

ECOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES:
CASE STUDIES FROM TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

ECOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES: CASE STUDIES FROM TURKEY

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The future relevancy of the architectural profession is a contemporary field of study, followingly, the notion of “alternative practice” comes to the forefront. The motivations of alternative practices vary, yet the study focuses on ecological motivations due to the current condition of the climate crisis. Conventional ecological architecture predominantly relies on technological solutions, yet environmental discourse in architecture is criticized by eco-technic dominance in the field. Similarly, this study problematizes the bombardment of eco-technic logic in ecologic architectural productions for several reasons. Most importantly, solely relying on mechanical solutions leads to the reduction of architects into mere technical actors. Accordingly, the study aims to bring an alternative dimension to the popular understanding of ecological architecture with relation to the broader notion of alternative practice. Five alternative ecological projects from Turkey are presented as case studies, and their production processes are examined with comparison to the tactics of alternative practices in general.

Keywords: Alternative Practice, Ecological Architecture, Deep Ecology, Ecocentrism, Self Building Activity

ÖZ

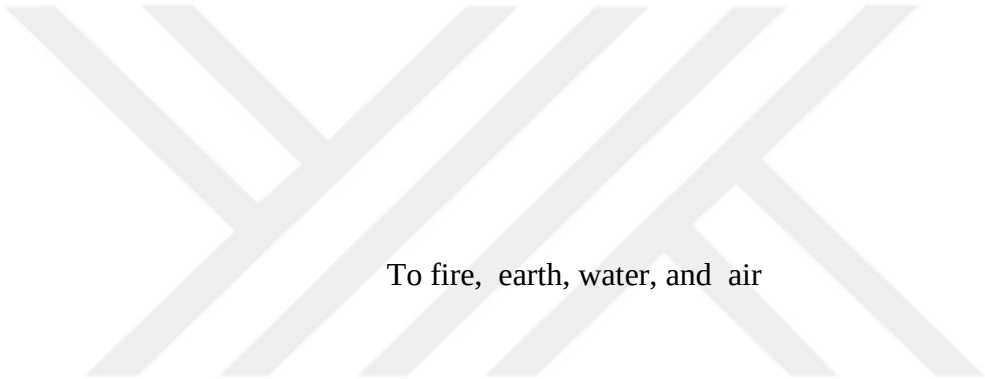
EKOLOJİK MOTİVASYONLU ALTERNATİF MİMARLIK PRATİKLERİ: TÜRKİYE’DEN ÖRNEKLER

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Mimarlık mesleğinin günümüzde ve gelecekteki durumu güncel bir çalışma alanıdır. Bu bağlamda “alternatif mimarlık pratikleri” nosyonu ile karşılaşırız. Alternatif mimarlık pratiklerinin çeşitli motivasyonları vardır; bu çalışma ekolojik motivasyonlara odaklanır. Konvansiyonel ekolojik mimarlık örnekleri, genellikle teknolojik çözümlere odaklanır. Ancak çevreci mimarlık söylemleri sıklıkla yoğunlukla teknolojik çözüm ve gelişmelere odaklandıkları için eleştirilmişlerdir. Benzer bir biçimde bu çalışma da ekolojik mimarlık örneklerindeki teknoloji-odaklılığı eleştirir. Bu eleştirinin en önemli sebeplerinden biri mimarlık mesleği üzerindeki eksiltici etkisidir. Buna bağlı olarak, bu tez çalışması, ekolojik mimarlık çalışmalarına alternatif bir boyut getirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Buna bağlı olarak Türkiye’nin çeşitli bölgelerinden beş ekolojik mimarlık örneği incelenmiştir. Bu örnekler alternatif malzeme ve teknoloji seçimleriyle öne çıkmanın yanı sıra yapım ve projeendirme süreçlerindeki alternatif taktiklerle alternatif mimarlık pratikleri ile örtüşür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alternatif Mimarlık Pratikleri, Ekolojik Mimarlık, Derin Ekoloji, Kullanıcı Katılımı,



To fire, earth, water, and air

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INTRODUCTION

After the summer of 2021, the drought and forest fires in the South and floods in the North of Turkey, not to mention various climatic catastrophes worldwide, put the harsh reality of climate crisis in everybody's agenda. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report published in August 2021 states that the climate crisis is 'unequivocally caused by human activities.'¹ Among those human activities, the construction sector is responsible for 23% of air pollution, 40% of drinking water pollution, 50% of landfill wastes, and 50% of climate change in total. Besides, a separate research conducted by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBA), the construction industry accounts for 40% of worldwide energy usage.² Unarguably, the construction sector's effect on climate change does not solely rest on the shoulders of the architects; in fact, the neoliberal market system and the urban policies of governments and municipalities are often blamed. Although these conditions gravely limit the capabilities of the architects, they should not be presented as excuses to prolong the conventional architectural practice without any inquiry. Thus, this study researches the 'alternative' mechanisms and whether they can have a more penetrating effect on ecological issues.

