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MASTER THESIS



**SOLIDARITY ARCHITECTURE:  
PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PRACTICES IN TURKEY**

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## ABSTRACT

### SOLIDARITY ARCHITECTURE: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN IN TURKEY

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Consumption-based economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have found their counterparts in architecture with mediatic projects and ‘starchitect’ figures. Urban transformation projects are the most visible manifestations of these developments, which support profit-oriented constructions and deepen social inequalities. Resistant, transformative, interdisciplinary and participatory architecture groups emerged in this context in contrast to competitive, mainstream architectural practices that stimulate consumption.

This thesis analyzes contemporary solidarity architecture practices in Turkey by focusing on the participant groups of Solidarity Architecture Exhibition (2017). The aim is to reveal the potentials and means of participatory practices which operate as alternatives in the dominant economic and political system.

**Keywords:** Solidarity Architecture, Participatory Design Practices, Citizenship Rights, User Participation.

## ÖZ

### DAYANIŞMA MİMARLIĞI: TÜRKİYE’DE KATILIMCI TASARIM

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Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Mimarlık

Danışman: Prof. Dr. Gülsüm BAYDAR

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21. yüzyılın tüketime dayalı ekonomi politikaları, mimarlıkta karşılığını medyatik projeler ve ‘yıldız mimar’ figürleriyle bulur. Söz konusu gelişmelerin en yaygın dışavurumu ise kar amacı güden ve toplumdaki sosyal eşitsizlikleri derinleştiren kentsel dönüşüm uygulamaları olmuştur. Bu bağlamda tüketimi teşvik eden, rekabetçi ana akım mimarlık pratiklerine tezat direnen, dönüştüren, disiplinler arası üretimler yapan katılımcı mimarlık pratikleri ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu tez Dayanışma Mimarlığı Sergisi katılımcı gruplarına odaklanarak Türkiye’deki güncel dayanışmacı mimarlık pratiklerini incelemektedir. Tezin amacı katılımcı pratiklerin, hakim ekonomik ve politik sistemde alternatif birer yol oluşturdukları yöntemler ve potansiyellerini ortaya koymaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dayanışma Mimarlığı, Katılımcı Tasarım Pratikleri, Kent Hakkı, Kullanıcı Katılımı.

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I would like to express my enduring love to my family, who are always supportive, loving and caring to me in every possible way in my life.

Ilgım TUR  
İzmir, 2021

## TEXT OF OATH

I declare and honestly confirm that my study, titled “SOLIDARITY ARCHITECTURE: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PRACTICES IN TURKEY” and presented as a Master’s Thesis, has been written without applying to any assistance inconsistent with scientific ethics and traditions. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources are indicated in the text and listed in the list of references.

Ilgin TUR

Signature

.....

July, 2021

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B1A	<i>Başka Bir Atölye</i> (Another Kind of Workshop)
HİM	<i>Herkes İçin Mimarlık</i> (Architecture For All)
DUA	<i>Düzce Umut Atölyesi</i> (Düzce Hope Studio)
KBİKP	<i>Kuzguncuk Bostanı İyileştirme ve Koruma Projesi</i> (Kuzguncuk Orchard Recovery and Protection Project)
TYBKG	<i>Tarihi Yedikule Bostanları Koruma Girişimi</i> (the Initiative for Preserving the Historical Yedikule Orchards)
MM	<i>Mimar Meclisi</i> (The Architects' Assembly)
PP	Plankton Project
TOKİ	<i>Toplu Konut İdaresi</i> (Housing Development Association)

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this thesis is on participatory design, which designates a form of alternative architectural practice among others such as design-build programs, design activism and self-help. Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, a clarification is in order before further exploration.

“Design-build programs” emerged as an alternative to the standard tripartite legal structure comprised of owners, architects, and contractors. Design-build combines design and construction, typically with the goal of reducing project costs. In education, it is a pedagogical alternative to the theoretical, desk-based, and media-driven design process commonly featured in design schools (Canizaro V.,2012). The precedents date back to the 19th c., when education programs were developed in the United Kingdom, based on art and social critic John Ruskin’s ideals.<sup>1</sup> The new British design schools spread to European countries with varying degrees of modification. In the early 1920s the Bauhaus school established the origins of today’s design-build schools which aim at reconstituting a critical relationship between the designer and the built product outside profit-oriented mechanisms (Longman,2010). After mid-century, the critique of increasing concern with architecture’s formal aspects resulted in the rise of social justice issues in Yale University. Since the 1990s design build programs have spread throughout the world. Each program adopts the design-build pedagogy for different reasons ranging from community service to experimentation with digital delivery methods. (Chi, 2002).

“Self-help” is a concept which is defined by John Turner (1976, in Huque 1982) as “the concept that signifies the competence of a household to arrange accommodation according to its priorities”. According to Charles Abrams (1964) most of the residential building stock in the world falls into this category. Today many governments supported projects enable families to build their own houses, as a result

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<sup>1</sup>Ruskin (1871) emphasized the importance of education in social change. He announced his education program as an alternative to the theory-based British education system in his various printed works. His active learning method was based on on-site applied courses and studies which combined different disciplines to teach the symbolic meanings, commercial value, and social reform. (Atwood, 2008)

of the demand by people rather than the imposition of governments or experts (Puph,1998:2003).

“Design activism” refers to architectural production motivated by the desire for social change. It is generally defined as “representing design’s central role in promoting social change, raising awareness about values and beliefs or questioning the constraints that mass production and consumerism place on people’s everyday life.” (Resnick, 2019). According to architectural historian Iain Boyd Whyte (1982) the ideals of the Modern Movement (1920) constitute the roots of design activism. He suggests that the Modern Movement was concerned less with function and purpose and more with millenarian dreams of a society which might be realized through the mediation of architecture.

“Participatory design” or “participation in architecture” is defined as the involvement of the user during the design process (Blundell Jones; Petrescu; Till, 2005). The first known example of participatory architecture is the New Gurna design by Hassan Fathy in 1945. Until the late 60’s the term did not appear in architectural discourse. The user as an agent, entered architectural discourse since then, and changed the architect’s role from expert to professional assistant in the context of participatory design.

The term participatory design breeds many other names and concepts. “Co-design” is one of the most current ones. It refers to the co-creativity of designers and people not trained in design working together in the design development process. (Sanders; Stappers,2007) A main creed of co-design is that users, as experts of their own experience, are central to the design process.

Because of the inclusive character of the term, I use ‘participatory design’ in this thesis while investigating the current state of such practices in Turkey. I specifically focus on the practices of the participants of the Solidarity Architecture Exhibition held by the Chamber of Architects İstanbul Büyükkent Branch in 2017.

## **1.1. Aim**

This thesis aims to reveal the ways by which participatory practices operate as alternatives in the dominant economic and political system in Turkey. It examines critically the operational procedures of participatory design practices as distinct from mainstream ones. By dominant system I refer to neo-liberal policies that govern most of the architectural practices today, both in terms of building types and design processes, both of which are based on profit generating incentives. By ‘alternative practices’ I refer to autonomous architectural productions which fall outside of the economy of consumer capitalism.

The consumption-oriented capitalist policies of the 21st century is manifested in architecture by megaprojects and 'starchitects'. Projects are defined by their designers as signature products with a brand value that significantly affect the development of cities. The built projects function as advertisement items with their impressive images. The social effects of mega projects, which are detached from their environmental context are at times unpredictable even for their designers. (Moore,2017)

Consumer-capitalism is based on the manipulation of the desires of individuals by using the sign-value of commodities to perpetuate consumption. The construction sector constitutes a prime example of this mechanism as cities are dominated by buildings which are mainly constructed and advertised as commodities that fuel the desire for consumption. Participatory design practices exemplify productions where the use value of the products gains priority and where architectural knowledge is used outside of commercial motivations.

## **1.2. Scope**

This thesis focuses on the operational schemes, tools and visibility strategies of contemporary participatory design practices in Turkey. The scope of this thesis covers the historical development of participatory design in architectural discourse and practice both in global and national contexts and focuses on the means and processes of contemporary practices in Turkey. Following the introductory chapter, the contents are framed under two main sections respectively entitled: “Historical Context 1950s-2000s” and “Contemporary Practices in Turkey”.

The second chapter focuses on the historical background of participatory design both in global and national contexts. In the first part, the development of participatory

design in discursive and practical spheres is examined at the global level. Starting with the ideas of the founders of the phenomenon such as John Habraken, Giancarlo De Carlo, and Lucien Kroll, this part continues with the analysis of built examples and their production processes followed by the study of publications on socially motivated exhibitions of the 2010s like *Small Scale Big Change* (2010), *Think Global Build Social* (2013), *Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities* (2014) and *Reporting From The Front* (2016). This section is also informed by the Spatial Agency project of Jeremy Till and Tatjana Schneider and Sibel Bozdoğan's work on Middle East practices, which are publicized relatively rarely in the latter sources and in architectural discourse. This section concludes with the critique of the paradoxical combination of social responsibility and market pragmatism in such exhibitions.

The second section of this chapter includes a historical analysis of the development of participatory design in Turkey both in discursive and practical terms. In the discursive analysis the social responsibility and political identity of the architect, and collaborative strategies in architectural education are discussed. This is followed by the development of participatory design practices which involve municipal organizations, user cooperatives and various agents of urban regeneration.

The third chapter “Contemporary Practices in Turkey” opens by revealing the political and social environment of architecture after the economic crisis of 2008. Participatory architecture groups which were formed in the following years are addressed as reactions to urban transformation and renewal projects that were carried out without consultation with users and civil society organizations. The rest of this chapter includes in-depth analyses of participatory design practices in Turkey from the viewpoints of their founding aims, production processes and visibility strategies.

