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An examination of reflections of mainstream and architectural approaches in architectural design studios

Öze Uluengin[a]*, Senem Kaymaz Koca[b]

[a,b]*Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Yıldız Technical University, 34349 Beşiktaş, Istanbul-Turkey*

Abstract

This study concentrates on the experiences acquired in the architectural design studios which are a prominent part of the architectural education, and evaluates also the effects the space where the project is being put to life has on an architectural product. In this sense, this study includes mainstream design approaches, based on the idea that an inter-dependence is mandatory between space, context and the architectural outcome; and also contarian ones which criticizes this interaction. This paper aims to weigh the potential that these two different approaches discover whilst interacting with space against the conceptualization and spatialisation methods through the design process. In order to do so, the study advances in two separate stages: The first stage develops a discussion of the mainstream design approaches, which are based on the *a priori* and urgent interaction of the architectural product with the space and context, and evaluates also the architectural discourses opposing these ideas. The second section has chosen to dissect two different architectural design studio experiences of Bomonti [B] and Seyrantepe [S], (Districts located both in Istanbul) based on the context set forth in the first section. Thus in this manner, six student studies with architectural products relating to different districts of Istanbul have been chosen from these design studios and they have been evaluated on the basis of interaction they have implemented with space. The conclusion of the study is that the architectural design process incorporates multiple potentials to the architectural understanding, and that the education given in the architectural design studios carries an important responsibility in the development of the design approaches. In this sense, as an independent platform, the architectural education is seen as a valuable laboratory, which has the ability to expose the embedded potentials of space and its design.

*Keywords:*Architectural education; design studio; oppositional architecture; Bomonti; Seyrantepe; Istanbul

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +90 212 383 2602
  *E-mail address:*ouluengin@yildiz.edu.tr; ozeuluengin@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Throughout history, the concept of space has been the subject of various discussions in different disciplines, being primarily philosophy. In fact, it is possible to state that the breaking points in this field overlap the critical breaking points in the history of thought. Thus, defining this concept by today's concepts is vital in order to comprehend the present-day design approaches. However, today's slippery ground leads to a much greater diversification of the discourses relating to space, and this paves the way for the emergence of very different approaches.

This study concentrates on the experiences acquired in the architectural design studios which are a prominent part of the architectural education, and evaluates the different design approaches towards the properties of the space where the project is being put to life. In this sense, in addition to the 'mainstream' design approaches, based on the idea that interdependence is mandatory between space, context and the architectural outcome; the 'contrarian' designs, which take a critical stance against this interaction are also included in the study.

This paper, which aims to weigh the potentials that these two different approaches discover whilst interacting with space and the conceptualization and spatialisation methods through the design process, advances in two separate stages. In the first stage, a discussion of the mainstream design approaches, which are based on the probable and urgent interaction of the architectural product with the space and context is developed; and also the architectural discourses opposing these ideas are mentioned. In the second stage, on the other hand, two architectural design studio experiences carried out at different times in two separate working areas in Istanbul – Bomonti and Seyrantepe – are tried to be dissected on the basis of the context set forth in the first stage.

2. Mainstream and Opposition[1] in Architecture

As many disciplines today, architecture has undergone a series of rapid transformations. Concepts such as *'place'*, *'context'* and *'function'* which shape the comprehension of space, survived until the last quarter of the 20th century, yet, these concepts are no longer sufficient in understanding today's architecture and space approaches. According to Harvey ((1997)2006), the changes taking place in the production technologies triggered the transformation of the space, and the serial production which emerged together with modernism created a crisis environment which led to radical changes in the perception of space. In this way, the fragmentation, insecurity and ephemerality of the space, which was begun to be seen as a capital by being localized in the center of capitalism, started to be questioned.

In this context, the study is based on the assent that the process of comprehending architecture and space can be read through two reciprocal channels as ***'mainstream'*** vs. ***'opposition'***. Starting from the traditional narratives[2], the 'mainstream' architecture approaches (Moles, 1993),(Newton, 1846),(Malzkorn, 1998),(Howard, 2010) are defined through the concept of space which is in constant transformation. It is possible to evaluate the relation between the space and the context in this approach, through the relation between the 'time' phenomena and space. In traditional rhetoric, in which time and space are conceptualized separately from each other, the production is composed of the reiteration of the accepted and learned information in order to produce the 'same'. The uttered word had only one

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[1]Opposition means resistance or contrariety against a sentiment, thought, decision or action (Meydan Larousse, 1985). In democracies, on the other hand, opposition means the ones who are not in power (Meydan Larousse, 1985). This word, which is used in this study to describe architecture and space, in fact, includes both meanings.

[2]This concept most often passes as *'traditional rhetoric'* in English literature. 'Traditional' means, "cultural remnants, habits, information, rules and attitudes, customs and traditions which have power of sanction and inherited from generation to generation, as they are respected and time-honored (Turkish Language Association – TDK). In this study, this concept of 'traditional' is used to indicate the time in the history of thought when religion prevailed instead of science; information, perception and representation processes were yet to be solved; human mind had not yet started to question the concept of space, along with many other concepts; and only a set of rules were accepted. According to Carpo (2001), the traditional narratives define a system in both the Classical and Medieval ages, which is consistent within itself, economic according to its own rules; and which is dependent on the memorization of the production methods. In this context, arts have become a field advancing under the guidance of verbal discourses determined to the memory.