

The possibility of radical resources and participation in architectural education: autobiographical spatial narratives

Radical
resources and
participation

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to contribute to the pedagogical field of architectural education by conceptualizing autobiographical spatial narratives as possible radical resources and avenues for participation. It seeks to advance a critical approach to the dominant canon of course contents and hidden local dynamics of exclusion and discrimination in architectural education.

Design/methodology/approach – The methodology is based on conceptual and critical analyses of feminist, postcolonial and radical architectural pedagogies, relating those with broader feminist pedagogies that question exclusion and discrimination mechanisms from the perspective of the radicality of emotions. As a second step, three experiments intentionally designed in academic courses to open space for autobiographical spatial narratives are analysed to extend the theoretical discussion into the specific local dynamics of exclusion and discrimination that have largely been ignored to date in Turkey.

Findings – Different pedagogical approaches and self-experiments have revealed that autobiographical spatial narratives are a type of resource that accommodates students' diverse spatial experiences including forcible displacement. Sharing that multiplicity creates opportunities for participation in the classroom and studio where different individualities, backgrounds and identities are made visible. These potential resources and participation are open to emotions and affects, are collective and transformative and, therefore, are radical.

Research limitations/implications – Although research on architectural pedagogies is still limited, the current literature is constantly being empowered by new studies from various geographies and localities. The present study may facilitate future comparative readings and further research on radical architectural pedagogies, particularly within the Global South, where complex local dynamics might share commonalities dominated by the Western canon. It may also open new discussions on discrimination and the exclusion of silenced individuals in architectural education in Turkey and elsewhere. In the scope of this paper, however, the practical experiences and observations based on two years in architectural education may be too limited for a comprehensive analysis of the applications of autobiographical spatial narratives.

Originality/value – This paper offers novel strategies for creating inclusive, intersectional and decolonized perspectives for knowledge production and more equal spaces in architectural education.

Keywords Architectural pedagogies, Autobiography, Spatial narratives, Resources, Participation, Architectural education, Feminist pedagogies

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Since the early 1960s, critical thinking on urban space and different localities has been adopted by many architecture schools around the world as an innate activity in both architectural design studios and the discipline of architecture. Accordingly, the founding schools of architecture in Turkey, such as Istanbul Technical University and Middle East Technical University, have been addressing the local and social urban contexts with critical thinking since the 1960s. At Middle East Technical University (METU), located in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, architectural education was situated between two important lines of thought within the liberal socio-political atmosphere created by the liberalization of the economy in the 1960s. These two extreme lines were architecture as purely an object of consumption and a technical mode of building production and architecture as an integral part of local and social urban contexts. In the subsequent period of 1968–1980, educators in



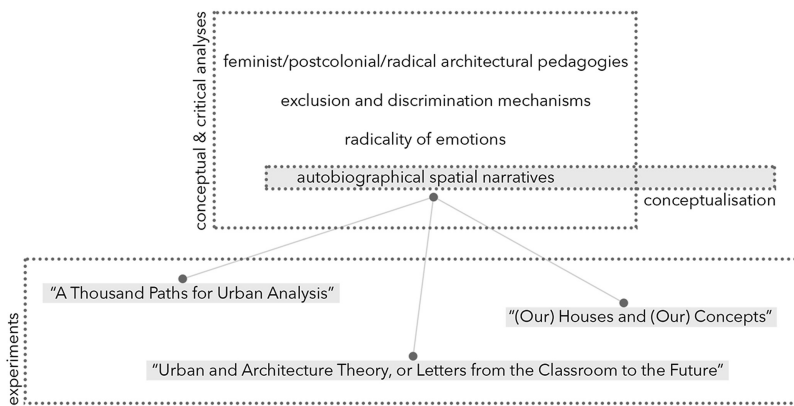
architecture focused on the search for reflections of critiques of local and social contexts in design methodologies and attempted to establish a scientific ground capable of addressing the Turkish context, situating knowledge in architectural education in this regard (Uysal, 2014; Artun and Aliçavuşoğlu, 2014). Up until the present, important investigations have been undertaken in Turkey on contemporary pedagogical experiences and approaches to facilitate critical thinking and situated knowledge in the architectural field along these lines, even if they are not always described in these words (Sökmenoğlu Sohtorik, 2020; Sönmez and Şenel, 2020; Aydınli, 2014; Yürekli, 2007; Yürekli and Yürekli, 2000, 2001, 2004).