Correspondingly, the case studies, specifically, the production processes of case studies, are situated in the increasingly spreading notion of 'alternative practice. The literature on alternative practices usually avoids a precise definition

¹ According to the report released by The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in August, 2021

² Snook, 2017

since alternativity stems from the creative interpretation of unique conditions. However, it is safe to claim that generally, ‘alternative’ acts of spatial production prioritize environmental issues and the user's empowerment over neoliberal values.

The book ‘*Spatial Agency Other Ways of Doing Architecture*³ is treated as a foundation for the notion of alternative practice. The editors structure the book under three questions Why? Where? and How? These questions refer to spatial agencies' motivations, sites, and operations, respectively. The motivations of alternative practices are listed as humanitarian, political, pedagogical professional, and ecological. Accordingly, the study barrows this logic and offers the term ‘ecologically-motivated.’ These motivations often intersect, yet the study focuses on alternative takes on ecological issues.

Current Situation of Ecologic Architecture

A brief description of mainstream ecological practices is necessary to locate the alternative practices in the current condition of green architecture. Indeed, there is extensive literature on environmental, ecological, sustainable, or green architecture, and countless architectural works can be described under these categories.

Predominantly, both academia and practice deal with environmental issues with a technocentric approach. Partially, the construction industry's pressure on architectural research and production might be a reason for that. A more fundamental perspective would be that the “architectural culture is accustomed to critiquing spatial interventions via static properties such as the visual or technical, hence atemporal.”⁴ In other words, sustainable buildings are produced and evaluated with an object-oriented perspective, namely the globally applicable, industrialized

³ Awan, Scheneider & Till

⁴ Ibid.

materials and technological systems such as greywater systems, green roofs, photovoltaic panels, etc.

Solely depending on materials and engineering solutions brings forth some issues. First, the contemporary debates around the Anthropocene and climate crisis tend to focus on consumers and their consumption patterns. Correspondingly, in the architectural field, sustainable buildings prioritize minimizing energy consumption. Indeed, the engineering systems attached to the architecture increase the energy efficiency of the building during the usage phase. The energy consumed for producing and transporting these mechanistic solutions is not entirely disregarded but sometimes is relinquished not to hinder the conventional construction process. More importantly, the performance of these systems is a mechanic accomplishment; and has a limited influence on changing inhabitants' consumption patterns. They continue to promote the message that natural resources are commodities for human usage; since the eco-friendly construction sector deliberately advertises the economic benefits. Thus, prioritization of technical solutions eases and adds to the commodification of architecture while creating an industry of its own.

Statement of the Problem

It is important to remember that ecology is a spectrum from shallow to deep. Shallow practices have a “utilitarian and anthropocentric attitude to nature, based on materialism and consumerism. It seeks technological solutions to major environmental problems, rather than a change in human behavior and values.”⁵ For example, shallow ecology promotes the recycling of waste rather than preventing waste in the first place.⁶ This shallow ecological attitude is also prevalent in contemporary sustainable architecture, apparent with the reliance on mechanical solutions.

⁵ See Rennan & Norva.

⁶ Ibid.

In light of the abovementioned conditions, this study problematizes the bombardment of eco-technic logic in ecologic architectural productions for three reasons. First, it promotes shallow ecological logic, namely a reductive, utilitarian attitude toward nature, in architectural practice. Second, eco-technic dominance inevitably prioritizes static qualities of architecture which facilitates the devaluation of architecture into buildings. Also, the reduction of architecture into buildings enhances the commodification of architecture by the construction industry.⁷ Correspondingly, as a third problem, reliance on mechanical solutions leads to the reduction of architects into mere technical actors. In other words, exclusively depending on mechanical solutions overlooks the architect's role as a creative agent who can envision specific functionings among users and appropriate technologies befitting the unique ecological and social context of the projects.

Aim of the Study and the Selection of Case Studies

The study aims to bring an alternative dimension to the popular understanding of ecological architecture. For that purpose, first, the study intends to locate the “deep” ecological approaches in the green spectrum of ecological architecture and discuss their ethics and technologies. Accordingly, the primary criteria for selected architectural works are that they use natural building materials and utilize low or intermediate building technologies. In addition to materials of technologies, hence the static qualities, the study provides a detailed record of the design and construction “process” of the case studies. The detailed record and examination of the process is intended to showcase the mutual creative tactics of case studies with the broader notion of alternative practices. The case studies are also distinct since the projects which made the criteria are the architectural works of female architects.

⁷ From Scheneider & Till in “Alternate Currents: an introduction”

Methodology

As mentioned before, contemporary discussions on ecological issues primarily focus on consumption. This study argues that examining modes of production might provide a complementary perspective. Thus, the study focuses on recording the production processes and the contributions of social actors. For this purpose, interview with the architect Özgül Öztürk and Aslı Tekin have been conducted; to reveal the usually neglected process and contributing actors of spatial production.

