

## CONTENT, SCALE, METHOD, AND THE ROLE OF PLACE: A DESIGN TEACHING APPROACH 1

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1 This article is mainly based on two papers presented at different international symposium by author: Turgut, H., "Architectural Design Education: Studios 3-4 and Amasya /Mimari Tasarım Eğitimi: Stüdyo 3-4 ve Amasya", Yapı , Number 236, May 2001. Eren, Ç., Turgut., H, "Scale, content and method: Different Approaches to the Design Studio in the first year of Architectural Studies, Proceeding of 30th.International Symposium,Engineering Education 2001), leuchturm-Verlag-2001-Publication Number: 1545, pp: 239-243

Figure 1  
Map of Turkey  
Showing the  
Location of the  
City of Amasya.

### Introduction

Architectural Design study naturally aims to give design talent to the student. Design studios in which architectural design lessons are taught, are the main part of this architectural education. Students are encouraged to develop creative ideas and imagination whilst on the other hand they are also made to obey the rules of construction in design studios. Thus, we are trying to find the intersection of the imagination and reality. These studios, both in terms of content and the way in which the courses are presented or conducted, should be approached as a system of unified and complementary stages over eight semesters. From this point of view, the aim of this paper is to present a design teaching approach for Studios 3 and 4 at the Department of Architecture, Istanbul Technical University. In this context the overall objective was, "to achieve development of the student's design behavior in terms of both knowledge and sensibility by the end of each semester in each architectural design course". The design problems set at the third and fourth design studios were planned as steps forming the eight-semester design-

-training model viewed through the dimensions of scale, content, and method. It was tried to develop the structure of the design studios by examining the scale/place answering the question "what"; the method/behavior answering the question "How"; and the content/essence answering the question "Why" within the eight-semester whole.



The city of Amasya was chosen as "place" for these semesters. Amasya is a characteristic Ottoman city with its history and culture. Amasya is also one of the best examples of

cities in Anatolia that has protected its identity and structure. The architectural, natural, cultural values which form the city of Amasya, and in particular the local and central government, the sensitivity and awareness of the people of Amasya were the factors, which influence the selection of this city as the area of study.

The rapid change in social, cultural and technological developments in the contemporary and pluralistic world has also necessitated a change in the focus of architectural studies. In order to follow these changes it is essential to adjust design education accordingly. Architectural education as a whole, and particularly the architectural design studio, should be considered as sort of an initiation process where students are introduced to architectural knowledge. The design studios, which are the backbone of architectural education, should also be approached as a system of unified and complementary stages over all semesters. In order to form the whole design education, each semester as steps of the whole includes content, method and the scale. In this framework, the importance of the concept of "place" including different environmental identities is also indisputable. At this point, the study area of the workshop is chosen as the city of Amasya which has a very deep historic background. Amasya is a characteristic Ottoman city with its history and culture. The architectural, natural and cultural values which form the city; and in particular the local and central government and the sensitivity and awareness of the people of Amasya were the factors in the selection of this city.

On the basis of these arguments, the aim of this article is to construct a conceptual framework for the design teaching program and to present this teaching approach applied in the second year studios conducted at the Department of Architecture, Istanbul Technical University by the author.

### **Conceptual Framework: Content, Scale, and Method**

There are many different points of views about how architectural education is supposed to be. In design teaching there are also a variety of methods including different contents and scales. Because of the multidimensional and complex nature of architectural design it is essential to develop appropriate teaching approaches to design education (EREN&TURGUT, 2001). The teaching approach to the design education in the studios conducted by the author is based on the conceptual framework of man and environment interactions. According to this view, like any dynamic phenomenon, architectural design education is a combination of three basic systems: content, scale and method, design education has to teach students the importance of 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions for design process. In this framework, it is aimed to discuss methods, goals, components and criteria relevant to second year design education.