In light of these previous enquiries and my own educational experiences (Aykaç, 2021), I would like to address two intersecting pedagogical axes in architectural education in Turkey, where the influences of Western Europe and North America are dominant and decisive. The first entails the creation of course contents while questioning current local contexts, while the second, which has not been previously addressed in the context of architectural education in Turkey and has remained under-theorized, involves ensuring the participation of students from different backgrounds, such as gender, social class, ethnicity and race, in education in the face of the dominant relations of power and oppression. In this conceptual paper, I define these two intersecting axes as resources and participation, respectively, and offer a strategy of applying autobiographical spatial narratives for both.

In this context, I ask the following questions while designing studio processes and theoretical courses: How can architecture students make reference to their own autobiographical experiences and their own local pasts in architectural design studios and related courses? What can these autobiographical materials contribute to our understanding of the urban space, critical thinking and, in general, architecture?

The personal spatial testimonies of architecture students who have come from diverse foreign countries and from different cities within Turkey and the spatial terms they use in discussing spaces, their different rhythms of daily life and their relations with the city constitute very valuable resources and incorporating these resources into educational processes creates opportunities for participation. The stories embedded in personal spatial testimonies, or, in other words, “autobiographical spatial narratives,” create possibilities for plurality and intensity within human geography not diminished by a single internationally dominant architectural identity, namely that of North America and part of West Europe. Furthermore, experiences of displacement among students with whom I have previously worked in Turkey, including students from the African continent, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Albania and Georgia, may provide opportunities to explore the territoriality of geography. Sharing multiple autobiographical spatial narratives creates opportunities for participation in the classroom or studio where different individualities, backgrounds and identities are made visible. These potential resources and participation are open to emotions and affects, are collective and transformative and, therefore, are radical.

In the following sections, I will first focus on the growing body of feminist, postcolonial and radical pedagogies in architectural education. Secondly, I will enlarge those discussions with the radicality of emotions in interdisciplinary feminist pedagogical approaches in order to highlight the issues of exclusion and discrimination. I will then reconceptualize “autobiographic spatial narratives” as a pedagogical strategy in architectural education, embodying feelings and affects, empowering students’ individualities, making displacement histories visible and embracing pluralism. I define autobiographical spatial narratives as systematically collected oral, textual and visual narratives that function as radical resources creating radical opportunities for participation. Finally, I will illustrate how autobiographical spatial narratives can be brought into classrooms and studios with three examples of experimentation conducted in urban readings, architecture readings and architectural design studio courses that I have designed and taught in the last two years (Figure 1).



Source(s): Diagram by the author

Figure 1.
Journey of thinking:
analysing and
conceptualizing
autobiographical
spatial narratives and
experiments

In the scope of this paper, the practical experiences and observations based on two years in architectural education might be limited in efforts to achieve a more comprehensive analysis of applications of autobiographical spatial narratives. However, I hope that autobiographical spatial narratives will come to be included in more educational processes and that applications of similar pedagogical experimentation will increase. Moreover, I hope that the axis of exclusion and discrimination in architectural education in Turkey, which has remained largely ignored to date, will be more widely discussed in the future with the help of the pedagogical approaches proposed here. This paper also offers possibilities for future comparative readings across the Global South in the context of architectural pedagogies and collective efforts in architectural education (Harriss *et al.*, 2023). It may specifically promote further research on radical pedagogies, autobiographical spatial narratives which is proposed as a radical pedagogical approach in this paper and the role of emotions to discuss asymmetrical power relations inherent in architectural education.

2. Architecture and pedagogy

Pedagogy can be seen as the foundation for developing common attitudes, strategies, and actions in education to create exciting, egalitarian, dynamic, and emancipatory spaces and processes. When pedagogy is understood in this way, it becomes particularly important to discuss its roles at the university level and in the fields of architecture, art, and design. First of all, in architectural education, as in other fields, the educator is the person who designs, conducts, and grades the processes in the classroom or studio, and so the positionality of the educator differs from that of the students. Secondly, the production of dominant architect, artist, and designer identities may intersect with modern/traditional, West/East, and even rural/urban dualities. Therefore, in architectural environments historically oppressed by Western, masculine, and elite actors, architecture students may experience the trauma of entering a new identity or displaying conformity. Students may be exposed to exclusion and discrimination directly or indirectly in response to their cultural, class, or geographical backgrounds or gender identities; they may feel a sense of not belonging at the university and they may retreat into silence in the classroom or studio. For students with personal narratives of displacement, the effects of these axes of exclusion, discrimination, oppression, and silencing may be amplified (*author's name*, 2021).

However, architectural design studios are expected to be places where students encounter themselves and discover what they can make. It is important to have a pedagogy that can be discussed in the context of architectural education and that allows for the organizing of activities that will reveal oppressive and exclusionary attitudes, enable us to develop common reactions and positions in opposition to those attitudes, and accordingly allow us to discuss the contradictions inherent to architecture and the local.

