



## ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE BASED ON 'PLACE': THE CASE OF SILLE

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### ABSTRACT

*The design studio is a medium of intense learning in architectural education. The theme of the studio exercise presented in this paper consists of the comprehension of place and space qualities and proposing new design in a historic context. While this theme directed learning of pertinent design vocabulary and concepts, it also required that students should develop an ethical approach based on the sense of responsibility towards delicate environments possessing cultural heritage. The aim of this study is to make the architect candidates do the investigation related to the "place", and live the experience of using the properties unique for the place as design criteria. Konya-Sille, which for some people it is a Byzantium village, for some other it is a Central Anatolian settlement dated to very old periods, where either Byzantines or Turks, as being Orthodox Christian and Muslim, lived together. Sille, with its economic potential, has become one of the most important economic centers of Konya and its environment. Sille, which is known a very important centre up to the end of 19 Century, fell into a declining period at the end of that century, and accelerated its speed during the Post Exchanging period realized together with Lausanne Agreement, and reached to the 21 Century. The design problem is determined as "cultural center" in this area where is under conservation and has a unique traditional texture. In this study about a studio experience; the process of the discussions on culture, history, religion, texture, tradition, originality, continuity concepts upon context/place and new design realization in an existing texture in the direction of these concepts are explained.*

**Keywords:** Place, Identity, Architectural education, Contextual design, Cultural continuity, Sille.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Originality that has begun expressing itself in architecture since 19th century and previously covered a small intellectual area in the familiar concerns of architecture, similar to the other fields, is a different meaning, expression, search and defines a new interpretation and a different identity. Originality can be searched by the way of spatial features, form, material-technology and context and evaluate in the levels of being innovative (refinement) or creative (heuristic). It can be

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asserted that the most important revolutions in architecture occurs by the space being thought by means of void. Architectural design should be thought not by means of the function or solid components of the space but by void itself. Thinking the void in designing process can create more original results and reveals an architecture which is not generic. The uniqueness of the form is either an important way of originality.

More, differences in using the materials and technology can reveal originalities. Architecture, differing from other design products, exists with a constant “place” and gains meaning. So “place” is the significant data for architecture and meanings founded in a design sensible for its context adds dissimilar diamentions to the buildings originality.

The Norwegian architect and phenomenologist Christian Norberg-Schulz is a key theorist in elucidating the concept of genius loci, which he explores in several works spanning three decades. In his 1963 thesis, his original intention was to investigate the psychology of architecture [1]. Based on the same gestalt psychological theory employed by Kevin Lynch, Norberg-Schulz [2] explores the character of places on the ground and their meanings for people, although Lynch [3] ignored meanings and focused on structure and identity.

Norberg-Schulz uses a concept of townscape (although not as Cullen defined it) to denote skyline or image. He sees the skyline of the town and the horizontally expanded silhouette of the urban buildings as keys to the image of a place. He promotes the traditional form of towns and buildings, which he sees as the basis for bringing about a deeper symbolic understanding of places [4]. The culmination of his examination of the genius loci concept is found in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* [2]. Here, genius loci is described as representing the sense people have of a place, understood as the sum of all physical as well as symbolic values in nature and the human environment.

In Norberg-Schulz’s description of the genius loci, as well as in his own use of the concept, four thematic levels can be recognized: the topography of the earth’s surface; the cosmological light conditions and the sky as natural conditions; buildings; symbolic and existential meanings in the cultural landscape. The natural conditions of a place are understood as being based on features in the topographical landscape, including a cosmological and temporal perspective that includes continual changes of light and vegetation in the annual cycle.

Place” is a complex and contested term being exposed to various theorizations and positions in diverse fields. Conveying an understanding of “place” as an ethical component in architecture’s agenda, the study defines architecture as the “identification of place”, and comes up with ideas for a conceptual framework of “gathering” insight concerning the physical location/condition, namely “place”, through the study and understanding of its components, namely “reading” them.

The significance of defining, listening to and interpreting physical location/condition for a more “enriched mission of architecture” within developing a notion of dialogue is addressed in this study.