In this context, the overall objective determined is, "to achieve development of the student's design behavior in terms of both knowledge and sensibility by the end of each semester in each architectural

design course". The design problems set at the third and fourth design studios were planned as steps forming the eight-semester design-training model viewed through the dimensions of scale, content, and method. For these reasons, it was tried to develop the structure of the design studios by examining these dimension:

**Content/essence** answers the question "why",

**method/behavior** answers the question "how" and

**scale/place** answers the question "what" and to form "scope" and "dimension"

Based on this framework, the components developed for the second year design studio (studio 3-4) are the following:

### Objectives: Content/Essence

#### Studio 3

*"Content is the whole of the elements and development that creates a situation or object. Shape can be described as a structure connected to content or the arrangement of the content. All objects are the inseparable union of content and shape." (AFANASIEV, 1977).*

Content in architectural design education requires knowledge to reach the final product, and to develop architectural culture and thought. The knowledge content in the learning process includes so many types of knowledge from different disciplines relevant to the problem at hand. These concepts can be classified as: theoretical and imaginative concepts such as architectural concepts, architectural philosophy, environmental issues

and socio-cultural issues (KAYA&HIKMET, 1998).

The project of third semester is meant to create an architectural form and place coinciding with the city and its natural and original setting. The objectives or content aimed at for this semester (STUDIO 3) are the following:

- To examine the function of the subgroups that is more complex and different from previous semesters.
- When creating appropriate places according to the functions discussed, to study the relation of the inside and outside of the place according to the place hierarchy opposite "open/closed, private/public" in the micro and medium/mezzo scale.
- To examine the shape-function relationship of the function and architectural shape of the structure and its effect on the place.
- To create an "architectural concept" that will bring movement to the design, to improve the relation of shape-content, in other words to give the decision and shape of the intellectual data.
- To examine the shape and structural (conceptual and physical) foundation relationship.

#### Studio 4

*"It is possible to define a city as a living organism. Such a definition stresses the fact that the urban surroundings together with a historic identity also stresses that it must reproduce continually. Accordingly, architectural work should protect the past but it must also include the necessity of modifying it to today's truth. The problem of how*

*new architectural products will be designed within a historical setting comes from this necessity.” (AKIN, 1992).*

The purpose of the fourth semester (STUDIO 4) project as a place, in an urban setting, is totally formed:

- Choosing settings with historical and cultural values for the subjects to be discussed,
- To adapt to the formed and built surroundings.
- To find solutions to urban surroundings within daily functions those do not have unique problems.
- To recognize the close surrounding according to volume or surface as emptiness-fullness characteristics and to redefine it with solutions offered.
- To create places for those have few stories and different functions.

### **Method / Behavior**

Generally, “the phases of design process” that are followed during the semester are formed with the following steps: preparation for the project and analysis consisting of “developing concept” in accordance to the given conditions, production of interpretation / alternative; development of solutions for synthesis / selected, expression / presentation.

It was expected from the students before starting their projects to learn about new building designing in a historical setting, creating a program and scenario, researching literature; to have preparatory work done for their project and to support it with conferences

using slides. It was expected from the students that by using these preliminary works they would show sensibility to design problems arising from small-scale urban problems, analyzing and structuring the problems.

It was aimed that the students develop their architectural expression through writing, graphics, freehand and 3D drawings and models.

The workshop and jury study were achieved with other faculty members; the trip to Amasya and the workshop were achieved with the help of the mayor and governor of areas, and local architects.

### **Scope: Scale / Place**

The importance of the concept of “*place*” in architectural design and different urban identities in increasing architectural experience is indisputable. It is important to direct students to participate, explore and be motivated about learning all dimensions of the environment in order to be creative. From this point of view, carrying out the architectural project in other geographical areas expands the horizon of the students. Learning by seeing and living with the different physical and social characteristics of different areas is more lasting. The city of Amasya was chosen as “*place*” for these semesters.

There are several reasons that cities are important for architectural education. Firstly, the city is somehow the place of architecture; it has important concerns such as social control, physical context, and the roles of technology. These are all the things that are

evident in cities, and which have become central features of architectural production. The other important reason is that the city has formed one of the primary contexts for contemporary and public debates about architecture (BORDEN, I.,1996: 141) .

Technical trips to Amasya and the workshop , within the context of design education, to different urban settings that accentuate the historical and local characteristics, provide students with the opportunity to increase their architectural experience by seeing and meeting the locals in their traditional setting. This trip supported with workshops aims to help the process of increasing the visual memory of the students. The workshops conducted

in Amasya allowed students to interact with each other, share ideas, and discuss the problems and ideas with the city authorities. It was concerned with understanding the relationship between different scales of environmental settings (spatial settings, settlement patterns, built form) and socio-cultural factors.