The body of literature being produced in North America and Western Europe has begun focusing on design pedagogies in terms of feminist, postcolonial, and ecological perspectives. According to [Pilat *et al.* \(2022\)](#), discussions of the dominant role of white elite male star architects, or starchitects, in design education began growing in the 1990s. It became apparent that the dominance of this role restricted those who might practice architecture in different ways. Therefore, the establishment of inclusive studio environments for diverse voices and identities became a topic in architectural education. In more recent years in particular, with the deepening of ecological, economic, and social crises, discussions on design pedagogies have been expanding with the addition of new dimensions such as engaging in collaborations with outside communities and civic initiatives in order to free the studio from institutional and academic contexts, and conducting wider research on design pedagogies influenced by pedagogical discussions in other disciplines ([Colomina *et al.*, 2022](#); [Pilat *et al.*, 2022](#)). There are also similar attempts focusing on the situation of architecture in our age of multi-layered crises, including ecological collapse and destruction. All these attempts question what would happen if architectural pedagogy set aside its mainstream worldview shaped by the aforementioned starchitects and obsessions with capitalistic progress and turned instead toward discussions of forms of collapse and renewal ([JAE, 2022](#)).

The growing body of literature on feminist pedagogies in different disciplines including sociology, women's studies, and political science has also influenced the debates on pedagogy in architecture. For example, the US-based Feminist Art and Architecture Collaborative (FAAC), consisting of a cosmopolitan group of feminist artists and architects, has been examining art and architecture education through the lenses of feminist pedagogy and intersectional feminism since 2017. In a manifesto published in *Harvard Design Magazine* in 2018, the FAAC explained that its aims include the collective production of new curricula for art and architecture education, the questioning of dominant canons and precarious institutional employment contracts, and the establishment of classroom and studio environments in which relations of domination are not reproduced ([FAAC, 2017, 2018](#); [Aykaç and Uysal, 2021](#)).

However, there is a recent critique of this growing literature noting that it has been dominantly produced within the Northern context and imposed on the Global South ([Harriss *et al.*, 2023](#)). Turkey, a land that could not be labelled as Western due to its culture, history, and location, may be viewed through the theoretical lenses of all of the literature mentioned above. However, while doing so, it would be more appropriate to establish critical ties between them rather than directly applying pre-existing theoretical frameworks proposed by Western feminist, postcolonial, or alternative design pedagogies. It is important in this process to discover and make visible the specific dynamics of architectural education in this unique geographical entity on the periphery of the capitalist economy alongside the dynamics of the country itself.

The dynamics of being situated on the periphery contain their own contradictions and possibilities. Compared to the international literature ([Salama and Wilkonson, 2007](#); [Salama, 2021](#)), a valuable body of literature has also been produced in Turkey, mostly in Turkish, that does not necessarily address feminist, postcolonial, or alternative design pedagogies or even more general "architectural pedagogy" but nevertheless focuses on local urban contexts, situates knowledge, and reconsiders course contents and the positionality of the educator in the design studio accordingly ([Sökmenoğlu Sohtorik, 2020](#); [Sönmez and Şenel, 2020](#); [Aydınlı,](#)

2014; Yürekli, 2007; Yürekli and Yürekli, 2000, 2001, 2004). Within this literature, Ashlan Şenel explores the possibilities of being open to local knowledge through tactics and methods such as mapping and performative mapping by interrelating architectural education with feminist theories (Şenel, 2019, 2022; Şenel and Yetim, 2023).

The methods for and results of applying a dominant syllabus or the nuances of systematic discrimination mechanisms in Turkey differ from those in North America and Western Europe. Similarly, the stories of students who choose architecture departments of faculties of architecture differ across geographical contexts. At this point, it can also be said that there are serious gaps in the system for migrant students, those who have come to metropolitan cities from less “central” areas, or those with identities that remain marginalized in Turkey compared to the dominant profile in terms of the failure to discuss the interrogation of such individuals in the framework of current local dynamics and the systematic discrimination that they may face (*author’s name*, 2021). None of the attempts in the growing literature in Turkey have considered this fact yet. The mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination that students may be exposed to in architectural education have not yet been considered [1].

In the next section, I engage with discussions of pedagogy occurring outside of the discipline of architecture that I find to be more relatable than “design pedagogies” together with the exclusion and discrimination mechanisms that I have encountered in the field of architecture to date. These pedagogical discussions can contribute new perspectives to the processes of architectural education in Turkey. In this context, I first address the radicality of emotions through the conceptualizations of pedagogies that can be described as participatory, intersectional, radical, and postcolonial.

