Rohan, 2008; L'Eplattenier, 2009; Moore et al., 2017) in order to end the "silence" of researchers regarding their archival practices (Stanley, 2017). In this growing literature, scholars point out the necessity of reflecting on the practical strategies of archival research and revealing the what, how and why of research practices. The repertoire of contributions is considered as both a guide for novice archival researchers and a place for the experienced to develop a more elaborate theoretical and methodological framework to study and understand archives. L'Eplattenier (2009) suggests that a

"methods section" added to studies based on archival research processes would help in constructing a body of work on primary research methods. As L'Eplattenier further notes, "methods sections" would bring the research process into the open by describing "the pragmatic goals, issues and actions of […] archival research." In this way, "methods sections" would not only endow the work with credibility but also expose the "cracks, fissures and gaps" that create limitations (L'Eplattenier, 2009, p. 74). In light of these discussions, I see my introduction of "the pragmatic components involved in obtaining the materials that are the foundation" (L'Eplattenier, 2009, p. 71) of my study as an essential part of this article. I therefore begin by clarifying how I found the research subject, how and where I located the primary sources, how many collections I examined, what the content of the records was and how I read them.

2. Method

My interest in Peter Muller-Munk Associates' visit to Turkey was stimulated by the recognition that it had been covered almost exclusively as an anecdote in the literature, as the following brief account suggests:

> In 1955, Peter Müller-Munk [sic] Associates was assigned by ICA to help Turkey, along with India and Israel, to raise the quality of their craft products. Peter Müller-Munk and designers from his firm visited Turkey several times in 1956 and 1957. […] However, this ICA assignment in Turkey—as in the majority of ICA assignments in other developing countries—was not successful. It was, on the other hand, the first known initiative to create an awareness of industrial design in the Turkish context. (Er et al., 2003, p. 26)

The significant gaps in this story raised a succession of questions. Why would such an important incident, identified as Turkey's first acquaintance with the concept and practice of design, be summarized so briefly? Who were these designers who visited Turkey several times over two years? What were the scope and objectives of their project? What was the plan? How did it proceed? Who were the Turkish counterparts in the project? Why did the project fail? What was it that they failed to accomplish? What traces did they leave behind? The answers to these questions must have been hidden in somewhere. But where? These questions entailed others. From where would I begin the search? In what forms did the primary sources exist? What were the ways to identify them? I felt like I had encountered the "black box" of archival research.

Before finding a way out from this dead-end, I needed to continue investigating secondary sources. In doing so, I was trying to compensate for my lack of practical knowledge of historical research, as an industrial designer by education. I was particularly focusing extensively on the bibliographies of the works that I had been consulting. My journey towards the archives was initiated in this way, with two studies in particular providing the most guidance. One was a biographical study of Peter Muller-Munk by Rachel Delphia and Jewel Stern (2016) and the other was a study by Emre Gönlügür (2015) of how the American way of life was promoted in the American pavilions at the İzmir International Fair during the 1950s. Both sources helped me take the major step of initiating the research by indicating two major archives to delve into. The former pointed at the records of the Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) as a useful resource while latter made me aware of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which contained records of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies that had conducted non-military foreign aid programs. The present article is built on the research conducted in these two major archives, which document the American side of the story. The traces of the Turkish side also began to come in sight during this time in the American archives. I collected a good amount of information regarding the Turkish institutions and people involved in the project. However, except from a few major reports this article excludes the records of Turkish institutions since the research on them is still in progress.

I began by working on the NARA's records, which "is the U.S. Government's collection of documents that records important events in American History" (see "What's an Archives?" August 15, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/about/info/whats-an-archives.html). It is a vast collection of documents from several centuries prepared by various government agencies. The documents are organized into "numbered record groups, with each record group comprising the records of a major government entity, usually a bureau or an independent agency" (see "Record Group Concept," August 23, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/index-numeric/concept.html). NARA offers practical online search and research tools to survey the collections. I used the online catalog to make a keyword search and the list of possible research topics containing links to information about particular research groups (see https://www.archives.gov/research/topics).[1] This survey of holdings directed me to the collection of the ICA's documents, gathered under the "Records of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies (RG 469)". I surveyed around twenty boxes that contained contracts, project status reports, memoranda, briefing papers and correspondence like circulars, aerograms and telegrams.