The thesis concludes by discussing how the consideration of social needs rather than profit generation is possible by redefining disciplinary boundaries and establishing a communicative environment between institutions, users and professionals.

### **1.3. Method**

The research method of the following study includes primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of interviews, exhibition books, period news and journal articles about practices of participatory design groups and these groups' own websites. Secondary sources include historical and theoretical studies on participatory design,

spatial agency, urban regeneration and the right to the city. The latter include critical interpretations of the works of leading figures in participatory design such as John Habraken, Giancarlo De Carlo and Lucien Kroll. It also comprises the critical theories of Jeremy Till and Tatjana Schneider on 'spatial agency' and their open-source with examples all around the world, as well as Sibel Bozdogan's work on the position of such alternative practices in the Middle East region. In addition, theoretical works of such urban thinkers as David Harvey on the right to the city constitute the background information on the social effects of the 21st century's urban transformation projects.

Interviews with practitioners of participatory design played a significant role in understanding the working patterns of the groups. The interviews were conducted with five of the seven participants of Solidarity Architecture Exhibition: *Başka Bir Atölye* (Another Kind of Workshop), *Herkes için Mimarlık* (Architecture For All.), *Düzce Umut Atölyesi* (Düzce Hope Studio), *Kuzguncuk Bostanı İyileştirme ve Koruma Projesi* (Kuzguncuk Orchard Recovery and Protection Project), *Tarihi Yedikule Bostanları Koruma Girişimi* (the Initiative for Preserving the Historical Yedikule Vegetable Gardens). *Mimar Meclisi* (The Architects' Assembly) and Plankton Project groups are examined through the exhibition book, their media accounts and articles on their productions.

The exhibition book provides valuable information on new pathways opened in architectural discourse and practice such as collective design, rights of residents, sustainability and integration of productive landscapes in urban areas. Both the exhibited projects and the groups' portfolios clearly show that the production process rather than the final product is of primary importance in participatory design practices. The analysis of the media coverage of the groups reveals their priorities in terms of visibility.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT 1950s-2000s

This chapter examines the historical trajectory of participatory design at international and national scales. It offers an analysis of both discursive and practical developments by means of selected examples, aiming to understand the potentials and limitations of such practices.

#### 2.1. Development of Participatory Design

This section offers a critical survey of the beginnings and spread of participatory practices from the late 1950s until the 1980s; their retardation due to the rise of liberal economic policies; and their revival since the 1990s as a reaction to the intensification of profit based urban transformation

##### 2.1.1. Discursive Constructs

Post-World War II conditions stimulated architectural discussions on social needs. Architectural discourse started to stress the limitations of modern architecture in the production of meaning and in addressing cultural and social needs. One of the most significant critiques of the Modern Movement emerged in 1956 by Team 10 during the 10th congress of CIAM. Team 10 primarily criticized the Athens Charter's doctrines on functional zoning of cities and its negative effects on society. Members proposed an alternative which focused on patterns of human interaction rather than categorization of functions. Team 10 prioritized social progress and shifted the vision from the future to the present, from the city and nation to the community and the individual. They objected to the arrogant perspective of the Modern Movement which claimed that architects could change society. Instead, they defined a less heroic character for the profession; making places which would nurture the inhabitants' sense of belonging and identity. (Schumann A., 2007)

The strategies of Team 10 led many architects to experiment and produce new approaches based on these strategies. One of the most popular approaches, 'support and infill', was proposed by Dutch architect and theorist John Habraken in 1961. In his book *Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing*, he named the base building as support and the interior fittings as infill. He argued that the support structures could restore the "natural relation between environmental form and the inhabitant"

(Habraken, 1961). According to Habraken, the city as well as the building is a living-evolving environment which calls for a balance between the use of present-day's technological potentials and the restoration of human relationships. Habraken stated that "if we agree that it is necessary to introduce the inhabitant or active force into the housing process, we can face the future with confidence." (Habraken, 1961) In that way, society would be empowered via activating its smallest.

Another leading figure of Team 10 and founder of participatory design was Italian architect, planner and educator Giancarlo de Carlo. He focused on the inclusion of users in the design process and the political role of architects in his lectures and articles. (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2011) Both in his built and written works, like *Architecture's Public* (1969) he pointed out the importance of the social networks that the built environment would induce. In his Terni Housing project, for example, he insisted on the paid involvement of the steelworkers in the design process. (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2011)

During the 1970s Belgian architect Lucien Kroll adopted Habraken's 'support' theory and became one of the pioneers of participatory architecture. He separated the structural system from the infill of the building and procured a fragmented look of the facades. (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2011) The various inputs obtained from intense consultations with users, resulted in a variety of customized 'infill's. Kroll elaborated on his idea of 'organic disorder' in his written works like *Architecture of Complexity* (1986). According to him, diversity brought creativity and livability to build environments. The role of architects was to facilitate users' participation in the design process and to combine advantages of organization and spontaneity.

Participation was addressed in city planning and interior design as well as architecture. During the 1980s, as a consequence of the dominance of neo-liberal tendencies in diverse geographies, the practice of participatory design came to a halt, but the discourse continued combined with ecological concerns of the period. After the 1990s, problems of over-population and immigration began to dominate the architectural agenda. Such urban theorists as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey were the leading figures in theorizing new agendas. In *'The Right to the City'* (2008), David Harvey highlighted the close relationship between the identity of inhabitants and the built environment. For these theorists, the democratization of citizenship rights was obligatory.

Today's practitioner-researchers work on participation for disadvantaged populations.



Architects like Teddy Cruz and Alejandro Aravena who use participatory design principles to produce projects which consider social, political and economic advantages of users, also participated in such discourses. Aravena, for example, made the ambitious statement that “it’s time to rethink the entire role and language of architecture” (The Guardian, November 20, 2015). According to him, the broadened horizons of today’s architectural environment fed the architectural output differently than the past. Hence, he is convinced that it is time to discuss the relationship between architecture and other fields such as security, public health and environmental issues and how these rather than architectural form should inform a project. Such interdisciplinary relations require an open information flow among all actors for the production of built environments which benefit all citizens.

Another substantial study on the active involvement of different actors in spatial production is the 'Spatial Agency' project by Jeremy Till and Tatjana Schneider. Schneider quoted Anthony Giddens's definition of agency while defining their understanding of spatial agency: [Agency] means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs. Accordingly, 'spatial agency' is defined as a state of continuous action in the space, that gains the feature of temporality, as a social structure and far from the certainty and authoritarianism on which conventional architectural practice and education are based. According to Till and Schneider the behavior of the architect, one agent among all others, should be empowering others for change. (Schneider, 2009)

In her study 'A Case for Spatial Agency and Social Engagement in the Middle East' (2015), critical architectural historian Sibel Bozdoğan makes an important contribution to this thesis, which includes detailed analyses of projects that made a difference and were produced in alternative ways from various parts of the world and in different times. She emphasizes that spatial agency shifted the focus of the discussions of the architectural product from technocratic and aesthetic features to production, occupation and temporality and its relationship with society and nature.

Bozdoğan focuses on the practices that expand the field of architecture using Philipp Oswalt's 'pre and post-architecture' theories. In pre-architecture, architects are figures who proactively identify problems, offer new possibilities and identify new models of collective work; in post-architecture, they re-function and organize the re-use of the existing building stock and make small interventions. Bozdoğan emphasizes that, in

the Middle East countries ruled by authoritarian regimes, practices mostly remain at the stage of negotiations and raising public awareness in the pre-architecture category. However, post-architecture examples for victims of war, immigrants and low-income groups displaced by neo-liberal city policies are mostly realized. To conclude, she deduces that although the latter applications are included in international publications under the title of 'humanitarian design', there are very few examples from the Middle East in the category of people-oriented, socially engaged, participatory design practices compared to other regions of the Global South. (Bozdoğan, 2015)

### **2.1.2. Practical Applications**

Before the term participatory design was coined in the 1960s, renowned architect Hassan Fathy pioneered a participatory practice in his New Gurna project of 1945 (Pyla, 2009). By the demand of the Egyptian Government, he designed a new settlement for an old village next to Luxor Temple.<sup>2</sup> There, users participated in all stages of the design process whereby each dwelling turned out to be unique based on the inhabitants' needs. Fathy saw the project as an opportunity to perform his social and ecological ideas at a large scale. He had one to one contact with the users and made an effort to train laymen with local experts in vernacular construction techniques. Although his proposal is regarded as one of the pioneering examples of participatory design, the project could not be implemented as a consequence of dwellers' resistance to be displaced from their original village.