3. The radicality of emotions

As Carolyn M. Shrewsbury (1993, pp. 166–167) observed, at the simplest level, feminist pedagogies make the mechanisms of oppression visible, facilitating the development of a collective attitude towards them. There are a wide variety of answers to situations such as discrimination, exclusion, and silencing at every educational level. In this context, bell hooks (1994, 2010) applied the perspectives of intersectional feminist thought to challenge Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000 [1970]), a book that applies critical pedagogy to discuss discrimination in education. While incorporating her own intersecting experiences in terms of race, gender, class, and place into these conversations, she also addressed emotions and affects that are typically ignored in these contexts, such as love, excitement, and happiness, as well as practices such as being caring or sensitive. Although these emotions may seem to constitute an abstract dimension of our lives and particularly of education, they are directly related to the activities that are undertaken and the collective fields produced through those activities. Emotions are concretized by actions. For example, with the recognition of teaching as care work (Bimm and Feldman, 2020), an educator who cares for herself and loves herself more readily cares for her students and the space in which she is collectively present. This is precisely why emotions have the power to make educational spaces, curricula, and universities emancipatory and democratic (hooks, 1994, 2010). Moreover, with a sensitive, tolerant, and emotionally aware approach, an opposing stance can be displayed against the collective masculine, oppressive, exploitative, and therefore harsh and insensitive mechanisms of existing institutional structures and programs (Ahmed, 2014).

In recent years, concepts such as “radical happiness” (Segal, 2017) and “radical softness” (Bimm and Feldman, 2020) have begun being used in pedagogy and wider bodies of literature to shatter our perspectives on emotions and affects, to bring them into prominence in places where they are ignored, and, most importantly, to discuss their potential. In order to understand this characterization of radicality, it would be helpful to ask, for example, what makes happiness or softness radical. How are happiness and softness radical?

Segal (2017) stresses happiness as a human right while also highlighting the extent to which people remain unhappy in our age of collective cynicism and depression. In other words, Segal holds that we have the right to be happy as human beings, but the happiness that she discusses is very different from the perceived feelings of happiness that stem from consumption and are rapidly depleted and replaced. This difference makes it a radical type of happiness. Radical happiness is collective and transformative, constructive and constitutive; it arises from a state of coexistence in which people take care of each other, empathize with each other, and attach importance to the well-being of others (Segal, 2017). The idea of radical softness, on the other hand, interrogates the concepts of “softness” and “hardness.” Bimm and Feldman (2020), who work on confronting trauma in universities, classrooms, and studios, have spoken out against viewing universities as places completely impervious to the vulnerabilities of our age, which is “hard” enough in its economic, social, ecological, and political contexts. Instead, they propose a softness that builds solidarity and allows vulnerabilities to be voiced, discussed, and transformed, and they characterize this softness as radical (Bimm and Feldman, 2020).

From these radical characterizations of both happiness and softness, it can be understood that situations are viewed critically according to their contexts with these approaches, and emotions and affects are not ignored in the face of the suppression occurring within institutions and academic programs. To challenge “power and privilege” in this direction, D’Ignazio and Klein suggest the following set of action-based principles: “examine power, challenge power, elevate emotion and embodiment, rethink binaries and hierarchies, embrace pluralism, consider context, and make labor visible” (2020b, para. 1).

Thus, with love, happiness, excitement, sensitivity, and caring, it is possible to take a fresh look at the classroom or, with reference to architectural education, the studio and its dynamics. With emotions and affects and their embodiment in actions, a dynamic collective production environment can be established in which participants feel happy. Only in such an environment can individuals discover themselves and what they are capable of doing. What kinds of approaches can be followed in Turkish architectural education to create such an environment in which the potential of emotions and affects is recognized and they are allowed to shape actions, and how can architecture students draw lines of escape from the oppressive environment shaped by the dominant models of successful architects, geographically limited curricula, or exclusionary power relations?

4. Autobiographical spatial narratives as radical resources and participation

In my individual efforts to produce answers to these questions, I devote attention to the journeys of the students that start before their enrolment in the Faculty of Architecture and I invite their participation in the classroom or studio by systematically focusing on their life stories, including forcible displacement. Inviting these stories, which I refer to as autobiographical spatial narratives, into the classroom or studio creates a “radical” new resource and opportunities for participation, facilitates the sharing of emotions, increases the level of participation, and allows for alternative knowledge production. Moreover, with autobiographical spatial narratives, participation turns into a resource itself.

At the simplest level, the use of autobiographical spatial narratives can be understood as a return to self-lived experiences. Jane Gallop put forth the concept of “anecdotal theory” with the recognition that all theories are connected to stories or anecdotes. Thus, it cuts through diametrically opposed associations of binary concepts such as trivial/meaningful, entertaining/serious, or personal/public. Autobiographical anecdotes may contain emotions, humour, bodily reactions, or enigmatic details of lived experiences; they honour the complexity of events whose emotions are deemed worthy of narration (Gallop, 2002, p. 2). The knowledge that is traditionally academically deemed “appropriate” and “scientific”

becomes inseparable from the knowledge that is deemed academically “inappropriate, ” entertaining, personal, emotional, or sensitive (Gallop, 2002).