The second major resource, the IDSA records, is located at Syracuse University Libraries Special Collections Research Center. The records include "office files from predecessor industrial design organizations (ASID, IDI) as well as files from IDSA itself" in the form of bound materials, printed matter and audio-visual material (see http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/i/idsa.htm#d2e105). The collection's content can be searched through an online inventory, which offers a list of materials arranged by topic. I worked on files from a total of 8 boxes, arranged under topics or titles including "foreign affairs", "government relations", "correspondences", "newsletters", "United States Department of State", "foreign design groups" and "trade fairs".

The materials from these two institutional archives were later complemented by the documents from the unofficial "archives" of Peter Muller-Munk Associates.

This was a personal archive kept by a former employee of the company with a vast range of files from company projects. Since it has not yet been classified, indexed and made accessible to researchers, Rachel Delphia personally helped me access relevant files regarding the company's mission to Turkey. The materials derived from the unofficial PMMA archives include images of the products, samples and models designed and/or collected in the course of the project, and a number of press clippings, including news about the project from both the U.S. and Turkey. Compared to the other two archives, this source was richer in information about outcomes than the organization itself. In this respect, it helped substantially in filling a major gap.

Apart from these archival documents, I referred to newspapers, institutional and professional publications of the period as other types of primary sources. I found *Newspapers.com* served as an efficient engine for identifying the news regarding the ICA design aid project in the U.S. The site contains "200+ million pages of historical newspapers from 5,000+ newspapers from around the United States and beyond" (see https://www.newspapers.com/about). In addition to newspaper articles, I scanned the Industrial Activities Bulletin of the ICA and the journals *Industrial Design and Craft Horizons*.

In brief, I began my survey and analysis of these resources by compiling a list of primary and secondary sources after an extensive literature review. The preliminary preparation was not limited to appropriating bibliographies of secondary sources but also included surveying and mapping the collections anew to identify additional materials, which created extensive lists of resources to investigate. I then began to copy relevant documents, which I reviewed repeatedly each time for a different purpose. I took various notes to identify the people involved and their roles, create an organizational scheme of the project (Figure 1), produce a timetable (Figure 2), designate key themes and specify lists of new keywords for further searches. In this respect, my archival research was substantially a work of "archigraphics" or "writing the archive," as Stanley (2017) would define it.

Drawing on de Certeau, Stanley (2017, p. 35) argues that the crucial activity that underlies archival research is "writing, with the researcher actively engaged with secondary sources and primary (archival) documents by rewriting aspects of these in their notes, summaries, transcribed quotations and so on". Thus, writing is the essential activity for a researcher to make sense of, interpret and frame the primary materials at hand. It refers to both "the different kinds of *rewriting* that are carried out, in scribbling notes, making quotes from secondary sources, transcribing documents; and also different kinds of *writing* '*proper*'" (Stanley, 2017, p. 35); namely, the outcomes of research in the form of various scholarly texts. The rest of the article consists of what I wrote out of my inquiry into the primary resources mentioned above.

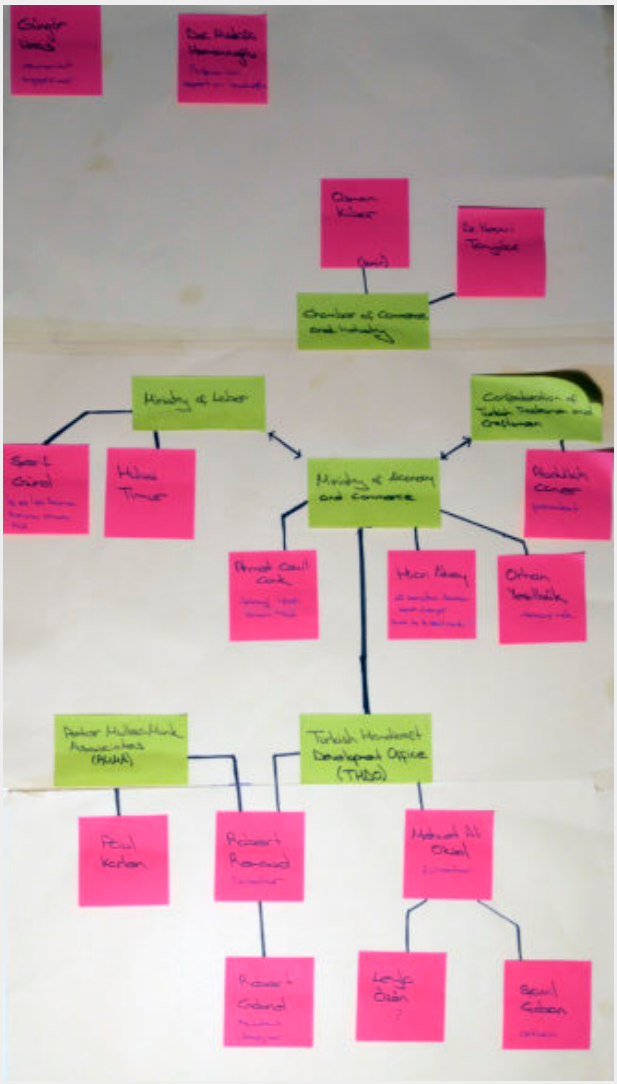

Fig. 1 – Draft of the organizational scheme of Turkish Handicraft Development Office drawn from the notes taken from several correspondences and reports.