In sum, this study might shed light on inconsistencies in mainstream ecologic architectural productions and envision new methods. Additionally, it contributes to architectural literature by analyzing five case studies from Turkey.



CHAPTER II

ECOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES

The diverse alternative architectural practices operating in the contemporary architectural field do not always position ecology as their core motivation; some pursue humanitarian, pedagogical, professional, or political motivations. Of course, these motivations are often interlinked; however, this study situates the climate crisis as the most urgent, critical issue and focuses on ecological motivations. Correspondingly, this chapter aims to provide a literature review on the notions of *ecology* and *alternative*. These discussions are attempted as a narrative for contemplating the new roles and skills of the contemporary architect. The Deep Ecology Movement of the '60s is discussed to provide an unadulterated ecological theory. Correspondingly, the environmental perspective and the radical operations of some architectural groups from the '60s are examined as the roots of alternative contemporary ecologically motivated practices. Last but not least, the chapter provides a mutual theoretical understanding and frequent tactics of contemporary alternative practices.

3.1 Ecocentrism and Deep Ecology Movement

Ecocentrism constitutes the core environmental philosophy of deep ecologists. Aldo Leopold first introduced the term ecocentrism in his seminal article "The Land Ethic"⁸ in 1949. His construction of the theory underlines the limitations of the early 20th century's environmental concepts such as conservationism. His main critique is evaluating natural objects according to their benefit to human life. Conservationism considers components of nature as "resources" to which humans are entitled to manage.⁹ According to Leopold, this logic is problematic "since the most members of the land community have no economic value,"¹⁰ they become not eligible for protection. He advocates that [components of nature have] a biotic right regardless of the presence or absence of economic advantage to [humans.]." Land ethic is constructed on "love, respect, and admiration [...] and high regard for [land's] value. By value [Leopold means] something far broader than mere economic value [...] value in the philosophical sense."¹¹

In addition to Leopold's critique on the commodification of nature, his assessment of the separateness of modern living from nature is compatible with the current condition. He states, "Your true modern is separated from the land by many middlemen and numerable physical gadgets."¹² His foresight is remarkable regarding the current conventional construction process and the industrialized technology involved. Lastly, Leopold invites people to view the human as not the 'conqueror' of nature but rather a 'biotic citizen.'¹³ Since humans can spread around the world and manipulate natural processes, they have moral responsibilities toward the protection of all living species, which are our relatives in evolutionary terms.¹⁴

⁸ See Leopold, A.

⁹ See Leopold, A

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Washington H.

In sum, ecocentrism acknowledges our roots and place in the evolutionary process, which arouses humility, empathy, and respect for our living and non-living surroundings, resulting in an internal obligation to preserve and live in harmony with nature. In addition to Leopold's descriptions, Arne Naess, one of the most famous deep ecological thinkers, identifies Spinoza's work as a precursor" to deep ecology movement on a plethora of issues.¹⁵ Like Leopold's perspective, Naes indicates that field ecologists do not conceive nature as "passive, dead or value-neutral" which is analogous with Spinoza's Deus Siva Natura.¹⁶

There has been veracious criticism against deep ecology from ecofeminists and social ecologists such as Ariel Salleh and Murray Bookchin at the first meeting of the US Greens in 1987;¹⁷ for its inability to engage with societal issues. However, Fox clarifies that the egalitarian attitude towards all beings inherent in ecocentrism by reason involves the concerns of the various social justice movements such as ecofeminism and social ecology.¹⁸ Further, Fox argues that social ecologists and ecofeminists - preoccupied with their various agendas on social justice- often remain anthropocentric in practice.¹⁹

To conclude this section, drawing parallels between activities of deep ecology movement and alternative practices might be beneficial. Naess emphasizes that the "essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions" ²⁰ This activity of questioning the underlying political, ethical, religious or social aspects of the issue at hand aims at transforming the way human beings see the world. Rather than providing expansive ethics, deep ecologist also take action such as holding protests, or organizing other happenings. Likewise, critical thinking is an operation of

¹⁵ Naess, Arne (1977). Spinoza and ecology. *Philosophia* 7 (1):45-54.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See From George Sessions's Introduction to the Part 2: Deep Ecology in the book *Environmental Philosophy From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*

¹⁸ Jonge, E. D. (2004). *Spinoza and deep ecology: Challenging traditional approaches to environmentalism*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

alternative practices, but more importantly, followed by critical actions taken in an spatial context whether a happening, installation, forum, workshop or a building. Secondly, "Naess describes deep ecology movement simply a social movement, consisting of writers, poets and artists who form a circle of friends to motivate each other towards direct action;" ²¹ he depicts "deep ecology as a movement, not a philosophy [...where] various persons come together in campaigns and direct actions."²² Similarly, the second forthcoming characteristic of alternative practices is engaging with various social actors of the issue at hand and mediating their needs, comments, or criticism. Lastly, ecologically-motivated alternative practices share the common ecocentric understanding of nature, situating humans as equal biotic citizens and not owners of resources. The next page presents a timeline²³ of events and publications that inherently have an ecocentric perspective toward ecology.