The 1960s witnessed a dynamic political atmosphere which triggered socialist tendencies in many areas including civil rights, democracy, freedom and social responsibilities of professionals. The relationship between politics and architecture gained priority on the architectural agenda via pioneering works of European architects both in Europe and in less developed regions and the user came to be seen as an active agent in the production processes.<sup>3</sup> In this context various attempts surfaced, which are classified as 'social', 'collaborative' or 'community-based' according to their differing

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<sup>2</sup> Removal of the Old Gurna Village became necessary because of the uncontrollable smuggling of historical artifacts at Luxor Temple excavations. The proposed program by Fathy for the new village included not only housing units but also a construction school, a mosque, a khan and a bazaar. He aimed to supply access to education and a new working field for villagers by training them on traditional construction techniques and Egyptian vernacular architecture. (Haney, Allen, Avrami, and Reynolds, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Such examples include, The Centraal Beheer (1968, Netherlands), Byker Housing Estate (1970, U.K.), Kampung Improvement (1969, Indonesia) and Rimini City Plan (1972, Italy).

goals and methods. Yet they all exemplify participatory design processes whereby the architect turns into an equal member of a team rather than occupying an alienated and elitist position. (Salomon, 2012)

Leading architects including Lucien Kroll, Henry Sanoff, Christopher Alexander and Ralph Erskine produced both written and built works to shift the predominantly unresponsive attitude of architects to users. Combining their experience with nascent social studies working on person-environment relations<sup>4</sup>, that produced data on how buildings were used and how they performed, architects had a chance to design proactively and produce transformable, unfinished schemes for occupants to complete. For example, in the La Meme project, Lucien Kroll conducted several interviews and workshops with students to design a new dormitory. He designed just the structural base of the building and gave the control of interior spaces to their users. The exterior of the building purposefully reflected an eclectic character. (Figure 1)

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<sup>4</sup>Several well-known social scientists started to work on the new field of ‘environmental psychology’ or sociology of housing’ such as Derk De Jonge (1962), Hugo Priemus (1969), Robert Sommer (1969), Harold M. Proshansky (1970). (Voordt and Wegen, 2005)



**Figure 1.** Lucien Kroll, La Meme, Housing for medical students, Louvain, 1970.

Source: <https://www.architectural-review.com>

By the end of the 1960s, as an alternative to participatory design proposals that were based on scientific knowledge and environmental psychology studies, ‘community-based design centers’ emerged and offered an alternative approach which combined professional technical knowledge with moral and political concerns. (Comerio, 1984) These centers were mostly founded in low-income neighborhoods in Western countries but they also worked internationally for the needs of people from underdeveloped countries to offer design and construction assistance. Due to the energy crisis in 1973, ecological approaches started to be incorporated into social concerns of such groups and individual architects. The use of local materials and building techniques became one of the priorities of such projects as the housing project in Malagueira by the renowned architect Alvaro Siza (Figure 2). In his design, Siza adopted characteristics of Mediterranean architecture with low-rise, whitewashed

houses with gardens. He deliberately placed infrastructural elements on viaducts to decrease the cost of repairs. Individual houses were built over existing squatter houses but common social spaces that were included in the plan could not be realized because of conflicts between local and central governments. (Frampton, 2016).

In addition to community centers, local housing cooperatives too were founded in this period which favored a ‘bottom-up’ process of design as an alternative to conventional production procedures.



**Figure 2.** Alvaro Siza, Housing for low-income Roman population, Evora, 1977.

Source: <http://www.alvarosizavieira.com>

These practices maintained their existence until the early 1980s, but most of them suffered from lack of funding and recognition due to the neo-liberal policies of the Reagan-Thatcher era. (Schuman 2006; Toker and Toker, 2006) Until the 1990s participatory design practices lost their popularity and star architects took central stage in architectural production.

One of the leading participatory design-based institutions of the 1990s was founded in 1991 at the Rural Studio, founded by Samuel Mockbee at Auburn University. There, the ‘design-build’ program was based on the collaboration between architecture students and the low-income local population. The success of the program lied not only in its organization but also the innovative use of representational tools that

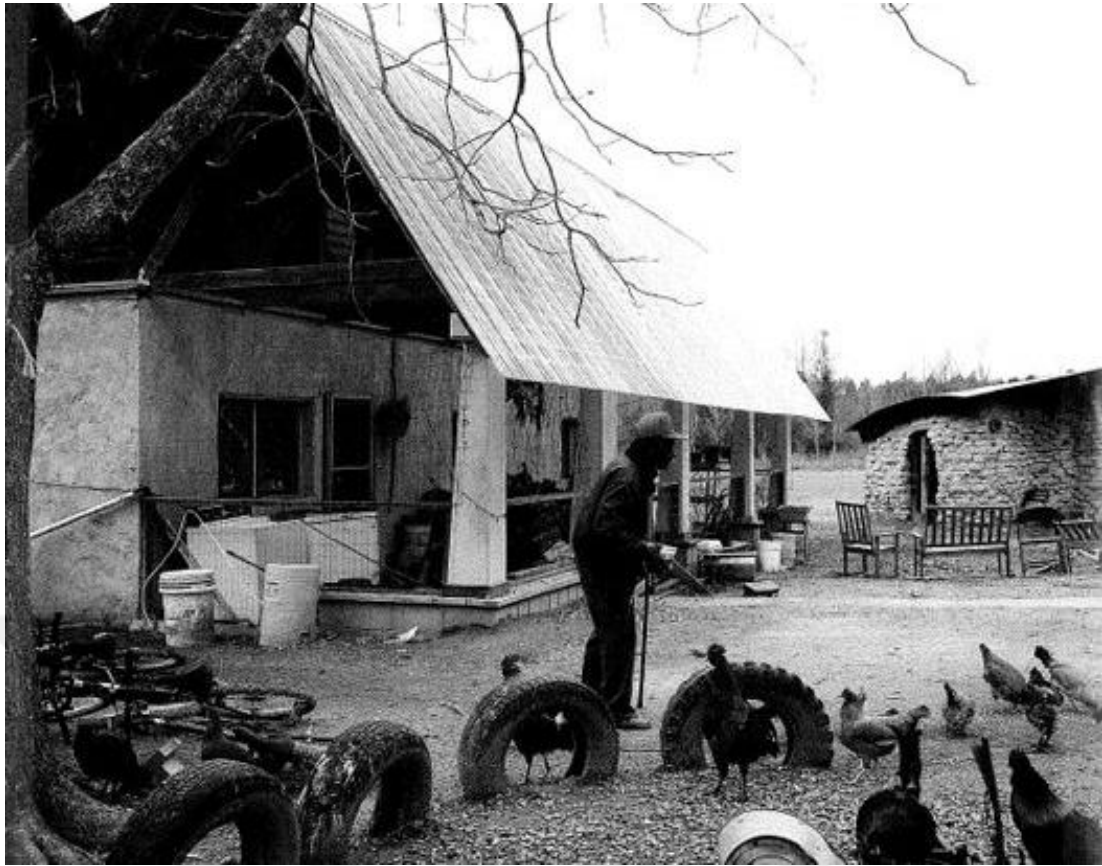
communicated the relationship between design and public good. (Salomon, 2012) Mockbee is largely inspired by drawing and painting in his architectural representations. In one of his early projects with the Rural Studio, Hay Bale House, he started the project with a painting using unusual materials like dried gourds, found wood pieces, turtle shells and rusted metals from the neighborhood. These materials make references to the family's riverside residence, means of earning a living by hunting turtles and building materials of their previous residences. (Figure 3)



**Figure 3.** Samuel Mockbee, The Black Warrior, 1996

Source: <https://www.jstor.org/stable>

The basis of Mockbee and Rural Studio's relationship with their clients is celebrating and understanding but not eliminating their differences. The representation of their built work is also elaborated around the same idea. Photos of the Haybale Project by Timothy Hursley which was exhibited in various prestigious organizations, displayed an ordinary day of the clients in their new house with their own habits. (Figure 4) While representing the humanitarian side of architecture, they chose to emphasize different characters of the users and their sense of belonging in their designs. They achieved this as a consequence of long term, participatory design processes.



**Figure 4.** Rural Studio, Hay Bale House, 1994

Source: <https://placesjournal.org/article/portfolio-timothy-hursley/>

As a consequence of urban overpopulation and neo liberal land-use policies, urban regeneration projects became widespread in the 21st century. Citizenship rights, ‘The Right to the City’, communal ways of production and social justice issues were boosted worldwide. These tendencies became new focal points of participatory design practices. For example, in the Metrocable Project, the Urban Think-Tank group designed not just a station and metro cable system but also a connection between the formal and informal parts of the city, i.e., the slum areas and the urban center. Hence the less privileged population of the slum neighborhoods could reach such urban amenities as education and art. (Figure 5)



**Figure 5.** Urban-Think Tank, Metro Cable design, Caracas,2007.

Source: <https://www.archdaily.com>

Today's participatory design projects are publicized using advanced representational techniques and communication technologies. There are a considerable number of prestigious exhibitions to show participatory design works and their effect on communities<sup>5</sup>. The 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale, curated by Aravena and titled *Reporting from the Front*, arguably marked the culmination of such efforts. By means of this exhibition Aravena, publicized projects from diverse regions, that “managed tough circumstances such as unhealthy state of immigrant or disaster area settlements, shanty towns with intelligent solutions” (Aravena, 2015). This remarkable exhibition and Aravena's manifestations were broadly publicized by the international media which contributed to both the appreciation and critique of such efforts.

The Small Scale Big Change exhibition, which included 11 alternative projects from five different continents, Uneven Growth exhibition, which included strategies to be developed against social problems that six global metropolises will face with overpopulation in the next fifteen years, and Al Jazeera English: rebel architecture documentary series, reveal the differences in priority and operational schemes depending on the context of participatory projects implemented in different parts of the world. Although each production recreates its own operating order in participatory

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<sup>5</sup>Prominent exhibitions include, *Actions: What You Can Do with the City* (2009), Small Scale Big Change (2010), *Design with the Other 90% Cities* (2011), Think Global Build Social (2013), *Reporting From The Front* (2016).



processes, it is also possible to detect regional differences in those that are directly based on the economic, political and social structure in question. Examples from Africa are mostly in the form of providing infrastructure services that cannot be provided by the state, together with volunteer architects and donations, by using local materials and developing innovative vernacular construction techniques with local people in extreme poverty through collaborative construction processes. On the other hand, Latin American examples are current practices that are formed on the basis of left-wing policies, urban informality and self-help housing studies. For instance, the Brazilian chapter of the Rebel Architecture series examines the Rio's Rocinha slum neighborhood. The buildings are produced by the informal local builder Ricardo de Oliviera by means of his own methods alongside reactions to the central government's gentrification decisions. And among all the conflicts, the Rua 4 project, developed by the city planner Luiz Carlos Toledo through workshops with the local people, was carried out in 2011 by the administration, where local people were placed in a facility in the neighborhood. By adopting and co-building the parks, gardens and widened roads, the locals give the spirit to the place again.