Fig. 2 – Timeline of events re-written after reviewing the primary sources at hand.

3. The beginning

In early 1957, the magazine *Industrial Design* proudly announced the new political and diplomatic missions assigned to renowned American designers by the U.S. Department of State (Fleishman, 1957; Fiske Mitarachi, 1957). These assignments were part of trade fair and technical aid programs initiated within the Mutual Security Program. As Fleishman (1957, p. 46) clearly put it, the overall objective of the program was to stimulate the development of allied underdeveloped countries and "increase the standard of living of the man-on-the-street […] to give him a better chance of living a productive life free of the allure of communist ideology." To this end, the ICA, the agency responsible for organizing and implementing foreign aid programs, searched for a wide-ranging plan to integrate these countries into the international market, thinking that this would catalyze the development of their production and economy (Fleishman, 1957, p. 46).

The program appeared to be grounded in Cold War U.S. efforts to promote an abundant consumer market as key to freedom, prosperity, advancement and the peaceful integration of allies against the communist bloc. Within this context, design was gaining prominence as an effective tool to propagate the development of local capitalist markets in the developing world and their articulation into the international market.[2] Designers' abilities of product differentiation and marketing were exploited to create and display the American way of life while "the talents of designer as coordinator, analyst and trade consultant" ("The Designer as," 1956, p. 72) were offered as the catalyzers of desired development in countries receiving technical assistance. As intergovernmental correspondence reveals, at the heart of the design aid proposal was the idea to "provide personal services in design, processes, materials, marketing and packaging for handicraft and village industry products."[3] Although the initial intention was to advance production techniques and introduce stylistic improvements to make local products appealing to foreign markets, expanding the domestic market of locally-designed consumer goods was also on the agenda. Industrial designers were seen as the experts who would carry out the program with the help of their marketing and management experience. The plan was to work with qualified designers who could "evaluate local production, draft product designs, work up production plans, and finished sketches, and suggest materials, and recommend distribution methods."[4]

It was also considered essential “to utilize existing productive equipment, domestic resources and materials, and the local manufacture of hand tools and larger equipment.”[5]
Armed with this agenda, the Foreign Operations Administration contacted the Society of Industrial Designers to ask for the services of its member design consultant agencies. The government scheduled the program to start in the summer of 1955 in a number of countries in the Near East, Far East, Africa and Latin America, with Israel identified as the first country to collaborate.[6] Participant firms were asked to appoint a team of at least two “to survey local requirements, determine effective methods of rendering assistance, and carry out demonstrations and training activities.”[7] The survey would review production conditions, available resources and marketing possibilities in cooperation with local institutions like trade associations, cooperatives and marketing firms.[8] The survey would be followed by design, production and marketing consultancy whereby participant designers would develop designs to be produced by local craftsmen, suggest possible materials and supplies, help standardize product quality, facilitate advancement of tools and materials, guide their acquisition and establish connections with potential markets. The program was estimated to last around a year.[9]
Following negotiations, five renowned industrial design companies were assigned by the ICA to nineteen countries. The contracts included Russel Wright Associates’ mission to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam; Walter Dorwin Teague Associates’ mission to Greece, Jordan and Lebanon; Design Research Incorporated’s mission to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mexico, Surinam, El Salvador, Jamaica and Costa Rica; Peter Muller-Munk Associates’ mission to Israel, Turkey and India; and Smith, Scherr and McDermott’s mission to South Korea (Pulos, 1988, pp. 236-237). The design teams did not implement their projects simultaneously or follow similar routes; rather, the programs in each country were shaped by its particular economic conditions, production capacities, established craft traditions and political agendas.[10] As for Turkey, the project was brought onto the agenda at the end of 1956. U.S. officials saw Turkey as a democratic Middle Eastern country in which the proposed development could achieve significant outcomes.[11] Before proceeding to discuss the details of the program, it is crucial to outline the economic, social and cultural background that foregrounded Turkey as a promising geography regarding the aims of the program.

