



TEACHING DESIGN TO CITY PLANNING STUDENTS: AFTER FIRST YEAR PLANNING STUDIO EXPERIMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING, AT ATÜRK UNIVERSITY, TURKEY

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The present study aims to share experiments in terms of teaching design to students of city and regional planning (CRP) department in the case of Atatürk University. Undergraduate education of CRP takes 8 semesters in Turkish context. The core of the education consists of studios conducted every semester as a prerequisite must course aiming to equip students with professional skills. In the case of Ataturk University, studios in the first two semesters, where students practice mainly Gestalt laws of form, seek to teach design to students at the very beginning of their education. The programs of design studios in both semesters are presented within the context of this study, which introduces a new and abstract world of lines, surfaces, volumes to teach visual language and teaching experiments. Sharing experiments, criticizing the practices and through this way, developing studio program is critically important because the design education is the key for city planners. The effects of design education can be seen in professional life where it makes easy to communicate with other professionals such as architects and landscape architects to give final shape to the environment to be designed.

Keywords: Basic design education, City and regional planning, Gestalt laws of form, Urban space.

Introduction

Nowadays, defined as intervention into socio-spatial process, planning is accepted to be the child of Enlightenment, which brought the belief that mind can comprehend the systematic periods of nature and society and also the acceptance that it established the applied sciences which can guide human actions (Tekeli, 2001). This means the use of technical mind to direct and transform the society (Friedmann, 1987), in other words, the birth of modern planning idea. Practices of the modern planning approaches began to be implemented in the 19th century all over the world afterward, in the early 20th century, the discipline of planning was organized as a separate profession (Kulözü, 2015).

Since that time, CRP (it is used to be city planning and CP as acronym in the rest of the paper) as both science and educational field have continued its development in the ever-transforming world. Educational programs designed for planning matters developed based mainly on the place of planning within planning approaches, types, techniques and political discussions are being restructured by considering the latest developments such as new paradigms, environmental problems, climate change and risk planning etc. (Günay, 2012a). Such improvements seem to have supported the development of planning and new concepts began to take part in the plans produced recently (Ersoy, 2012). However, in spite of the incessant development in both practices and education of planning, city scale design has never

lost its importance in as an educational field along with visual skills in professional life of city planners. Since the CP is one of the disciplines shaping urban environment, city planners should acquire visual skills developed during their education to design 2 and 3 – dimensional composition of urban forms and they should also be equipped “*with skills to form groups of structures and the ‘sense of belonging together’ to those groups of structures that build the environment (Günay, 2007: 93)*”.

In Turkish context, undergraduate city planning education takes 4 years, in other words 8 semesters. The core of the education is consisted of studios, conducted every semester as a prerequisite must course aiming to equip students with professional skills. In the case of Atatürk University, studios in the first two semesters seek to teach design with the aim of developing visual skills of students, at the very beginning of their education. As a result, at the end of the first year of planning education, students gain design skills in both two and three dimensions enabling them to learn scales starting from a living unit to city scale and the understanding of how to transform geometrical patterns into those of physical environment.

By aiming to share the experiments gained, in terms of teaching design to students attending at CP department in the case of Atatürk University, present study gives the programs of two semesters and the examples of students’ creative works. Inconvenience with its aim, the study first introduces CP as a profession and its development and secondly, the development of planning education in Turkish context as well as the place and importance of design education in CP. As a third part, the program of the design studio in two semesters which is also the main focus of the study is evaluated by presenting project examples produced by students in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 educational terms. The study is finalized with a conclusion part.

City Planning as a Professional and Educational Field

The sophisticated social change period started with the Enlightenment in human history, which was followed by Scientific, Industrial, and French Revolutions and continued with modernization. During the time period given, planning was introduced as an occupational discipline since it had to find solutions for the problems threatening humanity in industrial cities of the modern times (Kulözü, 2015).

Modern urban planning came up simultaneously and integrated with the socialist movement (Benevolo, 1967). However, after 1850, when the rising bourgeois class began to focus on urban planning, capitalism developed its own urban planning approach. Relative improvement of the living conditions in urban areas, cleaning of miserable districts, improvement of residential programs, municipalizing of urban services and publicizing of urban lands were among the actions attempted to be accomplished by this movement. In the 1890s, reactions against such practices began to be seen intensively bringing together new suggestions, some of which were the City Beautiful, Camillo Sitte’s Urban Planning, the Garden City, Berlage’s Amsterdam Planning and Tony Garnier’s Industrial City Utopias. Among these significant urban planning approaches of the period, the City Beautiful was, maybe, the most influential approach, even though it faced serious criticism in the 1910s, particularly after the World War I, like it wastes public monetary resource. Following such criticism, a new planning approach, Practical City movement, appeared and started to take over it (Tekeli, 2011; Kulözü, 2015).

After the adoption of this new approach, the Practical City, the need for understanding the city and the process behind its appearance was soon accepted to be a problem to solve thus rising the importance of the scientific content of urban planning. At that time, urban planning began to be given more places at universities and gained importance as an academic field. For this reason, the development of Practical City is considered to be the beginning of urban planning since it caused urban planning to be an organized and separate occupational field and to be lectured at universities as a course (Tekeli, 2011; Kulözü, 2015). Meanwhile, the first planning school was founded in the body of British Liverpool University in 1910 and urban planning lessons started to be given at the School of Landscape Design at Harvard University (Tekeli, 2011). In the following years, the first planning school in the USA was founded at Harvard University in 1923 (URL 1, 2015). As urban planning developed as a separate occupational and academic field at universities, some other organizations were also founded to support the institutionalization of the

occupation. In this respect, the first Planning Institute founded in England in 1914 was followed by the foundation of the American Planners' Institute in 1917 (Kulözü, 2015).

