

*Full Length Research*

# DIFFERENT APPROACHES IN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION About Workshops / Cooperation and Joint Events

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It is obvious that universities play a significant role in the production and transference of knowledge in the contemporary world often referred to as the age of knowledge. Recently, the mission of the multifunctional university has been changed and transformed becoming more interactive in character, allowing for greater creativity, participation and influence in relation to other aspects of the contemporary world. The changes in the outlook of education, has allowed universities to develop new techniques and methods and new educational programs, including interdisciplinary workshops, allowing for interrelations between academic individuals through more innovative studies and research projects. Thus, the educational programs not only make third generation students much more effective and willing to participate in these activities but they also generate a network between different social platforms. Throughout the paper, the fundamental approaches, policies and projects implemented by the Faculty of Architecture in Erciyes University will be introduced. In particular, this paper presents some of the experiences within the Strasbourg/Germir Workshops and Ağırnas Studies, both of which have been organized by multiple partners and stakeholders. The different acquisitions delivered by each partner are mentioned, specifically focusing on the experiences of the students. The necessity of architectural education which should engage with the social agenda of the present time is conclusively highlighted as is the revision in the educational practice which thus far has been restricted to the theoretical and therefore divorced from the dynamics of reality.

**Keywords:** Architectural Education, Different Methods in Education, Training of Architects, Workshops, Cooperation and Joint events

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## INTRODUCTION

As a professional field of study concerning the design of living space, architecture has been the foundation of social culture and history, so that it has always been the focus of interest for people around the world. The built environment as created by architects influences the mood, psychology and social interaction and life styles of its users. From this point of view, architecture can be defined as an interdisciplinary area of science that is built on an intellectual background going beyond simple notions of design and construction.

Architectural education represents a special field of knowledge taking into account multiple factors including the scientific, artistic, social and physical aspects. It also differs from other professions in terms of the teaching and training methods that it employs.

In today's age of information, universities play an undeniably crucial role in generating, transmitting and sharing knowledge. The mission of universities, characterized by multiple functions is currently shifting away from a purely academic one of generating and teaching knowledge. Indeed a, more active, visionary, prolific and participative mission has evolved thus maintaining stronger links to a reality in the form of cross-pollination of mutually enriching elements, interacting with different components of the contemporary world. This evolution characterizes the polyphonic model of universities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Büyükmihçi, 2015).

In recent years, universities in Turkey have adopted different approaches to education. Social networks have been established among academics; innovation and R&D works have gained importance. There is a stronger tendency to look for different platforms for education.

At a time when unpredictable changes and transformations are taking place, the universities, as places of the creative teaching of rapidly changing/transforming knowledge are inevitably required to reassess their own position; their academic curriculums and embrace the need for a restructuring of the curriculum. However, the laws of the higher education system allow for an increase in the number of foundations supporting the establishment of a new type of university; and the increasing number of universities which are embracing the new law, has thereby lead to an increasingly competitive environment. This new environment has prompted universities to call themselves into question and to take new positions.

As universities are shifting away from their traditional format and searching for new ways of educating, each faculty is then called to adopt the new teaching methods in their respective fields. Additionally, since different educational platforms are being devised, and more active educational instruments are being sought, it is imperative to organize the cooperation programs, the joint activities and the workshops which are being held with other

universities, civil society organizations, research centers and local administrations as part of broader national and international projects.

However, the situation is quite different for Turkey. It is often stated that the only mission of universities is educational activity. Indeed, many universities are criticized from time to time for being interested in non-curricular issues, creating new ideas and acting in a participatory manner. Yet as far as the development of countries is concerned, it is crucially important that the universities which are taking part in local social networks undertake a leading role in society, carrying out the mission of education for all segments of society, transforming and reshaping cities whilst setting a vision in action founded on scientific criteria that are independent of any profit seeking motive.

Given that universities have more dynamic relations with society nowadays, the idea that academic identity, social responsibility and scientific autonomy of universities are secondary to their function as teaching units is no longer a convincing discourse for large sectors of society. The universities, which are acknowledged as societal actors, are encouraged to share their knowledge with public and private institutions or agencies. To this end, significant amounts of funding are earmarked for cooperative programs relating to production and industry, the University/Industry, University/Civil Society and University/Local Administration projects for example.