4. The background

The political, social, cultural and economic atmosphere of Turkey in the 1950s was marked by the transition to multi-party democracy and the resulting Democrat Party (DP) government. As a right-wing political party, DP positioned the country as “a capitalist and anti-communist stronghold,” particularly through its policies encouraging urbanization and agricultural modernization (Örnek & Üngör, 2013, p. 6). DP’s policies also brought Turkey closer to the U.S. in the ideological divisions of the Cold War, which found its greatest expression in the party’s desire “to transform Turkey into a ‘little America’” (Örnek & Üngör, 2013, p. 6). Actually, Turkey’s alignment with the U.S. had commenced earlier, in 1948, during the Republican People’s Party (RPP) government, when the country began to receive Marshall Aid, or even earlier in 1946 with the arrival of the U.S. warship *SS Missouri* in İstanbul. The alliance strengthened further after Turkey joined NATO in 1952, which definitively located Turkey within the Western bloc in the Cold War (Örnek & Üngör, 2013, pp. 5-6).

Meanwhile, Turkey's economic policies were also being shaped in accordance with its alliance with the capitalist West, with World War II being decisive in introducing a liberal economic transformation. This began in 1947 in response to rising opposition to existing statist policies from Turkey's commercial bourgeoisie and industrialists, who had grown stronger as an economic and social actor during the war (Zürcher, 2007, p. 312). Besides, the growing capitalist world economy's tendency towards free trade and criticisms by foreign experts made Turkey more open to American investment, assistance and credit (Boratav, 2008, pp. 96-100). Hence, between 1946 and 1953, inward-looking protectionist economic policies were replaced by more liberal, foreign market and import oriented policies. However, due to an increasing foreign trade deficit, this ended in 1954 with the introduction of import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies (Boratav, 2008, pp. 107-108).
Alpay Er (1997) argues that governments in developing countries like Turkey have indirectly influenced the emergence and development of design practice through such economic and development policies, with ISI policies proving particularly effective in opening the way for the introduction of the concept of design. Yet, at this point, the actors were far from realizing the potential of design for implementing ISI policies and conceptualized design more as a cultural practice than a commercial one (Er, 1997, p. 302).
The technical aid proposal for Turkey was quite promising in terms of introducing the commercial capabilities of design practice to create a domestic mass market for consumer goods. The priority of the proposed program was raising people's living standards, particularly the rural population that constituted the main workforce of the handicraft industry. In addition, "development of small cottage industries and handicraft activities, to provide much needed consumer essentials, reduce the needs for imports, and hopefully, create some productive capacity for export" was foregrounded as one of the projects that would comply with the objectives.[12]
The Turkish government also approached the handicraft industry in a similar manner. Its approval of the craft development program was a concrete step in its long-term efforts to advance Turkey's craft industry. Indeed, the issue had been on the agenda almost since the establishment of the republic, with the search for solutions traceable back to *The First Handicraft Exhibition and Manufactural Arts Congress*, held in 1936 at the initiative of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce. In his comprehensive account of the event, Serkan Tuna (2004, p. 184) describes the exhibition as an attempt at examining the condition of local handicraft industries and determining possible measures to be taken for their enhancement. The exhibition attracted a good deal of attention from individual artisans and institutions, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Girls Art Institute, the Society of Weavers, the Society of Shoe Makers and the Academy of Fine Arts (Tuna, 2004, p. 194). The exhibition was followed by a congress at which new laws for regulating handicraft industries were negotiated. Deputies and representatives of craftsmen worked in different committees to discuss common issues like credit problems, legal issues and education, in addition to commissions to investigate the problems of particular branches like clay and stone goods, textiles, leather working and printing (Tuna, 2004, pp. 204-205). The resulting report of the Ministry of Commerce was influential in creating a framework for the suggestions and approaches.

