

## Rethinking the Entrance of a Historical Urban Garden / Istanbul Yildiz Park

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### 1 ABSTRACT

Nevertheless Industrial age, western cities were grown by immigrations from the country sides and villages. Architects and urban planners work together to design parks and gardens that integrate nature, zoos, planetariums and public squares such as Central park in New York, Hyde park in London, Tuileries Garden and Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris, etc. While this urban planning revolution acted on western cities, in one of the most important eastern city “Istanbul”, the processes of using gardens displayed differences, use as part of Ottoman palaces, used only by royal members.

Yildiz Park is a historical, urban garden in Beşiktaş district of Istanbul, which is located in Yildiz quarter between the palaces of Yildiz and Çırağan. It was once part of the imperial garden of Yildiz Palace. Extending down the slopes from the palace, this high walled, park was reserved only for palace dwellers. But unfortunately, because of perceiving as a shortcut transportation corridor between Beşiktaş residential area and seaside of Ortaköy, and varying from garden to car parking area; cause decreases on awareness of its historical background and being remembered as an urban public space, used in our daily life. With the scope of increasing the awareness of Yildiz Park and also trying to teach the importance of historical buildings and places to the junior class students, which are in the first year of architectural education; we have decided to make a second semester architectural studio “Being in Yildiz Park” in Istanbul Kultur University. In studio works, first year architecture students tried to design new entrances of Yildiz Park without interfering with its existing historical doors and walls. And also they made design alternatives to provide Yildiz Park to be an attractive and memorable place for citizens again. The aim of this paper is to determine the results from the architectural design studio works to make new design decisions of increasing the awareness on historical buildings and places in architectural design education.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

Today, if the historical remains in cities are not integrated into the daily life, the urbanization process will fail and urban centres will continue to lose population. Accordingly, history will become both a cultural obstacle and a bother for urbanites (Karaman, 1999). Hence, revealing the historical and physical value of urban areas and remnants and bringing them into the daily lives of urbanites play an important role in terms of architectural design. The purpose of historical and urban preservation is to prevent historical environments from falling into ruin, to protect and maintain the entirety of the physical and social values that create these environments, and to integrate them into today’s urban life.

It is essential to first identify the “cultural significance” that will be the basis of any intervention planned for historical settings. “Cultural significance” refers to the body of aesthetic, historical, scientific, social and spiritual values contained in historical settings, as specified in the Burra Charter created by Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites).The physical and historical value of cultural significance include, in order of precedence, the following: the building type and period, its preservation status (existing as a whole / a part of the whole / remnant / trace etc.), its accessibility and perceptibility, its research/investigation status, its physical and functional continuity, its integration status, its rarity/typicality, and its conservation status (Aykaç, 2008).

The act of building a new structure should be considered as a part of the conservation process that aims to ensure the vitality of the fabrics. In other words, the more historical fabrics can be integrated with modern life, the less risk there will be of destruction, deterioration and depopulation. On the other hand, as long as a new structure achieves historical continuity with the fabric of the place, it can be an integral part of the context, can be a part of the design infrastructure for the new architecture that will replace it, and, in this sense, and can contribute to the vitality of the fabric.

The task of designing a new building in an old fabric requires an extensive work covering a creative process managed by the architect. Although the designs based on this problem are produced or addressed during the higher semesters of the architectural design education, perception of the historical fabric and production of place-bound designs constitute a problematic that can be addressed in any semester. This study evaluates the end products of a study conducted to develop the ability of 1st year architecture students to demonstrate an absolute perception with regard to a historical setting/fabric/element in accordance with the temporal and spatial conditions in which it exists, while also demonstrating the sensitivity to make designs incorporating them. One of the objectives of 1st year architectural education is to raise awareness on design strategies, decision mechanisms and the influences that guide them, so as to be able to bring out the creativity in students, all of whom have different cognitive characteristics and spatial experiences. In this context, architectural design, which is the foundation of architectural education, is something that is experienced rather than taught. It is necessary to reconsider the steps that will enable the students to experience the historical setting perception starting from the 1st year, and incorporate it into the design problem.