“Architectural design studios are educational environments that professional education and art education is conducted jointly. These studios are premised on a particular kind of pedagogy defined as “learning by doing” and architectural curriculum has been based on “learning by doing”

in the design studio" [5]. Traditionally, the practice of architectural design is learned through a project-based "studio" approach. In studio, designers express and explore ideas, generate and evaluate alternatives, and ultimately make decisions and take action.

Design studio in architectural design education is a process, built in the frame of different methods related to the aims those the studio instructor/s wants to learn, where the knowledge gained from other lessons is synthesized. In this process design area and design problem itself happen to be means; selected place and subject serve the determined aims. In this study about a studio experience; the process of the discussions on culture, history, religion, texture, tradition, originality, continuity concepts upon context/place and new design realization in an existing texture in the direction of these concepts are explained. Context can be defined as the components affecting the formation of something. It is possible to read the components belonged to that context in the spaces formed by people according to their own life styles and the geographical characteristics of the "place" they live in Aydm [6].

The aim of this study is to make the architect candidates do the investigation related to the "place", and live the experience of using the properties unique for the place as design criteria. Konya-Sille, which for some people it is a Byzantium village, for some other it is a Central Anatolian settlement dated to very old periods, where either Byzantines or Turks, as being Orthodox Christian and Muslim, lived together [7].

The "cultural center" design in this texture is determined for the Selcuk University 4nd year architecture students with the aim of experiencing the design process upon the concepts peculiar to the place.

## 2. METHOD

Different methods were used in Studio 8 cultural center project. Firstly, a trip, study field of which was shown was organized and observations and meetings were performed about Sille for understanding traditional texture. In the first days of the study, information about Sille was given to the student. After that each student designed his or her own "cultural center project" in historical texture of Sille.

## 3. CASE STUDY

### 3.1. Description of the Study Area

Sille settlement located 9 km away to the Konya city centre placed in Middle Anatolia is an area under conservation and has a unique traditional texture (Fig.1., Fig.2., Fig.3). Until the 1920s, Sille was a Greek ('Rum') orthodox village. In the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey (1923), Turkey and Greece decided to exchange population based on religion. After 1924, all Greek population had left the village.



Figure-1. Study area



Figure-2. View of Sille settlement



Figure-3. General view from Sille

Sille was one of the few villages where the Cappadocian Greek language was spoken until 1922. It was inhabited by Greeks who had been living there in peaceful coexistence with the nearby Turks of Konya for over 800 years. In the barren rocky neighbourhood of the village, the remains of several medieval rock monasteries are worth visiting; they are very 'Cappadocian' in style. The monastery and rock churches still exist in the settlement (Figure 4). Sille being a witness of a rich history and culture exhibits this character in spatial variety. There are stonework

churches, chapels, houses, Aya Elenia Museum (Figure 5), Tepe Chapel, mosques, baths, fountains, public laundries, public buildings, waterways and some sort of civil architectural buildings in Sille.