Whereas big construction projects and iconic global cities, which are favored by authoritarian governments of the Middle Eastern countries seemingly legitimize their global status and establish the grounds of the architectural discipline. However, as Pakistani architect Yasmeen Lari pointed out in the Rebel Architecture series, the architectural discipline can work differently when we practice architecture on the basis of social needs by establishing genuine relationships with users. After many high-level projects she did in Pakistan, by questioning the requirements of the country's conditions, Lari has evolved her current practice to learn and produce mutually with the locals, especially in rural areas, based on the principle of minimum cost and maximum benefit.

### **2.1.3. A Critical Evaluation**

Participatory design practices have received both acclaim and criticism in various media. Including *Wired*, *New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Dezeen* several popular magazines interpreted socially motivated organizations and awards. As a prominent example, winning one of the most prestigious architecture prizes, i.e., the Pritzker, Aravena received significant international attention. In *Dezeen*, he pointed out (2016) the vitality of “thinking the right thing” for architects in all aspects of the building process including building logic, political frameworks, and economical constraints. His remarkable participatory projects in Chile and their effects on the society and the country are appreciated and brought him the opportunity for the curation of the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale. By means of the biennale its participants with their alternative projects won unprecedented recognition. However, their unique problem solution techniques and design and building processes remained in the background while the final products became objects of architectural appreciation.

According to Bryan Bell and Katie Wakeford (2008), the socially themed architecture exhibitions are places “where a combination of social responsibility and market pragmatism [are] carried out in the interests of the common good while also being good for business.” The often-contradictory demands of social responsibility and profit motivations clearly present a paradox in participatory design practices. For architectural critics Camilla Boano and Francesca Perucich, the uneasy relationship between Aravena’s professional ideals and his mediatic success manifests an epitome of this paradox (Boano and Perucich, 2016). As Aravena stated in *The Guardian* (2016), today’s architecture has many new battlefields such as migration, race discrimination, pollution, waste and lack of housing to fight for a better built environment. He is convinced that these battles need to be surfaced to avoid the banality of the majority of contemporary architectural production. However, how these efforts should be represented to the public while maintaining their focus on the process calls for equal attention.

## **2.2. Development of Participatory Design in Turkey**

Participatory design in Turkey appeared on the architectural agenda in the 1960s. Although Turkey did not join World War II, the postwar atmosphere substantially affected the internal dynamics of the national agenda. Liberal policies and developing

industrialization which were rooted in the 1940s, transformed all economic and social structures in the following decades, accelerated rural-to-urban migration and eventually caused uncontrolled urbanization. These changes triggered questions about the aim and mission of the architects.

### **2.2.1. Discursive Foundations of a New Architectural Agenda**

The 1960s witnessed explorations regarding the role of architects in solving social inequality problems not only in global but also local contexts. Socialist tendencies of young architects were manifested in discussions on the role of Turkish Chamber of Architects which resulted in the foundation of the ‘Socialist Architects Club’ in 1965. (*Mimarlık*, 1967, p.28) In their manifesto, the founders of the association emphasized the necessity for the architects to work in the service of society. In the following years, the political position of the Chamber was constantly discussed between members of older and younger generations. In 1969, one of the most remarkable organizations in Turkish architectural history, ‘Architecture Seminar’, was held by a socialist group at the Chamber of Architects. This interdisciplinary seminar focused on the social role of architecture in the contemporaneous economic and political contexts of the country. (Bozkurt, 2019, p.60) As a consequence of its comprehensive theme, the seminar mobilized a discourse on participatory democracy, social awareness in architecture and a distinct political identity for architects.

Parallel to these developments, and originating from the discussions on social responsibility in architectural education at the Architecture Seminar, the relationship between user participation and education too became a significant topic of architectural discourse. The active involvement of students became decisive on the practical outputs of such discourse. For example, in 1981, based on a study of a group of architecture students from İDĞSA (*İstanbul Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi*), ‘Participation of the Community in the Development of the Physical Environment Seminar’ was organized as an open lecture with the participation of several professionals. Ensuing discussions were published in *Mimarlık*. (1982/1, p.2-5)

On the other hand, the mainstream political environment dramatically affected the universities between the 1960s and 1980s. For example, the lecture series that was planned at METU in 1973 by the internationally renowned architectural theorist Giancarlo De Carlo was radically affected by this tension. The first lectures were followed by very few students and others were cancelled by the repressive

administration. De Carlo's lectures were based on his comments on the association of architecture and social life and his current projects. He described his approach to architectural practice as a tool to solve social problems. He declared, "I am the Mao of architecture and I am proud of it" at his first lecture, which resulted in the cancellation of the lecture series (Bozkurt, 2019, p.169).

During the turbulent political period before and after the military coup in 1980, activities of non-governmental organizations, municipalities and universities were interrupted. In 1982 a new constitution was enacted by the military government. Accordingly, a new code, placed all actions of local authorities under the control of the central government. The following election of 1984 was won by the neo-liberal *Anavatan Partisi* (Motherland Party). The new Prime Minister Turgut Özal was the former consultant for the military and civil governments on economic policies. He was elected as president in 1989. The 1980s which witnessed his privatization policies is called the 'Özal period'.

Due to increasingly dominant neoliberal policies and their effects on architectural production, user participation issues were barely discussed until the 1990s, when urban transformation debates were raised. After the 1990s, legal regulations of the active citizen participation in planning phases became a politically debated issue around the world. (Roberts, 2004) Both these international developments and the changing urban context in Turkey seem to have mobilized the participatory discourse in Turkey. (Oktay, 1990/5-6, p.33)

### **2.2.2. Towards Democratic Practices**

The revisionary arguments of the Architecture Seminar were manifested in the New Municipality Movement of the 1970s. The movement was based on a socialist program written by mayoral consultancy groups, composed of architects and city planners of Ankara and İzmit municipalities of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (the People's Republican Party) elected in 1973. The program was enthusiastically adopted and implemented by the members of newly established unions of municipalities<sup>6</sup>. The new municipalities were to be democratic and open to public participation, productive and unionist; they would create funds and regulate consumption. (Tekeli, 1977, p. 32-34) The movement prioritized democratic and participatory processes in local governments which would

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<sup>6</sup> The Union of municipalities of the Marmara Region and Straits was founded in 1975 and the Association of Revolutionary Municipalities was established in 1976.

be conducted in collaboration with the local population and professionals as consultants. The new municipal perspective was seen as an opportunity to practice the democratic ideas of the architects to counter the dismissal of professionals, students and universities from decision making processes due to the unstable political environment and military pressure<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, a number of mass housing projects for low income and middle-class segments were produced by the partnership of consultant architects, local governments and user cooperatives.<sup>8</sup>(Unaran, 1983, p.17-19) Related examples and their design, organization and construction processes were widely publicized in local and national newspapers and journals such as *Milliyet*, *Kocaeli*, *Meriç* and *Mimarlık*. (Çavdar, 1982, p.8-9; 1978, p.55-60) Tuncay Çavdar's *Izmit Yenilikçi Yerleşmeler* project is a remarkable example, mobilizing detailed user participation techniques, and experiments in production, and flexible planning schemes. The planning phase, which spanned three years and started with the participation of potential users, continued with questionnaires and interviews. The project, which was intended to reflect the diversity of the ideas in the design to its appearance, was designed with specially produced prefabricated modules to provide the dimensions that the users can change over time and vertically independent plans. However, the project could not be realized due to the decision of the changed local government. (Çavdar, 1978)

The housing need in Turkey increasingly continued during the 1980s as a consequence of regulations which encouraged rural-to-urban migration. In 1984, metropolitan municipalities were legally recognized as an administrative category. The same year saw the generation of the 'mass housing fund'. Housing cooperatives and private housing firms which had the capacity to build mass housing projects could take credits from the fund. This condition shifted the mode of social housing production from multi-actor, bottom-up participation to top-down, private-public partnership. The user profile changed from low income to middle- and upper-income families. The role of the architect also changed from being a consultant to a participatory process into a designer working for the private sector.

Apart from mass housing productions, there have also been individual architects who

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<sup>7</sup>Between 1960 and 1980; two military coups (1960,1980), one military intervention (1971) and five general elections (1961, 1965, 1969, 1973, 1979) took place and twenty successive governments were formed. During those states of siege and unsteady periods, several political detentions and dismissals were exercised on academics, journalists, politicians and students. For further information see *Tunçay, Özdemir 2018, p. 177-254*.