### **3 THE PHENOMENON OF NEW BUILDING OR ADDITIONAL BUILDING IN A HISTORICAL SETTING**

Historical urban fabrics have been used by new generations either in their original states or after making some alterations. And as the social and eco-cultural structure has changed, so has the physical structure. In turn, the physical structure has resulted in changes in the social structure. With these changes, historical settings also provide the lifestyle that people subconsciously yearn for.

Empirical studies examining which environmental qualities are received with admiration by people have revealed the following results:

-People evaluate as beautiful the architecture that is in coherence with a composition that is in harmony with the natural, historical and social setting, which possesses as much green as possible along with originality and novelties, and which is well-planned, well-maintained and practical in its construction,

-If a building has some common characteristics stemming from the natural and socio-cultural qualities of people along with characteristics such as belonging to a specific location or time or featuring a certain level of novelty, then such architecture can be said to have everything that is necessary for the concept of beauty in architecture, eliciting aesthetic admiration.

-People want to see some effects of their traditions and cultures in the constructed setting, while they also want to see something new in that same setting (Şentürer, 1995).

In this context, the most important aim of conservation should be to keep alive the historical setting by equipping it with some new urban functions. On the other hand, the subjects of building additional structures in a historical setting or converting the historical setting for a new purpose mean bringing out the history and rendering it readable, viewable and perceptible.

Additions to historical buildings arise from the need to incorporate new spaces that will serve the secondary function designated for the historical building in the course of its renovation, and the need to ensure integrity in terms of aesthetic, functional or structural balance in the damaged sections of historical building. In the process of transferring to future generations the historical and cultural assets by keeping them alive, the aim should be to either maintain the original function, or maintain functions that are close to the building's original function. In the process of connecting the auxiliary spaces, defined as contemporary annexes, to the historical building, it is expected that these additions will cause minimum interference with and damage to the historical fabric, and that the annexes will reflect the characteristics of the period in a way that can be read from the outside. This is because the concept of "contemporary" is defined as "being in conformity with the understanding, mentality and conditions of the current period" (Tanaç Zeren, 2010).

Although any addition to a historical building seems more difficult than a new design created from scratch, it also has the quality of challenging the individual and motivating his perceptions in terms of creativity in design. Article 13 of the Venice Charter states that “Additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings”. In this context, new additions should not overshadow the old parts of the building, should be far from being extravagant or excessive, and should not result in turning the historical building into an addition of the new structure. The addition should neither be a copy of the original structure, nor merely a patch added to the structure. Where to place such addition on the historical fabric is also another design problem.

#### 4 EXPERIENCES ON THE WORLD

While urban designs from the world offer examples aiming to preserve and reveal historical and archaeological sites, increase their perceptibility and integrate them with contemporary urban life, there are very few good examples from Turkey where most examples include some implementation errors stemming from either political or technical reasons.

Following the decision to convert the Louvre Palace into a museum, Architect I.M. Pei designed a large glass pyramid to stand over the new entrance in the main court, the Cour Napoléon. Although this glass pyramid is like an addition to the historical structure, it can also be perceived as a new building when considered in terms of scale. This widely talked of glass pyramid is an important example reflecting the architectural identity of its period and presenting a contrast to the historical structure rising behind it, both due to its geometric form and since it rises before this rectangular historical culture which itself is a world heritage. This contemporary addition serves various functions such as regulating all entrances and exits of the palace and featuring a conference hall, a restaurant and various technical volumes (Tanaç Zeren, 2010).



Fig. 1: The Glass Pyramid at the Entrance of the Louvre Palace

In the project carried out for the Roman amphitheatre located in today's historical fabric in Saragossa, Spain, a top cover aiming to protect the current remnants was suggested; information panels and platforms for walking among the ruins were also constructed along with this top cover (Aykaç, 2009).