### The City of Amasya

The city of Amasya was chosen for the Studios 3 and 4 conducted in different semesters since the 1995-1996 academic year at the Faculty of Architecture, Istanbul Technical University (TURGUT, 2001). Amasya is also one

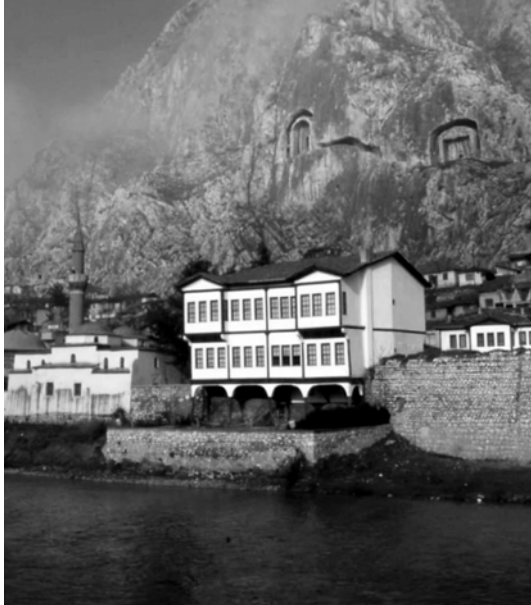


Figure 2  
a., b., and c.  
Views from the  
City of Amasya.

1. a.

of the best examples of a city in Anatolia that has protected its identity and structure. In spite of rapid urbanization, it has been able to resist the confusing metamorphosis due to its limited topography. Amasya brings to mind the important design features through the preservation of its historic heritage and its contributions to contemporary architecture.

Amasya is a characteristic Ottoman city with its history and culture. The yesilirmak River flows through the heart of Amasya and is the central feature of its historic core the north bank of the river is the site of rock-cut Pontic tombs as well as Amasya Yaliboyu Houses which are the best instances of Ottoman architecture.



2. b.



2. c.

### Design Studies

In accordance with the conceptual framework as defined earlier, within the semester three design works were done using three steps. The studio works were done as a passage, permanence and completion between terms by the teachers and the students of the Architectural Design I and

2. Trip to Amasya and the studio works were done by the teachers and the students of the Architectural Faculty, the mayor, the governor of Amasya and architects from Amasya.

### 'Conceptualization of the City' as a Pre-Studio Work

As a first step of the semester, students were given reading assignments on the city, whose identity is formed by historical, social-cultural, geographical and structural elements, to understand the city, its identity and the elements forming this identity. These studies were strengthened with conferences using slides and several images from the city. Students were taught to understand the image of the chosen cities through visual, written and verbal lectures.

In the first two weeks, as the first design work, before going to Amasya, Students created a project of "A House in Amasya" by the help of 'concept' at architectural design and the idea beside the architectural product. We have dealt with some conceptions as *place, time, human and technology* at Amasya; students were guided about the solutions between creativity and reality. Besides the planning and informing of students before going to site area, the aim of this short studio work was to discuss the conceptualization process with the students and to deeply discuss on basic architectural issues with designing a hobby-house for the imaginary-user living in Amasya.

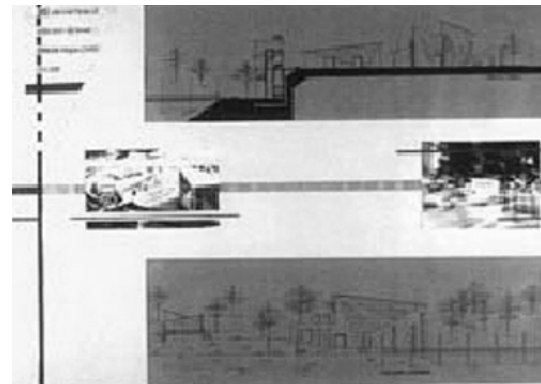
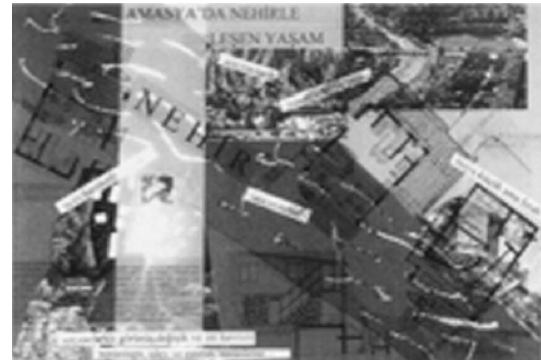


Figure 3  
Series of Posters of  
a Student Work: A  
House in Amasya.

