

“GALATA” AS AN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDIO EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study has been brought about due to the projects carried out in our country in recent years under the name of “transformation”. The projects in question are directed towards developing various designs by dealing with an area of a city but at the same time by partly or completely neglecting it. In fact in this context our country has become a “trend” in the architectural sphere. Concepts such as urban transformation, urban change, urban renewal and urban environment are the concepts which form the basis of these schemes and which are among the most commonly found therein. We believe it is both valuable and necessary that these transformation projects, which involve individuals who take part in the academic process and who are concerned with studio education, should also be dealt with in the architectural education process. Formed out of this idea, the “architectural design studio” was conceived with the aim of enabling students to “re-think” the above concepts and, by creating various projects in this context, of increasing their “internalisation” and “awareness” of the subject.

In this case study, concepts such as urban transformation, urban change and urban environment, which are the “artificial” and, unfortunately, “sterile” concepts mentioned above, are discussed with the “Galata experience” on the basis of the students’ designs.

INTRODUCTION

Accordingly, in Architectural Design Studios 4-5, which we are implementing in the 2009-2010 autumn semester at Uludağ University Department of Architecture, the “Galata Area” has been selected as the field of study. This area, with the architectural and experiential features it displays both for Istanbul and in terms of our other cities, offers a laboratory environment to designers. The existence of architectural and socio-cultural strata, laid down and developed during the course of history, has set the area before our eyes as a distinctive tissue. In the recent past, the overseas connections, arising from their trade dealings, of the “non-Muslim-Levantine” group, the users of the Galata Area, gave rise to the appearance of various neo-classic structures imitating the Europe of the time. In this way, the singular and distinctive architectural tissue of Istanbul, which was quite different from that of the other regions and which arose from its own dynamics and vibrancy, has come down to us today.

GALATA

Names of the area: Sykai-Iustinianopolis-Galata-Pera

The area of Galata was known with different names in the past. Such as Sykai, Iustinianopolis and Galata. Sykai, meaning “figs”, was mentioned in the 1st century B.C.E. first time in ancient sources And was described being accros Constantinople (Stabaro 1854). It became part of Constantinople around the year 425 and was known as the 13th region. (Mango 1991). When Avars reached the area during the

siege of 626, it was still referred as Sykai (Chronicon 2007). Name Sykai remained in use as late as 11 century (Komnena 1996). It is believed that the area had its own city walls as early as the reign of Constantine I in the 4th century (Eyice 1994). City walls were restored in 528 by Justinian I who changed its name into Justinianai or Justinianopolis and recognized it as a city (Mango 1991). For the origin of the name Galata there are several theories. According to these: Galata was derived from “gala or galaktos = milk, or “calata=stairs leading to the port” in Italian (Eyice 1969). For the etymology of the word “galat = point or peninsula” in Thracian, was also suggested (Mitler 1979).

It is interesting to note that an inner harbour in Genoa is called “calata darsana” (Mitler 1979) probably having its origins derived from the Genoese settlement at Galata and referring to the Turkish word “tersane=shipyard”.

As early as 717 there are references to the area under the name of “tou Galatou” or “kastellon ton Galaton”(Schneider and Nomidis 1944). Term Pera, which was used interchangeably with Galata for this area, was most probably had its roots in Greek. “Pera en Sykais”, is believed to have been in use by the local Greeks referring to the other side of the City (Eyice 1969) The “Pera en Sykais “changed into “Peran and Pera ” in time respectively.

History of the area

Amalfitans and Venetians were granted the permission to settle in the Byzantine soil at the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century. They were followed by Pisans and Genoese (Wiener 1977). Genoese settled in Constantinople officially in 12 October 1155. Their presence provoked a group of rival citizens, namely Pisans, and Genoese were expelled from their quarter only to return in 1198 (Belin 1894).

After recapturing the City from the Fourth Crusaders, Byzantines exiled all foreigners staying behind in 1261 (Ostrogorsky 1991). Fearing from the increasing power of the Genoese, emperor Michael Palaeologos VIII decided to re-settle them at Heracleia, but changed his mind to allow them to settle in Galata instead (Nicol 1999). On 1 May 1303 a Byzantine imperial decree was given to the Genoese with the new borders of Galata (Marmara 2006). In March 1304 Genoese obtained a permit to build walls around their city.(Nicol 1999).