The report considered that crafts and small-scale industry were indispensable components of industrial development, and highlighted their role in representing national culture and providing socio-economic balance (Tuna, 2004, p. 206). The measures proposed to defend the craft industry included legislation regarding institutionalization, formation of cooperatives, taxation, education and professional practice. In addition, the state was commissioned to support the marketing and sales of craft products (Tuna, 2004, pp. 208-209).
However, the law proposed at the end of the congress was never fully implemented; instead, the issues remained unresolved for two decades. In 1957, the Turkish Employment Service of the Ministry of Labor prepared *A Report on the Requirement and Establishment of a Handicraft and Small-Scale Industry Technology Center*. This report was the outcome of a number of meetings since 1956 between numerous relevant ministries and institutions, such as the Ministries of Economy and Commerce, Education and Foreign Relations, the Chamber of Commerce, Halkbank and Sümerbank, the Turkish Standards Institution, the Faculty of Agriculture and the Turkish Employment Service.[13] Like the earlier congress, this report considered the handicraft industry from a developmentalist perspective, emphasizing its potential for stimulating rural reconstruction. As well as emphasizing the economic and political benefits, it was also crucial for the proposed plan to evaluate the stylistic qualities and market appeal of existing craft products. In particular, since it was seen as essential for villagers to acquire the ability to produce products that addressed urban tastes and needs, [14] the report recommended the "procurement of necessary tools and materials, creation of sales opportunities, identification of the most favorable samples, supply of education and training tools."[15]
In short, both political parties viewed the efficient reconstruction of the handicraft industry as a catalyzer of Turkey's industrialization and development. This included both stylistic improvements to existing products in line with modernist aesthetics and the advancement of production techniques and capacity. Both the American and Turkish participants viewed these improvements as a means to ensure Turkey's social and economic well-being since increased productivity would enable the efficient use of labor, create a profitable occupation for rural workers and stimulate a flourishing domestic mass market for consumer goods.

5. The proposed program

Negotiations with the design agency regarding Turkey's craft development program began in the context of these efforts by both foreign and domestic actors. Peter Muller-Munk Associates was contracted by the ICA for the Small Industry – Product Development, Improvement, and Marketing project in Turkey in 1955.[16] The contract expected the firm to "spend about one-fourth of assigned time to design work proper; the major amount of project time is devoted to market evaluation, product development, technical assistance in placing recommended designs into production, and marketing and distribution arrangements."[17] The ICA expected Peter Muller-Munk Associates with a staff member to begin by surveying Turkey's manual and handicraft industries.
Before coming to Turkey to conduct the survey, Peter Muller-Munk and his team received a briefing document from the Turkish Employment Service in December 1955. This outlined the state of crafts in different regions in Turkey and made some suggestions for the design team's consideration.

The report defined craft production largely as a rural trade while noting the predominance of archaic production methods and the need for mechanization in many branches.[18] The report also mentioned that most craft production targeted a very limited local market and was hence considered as an unprofitable business. The proposed solutions focused on turning certain craft activities into profitable businesses for Turkey's rural population, with hand embroidery, İstanbul spoon making, pottery, ceramic work, copper working, gilding, carpet making, weaving and mother-of-pearl work indicated as having commercial potential.[19] Paul Karlen and Robert Renaud of Peter Muller-Munk Associates arrived in Turkey on December 16, 1955 for the survey.[20] As they reported, the designers' visit was organized by the Turkish Ministry of Economy and Commerce and the U.S. Operations Mission to Turkey (Karlen & Renault, 1956, pp. 7-8). They traveled around Turkey for twenty two days, visiting Ankara, Hacıbektaş, Kayseri, Nevşehir, Adana, Antakya, Gaziantep, Konya, Isparta, Burdur, Denizli, İzmir, Demirci, Kütahya, Eskişehir, Bursa, Umurbey, İstanbul, Kartal, Bolu and Amasra, to observe and analyze the problems faced by Turkish craftsmen regarding product design and development, production techniques and marketing. After reviewing the situation of various crafts, including carpet making, weaving, basketry, ceramics and tile making, furniture, leather working and meerschaum carving, the designers prepared a preliminary proposal for a craft development program. The project's two main objectives were increasing production volume and earning foreign currency (Karlen & Renault, 1956, p. 9). To achieve this, the proposal recommended establishing cooperatives of craftsmen to plan and increase production, creating high-quality products to address the needs and tastes of foreign markets, and organizing marketing and distribution channels through advertising campaigns. The designers based their program on two key points. First, the program should lead to the production of both functional objects for daily use and decorative accessories with high aesthetic appeal. Second, the competitive power of Turkish products should rely on the quality of craftsmanship than price because Turkey's production capacity was so limited at this point (Karlen & Renault, 1956, pp. 43-44).

Having determined the goals of the project and provided a comprehensive analysis of the situation of various craft activities, the two designers identified five major crafts for the program to concentrate on: coppersmithing, basketry, woodwork, ceramics and meerschaum carving. Copper was highlighted as the backbone of the program because of its potential to bring in foreign currency, given that Turkey was rich in copper and had talented coppersmiths, yet still relied on exporting raw copper. The designers therefore recommended increasing export revenues from copper by encouraging the export of copperware. However, the proposal also suggested designing products that combined different materials, such as copper and basketwork lampshades or furniture combining copper, woodwork and basketwork (Karlen & Renault, 1956, pp. 45-47).

