






Who is designing for whom? A critical design studio approach

Alperen Meral* 
Emrah Yalçınalp** 
Özgür Demirci*** 

Abstract

Studio studies can easily be defined as the cornerstone of the discipline in departments giving architectural education. Although the educational process differs in educational institutions and among the educators, its main purpose is always to give the best experience on design process to the students and to bring together different space designs and functions with certain criteria. Although it is often stated to the contrary, it is generally difficult to get the necessary support from the social sciences in studio work. For students, considering the design with sociological data and creating a concept can be perceived as a waste of time, since the user experience cannot be observed in a project that will not be implemented in the real life and it will often create differences that cannot be measured. Dealing with form, color, and material instead can help impress teachers and other students in the studio much more easily. Students often act pragmatically and choose the method that promises them a higher score in a shorter way, as creating a charming product in studio will seem more powerful while a deep research on the sociologic and ecologic background cannot reflect themselves easily on a render. Although very different user profiles were determined for the same area at the beginning of the design process, it may cause that the resulting products cannot create enough characteristic differences in the end. The aim of this research is to examine whether the projects differ in terms of functionality regarding their different user profiles determined by the students, based on the studio work of Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Landscape Architecture within the scope of Environmental Design and Project II course. As a result of the examination, it has been determined that although the designer and customer profile are different, the morphological differences in designs are not perceived very easily, which means the methodology in the studios should be examined again.

Keywords: environmental design and project, landscape architecture education, landscape studio

1. Introduction

As the discipline of landscape architecture expands and interacts with other disciplines, it needs to broaden and deepen academic thinking (Deming and Swaffield, 2011). Accordingly, the necessity for landscape architecture, as a maturing academic discipline, to develop its methodological repertoire urgently in order to produce new knowledge has become inevitable in recent years (Lenzholzer, Duchhart and Koh, 2013; van den Brink and Bruns, 2014).

Landscape design studios have an important place in landscape architecture education in terms of encouraging creativity and helping students produce original design solutions. Although design as a product is a concrete output of the teaching and learning situation provided by the studio, the main purpose is to explain how design as a process should work (Wingren, 2019). Although the

*(Corresponding author) Dr. Bingöl University, Türkiye, [✉ alperenmeral@gmail.com](mailto:alperenmeral@gmail.com),

**Assoc. Prof. Dr., Karadeniz Technical University, Türkiye, [✉ emrahyalcinalp@gmail.com](mailto:emrahyalcinalp@gmail.com),

***MSc., Karadeniz Technical University, Türkiye, [✉ ozgurdemirci_61@hotmail.com](mailto:ozgurdemirci_61@hotmail.com)

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design is a certain result, the abstractness of the process that leads the designer to this result cannot be ignored.

The basis of design education should be on how the process will work, not on what the result should be. Creativity that emerges in this process has a cognitive structure and includes the stages of discovery-production (Özkan, Alpak and Regular, 2016).

Design studios create the core of architecture and landscape architecture education. Developing both as a space and as a pedagogical environment, studio work, content and methodology show significant differences among schools and educators (Alon-Mozes, 2006). The main reason for this is that the design discipline, unlike other disciplines, focuses on the desired and imagined results rather than principles and theories (Akin, 2002).

Environmental comfort and sustainability problems have increased the need for science and technical education. Social approaches that include sensitivity to the relationship between human behavior and the built environment elements should also be instilled in studio work (Kowaltowski, Bianchi and De Paiva, 2010).

It is extremely important and necessary to be able to realize learning in design education. Learning is a process that takes place in mutual interaction and students who have a successful learning process can realize successful designs that reveal original and qualified products. Thus, methods and techniques in the learning phase that affect and make learning understandable gain importance in design education (Acar and Bekar, 2017; Kahveci and Göker, 2020).

Throughout the process, there is a holistic learning in which design knowledge is shaped as a result of accumulation. In these processes, a delicate balance is maintained between directing students to acquire knowledge and experience and producing original thoughts with the individual thoughts of the students (Dinçer, Temel and Öztürk, 2021). In addition, it will be a starting point that will improve education if design studio executives accept that designing and learning are different skills (Arıdağ and Aslan, 2012).

In this study, the designs made by 5 students within the scope of Karadeniz Technical University Environmental Design and Project II course were discussed and the reflection of cultural difference and designer difference on space-activity differences was investigated.

2. Material and Method

2.1. Studio chart

The purpose of studio work is to equip students with a basic framework that they can use in any future design work. The present study was carried out in the studio of Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Landscape Architecture, within the scope of Environmental Design and Project II course.

