

Architecture; culture, democracy and life

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT A GOOD ARCHITECT BEGINS A PROJECT WITH THE INTENTION OF CREATING A SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURE. A GOOD ARCHITECT BEGINS A PROJECT BY ENVISIONING A GOOD DESIGN, AND BY AIMING TO PRODUCE A SOLID ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE; SUSTAINABILITY IS A NATURAL RESULT OF THIS. I DON'T CONSIDER THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY AS APPLYING ONLY TO PHYSICAL STRUCTURES BUT RATHER BELIEVE IN SUSTAINABLE LIFE, SUSTAINABLE CULTURE, SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY...

In one interview, you had said: "A good architect endeavours to make all his structures environmentally friendly." What level of sustainability and ecological responsibility can be maintained within the scope of architecture? What should this it be?

Actually I misstated something there; a good architect only produces green works, doesn't endeavour to do it, simply does it. The work of any architect who is aiming to create a good product must contain the concept of sustainability. Now that I have corrected what I said in a previous interview, perhaps this statement will continue on as a sustainable statement.

I don't believe that a good architect begins a project with the intention of creating a sustainable structure. A good architect begins a project by envisioning a good design, and by aiming to produce a solid architectural structure; sustainability is a natural result of this. I don't consider the concept of sustainability as applying only to physical structures but rather believe in sustainable life, sustainable culture, sustainable democracy... This is a visual reflection of a sustainable life fit for humanity. Architecture contains within it culture, democracy, and life; it's a combination of these things. When there are deficiencies within the culture, the democracy of a country, I don't believe that talking solely about architectural sustainability in that country is sufficient.

I was asked in a previous interview: "Why hasn't architecture reached a breaking point in Turkey? Why aren't Turkish architects represented in literature and known internationally?" I don't agree that this is the case; we are becoming quite visible these days. Even if we were to acknowledge this as true, we are one with this country's sustainable economy, culture, development, human rights, politics. Any perspective that holds architecture separate from these, in my view, would be doing a disservice to architects who are currently working in this country because we are a reflection of the public; putting everything else aside, regarding architecture on its own, as solely the means for creating objects or works of art isn't possible. When I consider it in this light, I don't regard sustainability as a component of architecture, but rather architecture as being part of a sustainable life.

Do you believe that these concepts are internalised, perceived and applied correctly in our country, particularly when talking about metropolitan architecture?

It's a frustrating situation because without excluding anyone and speaking generally, your magazine, among others, focuses on parcelled unique materials that are region-based. Unique materials are important in and of themselves and integral to our work but when we can't talk about city planning, certain difficulties arise. The residents of a city, the local directors, architects with

KREATİF ARCHITECTURE



LÖSEV

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knowledge of city planning, designers, sociologists, instead of all of us sitting down and planning together, we have become focused on this issue of visibility brought on by the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. This is why it's more convenient to regard materials singularly. City planning is a massive undertaking and an architect, a city planner, or a politician, on their own, cannot speak for the whole. These

days, metropolitan architecture is not in the hands of experts and I believe the problem stems from this. Without a set plan, we see changes and different planning strategies each passing day. And of course, this process goes against the concept of a sustainable life and city. The current situation goes against the principle of sustainability and I for one find this frustrating.

When you spoke at the event entitled 'One Thousand and One Faces of Design' organised by AKG Gazbeton, you said: "We're not architects, we're developers; this is the difficulty in cities." Can you explain this?

Yes, this is what we've become in the last few years. To me architecture isn't simply building single structures; it encompasses the neighbourhood, the region, the whole process of creating and building and I would like to be able to discuss it and put for arguments about it in this context. I say we have become developers because as architects we endeavour to construct the best suited and high quality structures based on the plot and the conditions we have to work with. This is a challenge and a struggle for us.

The Piri Reis University project you worked on entitled BREEAM received a Gold Certificate. Do you believe that buildings should be certified and is this process heading in the right direction in Turkey?

Recently, certification of buildings has become better known and even fashionable in not only Turkey but internationally as well. In no way am I against receiving certification for green buildings; but I will say this: let's raise awareness from the designer to the investor, in the city, the country, with all people, so that we will no longer be required to receive certification to construct green buildings. Currently, there is no such awareness and therefore certification is a hot topic, whereas if we were better informed, we would simply build green structures and not consider certification to be necessary. I wouldn't want to displease my dear consultants but I do look forward to a better informed world in the future, and therefore one where there is no longer a need for them.

Generally speaking, in Turkey, it is the employer who requires certification. Certification can actually be classified in

two ways: one is commercial as pertaining to office and residential buildings; the other is what I call public certification referring to projects such as hospitals and schools, which is the one I am more passionate about. Piri Reis falls into the latter classification. Unlike the investors for office or residential buildings, since it's an educational institute, rather than obtaining certification based on annuity costs, the investors made a better informed decision. It's a priority for them to be sustainable and to impress upon those under their charge the concept of sustainability. This idea has become a reoccurring theme in their teachings, and thereby their students are informed about the buildings in which they live and receive their education in order to ensure a lasting education and cultural awareness that they will take away with them after graduation.