After the planning education started and planning itself turned out to be a separate occupational field, it continued to transform and develop to both educational and occupational aspects, which are in close interaction. As a conclusion, when the chronological development of planning is taken into consideration in the 21st century, the changes observed in planning as both professional and educational fields together with its theoretical development could be evaluated in six periods (Zeren-Gülersoy *et al.*, 2007), which may be accepted to be (I) the birth of planning profession in the late 19th century and early 20th century; (II) emergence of the planning education and development of physical approaches following World War I; (III) dominance of comprehensive planning approach in planning education following World War II; (IV) observance of social approaches in planning approaches in 1960s; (V) observance of participatory approaches focused on environmental matters following 1970s; and (VI) observance of strategic approaches in planning education in the 21st century. According to Sandercock (1999), who also discusses the changing nature of city planning, education of city planning may comprise of the contents covering socio-spatial processes and environmental and designing programs for the understanding of the problems in human settlements. In this line, Friedmann (1996) argues that the discipline of planning adopted approaches sensitive to social structure, which comprised of sustainable development practices caring for feasibility and spatial development dynamics in the 21st century.¹

It can be stated as a summary of what is mentioned above that while in the early periods physical approaches and tendency towards beauty and aesthetics were dominant, in the 21st century, planning education and discipline seem to have adopted the approaches sensitive to social structure. However, it does not mean that design focus of the planning field has lost its value and place in the profession and education totally. The reality of “...city planners should have skills enabling them to control the relationship between the parts and its whole and have to know how to give shape to an environment (Habermas, 1970 cited in Günay 2012b: 339)” has never changed so far.

City Planning Education in Turkish Context

Planning education started first at Middle East Technical University in 1961 in Turkey coinciding with the times when comprehensive planning understanding replaced with structural one in the West. However, in the meantime in Turkey, comprehensive planning principles were adapted to be more suitable and undergraduate planning education tried to be carried out by a group of professional teaching staff mainly in architecture field by developing students' skills for physical planning and design. In the first planning education practices, studio works at the first grade in the CP Department, was performed as “basic design” and thus forming the main characteristics of the Department's education base. In the 1980s, design began to be accepted as an important part of planning with the raising awareness across the country towards that city planning is a multi – facet discipline and professionals with different skills should be employed under the umbrella of this field (Günay, 2012b: 330-331).

On the other side, as the number of graduates from city planning programs began to increase, it became a necessity to get organized as a professional chamber to introduce and develop city planning as a separate profession. Inconvenience with this development, the Chamber of City Planners was founded in 1969 in the body of the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (UCTEA) and it started working actively in 1970 (Kulözü, 2015). In 2015-2016 academic year, the number of CP Departments giving active planning education increased up to twenty-one, among which is the one established at

¹ Even it is in a well - developed or constantly evolving form, planning consists of six socio-spatial processes according to Friedmann (1996: 97), which are “urbanization processes”, “regional (and interregional) economic growth and change processes”, “city building processes”, “cultural differentiation and change”, “transformation of nature” and “urban politics and empowerment”.

Atatürk University² and continuing planning education under the roof of Faculty of Architecture and Design since 2012-2013 education year.

In Turkish context, it takes 4 years the earliest to complete undergraduate education of planning after which the graduates acquire the title of a city planner. The core of every city planning education is consisted of studios as must course of every semester. As the basis of planning education, studios, which should be supported by theoretical courses, aim to give basic skills, knowledge and experiments to design and plan in different scales for different settlements, cities and regions for real / imaginary spaces. Since students use their visual skills in every semester and their professional life, studios in the first two semesters aim to teach design to students at the very beginning of their education in the case of Ataturk University.

Basic Design Studios as Part of City Planning Education

As a main part of city planning education, basic design studios aim to introduce a new and abstract world of lines, surfaces, volumes to teach “visual language” not familiar to the students since, in Turkish context, students had their high school education in a world of written texts and formulae, which detach them from sensory experience (Günay, 2007). On the other hand, the main objective of the studio is to teach students the concept of abstract and techniques of abstraction. In order to teach the relation between abstract and concrete, the basic design is used as a tool. Exercises that are based on the visual representation of the environment, constitute reference to all areas of city planning. Such an approach used to see and sense capabilities, create the most favorable conditions to reveal what is expressed with abstract-concrete relationship (Günay, 2012b: 341). Studio examines the concepts such as balance, solid-void, frame of reference, scale and order, which are not only the concept of our visual world, by using one-dimensional lines, two-dimensional surfaces and three-dimensional volumes. Then the concepts of basic design are used in exercises to produce artificial environment. As it has also been at CRP department at METU³, basic design studio at Atatürk University has a frame in which Gestalt laws are taught, experienced and implemented. Since, as stated by Denel (1979: 3), design education should acquire students the ability “*to conceive, perceive, organize and communicate as wholes as opposed to fragmented and unrelated information*”.