6. The work plan

Following their survey report, Peter Muller-Munk Associates staff delivered a work plan in April 1956, aiming to complete the project in two phases.[21] The first phase was dedicated to developing the above mentioned five fields of handicrafts (Karlen & Renault, 1956, p. 48). Peter Muller-Munk Associates staff was in charge of the entire first phase, which was also divided into three stages: design of new products, establishment of the Handicraft Development Board and the study of marketing strategies.

The design phase was preceded by a comprehensive market analysis in which American designers would analyze competing products and determine a possible market for Turkish handicrafts (Karlen & Renault, 1956, pp. 68-69). The design team would first travel to Rome, Milan, Zurich, Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen and Paris to examine the successful handicraft products they offered to the market and then to Montreal, Toronto, Quebec, Boston, New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, San Francisco and Los Angeles to discover promising markets. The survey's focus would be on the range of available products in the market, their prices, marketing and quotation strategies, retailing alternatives and ways of distribution. An essential part of this phase was to collect a variety of products to be used as samples when developing original design concepts for Turkish products.

In the following step, American designers at the design quarters of Peter Muller-Munk Associates in Pittsburgh would develop 150 original product ideas, including trays, tables, lampshades, folding screens, tables, jugs, candlesticks, picnic baskets, cigarette and jewelry boxes, trash cans, cutlery and crockery. After this, Turkish craftsmen would produce a selection of 100 items under the supervision of Peter Muller-Munk Associates staff (Karlen & Renault, 1956, pp. 69-70).

Once the samples had been produced, the Handicraft Development Board would be established in the second phase. The plan suggested turning the board into a Turkish governmental institution. Therefore, its recommended permanent members should include representatives from the Ministry of Economy and Commerce as the head, the Ministry of Labor and the Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen (Karlen & Renault, 1956, p. 70). Representatives of the American mission and Peter Muller-Munk Associates would become temporary members of the board who would leave once the handicraft development program was completed. In the short-term, the board was responsible for organizing the craftsmen involved in the first phase of the program into cooperatives and creating the means to pay for their work. In the long-term, a committee would be established, responsible for providing, exploring and developing materials and coordinating production facilities and standards (Karlen & Renault, 1956, p. 71). The latter included assuring production in quantity, developing a system for quality control, systematizing production, organizing distribution, granting credits, and working on marketing and retailing strategies (Karlen & Renault, 1956, pp. 71-72). The board would also be expected to encourage the sales of craft products through exhibitions in the U.S. and consulate buildings, prepare product catalogues and provide sales personnel (Karlen & Renault, 1956, p. 72).

7. The outcome

On June 28, 1957, Peter Muller-Munk Associates signed a contract with the government of Turkey to implement the proposed plan.[22] A total of $59,000 was allocated from the 1957 budget for the program.[23] Project proceeded as planned in its first year. The Handicraft Development Board established the Turkish Handicraft Development Office in Ankara, co-directed by Robert Renaud of Peter Muller-Munk Associates and Mehmet Ali Oksal (Delphia & Stern, 2016, p. 122). Under these directors was a Turkish staff of around six people as well as Robert Gabriel of Peter Muller-Munk Associates as assistant to Renaud (Delphia & Stern, 2016, p. 122, 124). The Turkish Handicrafts Development Office worked in coordination with fifteen cooperatives dispersed around the country, including cities like Kütahya, Konya, Antep and Eskişehir, to produce the designs prepared in the office (Delphia & Stern, 2016, p. 124).

In his report to the U.S. government almost a year after the contract was signed, Peter Muller-Munk noted that the project was on schedule and that they had already designed and prepared 115 samples.[24] However, the mass production of these samples was left to 1958-1959 when they could also begin to be exported.[25] Among the samples produced were interior accessories like tables, stools, magazine racks, lamps, fireplace accessories, screens, ashtrays, vases, pillow covers and needlework; some hostess and table accessories like trays, shish-kebab skewers, salad sets, pepper mills, mugs, place mats, napkins and towels; some office accessories like letter holders, calendars, mail trays and desk sets; and other various objects like toys, baskets, jewelry, pipes and souvenirs (Figures 3-8).[26]
The failure to begin commercial production of the samples seems to have caused some discontent on both sides of the project. The Turkish government complained that the American experts had prioritized collecting samples from Turkey for their own interests and had not tried to initiate production and market research (Türk El Sanatları, 1962, p. 36). The government also believed that various organizational and granting problems had disrupted the process (Türk El Sanatları, 1962, p. 36). On the other hand, the Americans complained about the orientation of the program. In its initial negotiations with the firm, the U.S. government had made it clear that assistance in producing consumer products for Turkey's domestic market was a crucial part of the program.[27] However, the officials observed that the production of export items for the international market had been prioritized instead, which made them openly express their doubts about allocating further budget to the project.[28] These growing complaints from both sides led to the termination of the project when, after three years of activity, the Turkish Handicrafts Development Office was closed at the request of the Turkish government (Türk El Sanatları, 1962, p. 69).