Figure-4. The rock churches

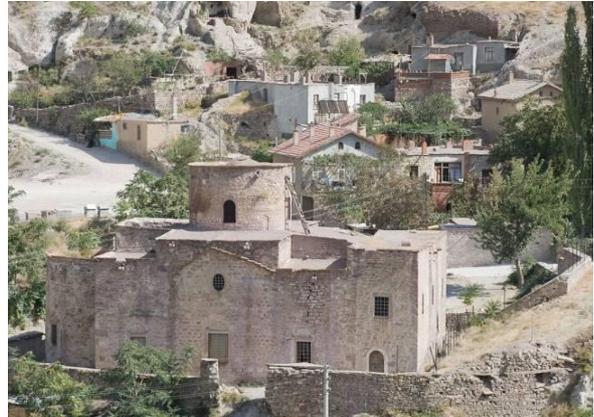
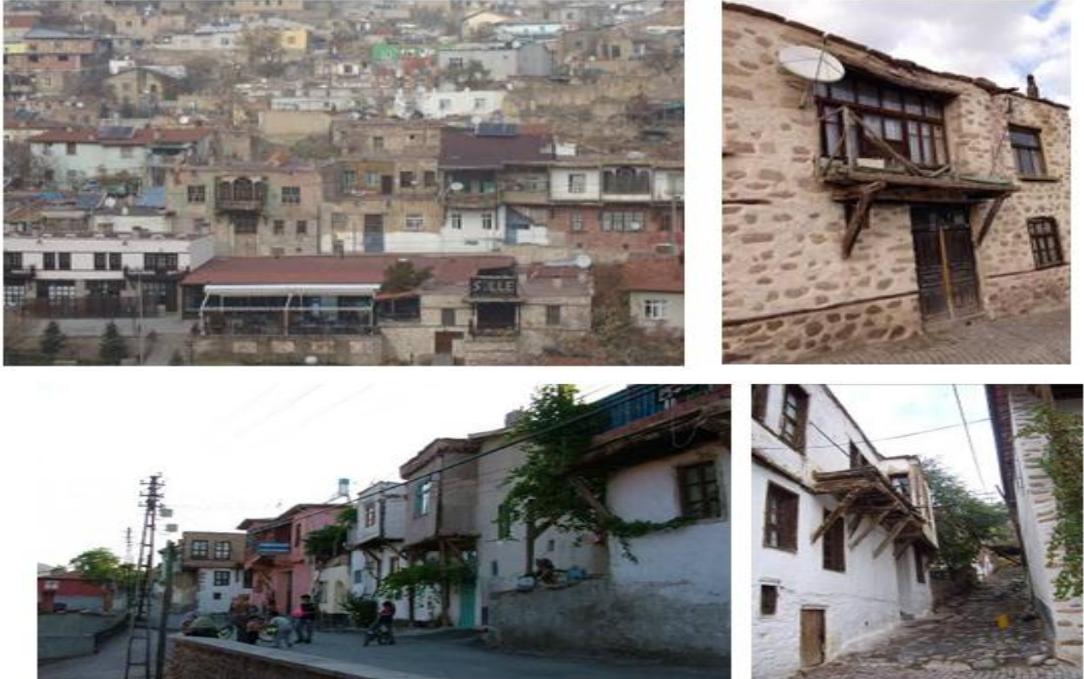


Figure-5. Aya Elenia Museum

There are two districts having different religious lives in Sille carrying valley settlement characteristics. However as different from similar other settlements there are districts in Sille where Muslims and non - Muslims live together. Sille brook (dried today) was a factor for the location of the dwellings and the mountain in the south of the brook obstructed the settlement to grow towards that direction. The original settlements under conservation form an arc in northeast - southwest direction. There are fountains in the intersection point of some streets covered by stone. Dwellings have generally double floors. The relationship of the dwellings located around twisted narrow streets with the exterior is provided directly with a door opened through the street. The doors and windows are small, low and narrow in the dwellings and there are rooms, storage and kitchen in the ground floor. On both floors the main spaces open to the sofa/transition space, there can be balconies in front of the spaces in upstairs or it can be possible to widen the usage areas, provide visual relationship with the outside and increase the view angle by the use of oriel. Kitchen shows generally a double space organization in ground floor. This formation can be named as cooking section and storage section. Storage areas generally carry appropriate conditions for food storage in rock carvings. In the scope of the space relationship from the religion angle, although the Muslim and Christian dwellings generally has formal similarity (material, silhouette, etc.), there are differences in the space transparency, permeability and the way it opens to the outside and the space [7]. The Sille andesite stone is probably the most important construction material which used in buildings (Table 1).

Table-1. Architecture of Sille settlement



#### 4. STUDIES

In this design studio it is aimed for students to design based on 'place' in Sille. The design problem is determined as "cultural center" in this area where is under conservation and has a unique traditional texture. Studio 8 project was organized in in 2014-2015 fall semester in Department of Architecture in Selcuk University with a team consisting of 11 students under the supervision of Prof.Dr.Ahmet Alkan and Emine Yıldız Kuyrukçu. Firstly, a trip, study field of which was shown was organized and observations and meetings were performed about the Sille architecture and history. In the first days of the study, information about surveying was given to the student. After that each student designed his or her own "cultural center project" in historical texture of Sille (Figure 6). In the following tables there are cultural center projects which designed in the historical texture of Sille by the students (Table 2-5).