<sup>8</sup>Izmit Yeni Yerleşimler, Ankara Batıkent (1974)

engaged in interventions that touch the social fabric in the environments they live and work. Foremost among these was Cengiz Bektaş, who lead the struggles for the preservation of historic buildings and public spaces in Kuzguncuk, where he was a resident. There, he founded the Bektaş Architecture Workshop, which carried out neighbourhood interventions with the locals for mostly youngsters and children. (Kaplan, 2020)

After the 1990s, the growing number of urban regeneration projects and changing land use policies intensified the discussions on social equality and citizenship rights issues. In Turkey both municipalities and ministries are authorized by the law on land use. This results in conflicting decisions on the use of land parcels and land value. The considerable profit margin involved in the projects which is shared between the land owner, the investor and the local government shifts the main objective of these projects from serving the public welfare to profit generation. (Ülger, 2013)

## CHAPTER 3

### CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN TURKEY

Except for the mass housing experiments of the 1970s which are elaborated in the previous section, participatory design remained largely at the discursive realm in Turkey until the 2008 economic crisis. The latter mobilized the search for communal organizations of architectural production. In this context, user participation was partially used as a political instrument by administrative bodies, but a close relationship between political agendas and participatory design was established after the Gezi Park resistance of 2013.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3.1. Contextual Background

One of the most significant architectural outcomes of the highly-charged socio economic environment of the early 2000s was the Second Architecture Seminar organized in 2015. The theme was the same as the former one (i.e., ‘a new socialist architecture’) but the economic, political and technological context was totally different. The first seminar was organized in 1969, as an outcome of the relatively democratic environment and the scientific, artistic and socio-political accumulation peculiar to the modernization process of Turkey. During the seminar, the participants - not only the members of the Chamber of Architects but also many students and professionals from economics, urban planning and sociology - questioned the role of their profession and their professional associations in this transformation process. Architecture was criticized from economic and political perspective. In line with the arguments raised in the first seminar, the participants of the second one too argued that the architect who was degraded to a technocratic figure was supposed to be a political subject who served the public.

The problems that were discussed during both seminars were very similar despite the 46 years difference and the changing architectural environment (Ulusoy, 2015). In the

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<sup>9</sup>In May 2013, Gezi Park, which was a rare green area in the city centre of İstanbul, saw a renewal project where an Ottoman barrack, which formerly existed on the site, would be rebuilt to serve as a shopping mall. As members of civil societies Taksim Solidarity, Society for the Preservation and Beautification of Gezi Park and also Turkish chambers of Urban Planners and Architects had struggled for years to halt the project. However, in 2013 the construction process started and met with nationwide protests. After the brutal police interventions, the protests took a different turn as a reaction to the repressive policies of the central government. The citizens, who came together with their desire to be directly involved in the decision-making processes about their living spaces, stood against the existing policies. The protests, which turned into a common platform of struggle and developed ways for co-productions, involved citizens from different segments, neighborhood unions, associations and professional chambers.

new millennium, it was once again crucial to rethink the social role of the architect and engage in self-criticism in the face of increasing concerns about the future.

Although the program of the second seminar was determined on the basis of the outputs of the former, the difference between the larger contexts call for further elaboration. As a result of industrialization policies that started in the 1950s (Tercan, 2018), rural to urban migration and the ensuing urban population growth caused housing problems in cities. Until the 1980s, the slums which filled valuable urban land were eventually legalized by the state (Tercan, 2018). With the privatization policies of the 1980s, transformations in illegal and unqualified built environments were also relegated to the private sector. The globalization process resulted in economic and social transformations, which in turn brought changes in settlement patterns in urban and rural areas in terms of housing, transportation and infrastructure. With the widespread use of private vehicles and appropriate infrastructure, industrial and residential areas became considerably decentralized. The central zones vacated from industries were replaced by buildings for the supervision and finance sectors, and prestigious housing projects. These changes deeply affected architectural needs and production processes.

The Second Architecture Seminar was informed by the changes in the economic system after the 1980s which were manifested in new urban dynamics, concerns in political participation and public welfare, architectural education and social responsibilities of the architect. Yet the interdisciplinary character of the first seminar was preserved.

In the Second Seminar, debates on the political identity of the architect were replaced by urban transformation debates. Most significant for the purposes of this study was the phenomenon of independent solidarity architecture groups, which was elaborated by urban designer Yaşar Adanalı in a session that was devoted to participation and public welfare. The characteristics of these design groups were described as micro-scaled, interdisciplinary, collaborationist, based on open-ended production processes, inviting participation, and producing practical solutions rather than consolidating political stances.

The potentials of the solidarity architecture groups were seen as the use of architectural knowledge in a diversity of social spheres, and actualizing participation which had been attributed merely symbolic meaning thus far. Architecture, which lost its social concerns after the 1970s, was reinterpreted with the rise of so-called



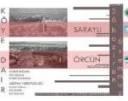






















‘resistance architecture’ that would meet the basic needs of residents.<sup>10</sup> Concerns about property ownership and speculative value that emerged with urban transformation operations were highlighted by the projects of solidarity architecture groups. The latter, which include in-situ urban transformations and urban farms, aimed at shifting the focus of disciplinary discourse from profit to public good. Besides, the Second Seminar emphasized that the relationship that solidarity architecture groups establish between users, design groups and local administrations during planning, design and construction processes, are examples of direct participation. Therefore, the potential of the small scaled practices of these groups were considered to be models for collaborative urban planning.

In the years following the Second Architecture Seminar, such issues as the right to the city, accessibility of architectural services, and the link between architectural education and practice continued to be on the architectural agenda. On the basis of these debates, the interest in the activities of the solidarity architecture groups multiplied incrementally. In 2017 the Chamber of Architects, İstanbul Büyükkent Branch organized the exhibition, Solidarity Architecture. Out of ten groups that were invited by the board members, seven responded favorably. As the outcome of a series of meetings between the exhibition committee members and representatives of the invited groups, an exhibition and a book were produced which include member profiles and visionary projects. The latter consist of: *Başka Bir Atölye* (henceforth B1A), *Düzce Umut Atölyesi* (henceforth DUA), *Herkes İçin Mimarlık* (henceforth HİM), *Kuzguncuk Bostanı İyileştirme ve Koruma Projesi* (henceforth KBİKP), *Mimar Meclisi* (henceforth MM), *Plankton Project* (henceforth PP), *Tarihi Yedikule Bostanları Koruma Girişimi* (henceforth TYBKG). (Figure 6)<sup>11</sup> The following sections are largely based on the interviews conducted with members of these groups.

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<sup>10</sup>The term resistance architecture was coined during the Second Architecture Seminar (2015) to refer to architectural approaches that would resist the profit motivations of the current context.

<sup>11</sup>For an extensive account of the exhibited projects of these groups see Appendix

GROUPS	PROJECTS						
Başka Bir Atölye							
Düzce Umut Atölyesi							
Herkes İçin Mimarlık							
Kuzguncuk Bostanı İyileştirme ve Koruma Projesi							
Mimar Meclisi							
Plankton Project							
Tarihi Yedikule Bostanları Koruma Girişimi							

**Figure 6.** Solidarity Architecture Exhibition participants and exhibited projects (Illustration by author)

### 3.2. Founding Aims

The birth of each of the seven solidarity architecture groups originates primarily from the felt need to reconsider the social responsibility of the architectural profession. PP and HİM consist of students and fresh graduates who question the profit motivation of current architectural practices, while B1A was established by a group of academics who aim to combine theory and practice. MM and DUA focus on the accessibility of architectural services and housing rights by economically deprived segments of the society, whereas KBKİP and TYBKG develop strategies to resist privatization of public spaces. Although each group has different starting points, all of them prioritize production processes and the construction of productive systems rather than the ensuing produce. Emre Gündoğdu for HİM explained their approach as follows:

“We started by dealing with social issues professionally. Yet when we searched for solutions, we realized that what was produced would be limited to buildings if we worked only as architects. We preferred to form an association. We established HİM as a horizontal organization and wanted it to be exemplary in other such practices.”

In spite of the similarities of the groups’ general objectives, they differ in their concerns and practices. While DUA, KBİKP and TYBKG are established to meet a specific need or to resist a specific intervention, MM, HİM, PP and B1A are founded as a result of similar concerns on the use of architectural knowledge. Hence the latter groups continuously re-examine and evaluate their actions at every step of the production process.

The interviewees repeatedly emphasized that unlike mainstream practices which emphasize productivity, they question their motivations during the execution of different projects, which often slows down and interrupts their production processes. For example, Gül Köksal from B1A reported that their latest work where they questioned the function of city hospitals had involved a very long, challenging, and discontinuous process. Despite the solidity of their motivations, the groups’ level of enthusiasm can weaken depending on the nature of the project. Köksal underlined that the subject they work on is not always a positive trigger but can turn into a serious problem. Under such circumstances, they prefer to lay the project aside for a while and then rehandle it again.

The groups’ practices may involve resistance and even refusal to engage in some projects. For example, Emre Gündoğdu referred to the productions of HİM during the Gezi Park resistance. He reported the activities, festivals, temporary installations of HİM together with several initiatives and individuals and their documentation works of the productions. He expressed that, after the resistance, the group was offered to exhibit their #occupygezi drawings by the organizers of the 2nd Istanbul Design Biennial. However, as they preferred open-source platforms they negotiated for the drawings to be published and distributed as fanzines.

Projects emerge through different means for each group. KBİKP and B1A initiate and participate in activities in their immediate environments; while HİM and DUA receive invitations from NGOs. In both cases establishing close contact with related parties is crucial. Small scale productions help to maintain intensive contact with all parties

involved.

The groups have different organizational schemes. HIM is an association with over 100 members, while B1A, TYBKG, MM, PP, KBİKP, and DUA have a small core staff that may grow depending on the size of the projects. All groups work on a voluntary basis and their projects are not means of livelihood for group members. Although looking for resources and allowance and budget organizations are parts of their practice, financial gain is not the focus of any of the groups. Aspects of their practices have no financial reward. For example, TYBKG engaged in the search for changes in economic and legal policies for a new status for gardeners and a new operating system of orchards. The housing project realized by the members of DUA together with the user cooperative is a product of the legal struggle that sets a precedent in the justification of ownership of the residents who do not have title deeds.