The role of the design workshops in architectural education did not take enough importance through overall design education's past. However in recent years, since it was seen that it will not only develop and sharpen design skills in a short amount of time, but also help to construct new approaches in architectural education, it has been started to be paid attention to workshop activities in many schools of architecture. (TURGUT, H., and others., 2002) On the basis of this argument, a design workshop which was concerned with understanding the relationship between environment in different scales and the socio cultural factors of the settings, was organized in Amasya. The workshop consisted of three parts:

- Planning and informing students of workshop in Istanbul,
- Surveying, recording on site and designing in Amasya and
- Refining, interpreting/ evaluating results of their designs and presenting them at final meeting in Istanbul

"Continuity and Change" was the main theme of the Workshop. These concepts are both fundamental issues discussed for the historical and traditional part of cities. Rapid change in living conditions and the contradictions between global and local cultures create new paradigms and new dimensions about culture-space interactions. The internationalization of cities came into conflict with so-called "traditional" values, and in the confrontation, continuity with the past was broken and livable cities were destroyed. *The essential humanity and the sense of place characteristic of traditional*

urban environments continue to be replaced by culturally and environmentally anonymous or irrelevant forms (WARFIELD, 2001).

The existing architectural and urban language was studied both in the abstract and through practical applications in design schemes. A field analysis was carried out for understanding the basic rules, grammar and the vocabulary of traditional environment. It was expected that students were able to read the architectural and urban language and to discuss solutions with new approaches to historical and traditional environment.

In the field, each student surveyed their site and recorded the use of space, conditions of buildings, importance of building as architectural value and socio-economic information on site. They tried to determine the character of their site individual. For this purpose, they drew freehand drawings studying form and space, facade studies studying scale, materials, openings, details, sections, took photographs and interviewed users during the day and later on they discussed with each other and tutors about their data collected and brought their works together at the studio in the evening. Each student selected a specific site and explored design alternatives and then teams placed each design in context on a master plan, discussed the possibilities for the neighborhood with each other, with the team leader and tutors in the second day. They visited their site for that last time and recorded missing information in the last day in Amasya and they returned to Istanbul. They worked individually and as a team to refine their design and tried to answer "what specific to



their solutions speaks of "place" in Amasya of its history, past and present culture."

### **Main Design Study**

During the trip to Amasya and its workshop, the Amasya Bora Bey Lake was chosen for the project land for the third semester and the inner city of Amasya for the fourth semester and the inner city of Birgi for fifth semester. According to the analysis of the areas chosen

for the project, it was seen fit to work on designs that covered the typology of the city's social-cultural foundation and activities according to the varying needs. The projects were developed using the "concepts" to show the way for the architectural design and discussing the idea in the forefront of the architectural product. The cities were examined under concepts of place, time, people and technology within the minds of