Whatever the underlying reason, these approaches and insights that might be qualified as novel approaches in education can give the universities a bigger margin to devise and maneuver within a more productive, dynamic, participative and ultimately stronger university model.

## MULTITUDE OF UNIVERSITIES IN TURKEY

Education, as a crucial aspect of national policy needs to be targeted, planned and organized well. The decisions taken in this field, which are intended for shaping the future of society, are crucial for new generations. The phenomenon of education, which promotes an individuality paradox which is dependent on whether the university accepts or resists change, requires a holistic approach to all the dynamics and a clear delimitation of the boundaries of intervention.

Turkey has recently been going through some radical changes in education accompanied by some specific qualitative and quantitative transformations (Sargin, 2014).

The increased number of universities in Turkey was brought about by the law allowing for the establishment of foundation universities which has not only brought about the concept of "multitude" (Hardt and Negri, 2001) to the

agenda of the country but it has also raised some concerns about the quality of education. Whether the increase in the number of universities is good or bad for the country is an issue that has been much debated. As far as the quality of university is concerned, there have been questions about whether the sheer number of universities would cause a quality problem on the one hand. On the other it was agreed that this multitude of choices could create a more competitive environment; and this, in turn, would be a positive thing aiding in stripping universities of their heavy and slow structure. The faculties of architecture, as individual objects within this multitude, have to make a self-assessment and they have to rethink their roles in terms of their social contribution.

In this environment of multitude, which is characterized by radical transformations and new evolutions, it is now fundamental for all institutions to decide where, how and with which tools they position themselves. Some universities have aimed to create their own new missions and environments through the maintenance of minimal but effective regulations. Some have tried to maintain their conventional structure despite all the contemporary pressures that have been exerted upon them, while others have tried to free themselves of their old missions, identifying themselves more closely with the new ones. The more recently established universities have often been fighting for an existence in this competitive environment, whilst searching for the models, which would be optimally directive for them.

To sum up, the presence of numerous and recently established foundation universities have caused a change in the traditional environment of education in Turkey. This has resulted in a complicated environment leading to questions about the quality of education. While some faculties have come up with unsubstantiated slogans which are used continuously to promote their prestigious educational schedules in order to survive and appeal to successful students and their platforms. Some other faculties are managing to capitalize on the environment of multitude and to create liberalizing togetherness through generating high quality cooperation and partnerships while maintaining their specific individual structure. The latter also creates different learning platforms for their students.

The process, which is characterized by significant competition among the universities across Turkey, will be interpreted in reference to the position and practices of the Faculty of Architecture in Erciyes University in the following parts of the paper.

#### **APPROACHES, POLICIES AND PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE IN ERCIYES UNIVERSITY**

The Faculty of Architecture at Erciyes University set a

target for itself. The faculty aimed to be a more active, more participative and more social entity within the university.

Architecture is a visual art. The visual effects of space, in the examination of architecture clearly matter. The Faculty building can be conceived as a shop window representing the image of the institution. If the faculty aims to achieve serious consideration in its relationships with other institutions and persons, established through its international cooperation programs, the quality of the space offered to its guests should have the desired visual and technical qualities. From our point of view, it is necessary to improve the existing structure of the faculty and complete its necessary infrastructural work in order to achieve this.

Primarily, we have strengthened the IT infrastructure of our building; we have set up a videoconferencing system for national and international calls in our convention hall and we have created two studios. In addition, we have ensured the security of our structure by fitting turnstiles and a video surveillance system. All students are now issued with special entrance cards, which are also designed to increase each student's sense of belonging to the faculty. These cards are used to access and exit from the building. Exhibition areas and workshops with audio systems for playing music have also been established. The acquisition of new furniture, paintings and lighting fixtures has been facilitated by donations or bought by ourselves. These re-adjustments to the layout and contents of our building has made it better suited to architectural training.