Gestalt is a psychological concept developed by German psychologists in the 1920s and defining “unified whole”. It refers to the theory of visual perception attempting to describe how people tend to organize visual elements into groups or unified wholes when certain principles are applied. The relationship between part and whole constitutes the basis of all Gestalt principles. Gestalt theory especially emphasizes that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

In this context, individuals do not perceive objects separately, but their composition in the visual world. Designation of the composition is based on two main categories constituting the nature of the composition, namely, an *order* which gives direction and target to lifeless nature *and meaning or significance* which is the meaning of a whole. Another feature of the Gestalt theory is its discourse developed on problem solving and creativity.

From the perspectives of design education, it is more important for planning a city where the relations between whole and fragment are more complex and whole to make students grasp the whole, teach them how to reorganize it, than the fragmented and unrelated knowledge. Such an approach is perceived to be the basic quality of education (Günay, 2012a: 401). It is also important for city planners who actively give the shape to a city to teach Gestalt rules in their education and expect them to apply these rules. In this way, they can acquire visual skills.

² Atatürk University was established in Erzurum as the seventh university of Turkish Republic after its foundation in 1957.

³ Author started her academic career at CRP department at METU. When she was working as a teaching assistant at the department; she worked with Prof. Dr. M. Adnan Barlas and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anlı Ataöv, who were the coordinators of the studio class for basic design studios between 2005 and 2010.



Figure 1. Gestalt: A design of Musa A. Eldemir

As required by its structure, studio class stands on the premise of improving students' skills rather than the conventional ideology of university life, in the processes of working towards innovating outcomes and working both as a participant and as a facilitator. It is a valuable opportunity in studio class for students to express their reactions and clarify some issues as young planner candidates. In some cases, the contributions of students may be different from and more valuable than those of experts. On the other hand, each student gains their own insights by feeling obligation to offer ideas different from what is offered by others.

In the following parts, based on the programs of 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 educational years at Atatürk University, and innovative works of students, teaching experiments are presented for both semesters each of which consisted of 14 weeks.

First Semester Basic Design Studio

First-semester studio class aims for students to gain design skills in 2- and 3- dimensions, an understanding of how to transform geometrical patterns into physical environment and demonstrate them design tools in creating geometrical and social meaning of space. In order to achieve its aim, the studio mainly focuses on abstraction, the Gestalt laws of form, Kevin Lynch's perceptual elements, public hierarchy in space, geomorphological and landscape order of space. Table 1 reveals the basis of the program in the first semester, the focus of each exercise for the first semester exercises.

Table 1. Basis of the program in the first semester

Exercises	Main Focus
	Exploration of Students Abilities
2-dimension	Abstraction
	Gestalt Laws of Form
	Gestalt Laws of Form & Abstraction
3-dimension	Felt Volumes & Geometrical Order
	Felt Volumes & Geometrical and Social Order of Space
Final project	Spatial Fete: whatever learned in the first semester & geomorphological and landscape order of space

At the beginning of semester, 2–D exercises were conducted. However, before starting teaching process, students were questioned as to how they define themselves visually in order to understand their aesthetic capacity and abstraction and design skills by giving them an opportunity to introduce themselves both visually and verbally. Such an exercise also helps to create warm climate in the studio, which is critically important since, in such a situation students could easily adopt to participate in teaching process both as a participant and a facilitator. At the end of the exercises, two main tendencies were determined; geometric (showing high – level abstraction ability) and non – geometric tendency (Figure 2). These two conflicting tendencies help start to teach mainly the concept of abstraction and frame of reference. These were two issues expected from students on their following exercise.

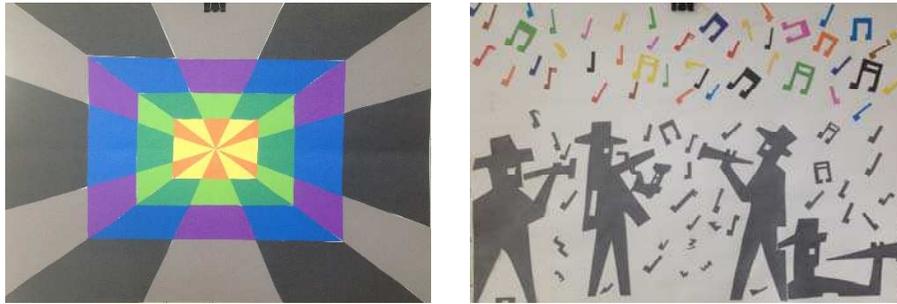


Figure 2. Examples reveal geometric and non-geometric tendencies at the beginning of the semester (Asude Elkoca, left; Hande Nur Balcı, right)

Secondly, we asked students to abstract a thing in natural or artificial environment by considering frame of reference and geometrical abstraction (Figure 3). At this point, in addition to developing abstraction ability and learning frame of reference, students begin to look at a different perspective to the environment.