During your talk in Izmir, you had said: "Like an actor preparing for a role, an architect needs to be informed about the lives of those that the structure will house." How did you prepare yourself for the design process before beginning the Piri Reis University project?

Piri Reis University is a nautical school, the function of which is rather different from a regular university, and for this reason, when designing their campus, just as a film or theatre actor prepares for a role, we did our research. This university is the 23rd nautical school to be established in the world and of the other 22 schools, we had the opportunity to visit 6-7 of them. Two of these were located in the USA, one in Japan, one in China, and two in Europe. The authorities at these schools were talking about things, such as a training pool, for example, that were totally unfamiliar to me. One was built 25 years ago on the campus of Istanbul Technical University but currently in Turkey there is no one to consult on the matter, nor an up-to-date example. This is why we visited similar schools in other countries and were briefed by their consultants and professors, who shared their valuable knowledge with us, and what we learned we could not have conjured on our own. This process of doing our research before beginning the project,



Piri Reis Üniversitesi



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IN NO WAY AM I AGAINST RECEIVING CERTIFICATION FOR GREEN BUILDINGS; BUT I WILL SAY THIS: LET'S RAISE AWARENESS FROM THE DESIGNER TO THE INVESTOR, IN THE CITY, THE COUNTRY, WITH ALL PEOPLE, SO THAT WE WILL NO LONGER BE REQUIRED TO RECEIVE CERTIFICATION TO CONSTRUCT GREEN BUILDINGS.

AYDAN VOLKAN

IT'S AN INTERESTING SUBJECT, DIFFICULT WORK, AND IT REQUIRES THE COLLABORATION OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES. MEDICAL PLANNING AND ALL AFFILIATED FIELDS ARE VERY BINDING; IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE EXPERIENCED IN THESE FIELDS AND KNOW THEM WELL.

in the way an actor would prepare for a role, as mentioned earlier, took a long time, 3 years, from 2006 to 2009.

In our current issue we will be featuring hospitals and other buildings designated for health services. Can you talk about your architectural approach to hospitals and projects regarding the health industry?

Currently we are working on a hospital, research centre, and a nursing school on the medical school campus of Koc University. The first phase of the 270-square foot project has been completed. Another project that is near to our hearts is the construction of a facility containing a hospital, school, and accommodation in Ankara for LÖSEV. We have been working on hospitals since 2006. It's an interesting subject, difficult work, and it requires the collaboration of several different disciplines. Medical planning and all affiliated fields are very binding; it's important to be experienced in these fields and know them well. In addition, there is not one general description that can be applied to all works in this function. For instance, when we examine the Koc University Medical School and LÖSEV projects and compare them, we see that while there are some fundamental similarities, they are quite different in terms of their operations and aspect. It is imperative for hospital



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structures to adhere 100% to the concept of sustainable architecture. Neither of the abovementioned projects were certified; regardless, both were designed and executed to the standards of sustainable architecture, as well as sustainable engineering.

Today we have the necessary contemporary technology to produce natural materials which are readily available. What are your views on how these are received within the market in Turkey?

Sustainable architecture doesn't solely depend on the materials used; it's an important component but we must first begin with construction techniques. In Turkey, in addition to having limited access to sustainable materials, it is difficult to find contractors who have the necessary skills to construct sustainable structures. It is a difficult market for them as well because in a country where the economy is as unstable as it is in Turkey, where the future is uncertain, speedy production is imperative but this is not conducive to sustainable architecture as that requires precise work so as not to damage the environment. A friend of mine says that "the greenest product is one which has never been produced" but since we do not have that option, we must take our time and devote the necessary care and attention to the environment when

building. In terms of certifying materials, the method and place of production is as important as the materials themselves. The factories must comply with health and safety regulations and waste must be properly disposed of. In the past three or four years in Turkey, progress has been made with regards to these issues but before then we had many difficulties.

In 2002, we worked on a hospital project and back then we used rubber for the installations and flooring as at the time the concepts of green building certification and sustainability were not a priority, nor talked of much in Turkey. We were long aware of these approaches but in those years it was a struggle to find suitable materials. With each passing year, we are making great strides in terms of the accessibility of natural materials but the efforts of manufacturers and architects alone isn't enough, it's important to have the support of the government. More incentives must be given by our government in order to motivate the manufacturers of sustainable materials and green building investors; it's the only way to render the construction of sustainable buildings appealing for those that are invested. Otherwise, if the investor isn't interested in or enthusiastic about taking measures to protect the environment, it is very difficult to convince them and we cannot blame them for not being swayed.

yarım yamalak yalıtım olmaz!



Yalıtım Dergisi
11. Yalıtım Sektörü
Başarı Ödülleri;
Yılın Isı Yalıtımı Ürünü Ödülü



Yeni Nesil Yalıtım Plağı



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