Bubonic plague, known in Europe as Black Death, reached Constantinople in 1347 by probably the Genoese trade vessels (Treadgold 1997). Byzantines intended to cut customs duties collected by the Genoese to end their financial difficulties especially caused by the bubonic plague. To force Genoese for an agreement, a makeshift navy was shaped by public money, which was destroyed by the Genoese navy in 1349. As a result, Byzantines allied themselves with their former enemy, Venetians (Nicol 1999). In the battle of 6 May 1352 combined Genoese-Turkish forces defeated the Byzantines. This marked a turning point in the history of Galata and Byzantine had no say on Galata anymore (Nicol 1999).

In 1396 former enemies Venice and Genoa together with the Byzantines defended the City against the Ottomans. In the same year Genoa was captured by French kingdom and Genoese colonies became part of French kingdom (Nicol 2002). A census after the Ottoman conquest indicates that the area of Perşembepazarı was inhabited by the wealthy Genoese, whereas eastern part of Galata was for the poorer Greeks and Armenians. Majority of the population was the Greeks (İnalçık 1994).

Venetians, who settled mostly on the southern part of the Golden Horn, began to have properties, probably summer mansions only starting from 1524 onwards (Ağır 2006).

Moors expelled from Spain in 1492 were relocated in the area, and former church was given to their use with the name of Arap camii (Eyice 1969). Arap camii was the main catholic church of Galata for that reason there were a very big number of burials within the building and its vicinity. Most of the gravestones have been found during the restoration of Arap camii between 1913-1919 were transferred to Istanbul Archaeological Museums (Wiener 1977).

Jews of the city, prior to the Ottoman conquest were mostly living in the areas of Eminönü-Sirkeci. Immigrating Jews from Spain as early as 1492 and following decades were settled along the Golden Horn in the area of Galata as well (Eroğlu 2000). In the 17th century the areas formerly inhabited by Genoese were settled by

the Jews (Wiener 1977). In April 1660 a conflagration laid waste $\frac{3}{4}$ of Galata including churches (Sakaoğlu 1994).

Life of Galata, also referred as Pera by the contemporary sources, was described in detail in the famous work of Eremya Çelebi Kōmürçüyan (Kōmürçüyan 1988). In a similar manner but more detail was provided by P. Ğ. Incicyan about Galata in the 18th century (Incicyan 1976). A project to provide water, which was scarce in the area, started in 1730 and completed in 1839 (Wiener 1977) added to the value of the properties of Galata. Large portion of the city walls of Galata, which were neglected since the 16th century, were pulled down in the 19th century. (Hasluck 1904)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Within the scope of the 2009-2010 autumn-term architectural design studio, a studio period was carried out in which, rather than examining the shape of the architectural product, the concept and the urban context forming the design were examined, in which a number of impressions coming from the city were given importance, and in which the place of communal living in architectural design was underlined.

During the studio period, the following were among the main topics investigated:

- What are the higher concepts that are valuable in shaping design?
- What is the most important feature of urban space that can be realized by design?
- What are the potentials of urban space?
- What are the valuable aspects of urban space?
- What kind of relationship should there be between the environment and structures?
- If any element of the designed structure or of the area is removed, what will the structure lose?
- What does the designed structure contribute to the environment?
- What is the effective factor in the formation of the design?
- How is the functional relationship worked out?
- How does the designed structure contribute to the environment in terms of continuity?

During the studio period, when the necessity for the design to begin with a concept and for this concept not to be formed separately from the context were emphasized, the students had the chance, thanks to the juries carried out, to be appraised at frequent intervals. During the appraisal, the existing pattern, the continuation of the pattern, the impressions and their architectural significance, the continuity of the impressions in the third dimension, and the concrete architectural meanings that can be produced by the impressions forming this pattern rather than their figurative potentials, were examined.

DESIGN STUDIO APPROACH

The basis of the methods we apply in the architectural design studio rely on the concepts of creativity and the freedom of the individual. With this aim in mind, during the study period, it has been our intention to enable the students to come up with various proposals and to transform them into projects, and, during this process, to consider such concepts as change and transformation. During the course of this case study, however, the approach employed for the students relies completely on processes such as problem-finding, exploring the subject, and developing suggestions towards finding solutions. Within this framework the students were left entirely free without any kind of guidance programme in their hands.