Within the scope of the study, the studio work was divided into 3 main stages;

Students were asked to identify a famous person from Turkey or the world and design a residential garden based on that person. This makes the process faster and more realistic as otherwise the students would spend extra time to create scenarios and put some responsibilities on their characters' shoulders.

They examined various examples of spaces that open or closed spaces embody in the landscape,

Finally, each student was asked to create their own story/design in a residential garden based on the previous two phases (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Studio chart

Within the scope of the study, five students' projects were selected, and these projects formed the basis of the research. This design process is spread over a 16-week semester

2.2. Field Survey

Before starting the studio work, first of all, field analysis was made and natural, cultural and climatic factors were included in the study. With the SWOT analysis, the strengths and weaknesses of the area, the advantages and disadvantages it offers were determined and recorded on the survey sheet (Figure 2). Slope groups and aspect, close environment characteristics, plants in the area were determined precisely. Since the location of the residence on a dominant hill within the KTU campus, it is important both when looking at the area from the outside and when looking out from the area, a visibility analysis was also carried out.

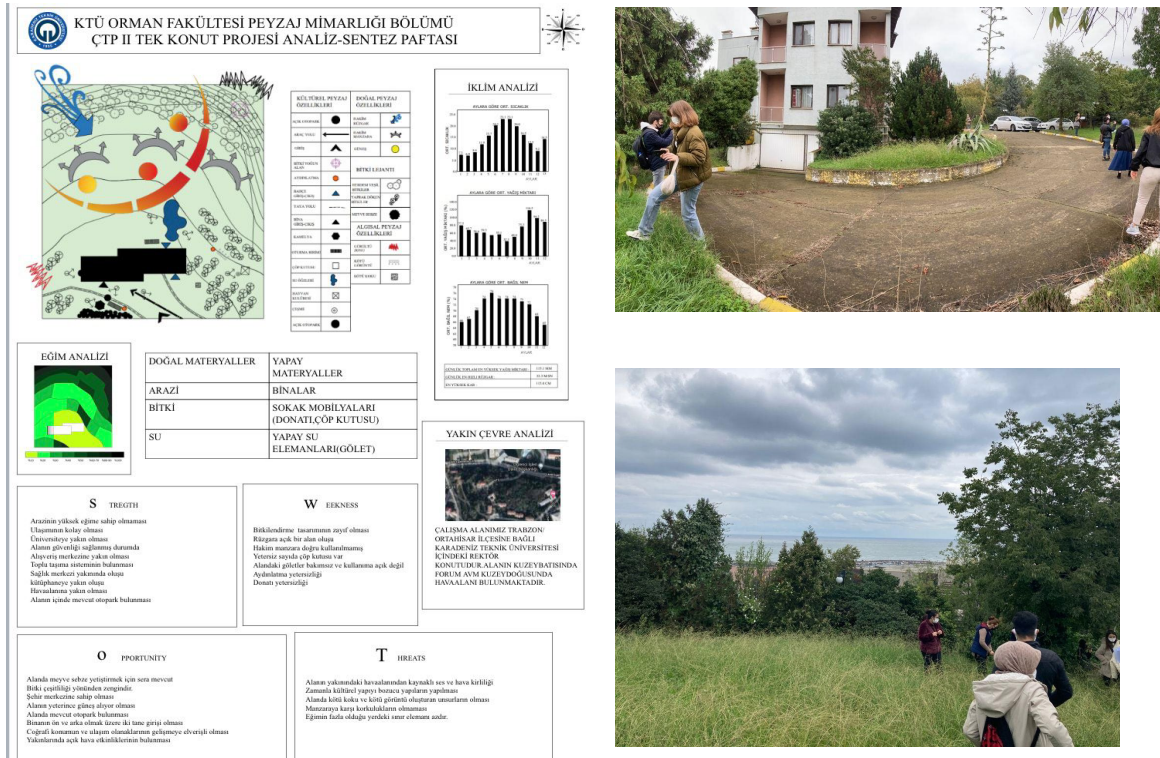


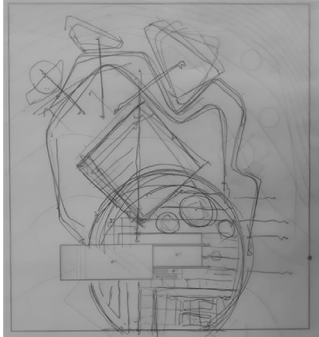
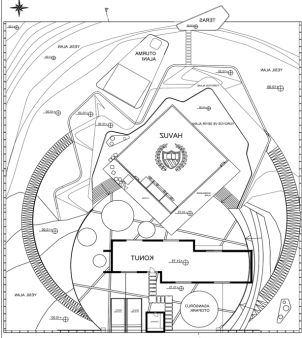