The common motivation of the solidarity design groups, which have different priorities, member structures and starting points, is to produce, criticize, resist, reform and transform architectural practices with the involvement of all related agents.

### **3.3. Production Processes**

From the nature of the projects to be undertaken to the division of labor, all solidarity architecture groups make their decisions jointly with their group members through various negotiations. For them each production involves a new design process in terms of both the stakeholders involved and the work patterns. In all stages of production, groups devote their time to consultation, participation of related subjects and agencies and seeking financial and material support. By devising original methods, they have developed for each project, they show that production is possible without standardization. The most significant features that distinguish their way of production from the consumption motivated practices are their interdisciplinary approach and the nature of their relationship with political/administrative bodies and with users, which are explicated below.

### **3.3.1. Interdisciplinarity**

All of the seven solidarity architecture groups consist of mostly architects but also include students and members from different professions. The member profiles of the groups vary depending on the issues they work on. TYBKG is a large team consisting of historians, agricultural engineers and architects. The architects in DUA collaborated with lawyers, sociologists and city planners. HİM, PP, MM, B1A which undertake projects that address a variety of different issues, establish new partnerships with related specialists and do not work with fixed teams. Apparently, a broad range of professional and practical knowledge is exchanged to establish a shared ground. In the course of the search for solutions to social problems, specialists from different disciplines work side by side and challenge established disciplinary boundaries.

As Öncül Kırlangıç from DUA stated, their concern is to anonymize information. Following a similar approach, Gül Köksal said, “it is the use value of information that is essential to us, not its exchange value”. Kırlangıç explained their production process by stating that they did not start the project from an architect’s perspective but first decided on participation methods with professionals from social sciences. Emre Gündoğdu emphasized the significance of the phrase ‘participant’ as every participant contributes to the production processes by setting their own priorities, transforming and reshaping them with their own capabilities. For all groups different professionals are viewed as the parts of a whole that is formed by working side by side instead of any single one taking central stage.

### **3.3.2. Relationships with Political/Administrative Bodies**

In conventional architecture productions, relationships with administrative bodies are mostly limited to the stage of project approval. Solidarity architecture groups establish distinctly diverse and multi-layered relationships with political/administrative bodies. B1A and MM are distant to the idea of contacting governmental agencies, as such contacts can turn into processes where decision-makers can intervene from the top. Gül Köksal from B1A emphasized that the priorities of the group are not to be corrective but transformative and to remain experimental and critical. She explained:

“We don’t prefer to establish relationships with municipalities that see our production as a form of service. Sometimes they may offer to work with us. For instance, after our ‘*başka bir oyun*’ [a different game] workshop, the

municipality proposed to turn the enterprise into a park project. In such a case, our implementations would turn into a sterilized and finite project. But our purpose was to experience the state of solidarity, so we did not accept the offer.” (Figure 7)



**Figure 7.** Başka Bir Atölye and the children of Saraylı village, an experimental playground design and construction by waste materials with the participation of users, Başka Bir Oyun, Kocaeli, 2016.

Source: <https://xxi.com.tr/i/saraylida-yere-oyunla-dahil-olmak>

PP and HİM are groups that occasionally offer municipalities and governmental institutions to participate in the projects. Emre Gündoğdu gave the example of ‘Abandoned Rural School’ projects of HİM. He explained that in those projects, they contacted the Provincial Directorates of National Education for permission to use the schools, but these communications were generally informative and could not reach the level of cooperation. However, in their Diyarbakır Pembeviran Primary School project, they conducted joint work with Izmir Metropolitan Municipality within the scope of the Good Design Izmir\_4 event<sup>12</sup>. With the common goal of recycling, waste materials provided by Izmir Municipality were refunctioned in the playground of

<sup>12</sup>Good Design Izmir, organized by Izmir Mediterranean Academy, is an annual event that brings together designers within the framework of a specific theme. It consists of workshops on topics including education, research and practice. <https://www.iyitasarimizmir.org>

Pembeviran Primary School. (Figure 8)



**Figure 8.** Herkes İçin Mimarlık, Xlab Group of Mardin Artuklu University Faculty of Architecture, İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, Cut Paper Group of İzmir University of Economics, Pembeviran Primary School Playground, İzmir, 2019.

Source: <https://herkesicinmimarlik.org/en/calismalar/pembeviran-garden-and-playground/>

In their first project, DurakOvacık, PP collaborated with Tunceli Ovacık Municipality. The project began with the search for an indigenous solution to the transportation problem which was expressed during a meeting with the Mayor of Ovacık. The Mayor told the group that the standard ready-made open bus stops they bought were not used by the locals due to harsh climate conditions. PP and the Municipality prioritized participation in the definition of the problem, and jointly engaged in design decisions and construction processes, with local craftsmen and local inhabitants. (Figure 9)



**Figure 9.** Plankton Project with the Mayor of Ovacık and the locals, DurakOvacık, Tunceli, 2015.

Source: <http://www.naturadergi.com/haberler/plankton-project>

The relations of DUA and TYBKG with state authorities and local government units are in the form of resistance, demand for rights and recognition. İnanç Kıran from TYBKG indicated that their initial aim in 2013 was to slow down and block the operation of the park project, which included Yedikule Orchards. They started negotiations with the Metropolitan Municipality to conserve both Yedikule Walls and market-gardening practices as tangible and intangible cultural heritages. Kıran explained the expectations of the group as follows;

“Instead of creating an alternative to the orchards, which have been a self-managing and living landscape for 1500 years, our aim is the arrangement of workshops to generate ideas and develop a management model for the continuity of this tradition.”

Today, the initiative is still trying to convince the Metropolitan Municipality to organize an overt design process that will be developed with the participation and dialogue of all relevant municipality units, property owners, gardeners, NGOs, professionals and local residents.

KBİKP is an organization where the residents of Kuzguncuk make their own decisions for land use and jointly produce a new urban garden with the Üsküdar Municipality. According to Tülay Atabey from the group; the relationship established with the municipality during the design and implementation phases, which were unusual



practices for the municipality, was a good example of civil society-local government collaboration. However, Atabey describes the municipality's appropriation of the project after the completion of the construction as ignorant of the history of solidarity. In fact, for Kuzguncuk residents this project is the product of 30 years of tireless effort against the construction threats which reappeared every ten years. (Figure 10) Atabey reported that:

“In 1986, upon the special request of a politician from Kuzguncuk, a part of this area, which was entirely agricultural land until then, was designated as a primary school area in the development plan and the threat of construction began. From this date on, the struggle was continued for 30 years by those who had the power, time, and energy- like the handover of a flag.” (Figure 11)



**Figure 10.** Protests with spring festival against the private school project in the orchards, Kuzguncuk-İstanbul, 2000.

Source: <https://www.dayanismamimarligi.org>



**Figure 11.** Protests with scarecrow festival against the tender of the orchard for a contract, after it was leased by Üsküdar Municipality, 2010.

Kuzguncuk-İstanbul, 2013.

Source: <https://kuzeyormanlari.org>

In solidarity architecture teams there is a multi-layered local government-design team relationship that may include conflicts and collaboration alike but under any circumstance, involves long-term negotiations and intensive communication.

### 3.3.3. Interaction with Users

Contrary to common practices, in solidarity architecture groups, users and designers are in close collaboration during the entire production process. Gül Köksal from B1A explained their approach as follows:

“What is essential here is the production of joint work... It is not like a person serving someone else. We are not service providing activists or volunteers. The issue that we work on is always as important for us as the users. We do not take on the role of saviors.”

The shoulder-to-shoulder relationship with the user, which is common to all solidarity architecture groups, is established somewhat differently in each group. For instance, DUA was founded as the outcome of a user cooperative which had initiated a legal struggle for their housing rights. After fifteen years of judicial conflicts, members of the cooperative organized DUA with an open call to ‘design together’.

In DUA, the design process is shaped by the users by means of social organizations like games, collective meals and activities like surveys and workshops prepared by the design team. (Figure 12) The architects just accompanied the users with their technical knowledge.

According to Öncül Kırılancı, the primary occupation of the members of DUA was how and to what extent they should share their professional ideas with users to ensure their proper degree of participation. The priority of the users was to make their living spaces different from the standard housing and landscaping solutions offered by TOKİ<sup>13</sup> (Housing Development Administration). *Düzce Umut Evleri*, the construction of which continues today by means of their own resources and donations, was recently entitled to a loan that cooperative members demanded from TOKİ by means of a lawsuit in 2019. Consequently, in DUA, the users’ initiative constitutes the main mover in all phases of the project.

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<sup>13</sup> TOKİ is an institution founded by the mass housing law of 1984. The institution aims primarily to supply qualified and affordable mass housing projects for middle and low-income target groups. For further information see: <http://www.toki.gov.tr>



**Figure 12.** DUA, Düzce, 2015.  
Games and collective meals at the construction site.  
Source: <http://www.umutevleri.org>

A similar user group-design team relationship was established in *The National Architectural Idea Competition for “Küçük Armutlu’s Improvement in its Locality with its Locals”* led by MM. Küçük Armutlu is a shanty town in Sarıyer, Istanbul where residents have been legally and physically resisting the threats of demolition for 30 years. Their struggle was rendered sustainable by the establishment of a people's assembly to make collective decisions and to administer the reconstruction of the area. Although the residents recently faced the threat of displacement in accordance to the urban transformation law, the neighborhood managed to survive with its unique living environment including a *cemevi*<sup>14</sup> and infrastructure systems that residents built on their own with the help of voluntary professionals.

