

ARCHITECTURE TO THE RESCUE: TURKEY'S ISRAEL VILLAGE

Winter was just two months away when Israeli Defense Ministry officials offered to help provide temporary housing for victims of last August's devastating earthquake in northwestern Turkey. With a basic program, they turned to U.S.-educated Israeli architect Shalom Kelner, 62, to design the project on the outskirts of Adapazari, now known as the Israel Village.

Kelner believed a semblance of normalcy would return only if he provided a renewal of community life: a school, a clinic, playgrounds, parking areas, and spaces for social interaction. Fabricated in Israel, the units had to be sturdy enough to withstand shipping. Kelner chose used marine shipping containers as his basic building blocks: he joined two containers lengthwise to form each 320-square-foot dwelling unit. Twelve units around a square courtyard compose a dwelling cluster that fosters neighborly relations and children's play.

Each unit includes two bedrooms, a bathroom with toilet and shower, and a multipurpose area with a kitchenette and dining space. Sheetrock insulation with gypsum-board facing provides protection against the cold, and the double wall muffles sounds between the bedrooms. A vestibule between the entry and an interior door allows for wet clothing removal and

the local custom of removing one's shoes before entering the home.

Every detail was discussed with Turkish officials so as to meet local needs. Furnished with basic amenities, each of the 312 dwelling units cost \$15,000. The Israeli government put up approximately \$4.8 million for the project, and another \$1 million came from the Israeli public and Jewish and Israeli organizations.

Kelner incorporated the use of color on the exterior, in keeping with local architecture. The colors now help residents locate their homes. The plan also provided for a 10-classroom school, with each classroom built of four containers.

Crowded, but working

Late last October, the Village was inaugurated by the Israeli and Turkish prime ministers. Though as many as 17 inhabitants have crowded into a single unit, originally planned to hold six people, the process was deemed a success. Turkish architects and builders have been impressed by the project's emphasis on communal interaction, which tends to be underemphasized in their country's urban planning.

In mid-March, Sefanur Aydin, 30, sat sharing a cup of tea on the steps of her new neighbor's home. "It's amazing how much the neighbors help," she said. "If you have an emergency, you open a window and call your friend," added Fethi Sen, 66. Elsewhere, an outdoor engagement party was in full swing.

Wooden lean-tos, curtains, TV antennas, and flowering plants are all signs that the Israel Village is becoming home. *Esther Hecht*



Communal interaction, not stressed in Turkish urban planning, is a priority at the Israel Village.