Autobiographies are historical, social, and spatial; that is, they are multi-layered worlds of knowledge and are therefore interactive and surprising resources. This means that autobiographies are radical sources whereby individual but concurrent life experiences can be used in the production of knowledge, and critical views of subjectivity, differences, otherness, and power can be developed (Marcus, 1994; Skeggs, 1995). In addition to their value in challenging academia and knowledge production processes, Gallop (2002) notes that autobiographical anecdotes, when shared, can lead to solidarity that arises from unexpected individual experiences between different classes and backgrounds. This process makes students of different backgrounds and identities visible, and it makes radical participation possible in the classroom or studio.

I define autobiographical spatial narratives as oral, textual, and visual narratives that are more systematically collected than autobiographical anecdotes. In bringing forward the radical contributions provided by these narratives for both participation and resources, I am investigating situations in which feelings and affects are embodied, binaries are questioned, and pluralism is embraced (D’Ignazio and Klein, 2020a, 2020b). Autobiographical spatial narratives carry within themselves the intersection of two different axes, simultaneously revealing radical resources and establishing an atmosphere of participation. In the following section, I share three experiments through which I invited students’ autobiographical spatial narratives into the classroom and studio as a transfer of experiences and processes.

5. Experiments and observations

5.1 *A thousand paths for urban analysis*

I have frequently encountered “urban analysis” in architectural design studio courses at universities where I have worked and those I have visited as a guest in recent years. Previously, in all of the architectural design studio courses I took from the first year of my undergraduate education, we had discussed architecture in an urban context. Accordingly, we strove to thoroughly understand the specific places of the city. In studio courses, we largely devoted the semester to studying and trying to understand a place and its complex dynamics spatially, discussing what we had understood. However, we were not asked to do a submission or assignment called “urban analysis” as part of the syllabus.

In light of my undergraduate education and my experiences as an architect working on an urban scale, I was excited to encounter “urban analysis” when I stepped back into academia. I believed that conducting urban analysis more systematically would encourage more serious research on a given place or locality. For example, the climate, topography, urban texture, morphology, occupancy and vacancy rates, traffic situation, or wind directions of a selected geographical place can be analysed and studied with maps and mappings. Similarly, diverse readings of social strata can be described as urban analysis. In my own experience, however, students may perceive urban analysis as a process borrowed from the field of city and regional planning, entailing mapping work that is quickly over and done with. Works submitted as urban analysis largely present macro-level data on the city; they do not necessarily offer spatial expressions or intuitive, close readings of the place. In such cases, we cannot properly perceive, follow, or discuss what becomes of analysis or urban data in design studios. Urban analysis and architectural design may advance as separate processes.

This is why I try to use the phrase “urban/spatial research” instead of “urban analysis” in studio courses, and I ask students to keep record books instead of sketchbooks throughout the whole process (Plates 1–3). On the basis of the action referred to as “urban analysis,” spatial research can involve multiple methods that differ according to the context, sometimes only determined after going to the site or during the design process. On the path to an

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architectural proposal, urban/spatial research has no set beginning or end. Urban/spatial research is conducted intensely at the beginning of the studio process and it continues throughout that process, and the proposed architectural design is also a part of this research.

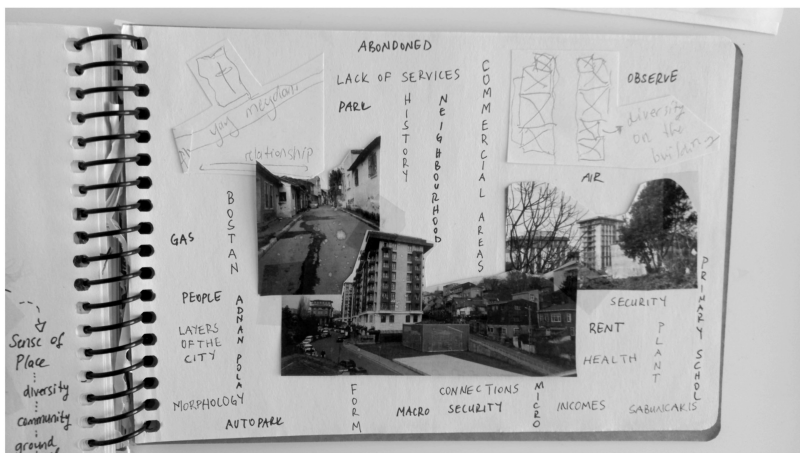
Urban space is social; it is not merely a result of production relative to political economies or a passive product. Urban space has its own productive powers; it possesses agency and is involved in processes of reproduction (Lefebvre, 2014, pp. 203–205). Therefore, architecture, as a field that participates in the restoration, conservation, reconstruction, and construction of urban space, strives to understand social contexts with their complex layers and contradictions. The fact that a city can be studied in various ways stems from the multi-layered nature and complexity of urban space. Therefore, I aim to share with students that there are a thousand ways of analysing urban space. I refer to my own autobiographical spatial narratives; to borrow the expression used by Gallop (2002), I make use of anecdotes. I was born in a very small-scale peripheral city in Turkey, and when I tell my classes where I was born, I witness silent smiles because my personal background does not mesh with the dominating academic or architect profile. I then shift that silence into an intense discussion of