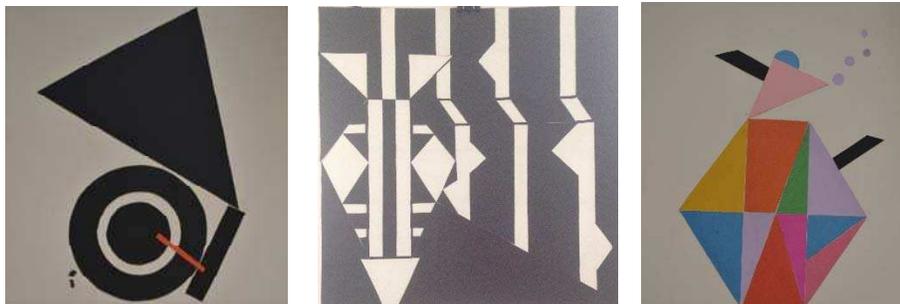


Figure 3. Abstraction of Gramophone (Rabia Tuyluoğlu), Zebra (Feyza Demir) and Teapot (Z. Şebnem Kokarca) (from left to right)

As the third exercise, students were given architectural buildings which were already designed by an architect. In 2015-2016 spring semester, “Brasilia Cathedral” designed by Oscar Niemeyer was chosen to abstract. Abstraction studies carried out by all students on the same architectural structure showed to what extent abstraction was learned and there are differences between students in terms of development of abstraction ability (Figure 4). Geometrical abstraction and frame of reference issues were completed through the exercises students conducted.



Figure 4. Abstraction of Brasilia Cathedral (Görkem Buğra Kızılkaya, left; Ökkeş Gülep, right)

After these exercises, reaching relatively a good-point in terms of development of students' abstraction ability and understanding the frame of reference concept; Gestalt laws of form started to be taught. In the first Gestalt exercise, students were asked to emphasize on the first 5 principles; proximity, similarity, and continuity, figure & ground and closure as the first step to teaching geometrical order. Then, they went on to design principles such as proximity, alignment, and connectedness, firstly, by aiming to teach low-level order. In order to create low-level order, students abstract the values that ensure the orientation. Secondly, they continued with other design principles such as symmetry, balance between complexity and coherence and common faith by focusing on high-level order. In order to create high-level order, students abstracted the values that ensured the diversity (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Examples of exercises of Gestalt laws of form (Bayram Taganov, Zehra Sökmen, Zeynep Kızılkaya, Feyza Demir) (from left to right)

On reaching a relatively good point, in terms of Gestalt laws of form, they turned back to abstraction. This time, they were expected to make abstraction by using Gestalt laws of form. During 2 weeks, they worked on abstraction of a thing in nature, music, film, and documentary respectively. First, students were asked to make abstraction in outer environment which refers to abstraction of “whatever they see”. For this exercise, students went out of the studio and drew a sketch of what they were attracted visually to abstract (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Examples of abstraction by using Gestalt laws of form: A girl taking selfie and its close environment (Alihan Söylemez), Tree (Şeyma Coşkun), Pinecone (Emirhan Sorşu) (from left to right)

Second, students were asked to abstract a song that refers to abstraction of “what they hear and feel”. In other words, it is the exercise of interpreting and visualizing the selected music. For the exercise, they preferred a different kind of songs (from both classical and popular music) by listening and then abstracting it. The songs were such as Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven, Adegio for Strings by Samuel Barber, Bolero by Maurice Ravel, La Valse D’Amelia & J’y Suis Jamais Alle among Amelia Soundtracks and Skyfall by Adele (Figure 7). While in the previous exercises the students were encouraged to use clear geometric form as circle, square and triangle; in the following abstraction exercises, they were encouraged to discover different forms of environment. Therefore, with the music exercise, students started to oscillate between regular and irregular shapes. However, the students were reminded of the Gestalt laws of form to enhance their capacity in reading and producing forms and shapes, in every instance.



Figure 7. Abstraction of “Adegio for Strings” (Bayram Taganov, left; Sinem Celayir, right)

Third, students were asked to make abstraction of a film, in other words, “what they see, understand and feel” in the film. It is the exercise of interpreting and visualizing the film chosen. For the exercise, “Modern Times” was preferred in 2015-2016 educational year (Figure 8).

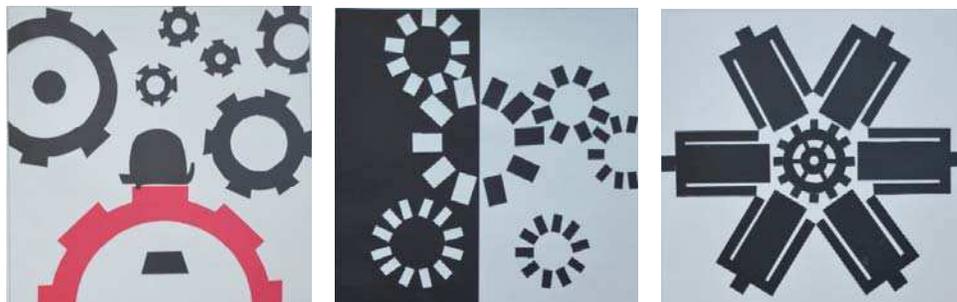


Figure 8. Examples of abstraction of “Modern Times” (Beyzanur Akkuş, Hazal Erden, Zeynep Kızılkaya) (from left to right)

Four, students were asked to abstract a documentary referring to “whatever they see, feel, understand and are interested in”. For this exercise, a documentary, “Aftermath: population overload” was preferred in 2015-2016 educational year (Figure 9).