This unique architecture of Galata and the fact that it has to a large extent retained its architectural character were the determining factors in choosing it as the field of study of Architectural Design Studios 4-5. With the aim of enabling

students to perceive and comprehend this field better, support has also been obtained from different disciplines. For this purpose, academic staff of the Archaeology Department of the Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts have described Galata and its environs on location to our students by evaluating its development over the course of history. During the narration and excursion, relevant questions related to “socio-cultural structure”, “urban strata” and “physical formation” were asked by the students. In this context, the intention was for the students to internalise the region and project area by increasing their perceptions even further. After this investigation and research had been carried out in the field, the “project area”, “problems and potential of the area” and “socio-cultural structure” were evaluated by discussion in the studio. Later, by making use of the synergy created by the group study, a model of the area and a model generated in a virtual environment were prepared collectively.

During the progress of the studies on an individual level, the principle of making sure the students could work in a free environment was adopted by the studio coordinators. Going beyond the simple concept of “client-consultant”, working as instructors who are more experienced than the “client” but who are themselves always ready to learn, and avoiding clichés and prejudices accepted as rules, are the principles we have adopted.

In architectural design education, when the jury method is examined conceptually, a kind of judicial system may be assumed to exist within it. In this context, in the studio environment we have devised, the students are left alone and as instructors, we have tried to stay to one side. In this way, the students are sure to ask each other questions and to interact with one another. Another result of this approach is to ensure that one student will think about the other students' projects and will work on several projects instead of on just one.

STUDENT WORKS

It was proposed that the Galata area, which has a very lively and varied make-up, should be made familiar to the architectural students by giving them architectural and socio-cultural data related with both its history and with its present state. Later, in the light of the first visit conducted as a group, the students attempted to familiarize themselves with the area as individuals. The “distance factor”, arising from the fact that the area is away from Bursa, accelerated the work done, and the information regarded as missing was completed at the weekends.

In the studio, the students who made up the study group fictionalized the area both with a joint field model and with the aid of three-dimensional computerized models in a digital environment. In the following period, an environment suitable for discussion of the problems and potential of the area was created with the students and, by evaluating the results, topics which could motivate the area were emphasized. The chosen subjects were generally found to be in the direction of cultural, artistic and touristic activities. The studies in question and the original student reports appear below.

“The project proposes a new axis to the north of the one joining Sadi Konuralp Street with the Galata Tower. Part of the axis located in Halihazır intersects a multi-storey car park and marriage office at the point where the project site is located. The creation and consolidation of this axis is targeted by the removal of these structures and the construction of the opera house proposed in their place. The positioning of the opera house within the site forms a street which completes the axis, and cafés are proposed on the ground floors of the neo-classic structures forming a façade of this street which is linked to Şişhane metro station, thus making it possible to liven up the street.” Figure 1 (Ercan Çelikkıran).



Figure 1. Culture Center (Ercan Çelikkıran).

“The site is located in the Galata District of Istanbul. It is in the place to the west of Galata Tower known as Kuledibi. The site is reached from Galipdede Street and Yüksekaldırım Street. The situation of Galata Tower in this area increases the frequency of usage. In this project, an appraisal directed towards the user of the area has been made. By facilitating a stopover on this axis running from İstiklal Street to Karaköy, the aim has been for users coming to Galata to preserve that environment by using it in different ways. The fact that Galipdede Street is known as the Musicians' Market has been important in determining the subject of this project. For this reason, music studios and exhibition areas which will serve the district and ensure a stopover here have been designed. By also considering the lack of green areas in the Galata District, a green buffer zone has been created between Galata Tower and the project site. In this area a performance stage for musical shows is located.” (Figure 2, Figure 3) (Derya Kırıl)



Figure 2. Rhythmic Arts Center (Derya Kırıl)



Figure 3. Rhythmic Arts Center (Derya Kırıl)

“In the study carried out in the Galata District, which because of its historical texture and location has an important identity in an urban context, the need for urban space in the area and particularly the need for a wide passageway for pedestrians have formed the starting point of the design. The general functions in the project are made up of a fashion design centre, sales units and cafés. The “historical wall” located in Kuledibi has been utilized in the project as an exhibition area.” (Figure 4) (Burcu Şanlı).