Plate 1.
Record books kept in place of performing “urban analysis”, ARCH 302 Architectural Design Studio, June 2022



Source(s): Photograph taken by the author

Plate 2.
Record book of Ş.L., ARCH 302 Architectural Design Studio, June 2022



Source(s): Photograph taken by the author



Source(s): Photograph taken by the author

experiences of urban space. I narrate the home I now live in and the neighbourhood in which that home is located in a very detailed way. We discuss the intertwined public and private layers of the city through narratives such as how I reach my home, the width of the sidewalk, the frequency of passing vehicles, whether or not children play in the street, how many people live in the apartment building, how many neighbours I know, the lives of those neighbours, the tree seen from the window, my observations on the relationship between the local grocery store and the neighbourhood, how many years shopkeepers have been working in the same place, what tradesmen produce and their relations in the neighbourhood, the location of the office of the *muhtar* (the administrative head of neighbourhood), the stories that the *muhtar* tells about the neighbourhood, what the street is like during the day and at night, how we move from rooms that don't get sunlight in winter to sunnier spots, my favourite parts of the neighbourhood and my least favourite parts, and physical variables that are not independent of those narratives, such as climate, directions, scales, volumes, and materials. At the beginning of the session, I ask one student and at the end of the presentation, to the extent that time allows, I ask all students to describe their own homes in detail. We highlight the urban situations in every narrative slowly, all together. In one of these sessions in a design studio course that I gave to third-year students, we had the opportunity to talk about creating borders, closures, and transformations with a student formerly living in an urban transformation project area on the edge of a Roma neighbourhood in the small-scale Turkish city of Edirne. We pondered what these concepts corresponded to in the experience of the student. Similarly, neighbourhoods in Istanbul in which immigrants from particular regions tend to live, mass housing projects on the periphery of the city, and dormitories and other student accommodations also became parts of our autobiographical discussions. In this way, working together, we also encountered spatial fragments of different places from cities outside of Turkey, such as Baghdad, Medina, Baku, Algiers, Lahore, and Homs. The participants told us about spaces that are very different from Istanbul, and sometimes they also stated similarities with excitement. In such discussions, I usually feel like it is the first time they are talking about their hometowns in the architecture faculty where they are trying

to establish distinctive ways of producing spaces. I also often realize how little I know about the territories of the broader geography in which I live.

5.2 (Our) houses and (our) concepts

We engaged in interscalar discussions of the city, apartment buildings, and the interiors of apartments as units themselves in an architectural design studio course in the second semester of the third year, where we focused on mass housing. To step away from the current dominating model of mass-produced dwellings in Turkey, which are coded as “two plus one” in terms of their room arrangements, I asked the studio participants to explain a home from the past or present that they found interesting through drawings and writings (Plates 4 and 5).

In this way, we discovered together in the studio that many students have had very different housing experiences, be it in rural areas or on urban peripheries. We discussed the dynamics of these houses; how the names of the rooms, referred to in Turkish with names such as the break room (*ara odası*), niche room (*göz odası*), or life room (*hayat odası*), are different from the names used in the dominating typology of common houses; and what,