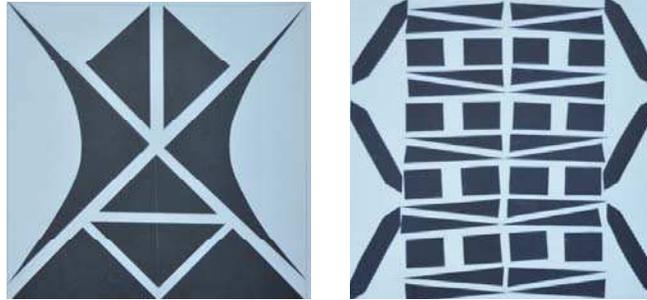


Figure 9. Examples of abstraction of “Aftermath: population overload” (Alihan Söylemez, left; Zahir Kıraç, right)

Through the abstraction of film and documentary exercises, it was also aimed to improve the students’ intellectual capacity, inform them about the concept related to CP such as modernity and industrial revolution; contemporary problems of the world and new focus of the planning area such as environmental problems, climate change, and risk society. These concepts provide them to think about the problems of contemporary world and increase their awareness about world’s common future.

As the last 2-D exercise, different from the earlier exercises students use materials different from black & white papers. The exercise was called “A Visual Fête”. In the exercise, students designed a plate for a monster eating things through its eyes by using mainly pasta and lentil as materials. Through this exercise, they also tried to be taught colour use and texture in the last 2-D exercise in addition to Gestalt laws of form (Figure 10).

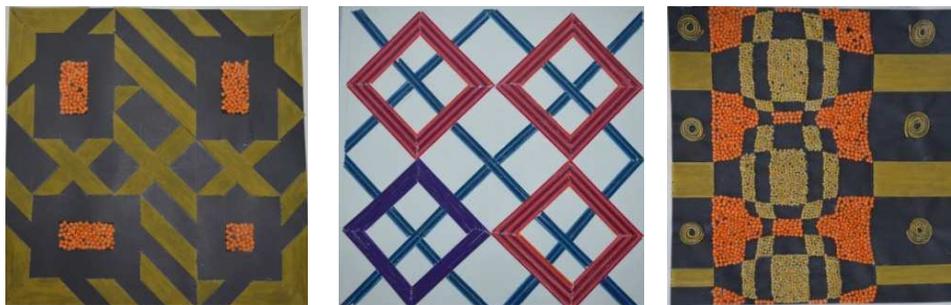


Figure 10. Examples of Visual Fête exercise (Ökkeş Gülep, Asuman Eda Akçay, Hatem Özcan) (from left to right)

At the beginning of the 7th week of the semester, students started to work on 3-D exercises but abstract design with the first cube. Therefore, after that the students were expected to transfer their skills gained in the 2-D to 3-D exercises. Passing from 2-D to 3-D exercises means the creation of good volumes in addition to good geometrical patterns. In the first cube exercise, students tried to be taught how they could divide a volume and creating smaller volumes through solid and void balance by using two-dimensional and colourful materials in a cube (33.3*33.3). The aims of the exercise were to create meaningful geometrical pattern that can be seen from all six sides of the cube differently, volumes felt in the cube and movement between the volumes felt in the cube requiring a balanced distribution of objects (Figure 11).

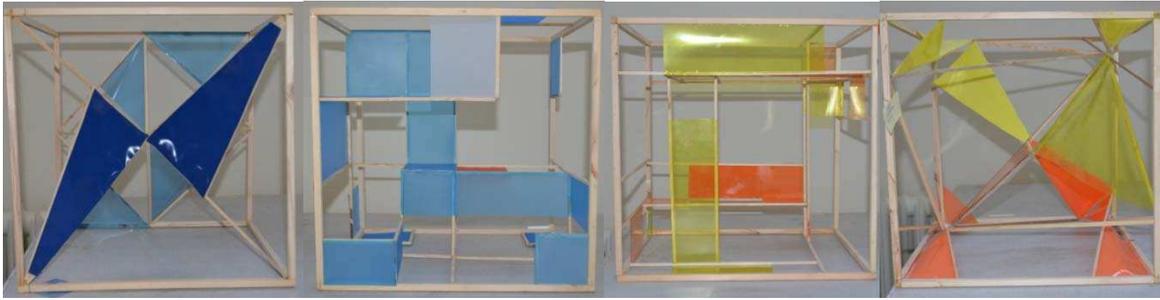


Figure 11. Examples of the first cube exercise (Merve Arslan, Sedat Sarışahin, Mükerrerem Bağdatlı, Merve Küçükkenan) (from left to right)



Figure 12. Examples of the second cube exercise (Sedat Sarışahin, Serhat Yavuz, Şehriban Paksoy) (from left to right)

In the second cube exercise, students designed volumes and geometrical patterns by using 3-D materials different from the first one. In addition to geometrical order, good volumes and movement between the volumes felt, students were expected to create social order by using public hierarchy in the cube (33.3*33.3). Therefore, during the project process, students were taught new concepts as social hierarchy of space; as public, semi-public, semi-private and private space. In this exercise, students abstract the cube as a living environment of a small monster that has some movement abilities. In the end, by using whatever they learned until that time students created geometrical and social order of space (Figure 12).