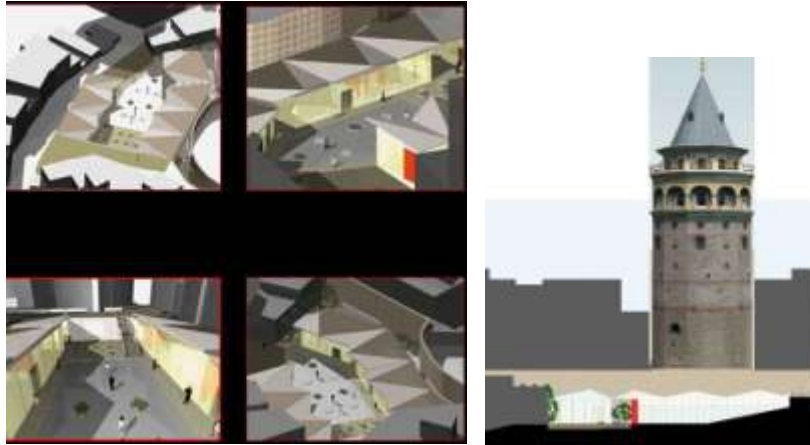


Figure 4. Fashion Design Center (Burcu Şanlı).

“Designed as a Visual Arts Centre, the site is located in Galata District between Serdar Ekrem Street and Dibeek Street beside Doğan Apartment. At the idea stage of the design, the “cul-de-sac pattern” prevalent in this area forms the main concept of the project. A street which both links and feeds these culs-de-sac has been envisaged. Devised with ramps and transparent items, the intention is for mobility and, for all users, for “chance and awareness” to be created in the street and studios”. (Figure 5, Figure 6) (Didem Yönter)

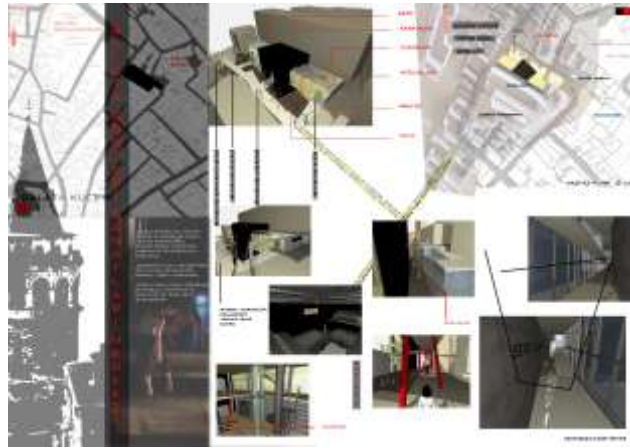


Figure 5. Visual and Performance Arts Center (Didem Yönter)



Figure 6. Visual and Performance Arts Center (Didem Yöner)

“I have attempted to produce designs which, by various active locations, will keep alive by night and day the area known as Asmalı Mescit Street, a name which was in some way given to that area and which was later perceived as rather out of favour by those who lived there. These are made up of designs on four different plots and a bridge which links them. Of these, the plots I have numbered as 1, on İstiklal Street, and as 3 on Sofyalı Street which joins Tunnel Square and where the existing social places are in abundance, are each proposed as enclosed spaces. The other two sectors, numbered 2 and 4, are proposed as interfaces.” (Figure 7, Figure 8) (Tuğçe Kodal)