In parallel with these structural renovations, we have revised our educational curriculum in line with the Bologna process, MIAK (Architecture Accreditation Board) and international accreditation so that it responds to the modern issues and contemporary requirements of contemporary architecture.

For architectural education, visual observation is as important as the theoretical basis. Bearing this in mind, we have aimed to consolidate our students' visual observation by organizing technical visits both at home and abroad. During such technical visits, our university has developed cooperative links with other prominent universities; and the students have thus had the opportunity to get in touch with these universities and to garner their support. We have already visited the important sites and architecturally valuable buildings of many cities under the guidance of stakeholder universities located in these cities. The narratives provided by the professors of those universities have allowed students to gain valuable architectural insight into the buildings of these cities whilst acquiring the targeted outcomes of the particular course.

The rapidly increasing number of universities has created a severe shortage of academics across Turkey. When we have faced this significant problem, we have

tried to solve it through cooperation. We have concluded cooperation agreements with reputable and experienced universities such as Yıldız Technical University, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (M.S.G.S.), Dokuz Eylül University and METU to name a few. In addition joint project groups were facilitated during some semesters.

These cooperative ventures have created a positive synergy between partner faculties, managerial staff and academic staff as well as between students, and have resulted in the development of numerous parallel activities such as publications, exhibitions and workshops.

In addition to these cooperative programs, we have invited architects, who have proved themselves either in Turkey or abroad, to visit both our studio projects and our reviews. These architects work together with us on a full-time or part-time basis. Emre AROLAT, together with his group leaders Natali TOMBAK and Nil AYNALI, have supervised the design studios of our Faculty for two consecutive semesters. Murat AKSU and Umut İYİĞÜN from MUM Architecture have contributed to our faculty every week for 6 semesters. Didier LAROCHE from ENSAS University has been employed at our Faculty for 2 semesters bringing his contribution of an international dimension. A certain number of competent academics from M.S.G.S. University, Dokuz Eylül University and Yıldız Technical University have participated in our studios together with our students every week. These experiences with practicing architects and their intellectual concerns, have made a significant contribution to the personal and professional development of our students.

In the central Anatolian city of Kayseri, it is difficult to find events like exhibitions, conferences, seminars, panels and music recitals that would also serve to support architectural training. We aim to provide the opportunities for our students to attend and experience such scientific and artistic events and in so doing to develop themselves and to broaden their visions. To do so, we have organized many events together with the Chamber of Architects and The Metropolitan Municipality of Kayseri. The classical music recital that we have organized jointly with The Austrian Embassy was an unforgettable experience not only for our students but also for the citizens of Kayseri.

Over the last 3 years, many scientific and artistic activities, including 14 workshops, 52 lectures, 14 exhibitions and 3 panels were organized by our faculty. These events have all aimed to create various platforms to broaden our students' visions. This present article intends to share some of our experiences through presenting the outcomes of two important workshops the Strasbourg/Germir workshop and the Ağırnas studies, that were organized in collaboration with multiple partners and stakeholders.

## KAYSERİ / GERMİR WORKSHOP

The universities that joined this workshop started with twinning the Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality and the Strasbourg Municipality. This collaboration has allowed for the strengthening of academic relations and also the organization of many joint events that took place thereafter. The "International Germir Workshop", which constituted the first stage of academic events, was organized in Germir on 13-23 October 2012 in cooperation with Erciyes University Faculty of Architecture and ENSAS Higher School of Architecture. It was sponsored by Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality and Strasbourg Municipality. It involved 15 French and 15 Turkish students attending this workshop facilitated by 5 French and 5 Turkish academics. Figure 1

In choosing the venue for housing this joint event with the ENSAS School of Architecture in Strasbourg, the city of Germir that has managed to preserve its historic fabric along with its memories was preferred by all parties. Germir boasts traditional dwellings, deserted churches and an urban fabric embedded into the natural landscape. Although it is historically rich with its outstanding architectural texture, it could not integrate with modern life and has almost completely lost its young population who has emigrated (Büyükmihçi, 2012a).

During the workshop, not only the physical environment data, but also the remaining traces of the past within the architectural fabric were examined. The problems that are faced by the citizens of Germir were discussed within the context of conservation theories and contemporary conservation methods. This generated proposals for solutions.