Lastly, the final project of the first semester was completed. The project called “Spatial Fete” aimed construction of geometrical, social, geo-morphological and landscape orders of space. Therefore, in addition to whatever they learned during the semester, the students were taught geo-morphological and landscape orders of space in the last one month of the semester. In this process, first students read a book of Kevin Lynch “Urban Image” and learned perceptual elements of urban space as landmark, path, edge, node and district, and the elements of spine and heart. Moreover, students learned conceptual drawing which is accepted to be what should be prepared at the beginning of every project. Second, a predetermined study area has been visited. In the last two years, the area was the part of a campus that is determined by buildings, as boundary of the area. During the field study, students observed and investigated how, by whom and for what reason the area was used and they tried to determine weaknesses and strengths of the area to design according to given scenario. Students started the project with the conceptual drawing of urban elements in the study area chosen in groups offering possibility to students to learn from each other. They started design after they recognized the project area in space and its relationship with close environment, according to observations and collected information. First, they drew conceptual map revealing perceptual elements in space and public hierarchy in space depending on their

proposed design. Then, they started geometrical design depending on their conceptual maps. During design stage, they used mainly public hierarchy in the space and hierarchy of forms in terms of dimensions. And after designing geometrical and social orders of space by considering their designed perceptual elements, heart and spine; the students were taught how to design geo-morphological and landscape order of space. With all elements of their designed area, they prepared their plan (in scale of 1:1000) depending on that topographical map. Then they made their model until the final jury and so, they learned how they can make 3-D model of a designed area. At the final jury, students presented conceptual map, plan, topographical modelling map and model (Figure 13, 14). Through this project at the end of the first semester, students gained skills to arrange space and elements such as private – common space, spine, heart and edge and used their skills within the context of Gestalt laws of form.

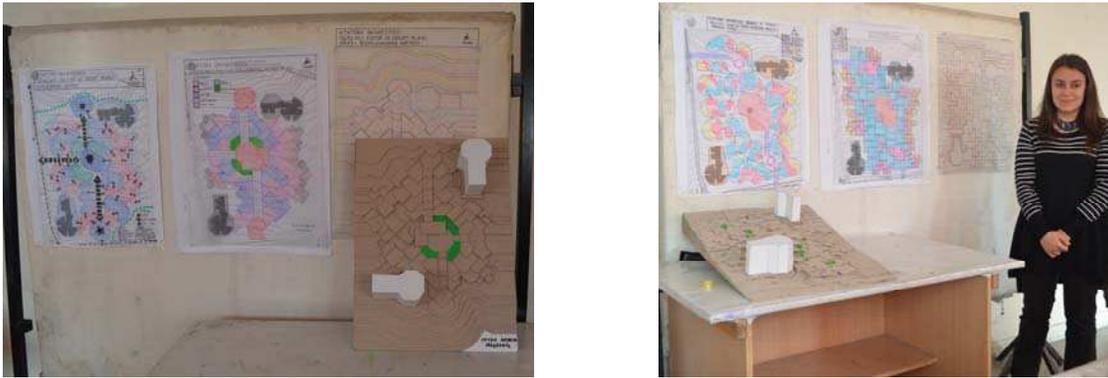


Figure 13. Photographs from the first semester’s jury (Feyza Demir, left; Gökşen Küni, right)

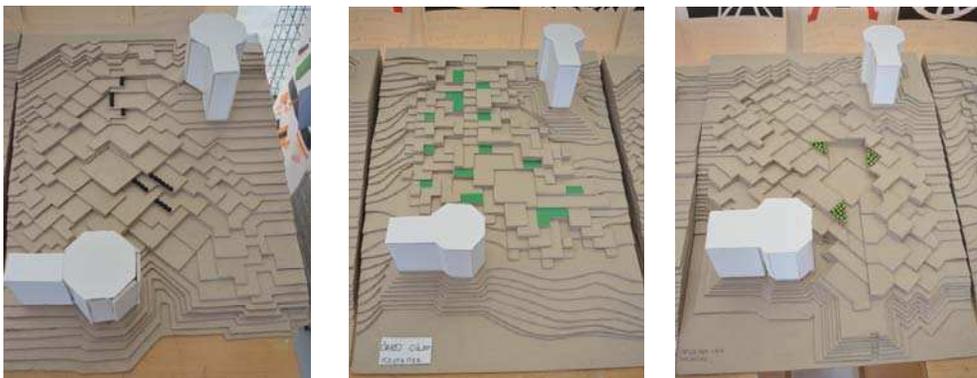


Figure 14. Example models of the study area (Özge Gülen, Ökkeş Gülep, Beyza Nur Çakır) (from left to right)

Students’ works were evaluated by a group of juries made up of not only studio teaching staff but also those from other departments at the Faculty (Landscape Architecture and Architecture). In addition, experienced upper-grade students were also invited to open jury evaluation. At the end of the first semester, “Invisible Cities” was presented to students and they were asked to read it during semester break.

Second Semester Basic Design Studio

Following the first semester, studio class in the second semester aims to give student the design tools to create urban patterns including living unit, cluster, neighbourhood and city macro form. The studio also

seeks to give students an understanding of how to analyze, synthesize and design urban space from a living unit scale to urban scale. In the mentioned semester, students were desired first to provoke their creativity and withdraw lessons from living environments they encounter in daily life, cluster and neighbourhood examples. They were asked secondly to design their living units, clusters and neighbourhoods moving independently from a determined place by following an approach from part to whole in other words an inductive method free from certain sites. Then finally, students are given opportunity to examine and experience what they learn during a whole year studio works on a realistic antique town by preparing project for a certain place. Table 2 reveals the basis of the second-semester program.