With its top cover designed by Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue, Santa Caterina is an assertive and resplendent marketplace bursting with colour in Barcelona. The wavy roof with Seville tiles hangs on steel arches supported with a steel and wooden frame. Although computer wizardry has helped in creating the roof style and structure, the individual laminated roof panels were cut manually; the design is integrated with the historical fabric in a striking way, within a multitude of strange curves.



Fig.2: Santa Caterina Market, Barcelona



Fig. 3: The Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona

“The Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona has a floor area of 15,000 m<sup>2</sup>, 4,000 of which are exhibition spaces. It also has an auditorium, a bookstore and various multiuse seminar and lecture rooms. The CCCB occupies part of the old Casa de Caritat almshouse, built in 1802 and serving this role until 1957. The remodelled premises are the work of the architects Helio Piñón and Albert Viaplana, and, in 1993, the project was awarded the FAD and Ciutat de Barcelona Architecture Prizes. The new project replaced the north wing, completing the original U-shaped layout with a 30-metre high prismatic volume, presenting a spectacular glazed facade that projects into the courtyard at the top. With its interplay of reflections, this new feature becomes a mirror of the surrounding rooftops and a prime lookout point over the city, as well as

housing internal communications (halls, lifts and stairs). In the spring of 2011, the CCCB expanded its premises with the incorporation of the former theatre of the Casa de Caritat, which has recently been remodelled. The project, designed by Martinez Lapeña-Torres Arquitectos, SL, forms a basement-level connection with the current premises, in the Pati de les Dones courtyard, and addresses the old theatre, built in 1912 by the architect Josep Goday i Casals, and part of one of the 19th-century cloisters of the former Hospital de la Caritat“ ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

The archaeological sites found during foundation excavations in new construction sites in Turkey and the problem of how to protect these sites have once again proven the seriousness of the subject of new designs in historical sites. The archaeological site of Yenikapı harbour, unearthed during the excavations for the Marmaray Light Rail project, and the recent developments about the additional building that the Four Seasons Hotel plans to erect on the Palatium Magnum (the Great Palace of Constantinople) also support the seriousness of this subject.

When all these developments are evaluated within the scope of architectural education programmes, it becomes even more important to start from the 1st year on the subjects of viewing, seeing and perceiving the historical setting and the ability to design with it.

## **5 SENSITIVITY IN VIEWING THE HISTORICAL SETTING IN 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR EDUCATIONAL DESIGN INSTRUCTION**

The programmes formulated by the architecture schools around Turkey in line with their own specific purposes have become varied in time, resulting in various different methods applied, especially in the 1st year of architectural education. The 1st year architectural education in Turkey is the transition phase from the primary and secondary education environment, which is based more or less on rote-learning and repetition, to a higher education environment that promotes a system of critical and creative thinking. In this phase, studio works become important. To this end, it should be a priority to create a studio environment where students can bring out their creative skills during the 1st year design studies. Students should be asked to suggest solutions to the small problems that nurture this environment; they should be encouraged to research the history, the setting and the location, and they should be given assignments requiring them to present the findings from their researches, thereby improving their critical skills.

When starting their architectural education, all students have some experiences of form and space, gained since childhood in their structured environments. Students should be given opportunities to make them confident about what they can do and create, beyond what they know, regarding form and space, without disregarding this reality and in a way that will enable them to review their perceptions about their structured environments, at the beginning of the learning process (Radford, 2000). Viewing/seeing/perception exercises are the foremost skills that should be taught during the 1st year of architectural education. Whatever the methods may be, the exercise to apply these skills, which aim to develop creativity, in combination with the historical setting may seem difficult; yet it is clear that the student will gain a sensitivity about viewing/seeing and perceiving the historical setting, starting from the 1st year.

Thanks to design problems formulated in line with this view, the student gains the ability to keep the elements of the historical structures with which he is endeavouring to associate, in the way of producing the new structure within a new context and with stylistic differentiation and richness, to repeat the duty cycles, to maintain the rhythms and mass and planning articulations, to evaluate the directional and topographical characteristics, to build visual, functional and structural connections with the historical building, and to integrate them, along with many other exercises. The most important knowledge-skill that the student should be equipped with at this point is how to be sensitive towards the historical setting; knowledge and skills related to conservation and restoration are expected to be given to students in later semesters.