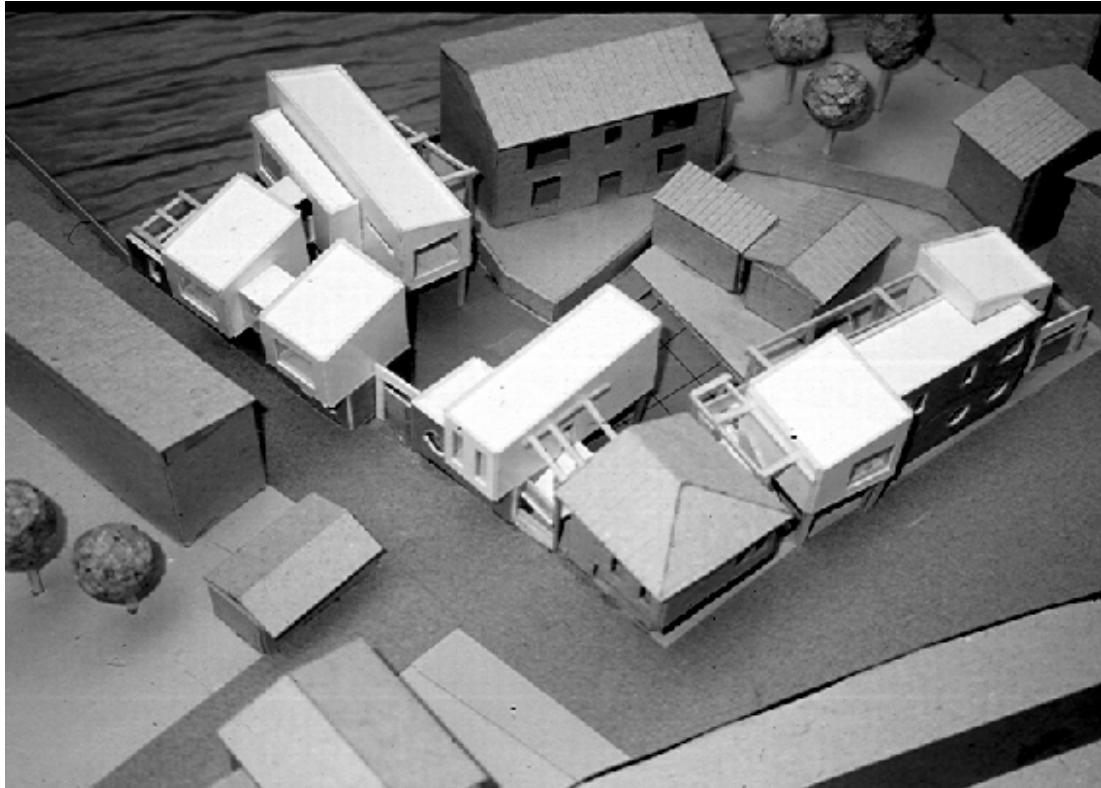


Figure 4  
Example of Main  
Design Study  
Özge Saka,  
Student.

the students; students were allowed to find multi-dimensional and complete solutions between creativity and truth.

**Example: Reading and Creating Center of Amasya** designed by Özge Saka, student

*Aim is increasing the interest on art and literature...*

*Creating a new road-system at inside city; one more little inside city...*

*Inside city-roads inside-place*

*Making a new comment on Yaliboyu*

*silhouette without disturbing...*

*Adapting the city's concept.....*

*Breaking and rebinding the blocks*

*A new building being created among old buildings..... Harmony-rhythm-difference-movement-connection*

*Connection, places among the buildings, bridges between two edges of the city*

*Özge Saka, student.*

## Conclusion

With the conceptual framework and teaching experience given below, we could state that each developing architectural design education model should be dealt with by studying the whole component system of content, scale, and behavior/method. In other words, each project studio should take place on top of the other and every semester; it must be related to the parallelism of professional and expertise courses. In this context, differences and importance of architectural design education in whole architectural education should not be forgotten. In architectural design education,

until today the content of project subjects, project instructor's role is to change many things including student's characteristics.

This educational experience also shows that such a working environment results in a positive conclusion for both the teacher and the student. Even if it is for a short period, working in a setting that is unknown, the unity of the living conditions and the joint work accomplished, especially for the students, is very valuable. As a result of this experience, it has been seen that the problems explored by students were matching those of the local and central governments. Because of the success of the process and of the products discussing solutions with new approaches, the tutors saw that the design projects may be helpful and useful for the local and central government to make decisions about the historical and traditional environment and apply them.

It might be useful to organize research activities like workshops, etc and to prepare analyses, design solutions for historical-traditional cities like Amasya for students of architecture, for the governments and for the residents. What architectural students see, feel and live in different settings changes them and helps sculpt their view of the world; living in the place and seeing changes happen in the place as a group, gives them new and different dimensions. It can also be said that the benefit has resurfaced with these projects for academic programs that are developed according to these inputs, that traditional and historical cities are evaluated through architectural education with "on the spot" workshops.

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