At the workshop, which was devised as a social platform, the participants focused on the potentialities of place, its opportunities and drawbacks as perceived in the objective reality; Based on these perceptions, participants developed ideas and projects that related to the future urban functioning of a particular place by referring back to its multi-cultural past.

The French and Turkish academics and architects came up with specific comments, interesting observations and proposals during this workshop. (Figure 2). This workshop was organized in order to bring together academics and architects in Germir which in itself provides an environment that has conserved the traces of its multi-cultural past. This collaboration has contributed to the planning of Germir through protecting its vibrant character and conserving its original historical characteristics in line with scientific principles. It has led to a critical forum among scientists (Figure 3) who initially came together to discuss these issues and allowed for the development of a different learning platform for students of architecture (Büyükmihçi, 2012b).

The ideas and outcomes generated in Germir were evaluated on a broad-based platform attended by the



**Figure 1.** Photographs from the Germir Workshop.(Photographsby Author.)



**Figure 2.** Created Posters from the Germir Workshop (2012).



**Figure 3.** Photographs from the Germir Workshop.(Photographs © Deanship Archive.)

Kayseri Metropolitan mayor and the Erciyes University Rector, Representatives of the Embassy of France, municipal council members of Kayseri and Strasbourg, the muhtar (selected village head), the inhabitants of Germir, the lecturers, the students and members of the press. Before the meeting took place where the results were assessed, an exhibition was held displaying the products that had been created in the course of the workshop. This exhibition was inaugurated at the exhibition Hall of Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality with an international protocol and admitted the public for one

week (Figure 1).

### STRASBOURG/NEUDORF WORKSHOP

The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the workshop which took place in France between 14 – 24 March 2013, was organized as part of the international scientific co-operation, through the sponsorship of Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality and Strasbourg Municipality, in cooperation with Erciyes University Faculty of Architecture and ENSAS Higher School of Architecture. The workshop was held in the





**Figure 4.** Photographs from the Strasbourg Workshop.(Photographs © Deanship Archive.)

Strasbourg – Neudorf region with the participation of 15 French and 15 Turkish students and was facilitated by 5 French and 5 Turkish academics. (Figure 4).

The venue hosting the workshop was located between the old city of Strasbourg, and Neudorf, a relatively newer settlement. Despite being positioned on the main canal which divides the city into two, the city has not developed in an integrated manner with the road and the public transportation axis. This problem has prompted the local administration to look for solutions.

Within the context of the workshop which was organized as one of the projects launched by the local administration promoting the idea of connecting the two sides of the city, urban and spatial analyses as well as a SWOT study were conducted. The SWOT analysis found the strong points of the area as follows: the mostly intact historic fabric, the specific settlement fabric associated with the area, the existence of high quality structures, the proximity to human scale, the well designed balance between free and occupied spaces, the easy accessibility, the presence of the canal, as well as the trekking and cycling routes, and the presence of areas conducive to new settlements. The weak points of the area are as follows: the highway which prevents a link between the old city and the new settlements which causes a social, spatial and visual disconnection between the two banks, the occasional new settlements contrasting with the historical fabric, the lack of pedestrian routes despite the presence of cycling routes, the problematic intersection of the motor vehicle transportation, the public transportation and the pedestrian travel, the lack of open public spaces, the lack

of urban furniture, the lack of parking lots and the under-utilization of green spaces.

The theme of disconnection was identified as the main problem of this urban area. This problem has also been frequently raised during other discussions necessary for strategic decision making. In this regard, students were divided into groups and were required to prepare scenarios under the headings: visual disconnection, spatial disconnection and social disconnection. They also carried out Urban Design projects.(Figure 5).The proposals for integrating the two disconnected banks of the city on the basis of different parameters were developed during the workshop. The workshop was concluded by the exhibition that displayed the outputs in conjunction with an assessment meeting that was attended by senior local administration officials, municipal councilors, consular representatives, academics and students. (Figure 6)