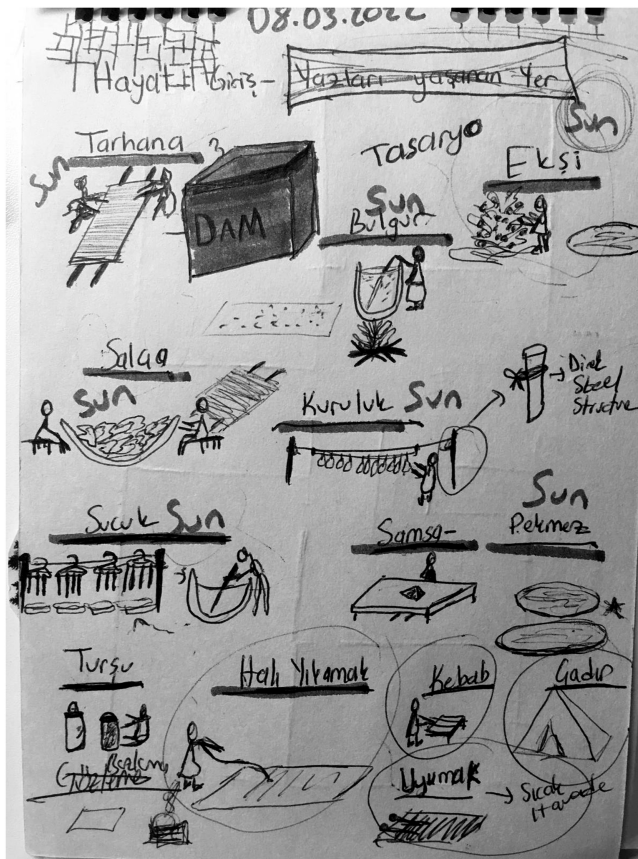
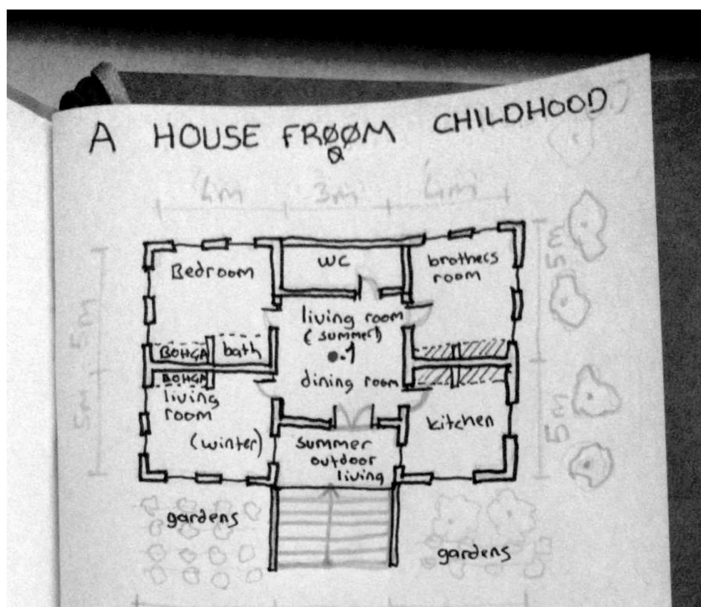


Plate 4.
Thoughts on a house in
Kahramanmaraş, a city
in eastern Turkey,
D.Y., February 2022

Source(s): Figure created by Dilara Yıldız, February (2022)



Source(s): Figure created by Enes Kinalı, February (2022)

Plate 5.
A house in the Seymen
village of Bursa, a city
in the Marmara region
of Anatolian Turkey,
E.K., February 2022

if anything, the students' parents would know about these narratives of the homes. We also discussed housework, the users of the home, and the distribution of roles inside the home during the course of daily life. We interrogated the ways in which houses and apartments themselves are urban layers, together with the transitions between private and public spaces. After voting to determine the most interesting personal home revealed by these autobiographical spatial narratives, the students collectively drew the plan of that home on the floor of our meeting space on campus on a one-to-one scale and we came together within the drawing on the floor to continue our discussion (Plate 6).



Source(s): Figure created by author

Plate 6.
Drawing the floor plan
of E.K.'s house in
Seymen/Bursa,
February 2022

I then aimed to continue these discussions in the context of the housing designed by the students themselves and to remind the students of the special points we had discovered in their autobiographical narratives. We discussed architectural design proposals and the social meaning of mass housing on a spectrum that ranged from the placement of furnishings inside the home and what those furnishings might be or what they could be to the names of each of the rooms inside the home as concepts, the hidden play areas for children both inside and outside of the home, the tunnels passing underneath the neighbourhood, and the characteristics of the areas considered to be the square or centre of the neighbourhood.

Discussions with students who had come to Istanbul for architectural education from small towns and those who had immigrated from other countries about their places of origin, utilizing drawings and texts, also shaped the outcomes of these processes in the studio. As the processes continued, proposals for mass housing projects were produced; the students sought to diversify these proposals and they were all typified by different understandings. The autobiographical urban/spatial knowledge that dynamizes and adds excitement to this production process is a radical resource that is implicit, yet very close at hand, waiting to be revealed. What reveals this resource is the application of autobiographical spatial narratives in the studio with radical participation. When considered in this way, the resource and the participation are both transformed into each other.