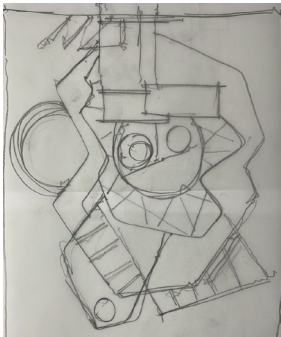
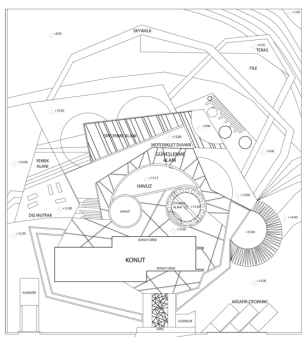

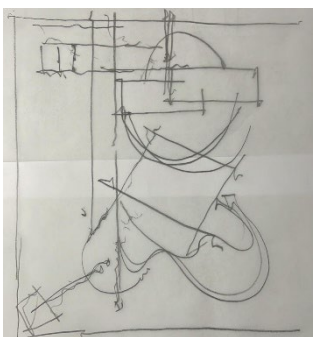
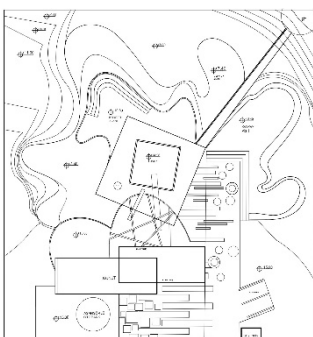

Figure 2 Survey posters and photos from the field analysis

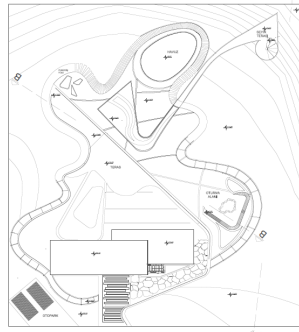
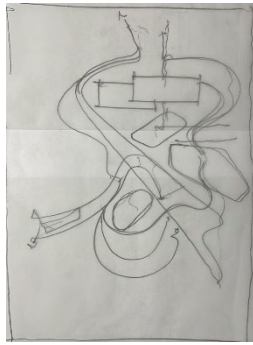
2.3. Studio Designs

The students, who completed the analysis studies by processing the land data, were asked to determine who would be their users, in other words, who would be the owners of the houses. Each student is held responsible for creating a scenario for the famous person they choose to move to Trabzon. For example, if a world-famous football player is to be chosen, he has been Trabzonspor's infrastructure manager for 10 years after he quit football, and if a famous actor is to be preferred, he wants to stay out of sight for a while. Thus, it is aimed to diversify the basic needs of their daily lives, visitors and accordingly, to show serious differences in designs from each other.

At the end of the studio, the design processes of 5 students were picked up. Among the design students, Hamza Duman took Will Smith, Nurseli Alptekin Ryan Reynolds, Özlem Arslan Shakira, Özlem Kurnaz Betül Mardin and Melisa Başak Hayko Cepkin as examples. Because students prefer users from different sectors who have adopted different lifestyles, it was found promising that the final products would clearly reveal their differences in functions. (Table 1).

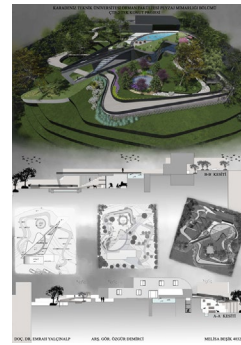
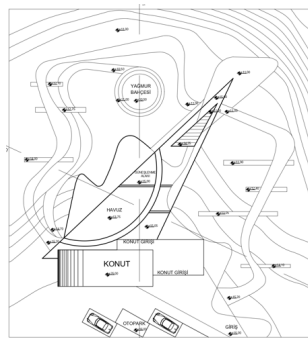
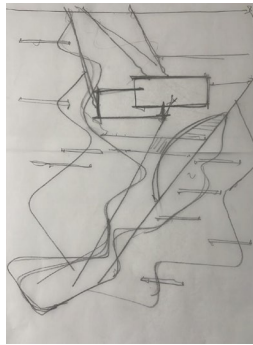
Table 1 Sketchs, designs, presentations, designers and users

Sketch	Design	Presentation	Designer and User
			<p>Designer: Hamza Duman</p> <p>User Will Smith</p>
			<p>Designer: Nurseli Alptekin</p> <p>User: Ryan Reynolds</p>
			<p>Designer: Özlem Arslan</p> <p>User Shakira</p>



Designer:
Özlem Kurnaz

User
Betül Mardin



Designer:
Melisa Beşik

User:
Hayko Cepkin

3. Discussion and Conclusion

For the development of landscape design, it is necessary to translate specialized knowledge (hydrology, climatology, ecology, environmental psychology) into applicable design guidelines and to develop academically accepted research methods specific to the discipline of landscape architecture. This approach for design will make important contributions to the design processes and the product to be obtained in landscape architecture education, especially in studio work.