Fig. 3 – Turkish Handicraft Development Office showroom, PMMA Archives.

Fig. 4 – Tabletop accessories, PMMA Archives.

Fig. 5 – Vases and candleholders, PMMA Archives.

Fig. 6 – Whirling dervishes, PMMA Archives.

Fig. 7 – Barbecue, PMMA Archives.

Fig. 8 – Furniture, PMMA Archives.

8. Conclusions

The termination of the project without any tangible outcomes caused some displeasure on the Turkish side. Some of the more moderate criticisms focused on the drawbacks of local conditions and incompetence of local producers. For this group, the project was destined to fail because it was badly timed (Türk El Sanatları, 1962, p. 37). However, more adversarial voices claimed that foreign assistance was incompatible with national interests and blamed foreign agents for exclusively protecting their own interests (Türk El Sanatları, 1962, p. 37). Indeed, interviews with program participants indicate that the American designers had even been accused of spying, leading to requests for their deportation.[29] Whether true or not, such suspicions reflect the ideological conflicts of Cold War Turkey and remind us that any account of design history, whether national or international, should take into consideration the political, ideological and diplomatic context. It also reminds us that this was not a one-way transfer from the center to the periphery; rather, the recipients of design aid reacted to it in certain ways to meet their own interests and agenda.

There are also other more crucial conclusions to draw from the account given here before quickly inferring that the project failed. The story confirms that this introduction of industrial design to the periphery largely took place within the ideological atmosphere of the Cold War as a matter of industrialization. As Gui Bonsiepe noted, “industrial design constitutes an indispensable instrument for endeavours towards development” in the peripheral countries (cited in Er 1997, p. 295). What Bonsiepe (1977) meant was creating a design practice to address local needs with local resources in place of commercially driven design practice as it is in the center. However, as Bonsiepe himself acknowledged, design practice had rather a restricted scope when it is only used to enrich the market for the upper classes through “ephemeral product differentiation”. Similarly, in the case of design aid to Turkey, design’s crucial role for both local and foreign agents lay in its potential to enrich international markets with exotically appealing products, as yet another form of “ephemeral product differentiation” (Bonsiepe, 1977, p. 14).

This brings us to another question to be raised about design practice in the periphery. It is now clear that the development of design in developing countries cannot be comprehensively studied without referring to its role in the development and expansion of capitalist markets (Er, 1997). Through the emphasis they placed on improving local craft products, U.S. design aid programs of the 1950s appear to suggest that peripheral countries were welcome to join the international design scene, particularly through a cultural interpretation of design. This may have further influenced the development of national design discourses in these countries. The way emergent discourses in the early 2000s defined the goal of Turkish design as modernizing the traditional and the aesthetic and conceptual similarities between products marketed under the label Turkish design and those produced in THDO is remarkable in this sense.

Before coming to a conclusion, there are still questions and relations to be explored. It is still too early to claim to understand how the Turkish participants experienced, interpreted and appropriated the whole experience, how they negotiated the design concepts and approaches introduced by the American designers, or how they used this experience to develop the field further because the story as covered in this article represents largely the American point of view and experience while records prepared by Turkish institutions remain unexplored. Analysis of these records would not only fill in existing gaps in knowledge but also open up new perspectives that would alter the analysis of American sources. Finally, to determine how the experience of the Turkish Handicraft Development Office influenced further development of design culture in Turkey and to reveal the dialogue between two parties would require recourse to personal archives and the memories of individual participants. It is through this way that clearer conclusions could be reached.