²¹ Ibid.

²² From "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects" by Arne Naess.

²³ See From George Sessions's Introduction to the Part 2: Deep Ecology in the book *Environmental Philosophy From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*

3.2 Critiques of Environmental Discourse in Architecture

In contemporary architectural literature, the adjectives: green, ecologic, sustainable, and are used interchangeably; also, often, the same word represents conflicting views. Accordingly, the architectural theoreticians have vastly criticized the environmental discourse for this inconsistency, especially in the 1990s and early 2000s.²⁴ In an attempt to provide a cohesive text, in this study prefers to use the adjectives green and ecological and excludes the term sustainable. Yet, this preference is not random. The architectural theoretician Suzannah Hagan in her book *Taking Shape*, argues that the words "green" and "sustainable" represent opposing views and affiliates green architecture with political environmentalist movements of the 1960s and '70s.²⁵ Correspondingly, the study points to the deep ecology and grassroots movements of the '60s and '70s as the foundation of ecologically-motivated alternative practices.

The architects rapidly embraced the word sustainable after the UN's Brundtland Report in 1987. In contrast to UN General Assembly in 1982, which presented an ecocentric perspective, the notion of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report announces "a new era of economic growth and development."²⁶ First, deep ecologists criticize Brundtland Report for its focus on economic growth. Second, Rio Environmental Conference in 1992 is reviewed shallow for promoting anthropocentric environmentalism, which considers the world as a resource.²⁷ They render this approach "increasingly popular but essentially unecological"²⁸ because aiming at economic growth means always being on the side of humans. Conspicuously, Brundtland Reports defines "sustainable development as "meeting

²⁴ From Begüm Yazgan's Doctoral Thesis: Post -War Systems Ecology And Environmentally - Appropriate Approaches In Architecture Since 1960's.

²⁵ Yazgan, B. (2006). Post -War Systems Ecology And Environmentally - Appropriate Approaches In Architecture Since 1960's. (Unpublished master's thesis). METU.

²⁶ See. Sessions, G.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."²⁹ Thus, the term sustainability refers to anthropocentric practices rather than ecocentric ones.

Apart from the inconsistency of terminology, and coherent philosophical outlook, the second major critique of ecological architecture is the dominance of the technocentric perspective.³⁰ In terms of vocabulary, the comments on technicist supremacy in the environmental field are inconsistently directed at sustainable, green, or ecological architecture.³¹ What are the problems caused by technicist focus in ecological design and building, especially with regards to the role of the architect? First, the complex social, cultural, and economic conditions which foster the ecologic problems in the first place receive limited attention. The eco-technic studies, especially in Building Science, are primarily object-oriented, which results in designing products rather than processes. Rawes finds this condition alarming and argues that object-orientedness reduces architecture into products.³² More importantly, she claims that the vast majority of the publications that focus on "physical science, technology and vernacular understanding of building structures reinforce the commercial commodification of the profession."³³ However, Rawes cautions that the total refusal of the coexistence of technology and ecology creates problematics of its own, such as defining ecology as anti-reason.³⁴ In other words, the dominance of technology-focused research promotes the production of aesthetic

²⁹ World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). Our common future. Oxford: Oxford University Press

³⁰ Yazgan, B. (2006).

³¹ For example, Sang Lee's *Aesthetics of Sustainable Architecture*; prefers the term sustainable, it critically analyzes and appreciates social aspects. On the other hand, *James Steele's Ecological Architecture A Critical history*, ignores the social aspects.

³² From Peg Rawes' presentation Relational Architectural Ecologies within the series Harman on Architecture.

³³ Rawes, P. (2013). Introduction. In P. Rawes (Ed.), *Relational Architectural Ecologies* (1st ed.). Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from <https://www.perlego.com/book/1614839/relational-architectural-ecologies-pdf>

³⁴ From Peg Rawes' presentation Relational Architectural Ecologies within the series Harman on Architecture.

and advanced products while limiting the architect's role into a producer of objects, negating the critical aspects of architectural education and profession. This situation bares the questions: Can architects, as specialists of the built environment, stay relevant to the climate crisis's current condition as mere object designers? Can focusing on other forms of architectural products such as critiques³⁵, discourses³⁶, interfaces or processes help secure the profession's relevancy in the future? Also, how can architects engage with these diverse socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of climate crisis if a technology-focused design is ineffective?

The above condition defines a crisis, not only on the environmental side but also in the architectural profession's entirety. Yet, these conditions are dictated by the neoliberal market and the construction sector's contradictory interest in ecological and societal issues. Therefore, it is important to distinguish different approaches and motivations in environmental architecture.