Within the scope of the competition, MM noticed that the neighborhood needed improvement in social facilities and public spaces. The advisory jury members of the competition were selected from democratic institutions like *Halkın Hukuk Bürosu* (Legal Bureau of the People), *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği* (Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association), *Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri Yardımlaşma Derneği* (Families

<sup>14</sup>Cemevi is a place of worship in Alevism, which is a sect of Islam.

of Detainees and Convicts Fraternal Association) and People’s Assembly of Küçük Armutlu. The competition spread over two years including pre-colloquiums, three-month long compulsory site visits -which were planned as at-home chats-, a colloquium, charettes, and construction workshops with the participation of residents, students, professionals, NGO representatives, and academics. (Figure 13) During the competition and following activities, the participants had the chance to produce a concrete counter-solution to the official urban transformation scheme, and learned from the self-functioning of the shanty town previously identified with insecurity.



**Figure 13.** MM, the colloquium of The National Architectural Idea Competition for “*Küçük Armutlu’s Improvement in its Locality with its Locals*” in Küçük Armutlu Cemevi with residents, Sarıyer- İstanbul, 2015.

Source: <https://www.dayanismamimarligi.org>

Unlike DUA and MM, B1A and KBİKP prefer to work within their local neighborhoods. Tülay Atabey, one of the architects of the Kuzguncuk Orchards project, and also a resident and a board member of The Neighborhood Association of Kuzguncuk, indicated that the orchard is a memorial place with its 700-year history. She argued that the 30-year-old resistance to preserve this public space could only last due to the determination of the local residents. She added that although there were different ideas among residents at the beginning, they could reach a consensus as a result of the one-to-one dialogues established between them. (Figure 14)

She explained:

“Most of the residents of Kuzguncuk and also the intellectuals who came here later, knew that some areas should remain empty. But of course, it is possible to find a wide variety of ideas anytime and anywhere. There were many residents who thought that if a new building was constructed here, their earnings would increase. As a consequence of our meetings, festivals, and joint workshops, after a short while, these people also realized that construction in that area would not have a positive effect on the neighborhood.”



**Figure 14.** KBİKP team, Kuzguncuk-İstanbul, 2014.

Team members with the residents of Kuzguncuk during a forum at the coffeehouse and a query form regarding the future use of the orchard

Source: <https://www.dayanismamimarligi.org>

HİM and PP experiment with co-design in the production processes after spending considerable time with users to share and understand their experiences. Emre Gündoğdu from HİM explained that for participation to be actual, but not compulsory, it must be experienced collaboratively and spread over time. For instance, one of their abandoned rural school projects in Datça Mesudiye Village, started with the landscaping phase with the participation of HİM members, university students and villagers in 2015. After the construction workshop, in 2016, the villagers established the Datça Mesudiye Volunteers Association with the support of HİM to organize future activities in the building, which is planned to be turned into a social facility. The first participatory design workshop held with the HİM group had a transformative and lasting effect on the villagers and prompted them to found an association and to communicate with nearby villages and cooperatives. (Figure 15)



**Figure 15.** HİM, Mesudiye Abandoned Rural School project, Datça, Muğla, 2015  
Project discussions with the villagers.  
Source: <https://herkesicinmimarlik.org/blog>

The common principle of solidarity architecture groups is to share the sense of spatial belonging with the users and to experience the long-term social effects of this collaboration. According to Gül Köksal from Başka Bir Atölye, establishing rapport, working together, and solidarity touch souls and will ultimately have an inevitable healing effect on society.

### **3.4. Visibility**

Among the big-scaled fast-paced productions of the construction industry, visibility is a challenge for solidarity design groups which work on small-scale buildings and use alternative methods involving close contacts with local contexts. Their way of finding solutions to social problems involves collaboration with relevant non-governmental institutions, individuals and central and local government units. Generation of public consensus is a crucial part of their criteria of success. Hence, the groups incorporated such agents as press members and artists in the events that they organized and ensured the publication of these activities in local and national newspapers and magazines. (Figure 16)



**Figure 16.** News clips of Kuzguncuk Orchard conservation events by KBKİG in national and international publications  
 Source: <https://www.dayanismamimarligi.org>

Most of the ideas of the participating groups of the Solidarity Architecture Exhibition were brought to the architectural agenda during the Second Architecture Seminar of 2015, in the proposals for the Turkish pavilion at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016 and in the discussions on the theme of the biennale and the selected project for the Turkish pavilion.

Two of the nine finalist projects of the national competition for the Turkish pavilion of the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale, 'Reporting From The Front', included some of the participants of the Solidarity Architecture Exhibition. (Bayhan, 2015) In their proposal titled 'Front everywhere, hope everywhere' Yaşar Adanalı and Sinan Logie featured artists, activists, and practitioners who were positioned against the increasing humanitarian, ecological and urban crises in the grip of intensified construction activities, as actors at the forefront of propagators of hope.

In the 'After Gezi' proposal for the Turkish pavilion Merve Bedir and Brendan Cormier reported the success stories and organizing methods of the initiatives that question the status quo in Turkey (Bayhan, 2015). They examined five initiatives as examples of how the Gezi movement evolved after the protests ended. These initiatives embodied the ideas and attitudes that characterized the Gezi movement and resurfaced them in different spaces by means of different actions in the city.

Although they did not win the national competition for the Venice Biennale, the solidarity groups were visible throughout the debates surrounding the winning project 'Darzana: Two Arsenals One Vessel'. After the selection of the latter, criticisms aroused among the architectural circles as some members of the project group were also designers of a transformation project in the same shipyard area where Darzana was constructed (XXI, 2016). The project, which involved the transformation of the 600-year-old practice of shipbuilding and a vast urban void in the city center, made a great impression in the media. Discussions focused on the closure of the execution of the project to the public due to the confidentiality agreements between companies and the 'Two Pavilions One Event' forum organized in 2016. During the forum, the groups seeking solutions to social problems in urban and rural areas in collaboration with all stakeholders shared their experiences. DUA, MM, HİM, PP, TYBKG, and KBKG made presentations on the struggles they waged, the various social issues they dealt with and their unique methods. (XXI, 2016)

Following the Gezi resistance, the architectural agenda focused on the struggles for the right to the city. Basic issues involved the new relations established between individuals with different technical and social backgrounds, the NGOs, local organizations and professional chamber members, on the basis of the idea of the power of solidarity.

In this context, The Chamber of Architects İstanbul Büyükkent Branch decided to address these issues by means of an exhibition. The Solidarity Architecture Exhibition, just like other productions of the participating groups, is the outcome of a joint effort spanning over 6 months. During the interviews, the groups' representatives defined the exhibition process itself as a remarkable experience in terms of learning from each other, producing a common language, standing together and keeping track of their stories. As Sinan Omacan, Vice Chairman of the Chamber of Architects İstanbul Büyükkent Branch, stated in the exhibition book, the exhibition aimed to trigger alternative practices among other professionals and students. At the same time, the board members envisioned this exhibition to be a pioneering example for future organizations which would set a lasting agenda on discussed topics. For this purpose, the exhibition visited seven provinces in Turkey and Athens. According to Öncül Kırlangıç, a member of DUA and a board member of İstanbul Büyükkent Branch of the Chamber of Architects, the exhibition has not achieved the desired impact yet. However, the topics addressed in the exhibition book provide a valuable source for



academic studies.

The solidarity architecture groups, individually and collectively are featured in various national and international exhibitions, magazine interviews, and competitions. Besides showing the possibility of cooperative production these also help to raise support for their cause.<sup>15</sup> The groups use their websites and social media accounts actively as open sources where they present their production processes and projects in detail. Gül Köksal from B1A encapsulated their group's approach by the term *copyleft* as opposed to *copyright*. Emre Gündoğdu from HİM stated that they place importance to create the most open and well-organized archive of their work. He added that they create their sharings with the contributions and permissions of all stakeholders-participants, users and contractors. Within the scope of the Solidarity Architecture Exhibition, Gündoğdu conveyed that they conducted interviews with the participants and users about their feedback on the projects.

What these initiatives, which are based on mutual support, emphasize and highlight are not the products but the production processes. For them, what makes a difference is the way of using architectural power rather than the outcoming product.

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<sup>15</sup> World Habitat Awards 2017 Finalist Düzce Hope Homes, Chicago Architecture Biennial 2019 HİM, Public-Supported Design Workshop 2012 Experimental Design Studio Hamburg at Kuzguncuk Orchards, for further information see the groups' websites.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

The 21st century predominantly witnesses consumption-based economies and related policies. The shifted focus of capitalism from the exchange-value to the sign-value of the product is manifested in architecture with the competitive market environment that stimulates consumption, and celebrates the ‘starchitect’. Built environments that gain symbolic meanings with signature projects and individuals whose socio-economic status is publicized by owning these commodities accentuate class segregation in the environment of global capitalism. Turkey is no exception to this scenario.

Since the end of the 20th century, urban transformation projects have provided one of the most significant manifestations of the profit based architectural context in Turkey which radically affected both the physical and social environment of cities. Globalization policies of the 1980s led to the foundation of metropolitan municipalities, the gentrification of city centers and reorganization of central business districts. Such practices intensified with the Urban Transformation Law enacted in 2005. Practices focusing on physical improvement and financial gain but ignoring the existing social fabric received reactions from neighborhood associations established in the transformation areas, voluntary organizations and professional chambers. (Güzey, 2012)

Practices that prioritize social aspects of architecture have emerged in this context of social inequality, overconsumption of resources, and the relatively indifferent state of architectural education. In this thesis, the concept of participatory design is investigated by means of focusing on exemplary architectural practices after the analysis of its historical development and its practice in global and national contexts.