## **PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOPS, PROCESS AND ACQUISITIONS**

In the course of the workshops, the students were expected to design dynamic, multi-layered and functional structure groups according to their strategic plan. This plan had to include the key points that not only supported and linked the urban and the individual functions of the spaces, thus meeting present needs, but it also needed to vary according to the type of use and urban flow required. In so doing future scenarios for the city were produced. This exercise has been done for different

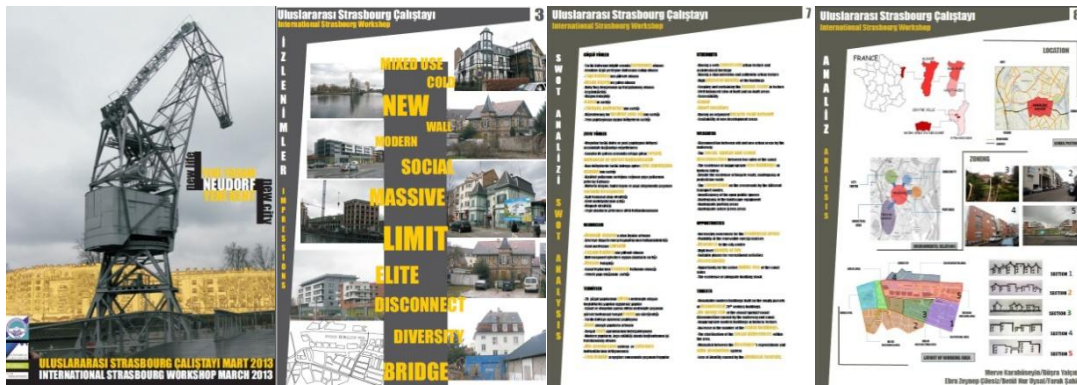


Figure 5. Posters Created from the Strasbourg Workshop (2013).



Figure 6. Photographs from the Strasbourg Workshop.(Photographs © Deanship Archive.)

places in different countries including for areas of a city that failed to integrate into the life of its region and environment. The students were required to solve multiple problems in a short time; they had to work fast, in harmony with one another and in coordination through a real exchange of knowledge and cooperation. They were also required to complete their project despite the limited time.

The training and design works were enriched by the presentations and comments of the French and Turkish lecturers, and offered very valuable experiences for both the local population and the students who were able to express themselves, whilst generating and assessing ideas in an international atmosphere.

The students, who have reflected upon the phenomenon of architecture in real situations have developed awareness about the present importance of the reuse and the versatility of objects and spaces belonging to their daily life, and they have observed different points of view by meeting with the different user groups that constitute a society.

The students, who preferred to focus on the remaining traces of an experience of the past as impacted on the architectural fabric and the physical environment, have

observed that traditional structures can provide functions quite different from their original intended use without losing their original characteristics. They have also learnt how to interpret such historic fabrics from a new point of view. Figure 6

These workshops, which have offered specific and creative opportunities, have turned out to be an enriching and useful experience for both the French and the Turkish students. They have provided important opportunities for Turkish students to experience the Alsace region and the city of Strasbourg, which has kept the traces of an experience of the past within its architectural fabric. They were also able to observe the interaction of the traditional fabric with the everyday life. The French students, on the other hand, were impressed by the spontaneity of the existing social life and the warmth of human relations despite the time-worn physical environment of Germir. (Figure 3-4)

## AĞIRNAS STUDIES

The Faculty of Architecture at Erciyes University, has aimed to shed light on the Ağırnas urban area, the birth



**Figure 7.** Photographs from the “Studio Ağırnas” Exhibition.(Photographsby Author.)



**Figure 8.**The Exhibition Poster of Studio Ağırnas(2014).

place of the great master Sinan the Architect. They aimed to familiarize the younger generation with the area whilst drawing the attention of the scientists of the university thus enabling an opportunity and the environment for its development and reconstruction. In this connection, the Faculty has cooperated with Ağırnas Municipality. As part of this cooperation, all appropriate studio works and other practical courses for the academic year 2012-2013 were directed towards this urban area. As a parallel event, during the course of the cooperation between Erciyes University Faculty of Architecture and Yıldız Technical University, Ağırnas was proposed as a working platform. Yıldız Technical University focused on Ağırnas during some of its graduate and post-graduate classes. As a result, 120 architecture students from Yıldız Technical University, 226 from the Erciyes University Faculty of Architecture as well as 57 academics in total worked on Ağırnas. (Figure 8).