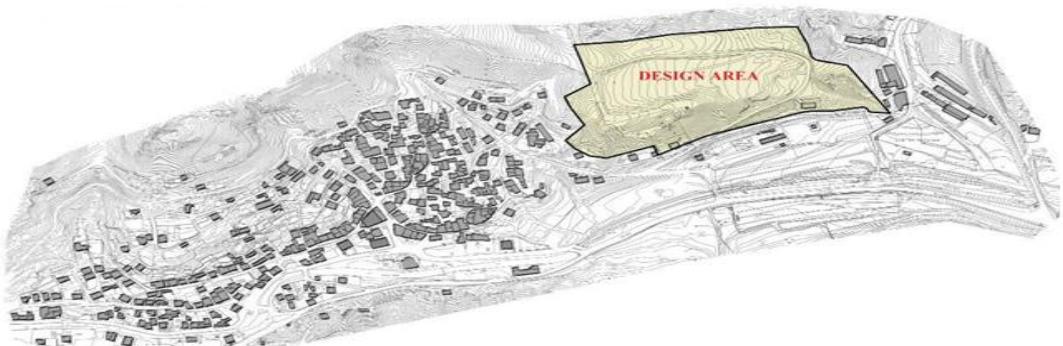


Figure-6. Design Area

Table-2. Student Final Project 1 – Designed by R. Zehra GÜLTEKİN

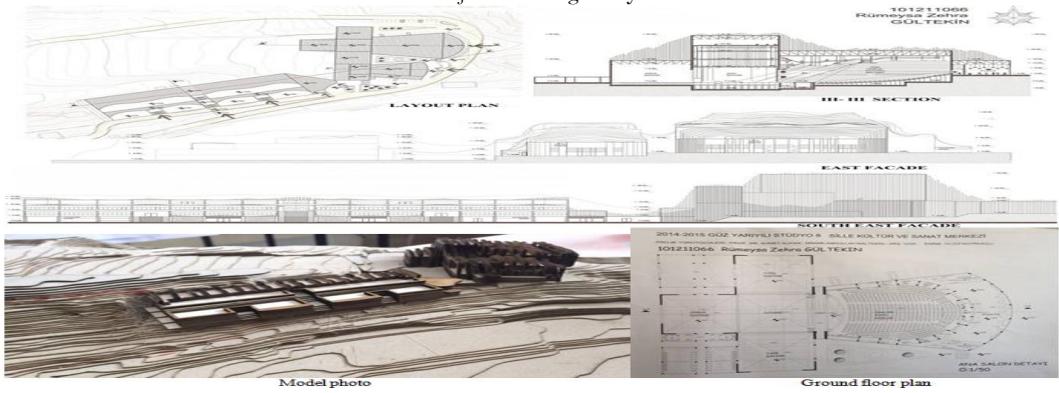


Table-3. Student Final Project 2 – Designed by Kübra AYAN

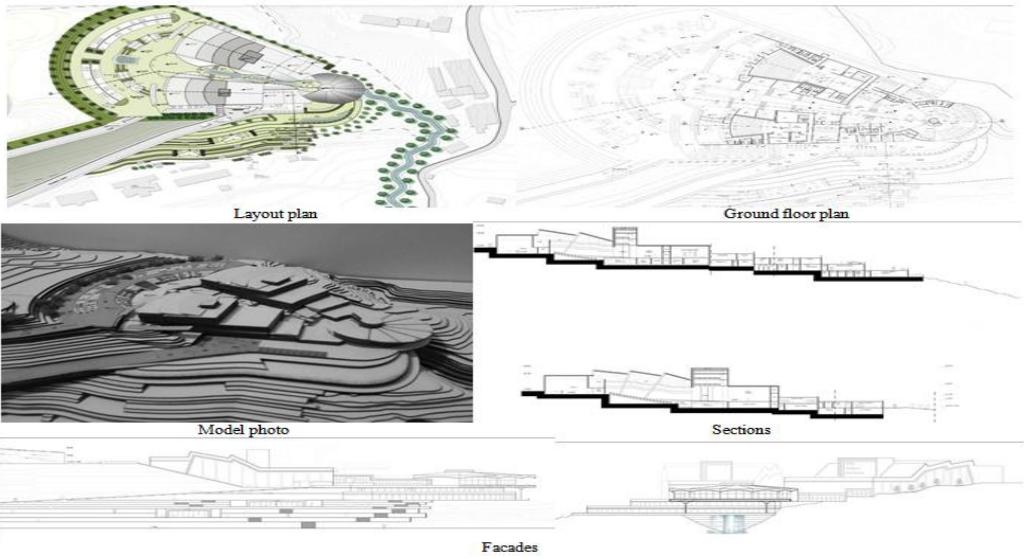
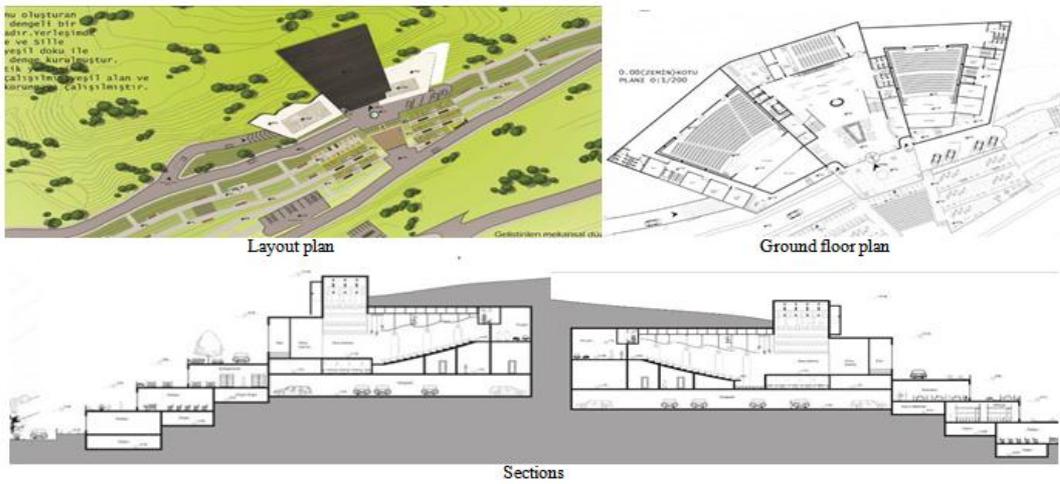


Table-4. Student Final Project 3 – Designed by Derya AKTÜRK





South facade



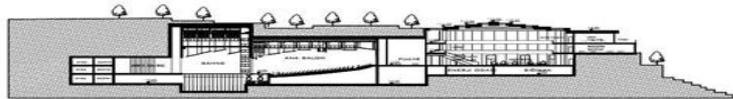
Model photos

Table-5. Student Final Project 4 – Designed by Duygu POLAT



Layout plan

Ground floor plan



Sections



Model photos

## 5. CONCLUSION

In architecture, “deterritorialization” refers to the notion that an architectural product does not belong to any geographical region, cultural structure, or intellectual system, nor to any moment in time; it makes no difference whether it is constructed here or there, at this time or at that time. It concerns not finding itself a place/territory and not becoming something more than a singular element. In other words, it is the disappearance of the qualifications of the data which

direct an architectural work and which make the place itself, a decrease in the communicational power of the environment and, in architectural theory, it is the disappearance of the integrity of the separation of concept and the thought. In brief, deterritorialization is a matter of breaking away from the observable context, away from the physical environment and cultural values, away from historical periodicity and a theoretical system. Architecture, differing from other design products, exists with a constant "place" and gains meaning. So "place" is the significant data for architecture and meanings founded in a design sensible for its context adds dissimilar dimensions to the buildings originality.

It is very important studying in area where is under conservation and has a unique traditional texture for architectural design education. It is seen that in this study students evaluated Sille original architecture, topography, traditional material (Sille stone) and socio-cultural characteristic in their cultural center projects.

This study emphasis that 'place' is very important and significant for architecture education in context of original design that must take care topography, material and original architecture.

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