Table 2. The basis of the program of second-semester

Exercises	Main Focus
Provoking creativity and imagination	“Invisible Cities”
Withdrawing lessons from real-life projects	Modelling and criticizing living units & neighborhoods
Projects from part to whole	Living-unit Design (1/100)
	Cluster Design (1/500)
	Neighborhood Design (1/1000)
Final Project	Antique town design : based on whatever learned in the whole year

At the beginning of the studio work, students were asked to start a project inspired from “Invisible Cities”, a book by Italiano Calvino in order to move their creativity. Through the exercises they made, their imagination and creativity skills were aimed to increase after they gained design skills in both 2- and 3- dimensions in the first semester. Through the exercise, it was aimed to let students visualize space in their mind and then interpret after reading and start to think about and criticise the cities in contemporary world to be designed at the end of the second semester. In the scope of the exercise works, students are demanded to select a part, paragraph or sentence from a book and abstract it and then make a model using every type of material and colour they prefer. Students are allowed to work with another student preferring the same part to abstract by finding chance to discuss and think about the book or a part they chose more than the whole group discussion in the classroom. The aim of such a work mentioned above is to determine the students’ way of imagining, visualizing and interpreting what they read depending on their visual skills which tried to be developed during the first semester (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Examples of “Invisible Cities” exercises (Gökşen Küni & Zeynep Kızılkaya; Ömer Murat & Muteber Yılmaz; Esennur Acar & Özge Gülen; K. Semih Uğurlu & Şeyma Coşkun) (from left to right)

After revitalising the creativity and imagination skills of students, they are forced to meet the cases from real-life including living unit, cluster and neighbourhood examples from all around the world. At that stage, students were given sample living units (in the scale of 1:100) and districts (in the scale of 1:1000) from “Residential Districts” a book by Kirshenmann and Muschalek (1980). Students were also expected to criticise the designed and completed living unit and neighbourhood designs by considering its compatibility with geometrical, social and geomorphological terms and landscape order of the space depending on the principles they learned in the first semester. The works at this stage are completed in pairs and student groups present conceptual scheme related to the evaluation of the sample living unit and district and their models (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Examples of models of living-units & districts (Sezgin Ateş & Mehmet Kasap; Sinem Celayir & Aysel Yaman; Devletgeldi Hasanov & Meltem Demir) (from left to right)

The second stage of the studio works started after working on imaginary and real settlement examples or parts and withdrawing lessons from professionally designed and applied examples. At this stage, each student designs living unit, cluster and neighbourhood gradually. The first thing the students do at this stage is that they design living units for three families by applying the Gestalt laws of form and socio-spatial hierarchical order and make the model of their living units (in 1:100 scale) (Figure 17). Students are asked to use their designed living units for all the following exercises as the basic unit starting from cluster design to antique city design.

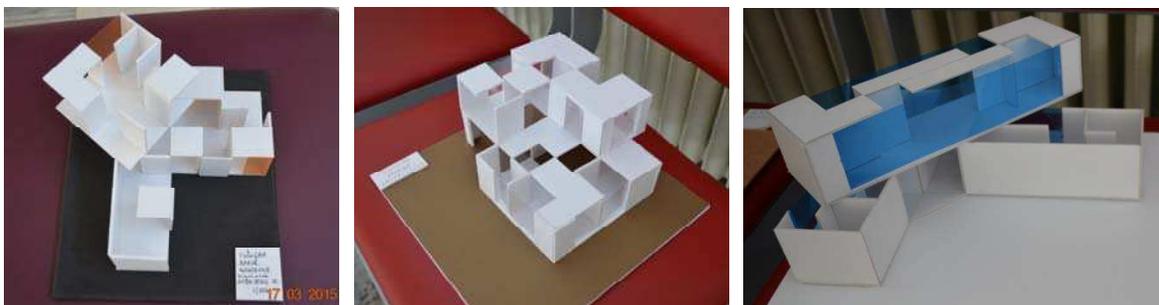


Figure 17. Examples of living-unit designs (Gülşah Bakır, Devletgeldi Hasanov, Sedat Sarişahin) (from left to right)

The second thing the students are asked to do is to design a cluster composed of previously produced living units and its modified versions (15 to 20 living units totally) as needed, its public/open space and landscape elements and to make its model in a scale of 1:500 (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Examples of Cluster Designs (Dovletgeldi Hasanov, left; Sedat Sarişahin, right)

The third thing the students are demanded at this stage is to design a small neighbourhood for a population of 2000 to 2500 people by using the living unit and cluster they designed previously. Students are also demanded to make plan and model according to neighbourhood plan in the scale of 1:1000. The neighbourhood design exercise includes the perceptual elements of an urban environment (path, node, district, edge, landmark; spine, heart, growth patterns); the socio-spatial hierarchy of space (private, semi-private, semi-public, public), and landscape design and enables to review of the urban patterns, perceptual/social/landscape order of neighbourhood design (Figure 19).



Figure 19. Examples of neighborhood designs (Dovletgeldi Hasanov, left; Songül Gündoğdu, right)

Finally, students design antique city macroform as the final project of the semester. In the scope of the final project, students prepare a scenario and then depending on their scenario, design a small town in the selected antique city, which has been Perge (7th century BC., Antalya) and Side (7th century BC., Antalya), in 2014-2015 and 2015 – 2016 academic years, respectively (Figure 20).

In all historical periods, human developed tools and principles called basic design principles to control physical development of cities. In this regard, antique cities are important examples where students can follow the traces of antique cities in an abstract way. The first year city planning studio class is worth working on when considered all its characteristics (Günay, 2012a). In this respect, both Perge and Side antique cities were chosen among many antique towns of Turkey, mainly because of their eligible spines, where students may encounter the examples of geometrical orders and historical structures such as agora, theatre, stadium etc. by bearing protection concerns. They design macroform of antique town and its close proximity in a scale of 1:5000 and urban space using the visual, geomorphological, social and landscape orders of space in a scale of 1:1000 and at last make the model of the designed urban space (Figure 21, 22). They completed the semester with the final jury as it was in the first semester.