## **6 CASE STUDY/ ENTRANCE TO YILDIZ PARK: BEING IN THE YILDIZ PARK**

With the help of historical entrance to Yildiz Park, try to teach first year-architectural students “how to re-design historical buildings or places without interfering their existing structures”. And also it is aimed to introduce students to conceive such as activity, motion, perception, space, the structural systems on built environment, in addition to gaining a perception on activities, activity/ space/ body/ object relations and the bodily experience of activity.

Thus, we have decided to make the second semester architectural studio with the topic of “Entrance to Yildiz Park-Being in Yildiz Park” in Istanbul Kultur University. Students tried to design new entrances of Yildiz Park without interfering with its existing historical doors and walls. It was asked to suggest different design alternatives to provide Yildiz Park to be an attractive and memorable place for citizens again. And also, asked to propose additional programmes such as box-office, book store, seminar room, tourist bureau/information and public square, etc. based on scenarios.

Aftermath, according to design works, students’ proposals generally seem to have quite similar conceptual method of approach in re-designing the entrance without interfering with its existing historical doors and walls, which can be classified into four different conceptual groups. These are;

- Landsaped entrance
- Orient to entrance (city to historical park)
- New entrances (underground entrance alternative)
- Increase the importance of entrances (with additional programmes)

Concept 1  
Landsaped entrance

Concept 2  
Orient to entrance

Concept 3  
New entrances

Concept 4  
Increase the importance  
of entrances



Table 1: Four Different Conceptual Groups of Entrance to Yildiz

In Concept 1, students used landscape design approach to re-activate the park entrance and increase the awareness of historical city park. In Concept 2, students designed structural elements (arcs, ramps, material paths, structural shells, etc.) to orient the users to re-appear the defaced city memory of Yildiz Park entrance. In Concept 3, underground entrance proposes an alternative-mix programmed- exit not to annoy the structure of historical entrance. In Concept 4, with additional programmes, tried to increase the importance of the entrance over daily life in Istanbul City.

## 7 RESULTS OF THE CASE STUDY

When the results of the studio study were compared, it was found that although students preferred different architectural solutions independent from each other, some students stood out with their suggested approaches. When the reasons for this situation are examined, it can be said that the main reason was that the architecture students included in the field work were 1st year students who had just been introduced to the experience of making designs that could bring together the different interaction points of the city. The second reason may be that the 1st year students, having no knowledge about the methods for preserving old structures, mostly preferred suggesting designs that did not touch the old historical park gates and wall structure, that solved the problem under and above the ground, that added new programmes to the entrance axle without changing the current passage function, and that guided towards the entrance by using structural elements, as they were afraid of making mistakes.

However, whatever the design proposals for the gates of the Yıldız Park may be, thanks to the design problems formulated within the scope of the studio work, the 1st year students found the opportunity to learn by experience how to keep the elements of the historical structures with which they were trying to associate, in the way of producing the new structure within a new context and with stylistic differentiation and richness, to repeat the duty cycles, to maintain the rhythms and mass and planning articulations, to evaluate the directional and topographical characteristics, to build visual, functional and structural connections with the historical building, and to integrate them.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The existence status of historical structures in their original settings with the necessary importance given to them is directly proportional to the interventions made to them. In this context, as hard as it may be to conserve the structures/buildings with the correct methods, it is equally hard to determine the attitude that will be adopted in the interventions undertaken to make additions to historical buildings or render them more visible, and to produce the design decisions. The manner in which this challenge is addressed starting from the 1st year of architectural education may vary according to the studio methods applied. The aim is to provide the 1st year students with exercises that will enable them to apply their acquired skills, which aim to increase their creativity, in association with the historical setting, and to equip them with a measure of sensitivity about viewing/seeing and perceiving the historical setting right from the 1st year.

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