When the design process was considered in detail, it was thought that the collaborative work of the students while revealing the possibilities of the field affected the final design more than the user characteristics. Very normal reasons such as the fact that there is only a part to create a swimming pool due to the aspect and slope groups of the area can be effective on that. Because in spite of the fact that chosen users come from different socio-cultural environments, ultimately every user may want to own a swimming pool and it has a great effect on forming the landscape as it is a very effective component in shaping the design of a relatively small residential garden. However, although the forms differ, the fact that the functions reveal similar spaces such as patios, terraces, pools, hobby gardens, recreation areas and garages has caused the education process to be questioned. The fact that there is no big difference between a single singer who is expected to take the stage at parties with his friends and an author who is expected to prefer to live a quieter life in his life at the age of 90 has been interpreted as the fact that students care more about the works that will give good photographs with a pragmatic approach than design for the users. As a result, it was seen that the students who preferred different user groups could not reflect different cultures in their designs and the functions were quite similar.

Philosopher Wolfgang Welsch attributes this to our living in an intercultural context and says, "Lifestyles no longer stop at the borders of national cultures, they go beyond them. There is no such thing as an absolute stranger anymore." He states that cultural differences have disappeared (Welsch, 1999; Chang, 2005). The results obtained in the studio may have eliminated the difference in perception of life between famous people, depending on Welsch's statement, and the fact that the difference in perception between designers no longer exists may have led to the same result. In other words, the similarity obtained may be due to the fact that similar demands were met with

a correct analysis and design approach. However, the same result can be achieved by designers living similar lives in similar socioeconomic environments, finding a "shortcut" way and being more influenced by each other than they should be. Although Yilmaz et al., (2016) states that carrying out the process through an imaginary design means both the development of students' imagination and the development of their formal repertoire; Learning from the problems, difficulties and tasks in the landscape, interacting with real stakeholders from institutions and organizations will enable students to approach daily practices and increase their motivation. In addition, this practice will provide students with skills and social competences that cannot be taught in the studio environment, such as teamwork, time management, design communication, presentation and discussion of projects.

There is a need for new strategies that transcend disciplinary boundaries in studio education and motivate students to think critically about the dynamic relationship between space, time and social practices (Chen and Lee, 2015). How the education process should be has been open to discussion since the day the professional discipline was acquired. It is important to provide students with style, method, critical thinking skills and to develop their social aspects as well as creativity.

Özkan, Alpak and Düzenli (2016) and Alpak, Özkan and Düzenli (2018) state that students should be aware of the subject, conduct a literature review, collect necessary information and data, and solve the problem so that they can produce creative and original designs in studio work. They argue that as a result of their evaluation, colleagues who will create systematic and quality urban spaces can be trained. However, the social communication skills required not only for the discipline of landscape architecture, but also for all professional disciplines and the approaches to analyze user requests well can be ignored due to the conditions of the current period in which all we have been. The process of returning to the "old life" right after the pandemic can make our perception and patience difficult. Since both the designer and the user are human, analyzing the human as a whole, knowing his behaviors and their reasons may be the main thing to do before analyzing a specific user group.

As a result, while it is ironic enough that the outer world is designed from the "inner world" in a room, it is important and necessary that there are quests in design beyond the forms and standard needs lists. Otherwise, an understanding of marketing the same functions to users in renders where forms, colors and textures look different will be a serious threat to the existence of all design-based professions.

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Resume

Alperen Meral graduated from Karadeniz Technical University, Faculty of Forestry, Department of Landscape Architecture in 2005. He received his Ph. D. degree from Düzce University. He is research assistant in Landscape of Architecture, Faculty of Agriculture in Bingöl University.

Emrah Yalçınalp graduated from Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Landscape Architecture in 2000. He received his MSc and Ph. D. degree in the same university. Working as an Associate Professor in the Landscape Architecture Department of Karadeniz Technical University, Yalçınalp has worked as an instructor, designer and researcher at different schools such as Mississippi State University, Okayama University, Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Florida International University.

Özgür Demirci graduated from Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Landscape Architecture in 2011. He completed his master's degree at the same university in 2018. He started his Ph.D. studies at Karadeniz Technical University, Institute of Science and Technology, Department of Landscape Architecture in 2019. He still continues his research in the field of Landscape Architecture, Plant Materials and Cultivation at Karadeniz Technical University.