In the course of this work, 346 young people have

reflected on Sinan the Architect; they have visited his birthplace; they have got to know the people of Ağırnas and they have interrogated their own thoughts, aspirations, desires and expectations. They have regretted that the area was not sufficiently protected and that the problems and opportunities of the place have not been adequately identified. They have come up with new ideas on how to restructure Ağırnas in a style worthy of Sinan and in line with scientific criteria applicable to new buildings and how they are integrated into the existing physical environment. They have also developed a number of projects. The outputs of this work has been shared with a broad-based platform through the large exhibition that was organized as part of the “9<sup>th</sup> April events for the commemoration of Sinan the Architect”. (Figure 7) The exhibition was held under the auspices of the President of the Republic and in cooperation with institutions playing an effective role in the reconstruction of the city and the protection of the urban environment.



The works carried out and projects generated were explained to the decision-makers and relevant institutions at an event attended by multiple stakeholders, with the participation of the Governor of Kayseri, Metropolitan Mayor, Erciyes University Rector, Provincial Culture Director, Conservation Board Director, KUDEP officials, the mayor of Ağırnas, the , representatives from the Kayseri section of Chamber of Architects, academics and students. These outputs were also shared with the public for one week.

We hope that this exhibition which reflected how young people viewed, interpreted and envisioned Ağırnas will also shed light on the relevant issues that can be taken up by the local administrations, thus contributing to the development of a vision for the Ağırnas community that can be enacted through the necessary projects. (Büyükmihci, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Mario Salvadori's thoughts on architectural training which state: *"Indeed, architecture cannot be taught. That is why there aren't any good architecture schools. But architecture can be learnt. The existence of good architects proves this"* (Raskin, 1974, Kortan, 2013) defines an interesting paradox. Education, the most prominent object of discussion of this paradox, is indeed about creating an environment conducive to nurturing professional and mental development.

Recent education models are based on *"learning how to learn"* and *"flexibility"* concepts. Teachers are expected to create the necessary conditions for a high quality education. Universities, which have an important role in producing knowledge, are adopting a multi-dimensional, competitive and flexible format based on teaching students how to learn, providing the skills of problem solving and creative thinking. There is a more proactive stance evolving that attaches importance to innovation and R&D, and the generation of projects designed envisioning a better society.

As for the architectural education that involves the solving of complicated problems as a matter of fact, the aims of the latest educational approaches are; to create the intellectual basis, to design the balance between theory and practice, to create relationships between people within the academic circle, to develop multiple and quick thinking ability and to enrich the architectural educational practice based upon real data gleaned from life. At present as academic curricula are shifting away

from the simple transmission of theoretical knowledge, it is noticeable that there is a significant diversification in the agenda of architecture schools.

It is acknowledged by all actors of the academic circle that the existing circumstances do not provide an environment that facilitates the production of scientific knowledge. That is why we face a young generation equipped with only theoretical knowledge, devoid of professional practice and unconscious of social realities. This, in turn, has a negative effect on our built environment. Indeed, the physical environment in which we live reflects this incapacity. One must acknowledge that the education has no chance of being successful unless it responds to the habits and expectations of the young generation whom it educates. In this connection, the education delivered to students of the new generation who are more inclined to discourses and paradigms of the new world should be equipped with the necessary tools. This is only possible through the creation of different learning environments that serve to keep their interest alive. When designing new education platforms for young people, who prefer a faster and more active education model, it should be kept in mind that crisis situations always have the potentials for bringing new developments. Shortcomings with regard to the transmission of knowledge, experiences and acquisition of knowledge to all levels of education need to be addressed. A university model should be designed to put in place universities that attach importance to innovation and R&D works, that are equipped with the necessary technology, are competent in research, possess international recognition as well as increased social responsibility and internalized technological developments.

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