3.3 Technologies of Ecologically Motivated Alternative Practices

As discussed above ecological architecture is criticized for cacophonous and contradicting approaches within its discourse. Since the reliance on severe technological approaches is dominant in conventional green architecture; distinguishing low and intermediate technologies of alternative practices is beneficial. Guy & Farmer's seminal article "Reinterpreting Sustainable Architecture: The Place of Technology" offers a clear categorization for this purpose. According to six logics provided by the article, ecologically-motivated alternative practices correspond to eco-centric, eco-cultural, and eco-social logics.

³⁵ MOM prefers this term.

³⁶ Rawes uses this terminology.

Table 1 The six competing logics of sustainable architecture					
Logic	Image of Space	Source of Environmental Knowledge	Building Image	Technologies	Idealized Concept of Place
Eco-technic	global context macrophysical	technorational scientific	commercial modern future oriented	integrated energy efficient high-tech intelligent	Integration of global environmental concerns into conventional building design strategies. Urban vision of the compact and dense city.
Eco-centric	fragile macrobiotic	systemic ecology metaphysical holism	polluter parasitic consumer	autonomous renewable recycled intermediate	Harmony with nature through decentralized, autonomous buildings with limited ecological footprints. Ensuring the stability, integrity, and "flourishing" of local and global biodiversity.
Eco-aesthetic	alienating anthropocentric	sensual postmodern science	iconic architectural New Age	pragmatic new nonlinear organic	Universally reconstructed in the light of new ecological knowledge and transforming our consciousness of nature.
Eco-cultural	cultural context regional	phenomenology cultural ecology	authentic harmonious typological	local low-tech commonplace vernacular	Learning to "dwell" through buildings adapted to local and bioregional physical and cultural characteristics.
Eco-medical	polluted hazardous	medical clinical ecology	healthy living caring	passive nontoxic natural tactile	A natural and tactile environment which ensures the health, well-being, and quality of life for individuals.
Eco-social	social context hierarchical	sociology social ecology	democratic home individual	flexible participatory appropriate locally managed	Reconciliation of individual and community in socially cohesive manner through decentralized "organic," nonhierarchical, and participatory communities.

Table: 2.2: Competing Logics of Sustainable Architecture provided by Guy& Farmer

According to Guy & Farmer, in contrast to the mainstream specifically eco-technic architecture's insistence on perpetuating conventional building mechanisms, the alternative practices advocate radical reconfiguration of operational tools and values. They aim to fuse the science of ecology with an ecocentric ethical framework.³⁷ The main goal is to reduce the ecological footprint radically in every step. In theory, any built environment prevents or interferes with nature, reducing its capabilities, hence our resources; so, the best scenario is not to build at all. However, dwelling is a natural act of humans. Therefore, this theory translates into holistic design strategies that focus on decentralized, small-scale techniques utilizing low and intermediate technologies in architectural practice. Also, reducing the

³⁷ See Guy & Farmer

dependency on centralized infrastructure services such as waste or clean water is strongly encouraged.³⁸ Additionally, preferred materials are natural materials such as earth (soil), timber, straw, and recycled objects such as tires or bottles. Also, ecocentric architecture utilizes natural building techniques that are either borrowed from vernacular architecture such as adobe, cob, stone, slip-straw, or newly developed ones such as earthbag, rammed earth, or alker. When new techniques are used, they must be compatible with the region's building culture. Indeed, revealing, employing, and enhancing vernacular methods is imperative to ecocentric practices. Earthen structures are primarily utilized in Turkey as a continuation of adobe building heritage.

3.3.1 Learning From The Vernacular

It is readily common in architectural and urban literature to describe vernacular settlements as green.³⁹ AlSayyad and Arboleda critically summarize the reasons behind this association in *The Sustainable Indigenous Vernacular Interrogating a Myth*;⁴⁰ but they also caution that readily associating vernacular with ecological bears the danger of mimicking vernacular techniques on a superficial aesthetic level rather than their ecological qualities. Their comprehensive research is encapsulated under four principles as follows:

1- Indigenous dwellings and settlements are adaptive to their natural environments, with the utilization of natural, raw materials.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ AlSayyad, N. & Arboleda, G. (2011). *The Sustainable Indigenous Vernacular: Interrogating a Myth*. S. Lee (Ed.), *Aesthetics of Sustainable Architecture* (pp. 26-41). Rotterdam: 010

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Compiled from: Moshe Safdie, in *Form and Purpose*, Richard Register, *Ecocities: Building Cities in Balance With Nature*, Allen G. Noble, *Traditional Buildings: A Global Survey of Structural Forms and Cultural Functions* and John J Boecker, et al. (7group), *The Integrative Design Guide to Green Building: Redefining the Practice of Sustainability*

- 2- Their construction is responsive to local weather and climate conditions.⁴²
- 3- Traditional societies have been able to keep the equilibrium between population, resources and environment successfully.⁴³
- 4- Indigenous dwellings can be easily transformed in response to changing conditions.⁴⁴