5.3 Urban and architecture theory, or letters from the classroom to the future

Autobiographical spatial narratives may entail much more than past stories from one's autobiography. To bring forward personal narratives and observations in my Urban Readings and Architecture Readings courses, which are elective courses in the architecture department on history and theory, I asked the students to write letters instead of reflection papers. I instructed them to write their letters to anyone who would be taking this course in the future, and I told them that anyone who wanted to write to those unknown future people anonymously was welcome to use a pseudonym. I would be sharing those letters with students who took the same course the next year, together with the standard readings from the syllabus.

My intention here was for students to share in the educational experience as equal subjects instead of addressing the educator. More importantly, I wanted them to feel that their subjective views and knowledge could be resources and that they are a part of producing knowledge within the university. Accordingly, their letters did not only allow them to express their opinions about the texts we read. The students were also able to share the points at which they experienced difficulties while reading a given text in the syllabus and what they thought future students should pay attention to while reading the same text. As an example of this, in the Urban Readings course, the students described what Georg Simmel might have meant by the mental life of the Metropolis (Simmel, 1950) in light of their own urban journeys and wrote about this in letter format for future students in the same course. They discussed different spatial conditions, such as the acceleration of the rhythm of pedestrians at subway exits, experiences of long and empty sidewalks or not knowing any of their neighbours in their apartment blocks, and journeys through Istanbul by car. This can be characterized as autobiographical reflection or a kind of immanent reading.

6. Conclusion

Architectural education in Turkey currently presents architecture as part of a multi-layered and complex urban space. Therefore, it aims to provide critical and intellectual educational environments where local urban contexts are discussed in depth. To ensure such environments, two intersecting pedagogical axes should be considered in architectural education. The first entails the design of course contents while questioning current local contexts in architectural education in Turkey, where the influences of Western Europe and

North America are dominant and decisive. The second, which has not yet been tackled in the context of architectural education in Turkey, involves addressing the dominant power relations of both academia and architecture to ensure the participation of students from different backgrounds in architectural education. These two intersecting axes have been discussed in this paper as resources and participation. In recent years, with the deepening of ecological, economic and social crises, discussions on design pedagogies have also gradually deepened. Topics of relevance in the international literature on feminist, postcolonial and radical architectural pedagogies have included inclusive environments for diverse voices and identities, the questioning of the roles of dominating architects and designers, the place of dominant curricula and canons in establishing course contents and the enriching of architectural design pedagogies through discussions of pedagogies in other disciplines. A wider pedagogical literature that reifies the radicality of emotions and addresses the axes of discrimination and exclusion has also contributed to discussions of design pedagogies.

In line with conceptual and critical analyses of this literature, autobiographical spatial narratives can open new debates within the radical, feminist and postcolonial design pedagogies that have just begun to receive attention in architecture. The mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination in education, the focus of both this paper and feminist/postcolonial/radical pedagogies, can be studied in the context of Turkish architectural education by considering the roles of economic, ecological and social crises. As highlighted by the three experimental processes shared in this paper, designed to create space for students' autobiographical spatial narratives, a critical and emancipatory environment was established with room for multi-layered urban and spatial discussions to be carried out, where participation was active, the position of the educator could change, everyone learned from each other, different stories and emotions could be shared and there was no dominant architect identity. Autobiographical spatial narratives could make displacement, diverse life stories and multiple identities inherent parts of the classroom, studio and syllabus. The common ground in these experiments was implicit spatial knowledge where we could also extend our geographical imaginations collectively.

From this perspective, autobiographical spatial narratives are a type of resource that accommodates students' diverse urban spatial experiences. Sharing this multiplicity creates an opportunity for participation in the classroom and studio where different individualities are made visible. This opportunity for participation and new resources is open to emotions and affects, it is collective and transformative and, therefore, it is radical.

Note

1. In my previous research published in Turkish (Aykaç, 2021), I did not come across any studies on architectural design studios adopting the label of feminist pedagogy within the Turkish literature on feminist pedagogy. This literature has largely been produced in fields such as educational sciences and sociology, and the focus is on courses addressing gender issues in higher education. At the same time, in that body of literature, there are very few works on the sharing of experiences in higher education outside the field of architecture (Meşe, 2018, p. 68). In a special issue on feminist pedagogy published by the Turkish journal *Feminist Tahayyül* ["Feminist Imagination"] in 2021, pedagogies referred to as feminist pedagogies and pedagogies that can be discussed in the same context even if they are not directly named as such were comprehensively addressed (Gündoğdu, 2021, pp. 1–8). In addition, a very earlier version of this conceptual paper was presented in "140 Yıln Mimarlığına Tanıklık: 1882-2022" conducted at Mimar Sinan University, İstanbul 5-9 December 2022.

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