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NOTE

1. All online sources were last retrieved on July 2017.↵
2. The American attempts at encouraging design development in allied countries during particularly postwar period has been subject to a number of design historical studies. Kikuchi (2008) uncovers the ICA led design aid to Japan, conducted by Russel Wright Associates. The U.S. interventions into the European context is covered by Rossi (2015) for the case of Italy and Yagou (2005) fort he case of Greece.↵
3. Proposed NEA Regional Small Industry Development Projects, Washington, Feb. 18, 1955; Industry-Handicraft; Subject Files, 1952-1960, p. 1; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
4. Proposed NEA Regional Small Industry Development Projects, Washington, Feb. 18, 1955, p. 2.↵
5. Proposed NEA Regional Small Industry Development Projects, Washington, Feb. 18, 1955, p. 2.↵
6. Foreign Operations Administration to Society of Industrial Designers, May 4, 1955; Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) Records, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries, Box 72, Folder: FOA Program on Underdeveloped Countries, 1955.↵
7. Foreign Operations Administration to Society of Industrial Designers, May 4, 1955, p. 1.↵
8. Foreign Operations Administration to Society of Industrial Designers, May 4, 1955, p. 1.↵
9. Foreign Operations Administration to Society of Industrial Designers, May 4, 1955, p. 2.↵
10. Brown (1958), Clabby (1957) and Fleishman (1957) provide an overview of the activities of design consultancy agencies in their assigned countries. Peter Muller Munk Associates' program in Israel is recounted in the article "A New State Gets a New Profession" published in 1960 in Industrial Design. Delphia and Stern (2016) also document the design aid to Israel through a reading of the archival traces of the project. Russel Wright Associates' mission is neatly summarized in "The Designer as Economic Diplomat" (1956).↵
11. Cedric H. Seager to Dr. D. A. Fitzgerald, Nov. 14, 1956; 7.0 Technical Cooperation, 1957 Turkey; Decimal Files, 1955-1960, p. 1; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
12. Cedric H. Seager to Dr. D. A. Fitzgerald, Nov. 14, 1956, p. 1.↵
13. Ev-Köy Sanatları ve Küçük Sanayi Teknoloji Merkezi Lüzum ve Kurulması Hakkında Rapor [A Report on the Requirement and Establishment of Handicraft and Small Industry Technology Center], Turkish Employment Service of Ministry of Labor, Ankara, 1957; Industry-Handicraft; Subject Files, 1952-1960, p. 4; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵

14. Ev-Köy Sanatları ve Küçük Sanayi Teknoloji Merkezi Lüzum ve Kurulması Hakkında Rapor [A Report on the Requirement and Establishment of Handicraft and Small Industry Technology Center], Turkish Employment Service of Ministry of Labor, Ankara, 1957, p. 32.↵
15. Ev-Köy Sanatları ve Küçük Sanayi Teknoloji Merkezi Lüzum ve Kurulması Hakkında Rapor [A Report on the Requirement and Establishment of Handicraft and Small Industry Technology Center], Turkish Employment Service of Ministry of Labor, Ankara, 1957, p. 15.↵
16. Proposed NEA Demonstration Project for Small Industry and Handicraft Development, Washington, Jul. 13, 1955; Industry-Handicraft; Subject Files, 1952-1960, p. 1; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
17. Proposed NEA Demonstration Project for Small Industry and Handicraft Development, Washington, Jul. 13, 1955, p. 2.↵
18. Handicrafts & Homecrafts in Turkey, Dec. 1, 1955; Industry-Handicraft; Subject Files, 1952-1960; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
19. Handicrafts & Homecrafts in Turkey, Dec. 1, 1955.↵
20. USOM/Baghdad to USOM/Ankara, Dec. 6, 1955; Industry-Handicraft; Subject Files, 1952-1960; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
21. USOM/Ankara to ICA/Washington, ICATO 870, June 2, 1958; Proj. 77-29-281 – Handicraft Development 11/56 – 6/58 Central Files; Classified Central Files, 1948-1960, p. 1; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
22. USOM/Ankara to ICA/Washington, ICATO 870, June 2, 1958, p. 1.↵
23. International Cooperation Administration Program Approval Summary Sheet, FY 1957; 7.0 Technical Cooperation, 1957 Turkey; Decimal Files, 1955-1960; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
24. USOM/Ankara to ICA/Washington, ICATO 870, June 2, 1958, p. 1.↵
25. USOM/Ankara to ICA/Washington, ICATO 870, June 2, 1958, p. 3.↵
26. USOM/Ankara to ICA/Washington, ICATO 870, June 2, 1958, p. 2.↵
27. Washington, DC to Ankara, ICATO 870, May 26, 1958; Proj. 77-29-281 – Handicraft Development 11/56 – 6/58 Central Files; Classified Central Files, 1948-1960, p. 1; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
28. Secretary of State to American Embassy, ICATO 939, June 13, 1958; Proj. 77-29-281 – Handicraft Development 11/56 – 6/58 Central Files; Classified Central Files, 1948-1960; Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1942-1963, Record Group 469; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.↵
29. A. Buldam, personal communication, March 21, 2017.↵

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