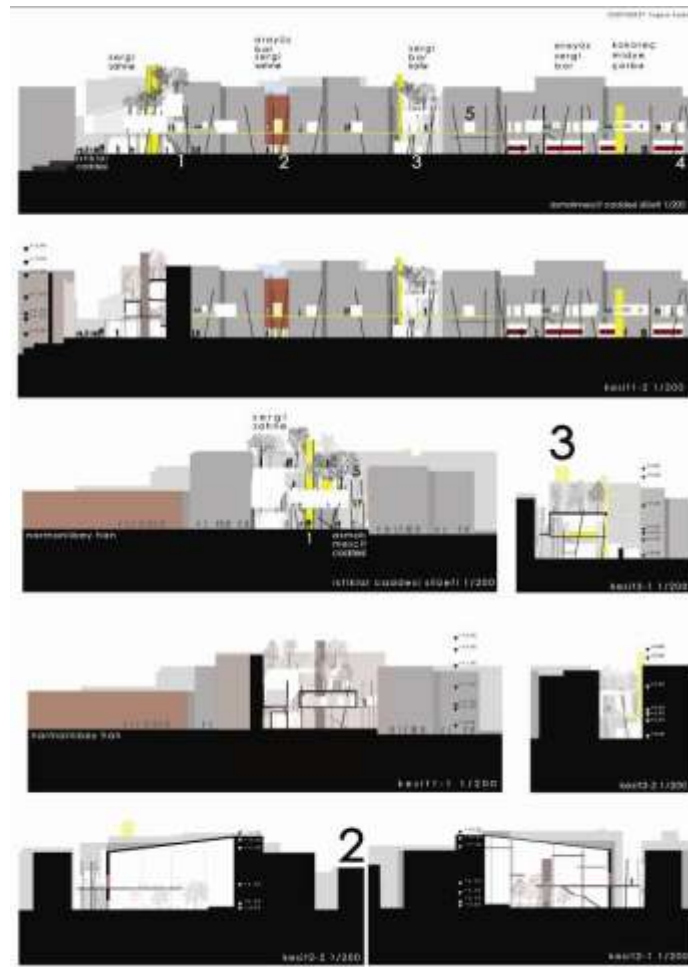


Figure 7. Mixed used complex (Tuğçe Kodal)

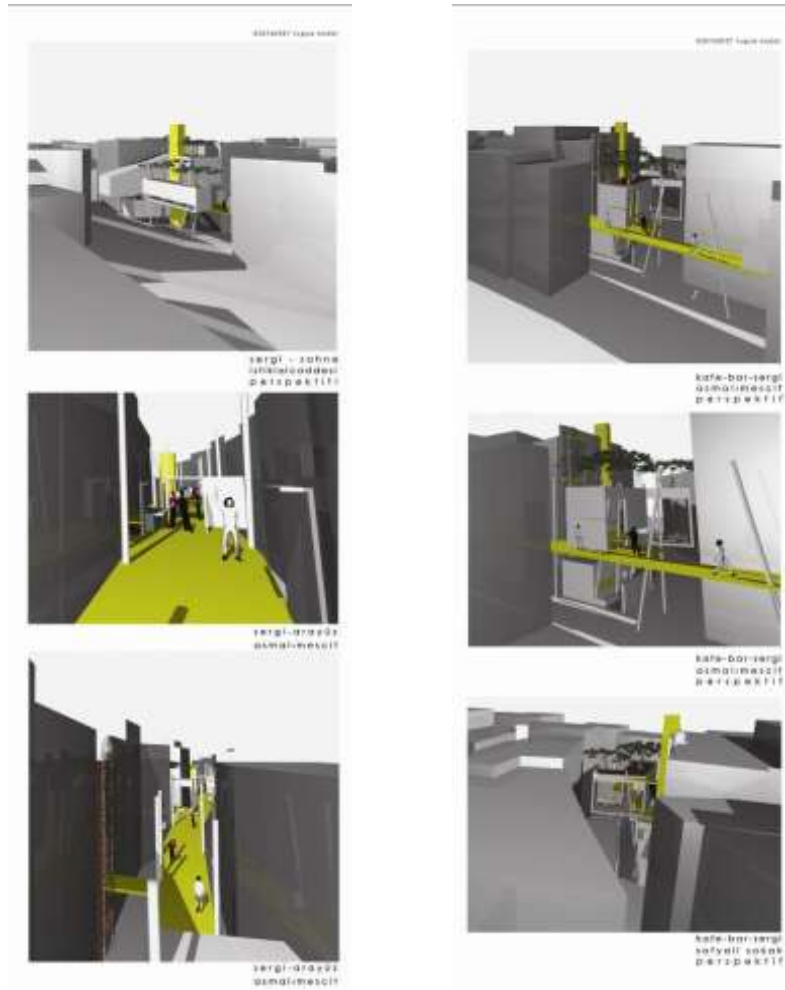


Figure 8. Mixed used complex (Tuğçe Kodal)

Besides the student projects presented in detail above, among the other projects designed for the area there appear a music school, a painting and sculpture studio, a bookshop and residence design, a cultural centre, a jazz centre, a photographic centre, a boutique hotel, an arts and culture centre, a fashion design house, an information centre, a maritime museum, an exhibition and display centre, accommodation for motorcyclists, an entertainment centre, a library, and a modern art museum and centre.