Participatory practices, whose economic, political, and social environment change depending on the changing geographies, differ in terms of method, priority, and relations with the user. Cultural factors that affect the attitudes and approaches of both users and designers determine the forms and levels of participation. Therefore, the productions that started with the initiative of the users, which are frequently seen in the practices in western and Latin American countries, are replaced by the projects built by volunteer designers and constructive contributions of the users in African countries. The practices carried out in developing and underdeveloped countries, aim not only to meet the services that cannot be obtained by the state, but also create new opportunities for the livelihoods of the users with transferred technical knowledge and

shared experience. In participatory practices of Turkey, a developing Middle East country, when the productions of the groups included in this thesis are examined, both the processes that start with the initiative of the users and the re-functioning projects carried out by volunteer professionals in rural areas are observed.

The contemporary state of participatory practices in Turkey is examined by means of interviews with the participants of the Solidarity Architecture Exhibition held at the Istanbul Chamber of Architects Büyükkent Branch in 2017. The interviews questioned alternative aspects of the methods they developed in the consumption-based economic system. The outputs can be summarized as follows. First of all, the founding aims of the groups consist of the accessibility of architectural services, the defense of public spaces against privatization, and establishing the grounds on which architectural education and practice can feed each other. The voluntary-based groups, which do not aim for financial gain, use architectural knowledge to resist, reform and transform existing practices in collaboration with all stakeholders and related community members.

The groups carry out collaborative production processes that they do not standardize as they progress on the basis of multi-layered negotiations at all stages. In the interdisciplinary working environments that they constitute with relevant agents, they reinterpret issues of knowledge production and disciplinary boundaries. In contrast to the limited number of agents involved in conventional architectural practices who seek approval from political/administrative bodies, solidarity architecture groups establish long-term negotiations and collaborations which may involve tensions as well as mutual cooperation. Solidarity architecture teams define their relationships with users on the bases of solidarity and partnership, rather than voluntary service provision.

For solidarity architecture groups that produce small-scale projects in contact with locals, public visibility to generate support is often a challenge. Towards this end, they take part in exhibitions and competitions and use their archives as open-sources in order to set examples regarding the significance of social issues in the production of the built environment. It is remarkable that in their publicity activities, they aim at communicating their production processes and methods rather than the products.

Solidarity architecture practices focus on such specific issues as resident rights, the consideration rather than destruction of the existing social structure in urban transformation projects, collective architectural production in rural areas, and the sustainability and integration of productive landscapes in urban areas. These processes

advance in a collective and interdisciplinary environment where the design team, relevant professionals, residents, NGOs and administrative bodies are equal partners in their projects.

The healing and transformative effects of multi-directional information flows and close contacts are observed in the local contexts where the participatory projects are carried out. If such cooperative practices are proliferated and organizational links are strengthened, the profit-oriented urban and rural interventions may be questioned by implementations based on the needs of the residents, where the latter turn into active agents and feel a sense of belonging to their physical environment. The direct and realistic communications established by the solidarity architecture practices that confront the conditions of the geography they are in and produce together with the locals to resist these conditions, provide a bilateral development for both citizens and the profession. Solidarity architecture practices that are exemplified in this thesis show that a re-definition of the disciplinary boundaries of architecture is instrumental in the production of environments that fulfill social needs rather than the financial interests of the construction market.

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## APPENDIX –Projects Referenced in The Thesis

DESIGN GROUP	PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DATE	LOCATION	STAKEHOLDERS	PROJECT INFO
<i>Başka Bir Atölye</i> (Another Workshop)		2016	Kocaeli, Saraylı Village	villagers, local craftsmen, academics, university students	This project started as a workshop designed to carry out theoretical discussions on rural-urban, old-new settlements. The need for a children's playground, which emerged from the studies conducted with the villagers, was met with the use of waste materials from the surrounding industrial zone, technical support from the local craftsmen and a co-build workshop.
	Başka Bir Oyun (Another Game)				
<i>Düzce Umut Atölyesi</i> (Düzce Hope Studio)		2015	Düzce	user cooperative members, professionals and students from law, sociology, psychology, engineering, city planning and architecture, government agencies	After 15 years of judicial struggle, Homeless Earthquake Survivors Solidarity Housing Cooperative procured a land parcel from TOKİ. In 2015, as a result of the open call of the cooperative and Bir Umüt Association, DUA was established by professionals and students from a variety of disciplines. The design process was completed with the active participation of the users in the participatory design games designed by DUA members. The construction phase continues with cooperatives' own resources, donations and along with the loan received from TOKİ.
	Düzce Umüt Evleri (Düzce Hope Homes)				
<i>Herkes İçin Mimarlık</i> (Architecture For All)		2012	Istanbul	workshop participants and city residents	Among other events organized by civil platforms and NGOs, HIM organized a festival series in Gezi Park, against the pedestrianization project for Taksim Square. Activities with artists, interviews with residents, and games with children and adults demonstrated that the park could be a place to be utilized as a public space rather than a construction site for a shopping mall.
	Herkes İçin Taksim (Taksim For All)				
		2015	Muğla, Datça, Mesudiye Village	Mesudiye residents, university students,	The landscaping workshop was held as a precursor for the transformation of an old school building into a social facility. With the collected waste materials from the village, participants created seating elements and tables in the school garden. The workshop ended with a discussion meeting with villagers about the future progress of the projects and strategies to provide resources. In 2016, the villagers established the Datça Mesudiye Volunteers Association with the support of HIM.
Anıl Köy Okulları Mesudiye Projesi (Mesudiye Abandoned Rural School Landscape Project)					
<i>Herkes İçin Mimarlık</i> (Architecture For All)		2019	Diyarbakır, Çınar, Penbeviran Village	Penbeviran residents, teachers and students of Penbeviran Primary School, university students, İzmir Metropolitan Municipality	For the landscaping and playground designs of Penbeviran Elementary School, first a workshop was held with students and teachers from various rural schools in Diyarbakır and Mardin Artuklu University architecture students. The search for resources for the draft project overlapped with the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality's Goo Design İzmir_4 event, that was based on the re-functioning of waste urban furniture. Within the scope of the event, participants from different universities developed playground designs with the materials provided by the municipality. At the end of the event, the exhibited designs were transported to Diyarbakır in disassembled form. The playground and schoolyard landscape were co-built by group members, students, teachers, and villagers.
	Anıl Köy Okulları Penbeviran Projesi (Penbeviran Abandoned Rural School Project)				



<p><b>Kuzguncuk Bostan İyileştirme ve Koruma Projesi (Kuzguncuk Orchard Recovery and Protection Project)</b></p>		2015	İstanbul, Üsküdar, Kuzguncuk	Kuzguncuk Neighbourhood Association members, voluntary architects from the neighbourhood, Kuzguncuk residents and Üsküdar Municipality	The urban garden project is a result of 30 years of struggle against construction in a 700 years old orchard area. Since 1990, every ten years the residents stood against various construction plans through legal means, organized festivities, protests, and press releases. After Üsküdar Municipality rented the orchard area in 2014, the project prepared by the locals via face-to-face conversations, votings, and discussions at the coffee house was presented to the municipality. The project was approved and constructed by the latter put into use in 2015.
	<p>İlyanın Kuzguncuk Bostanı (İlya's Kuzguncuk Orchard)</p>				
<p><b>Mimar Meclisi (Assembly of Architects)</b></p>		2015	İstanbul, Sarıyer, Kütüçük Amutlu	residents, local civil initiatives, academics, university students, voluntary professionals	Kütüçük Amutlu as a shanty town in the centre of Istanbul, faced repeated demolition threats for 30 years. With the support of volunteer professionals and the joint decisions of the people's assembly that the residents established, the locals were able to resist demolition and reconstruct the area. The competition organized by MM and Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association focused on identifying the shortcomings of the neighbourhood, and generating solutions appropriate to the local context. The competition and its subsequent activities, which spanned over two years, were designed as a mutual learning and co-creation experience between students, professionals, residents, and democratic institutions.
<p><b>Plankton Project</b></p>		2015	Tunceli, Ovacık	University students, Ovacık Municipality, residents, local craftsmen	From the design decision to the end of the construction, PP team collaborated with the Ovacık Municipality. The Mayor reported to the group that ready-made stops that the municipality purchased were not used by the locals due to their incompatibility with the climate conditions. The design team worked together with local craftsmen, municipal employees and locals in the construction of two bus stops coherent with the characteristics of the locality.
	<p>DurakOvacık</p>				
<p><b>Tarihi Yedikule Bostanları Koruma Girişimi (the Initiative for Preserving the Historical Yedikule Orchards)</b></p>		2013	İstanbul	architects, archeologists, historians, agricultural engineers, city planners and professional chambers	The historical Yedikule Orchards were in danger of destruction because of a park project of Fatih Municipality in 2013. In response to this, people from different professions and fields of interest struggled to conserve the 1500-year-old cultural heritage of gardening and reconstruct the orchard's relationship with the Historical Yedikule Walls and the city. The group advocates that the project to be developed in this area should be an overt process and a product of the workshops involving gardeners, local people, relevant professionals, professional chambers, associations, and municipal units. The group also demands legal recognition of orchards as a type of agricultural land and asks for rental rights for gardeners.
	<p>Tarihi Yedikule Bostanları (Historic Yedikule Orchards)</p>				