In the context of Turkey, the researches and excavations conducted by archeologists, led by Prof. Dr. Halet Çambel and Dr. Robert J. Braidwood, dates the use of Adobe in Çayönü to 8.000 BC. The research indicate that the mixture, process, and application of adobe are no different than today.⁴⁵ Moreover, "in the second of his Ten Books, Vitruvius writes about the buildings constructed by 'foreign tribes,' meticulously describing the Anatolian's Phrygians' earth building technology] and recording that the use of this technology 'makes their winters very warm and their summers very cool.'"⁴⁶ Cengiz Bektaş often emphasizes the importance of locality and local building culture.. Bektaş's Anatolian discourse aims at reflecting the zeitgeist with an awareness of the cultural and architectural heritage of Anatolia, where he is rooted.⁴⁷ Bektaş emphasizes architects who conduct their practices in Turkey have an obligation to learn adobe as a material due to its cultural and historical importance.⁴⁸ He adds that contemporary architects also have a responsibility to learn to use and repair adobe buildings since people still use adobe as a construction material in rural areas and a significant percentage of people live

⁴² Compiled from Françoise Fromonot, Glenn Murcutt: *Buildings +Projects 1962–2003*, Dominique Gauzin-Müller, *Sustainable Living and International Examples* and Ralph Knowles, *Ritual House: Drawing on Nature's Rhythms for Architecture and Urban Design*

⁴³ Compiled from James Steele, 'The Translation of Tradition: A Comparative Dialectic,' and Richard Rogers, in *Cities for a Small Planet*

⁴⁴ Compiled from John S. Taylor, *Commonsense Architecture: A Cross- Cultural Survey of Practical Design Principles*

⁴⁵ Çobancaoğlu, T. & Tuztaş U. in their book section *A Material That Has Witnessed the Past in Anatolia: Adobe*

⁴⁶ AlSayyad et.al.

⁴⁷ Altan et. Al.

⁴⁸ From an interview with Cengiz Bektaş conducted for toprakana.org

in Adobe buildings.⁴⁹ Reminding the benefits of adobe to interior air quality and eventually to human health, he argues that altering adobe buildings with conventional techniques is not a better solution.⁵⁰ Bektaş concludes that "if [architects from Turkey] have an intention to help [Turkey's citizens] as a contemporary architect or if [they] carry out such responsibility, [they] must understand adobe."⁵¹ Bektaş acknowledges Alker as a contemporary alternative to adobe; and supports its use since building regulations permit the use of alker, whereas adobe is not allowed.⁵² In sum, Bektaş's insistence on adobe or the contemporary alternative alker does not stem from an insistence on the continuation of vernacular tradition in a historical or aesthetic sense; rather, he illustrates alker as an economic and ecological material. More importantly, his advocacy has a societal aspect; he emphasizes that learning adobe can provide service to a significant portion of Turkey who generally does not have access to architectural services while sustaining a traditional building method.

Alker

Alker is a load-bearing environmental building technique developed by Prof. Dr. Ruhi Kafesçioğlu, later Prof. Dr. Bilge Işık carries the research forward. It can be described as a development on the vernacular building technique adobe. Adobe is improved by the addition of certain percentages of lime and gypsum to the earthen mixture. With the new formulation of the earthen mixture, the setting phase is accelerated, making the method more affordable. Additionally, it can be produced as blocks or in-situ. Constructing alker in-situ fastens the building process saves on

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

energy and human labor. Plus, building in-situ resolves the need for vast spaces required to dry adobe.⁵³ More importantly, alker does not require maintenance.

Kafesçioğlu indicates that alker responds to ecologic concerns of contemporary buildings such as pollution, carbon emission. Also, it provides healthy bioclimatic conditions for humans. More than that, Kafesçioğlu claims that alker is more ecologically sound compare to cement-induced earthen techniques. The cement-induced earthen methods require more energy because of the industrialized production process of cement. In contrast, the energy consumed for producing alker is significantly lower since gypsum is produced in low temperatures.⁵⁴

Alker is a simple construction technique that laypeople can learn. Kafesçioğlu considers this aspect valuable. Accordingly, his book *Contemporary Earthen Structures and Alker Practitioners Handbook* (Çağdaş Toprak Yapılar Uygulayıcının El Kitabı) provides guidance for laypeople who wants to apply this technique. To sum up, Alker is a suitable building material and technique for ecologically-motivated alternative architectures especially in Turkey, for a myriad of reasons. First, it is ecological in terms of both efficiency and consumption; and has a high performance in many other ecological earthen building techniques.⁵⁵ Plus, it is a load-bearing construction method meaning that it eliminates the need for variety of constructional methods; yet resistant to perpetual earthquakes of the region. Secondly, it references to the vernacular tradition dating back to 8.000 BC. But most importantly, it an intermediate technology which can be learned and applied by laypeople; in that sense it provides opportunities for the contemporary architect to incorporate self-building activities when needed.