In the projects mentioned above, among the main concepts which appear are network, bridge, focal point, dynamism, street, impression, custom, square, green, popularity, permeability, stopover, interface, contact, and treed rooftop.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of architectural design is still being debated at present, and a clear formula or approach has not yet been accepted.

The reason for this is the existence in the world of architecture of a variable and "unique individual" process which is dependent on the person, environment and culture. Architecture defined by the Vitruvian concepts of "venustas, utilitas, firmitas" (aesthetics, function, structure) alone will not be sufficient nowadays. Context in today's architecture makes it necessary for architecture to be evaluated not in a single area but as an extension of the city. In this way, context has necessarily affected architecture and therefore the design process.

With the features mentioned above, the Galata district is like an architectural laboratory. This unique pattern possesses great potential for revealing how valuable context is in the architectural design process. For this reason, Uludağ University Department of Architecture chose to work in a different area away from the studies being made in Bursa, with the aim of developing the students' points of view. Nowadays Galata, which has a considerably dynamic nature, continues to change shape rapidly.

When we look at Galata and the area in this sense, it can be seen that the Levantines and minorities who formerly inhabited and used the area have to some extent abandoned it. Later, the fact that the abandoned areas were to some extent filled by lower-income groups made it inevitable that the area should reach the state of "depressed area". The present state of usage, however, has reached a completely different dimension to the previous one. Various interventions made at specific points have resulted in the area's acquiring the status of "centre of attraction" for higher-income groups. This situation has paved the way for changes on both the single-building and the city-block scales. Naturally, this change has affected not only Galata and its immediate environs but also Istanbul as a whole. This situation is still continuing spontaneously.

One of the fundamental aims of the design period was to open architectural students' sensory channels, in other words, to stimulate their aural, visual and kinetic perceptions, their senses of touch and smell, and their awareness of being involved in group work. The congruence of the product of the designed project with the scenario - coherence, the "context-concept-product" relationship, and the presentation of the product were treated as the main evaluation criteria.

In the architectural design studio, first of all the names of the various neighbourhoods making up the Galata town pattern were given to the students, who were required to go around and study these patterns, obtain impressions belonging to community life, and ascertain the important landmarks, axes and guiding impressions of the area. It was emphasized that experiencing this whole pattern was a "city study" and that these studies were essential in the design process. The city study period was planned in two stages, which were defined simultaneously as utilizing technology and sociological observation and evaluation. As a method, it was proposed that the historical and socio-cultural features of the urban space where the design was to be carried out should be researched, the layout plans examined, and the photographs and sketches studied, and that the area should be observed and experienced at different times. Within the scope of the architectural design studio, the students, working in urban spaces located in various areas of the existing historical urban pattern of Galata, experienced a design process in which the environmental and spatial features of the site where the urban space was located, as well as the "urban context" based on social formation, were examined.

It was required that in parallel with the evaluations made by the students, an individual and detailed scenario, related with the users of the building to be designed, should be drawn up by each student. In this work, it was intended that the student should ascertain existing problems related to misuse of space, find a way for himself/herself in the design process, and therefore develop his/her individual creativity. After this, the students experienced a period in which, while remaining faithful to the individual scenarios they had written within the urban pattern, their projects were reciprocally discussed.

Both by the one-to-one appraisals given in the communication between the teacher and student during the studio period, and by the evaluations made by the students taking part in the studio by asking each other critical questions, we believe that

the most important benefit of this studio period and our major findings have been that by stressing the issue that one function of design in a general sense is its aim and reason, the students have acquired the viewpoint that design cannot be considered separately from concept, environment and context.

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