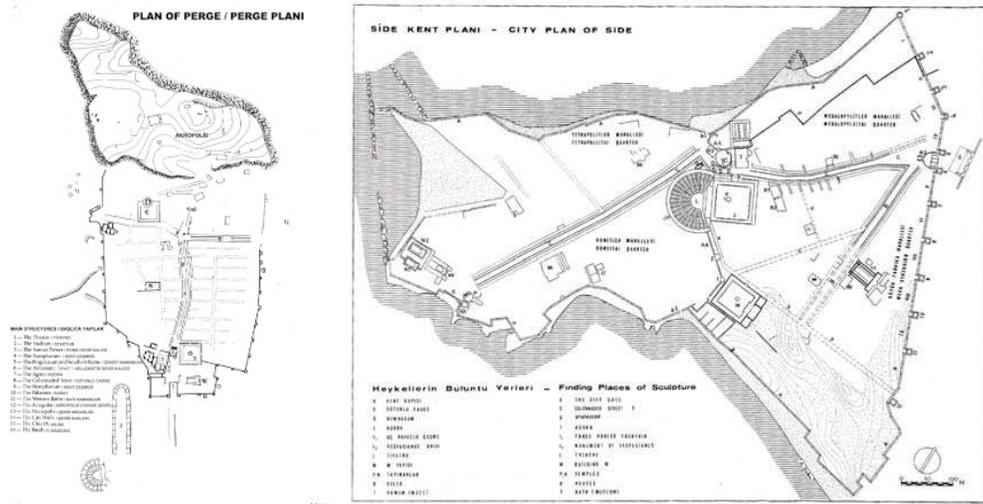


Figure 20. Plans of Perge & Side Antique Cities (URL 2 & 3)

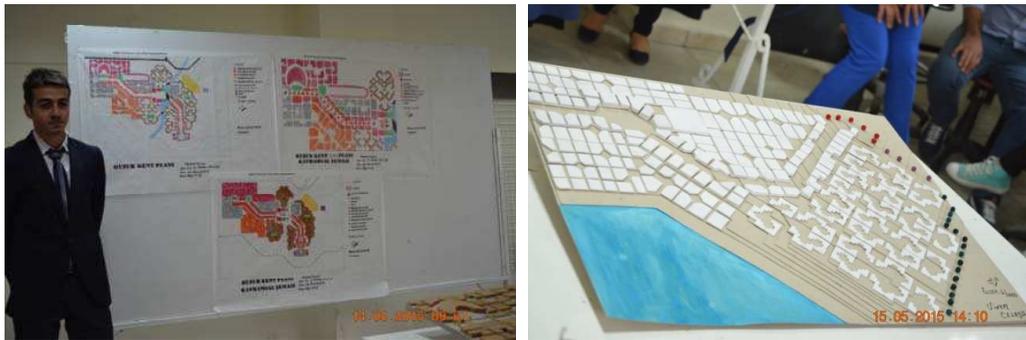


Figure 21. Antique city designs (Mahmut Yıldırım, left; Sinem Celayir, right)



Figure 22. Detail views of the Antique city projects (Sinem Celayir, Özlem Bilgin, Rumeysa Orhan) (from left to right)

Conclusion

The basic design studio at CP department of Atatürk University is a workshop where collaboratively learning space is provided with students to learn, experience and implement Gestalt laws of form to gain visual skills. CP students should have visual skills since their education cannot ignore the quality of artificial environment they will create. Functional relations and quantitative techniques could not be

enough to create a desired city. Production process of a city form is based on 2- and 3-D compositions. As stated by Günay (2012:404), shape of a city is mostly determined by 2-D property and 3-D development rights. So, if city planners are allowed to make decisions on such shapes, then the “*city planning education is obliged to teach gestalt principles to students*”.

In the case of Atatürk University, at the end of the first semester of their education, students are able to define, identify and describe guiding design principles; construct geometrical and social values in space, and apply in site design by using the conceptual drawing and modelling techniques. Moreover, upon completion of the second semester, students are able to define, identify and describe guiding design principles for living unit, cluster, neighbourhood and urban macroform designs; construct visual, social, and landscape values in space; and apply these in spatial design by using the conceptual drawing and modelling techniques. Conclusively, as the result of basic design education, CRP students gain design skills in both 2- and 3- dimensions; an understanding of how to transform geometrical patterns into patterns of the physical environment; and design skills starting from a living unit to urban scale in the first year of their four-year undergraduate education.

Within the context of the study, basic design studio experience, developed based on Gestalt laws of form, tried to be reflected in the study by presenting 1.5 – year creative exercises produced by the students attending at studio works in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 educational terms. The effects of design education revealed themselves in the professional life. It makes easy to communicate with other professionals such as architects and landscape architects to give final shape to the environment and thus affecting the human quality of life. Therefore, sharing experiments, criticizing the practices and developing studio program based on the criticisms are critically important. Moreover, city planners have been loaded vital roles in contemporary world, whose cities continuously resemble each other as they lose the elements giving their identities due to globalisation. However, only city planners among others having designing capacity seem to recognize their missions to help save and conduct individuality and distinctiveness of cities in today’s globalized world.



Figure 23. CRP students attending at studio In 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 education years

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