⁵³ From Prof Dr. Bilge Işık's informative video on youtube

⁵⁴ This section is summarized from Ruhi Kafesçioğlu's interview for the tv program *Kültür Tarihi*.

⁵⁵ Contrary to many ecocentric building techniques, it does not require maintenance.

3.3.2 The Tectonics of Ecocentric Architecture: An Epidermis Instead of A Shell

The tectonics of an ecocentric architectural work is representative of its philosophical concerns. Since energy efficiency and conservation of indoor temperature has paramount importance to a typical sustainable building, it generally uses the passive house principles, if not the passive house typology. Apart from the orientation of the building, the main characteristic of a passive house is its airtight envelope. To achieve this airtight shell impermeable envelope, which it proudly advertises. However, an ecocentric building is pervious.

"The ecological thinking ... requires a kind of vision across boundaries. The epidermis of the skin is ecologically like a pond surface or a forest soil, not a shell so much as a delicate interpenetration. It reveals the self ennobled and extended rather than threatened as part of the landscape and ecosystem."⁵⁶

The envelope of an ecocentric work of architecture is not oblivious to this pervious relationship. Here, architecture is envisioned as a permeable medium between the inhabitants (human non-human) and the environment. The porousness can be achieved by any natural material: stone, pumice stone, timber, brick, or an earth mixture.

However, a façade, composed of earthen walls and finishes, distinguishes itself from other natural materials for several reasons. First, the carbon emission of an earthen wall is significantly reduced; since it is resourced from a relatively closer location. Secondly, the labor that goes into extracting and delivering the soil is more visible from the builder's, architect's, and user's perspective. It is more visible

⁵⁶ Devall 1995 from Nir Barak's paper "Hundertwasser- Inspiration for Environmental Ethics: Reformulating the Ecological Self."

because of its proximity to the building site; plus, the architect, builder, or commissioner usually has to hunt for the suitable type of soil within reasonable proximity to the site. Accordingly, these actors are reminded of their effect on the resources by the colossal crater left on the ground where the soil is extracted. The crater's impact and the time and energy invested in accessing the soil might influence architects to be more environmentally responsible, for example, by frugally calculating the size of the building. Contrarily, the labor which goes into extracting, processing, and delivering stone or any other processed natural material is more invisible since the stone is delivered to the construction site cut neatly and packaged free of worry, energy, and time.⁵⁷

Lastly, more than other natural materials, an earthen envelope needs living creatures, be it a human, animal, or a plant, to maintain a certain amount of moisture within itself, which is essential for its durability. More quickly than other natural materials, an earthen structure melds back into nature when inhabited. This characteristic is symbolic of the symbiotic relationship an earthen building establishes with its environment. In the *Politics of Envelope*, Alejandro Zaera Polo uses a similar analogy for the building façade:

"Like the skin of a living creature, the envelope is the primary actor in the complex process of maintaining homeostasis⁵⁸ [...], but also communicates with the external public realm, opening up psychological, political, social, cultural surpluses. The surface of a building has a double function engaging with dialectical oppositions private public, inside and outside."

Accordingly, it might be argued that an earthen façade acts as a communicative medium and conveys the ecocentric logic that built it, and presents the non-hierarchical relationship between living non-living plant-animal or human.

⁵⁷ From Aslıhan Demirtaş's lecture for Aura İstanbul.

⁵⁸ Actually true for earthen façades.

In addition to its superiority in an eco-conscious sense, earthen techniques are meaningful with their relation to Anatolian building heritage.

3.4 The Alternative Practices of the 1960s

It is consistent that a kind of alternative architecture that attempts to work out of the limitations of conventional practice can be found in another turbulent time, similar to today, such as the political upheaval of the 1960s. Even though the societal debates of the '60 prevailed and gained momentum on certain issues; the countercultural and radical movements of the '60s largely diminished by the mid '70. In the architectural milieu, the radical debates were either abandoned or codified as postmodernism.⁵⁹ However, the issue here is as Felicity Scott questions in her book *Architecture or Techno-utopia: Politics After Modernism* whether there are lessons to be learned from this early trials and more so from failures of spatial practices operating on the intersection of architecture, technology and politics.⁶⁰

New Gournia Village

Sargın indicates that in the '60s, the urge to create social reform through architecture departed from the fundamentalist attitude of the modernists and became a fragmented endeavor.⁶¹ However, Fathy's New Gournia Project which set out in 1946 and partially built until 1948 must be mentioned as a prominent midway example encompassing both fundamentalist modernist attitude and popular concepts from the '60s such as vernacular explorations of material and communal self-building activity. In line with the modernist attitude of the era, the project aims to provide a 'large-scale' socially and economically viable public housing.⁶² Fathy's approach of

⁵⁹ Scott, F. D. (2010). *Architecture or Techno-utopia: Politics After Modernism*. London: MIT Press.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Sargın, G. A., 2003. Köktenci Dönüşümden Parçacı Direniş; Sosyal Mimarlığın “100 Yıllık” Kısa Öyküsü, *Arredamento Mimarlık*, 156, 55-57

⁶² Awan et. al.

appropriating vernacular techniques to solve climatic problems is revolutionary for that time. As a result, 'appropriation of technology,' a movement influential in contemporary ecologic milieu, regards Fathy as one of his founders.⁶³ Moreover, the fact that the project is constructed cooperatively by the owner-dwellers illustrates how much can be done without the interference of real estate developers, banking, and the industrial construction industry.⁶⁴ More importantly, it is one of the first utilization of self-building activity as the conscious intention of the architect in the design process.

However, the reasons behind the projects ultimate failure must be examined. The main issue was the residents of Old Gournah were content with their living situation; thus, were reluctant to get involved.⁶⁵ Therefore, "Thiessen concluded that New Gournah project was based upon a totalizing social and aesthetic vision, which in practice totally disregarded all local considerations."⁶⁶ Thiessen's claim is extreme since Fathy strived to incorporate social dynamics into his design. It can be deducted with the variety of housing plans that Fathy paid considerable attention to individual needs of the inhabitants.⁶⁷ Plus, the irregular urban pattern is a direct result of the residents' decisions in accordance with their traditions, values, and way of living. In fact, Fathy stood against the bureaucratic pressures of mass housing and repetitive living units.⁶⁸ Another criticism is that even though inhabitants built their houses; the design lack flexibility. Thus, the inhabitants were not able to alter their houses according to their changing needs. Lastly, Fathy's attempt to transform New Gournah into a touristic village in the '70s severely overshadowed the initial idealistic vision of the project.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Galal Ahmed, K., & El-Gizawy, L. (2010). The Dilemma of Sustainability in the Development Projects of Rural Communities in Egypt – The Case of New Gournah. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

To conclude, relocating the people who did not want to move might be considered the ultimate issue. According to Thiessen it represents the project as "a signifier of power structures, attitudes, and the ambitions of planners, bureaucrats."⁶⁹ Comparatively, Arevena's contemporary Quinta Monroy project utilizes self-build activity. Yet, this decision is made to create funds for the purchase of the land, since the main decision of the inhabitants was not to relocate.⁷⁰ In other words, self-build activity in Quinta Monroy, empowers its residents to act on their decision by incorporating their ability to build their houses to the design. On the other hand, in New Gourn Village the self-build activity is a mimicry of vernacular communal building activity, especially since the design does not allow users to make changes.

Ant Farm

Furthermore, Hill mentions that early 60's environmental architecture aimed at changing people's way of living, rather than focusing on aesthetic⁷¹ (or technology-focused)⁷² productions. For example, the works of the group Ant Farm, established in 1968, critiques North American culture of mass media and consumerism.⁷³ They proposed an inflatable architecture that was cheap, easy to transport, and quick to assemble, which is well-suited with their rhetoric of nomadic and communal lifestyles, which they saw as an alternative to excessive consumerism of the era.⁷⁴ By producing a manual for making your pneumatic structure, the *Inflatocookbook*, established a type of participatory architecture that allowed the users to take control of their environment. To sum up, their work is discursive. It

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Alejandro Aravena: My architectural philosophy? Bring the community into the process [Video file]. (2014, November 06).

⁷¹ Hill, G. (2011). *The Aesthetics of Architectural Consumption*. S. Lee (Ed.), *Aesthetics of Sustainable Architecture* (pp. 26-41). Rotterdam: 010.

⁷² In the text Hill, considers contemporary sustainable architecture is prone to being an aestheticized commodity especially with the pressure of technological advancement in the market.

⁷³ Awan, N., Schneider, T., & Till, J. (2011). *Spatial agency other ways of doing architecture*. London: Routledge

⁷⁴ Ibid.

aimed to unveil the relationships between environmental degradation and mass industry, questioned the role of mass media and consumerism, and exhibited the employment of new technologies. Also, they left behind a body of research accessible to everyone, which continues to be relevant in contemporary debates around green architecture, building technologies, public art and architecture.⁷⁵

Discussions around the environment date back to the 17th and 18th century Romantic ideas.⁷⁶ Yazgan cites Farmer and claims that this is the result of dissatisfaction with the values of the western world of progress and longing for a simpler way of living.⁷⁷ In a broader perspective, Farmer encapsulates that the reason for the revival of folk culture in the 18th century was disappointment with the religious wars. In contrast, in the '60s, it is the dissatisfaction with the technological wars. Accordingly, he argues the environmental movement in the '60s adopted a communitarian perspective rather than a technicist one.⁷⁸ Consecutively, the appeal of romantic ideas in the '60s counter-culture enhanced the exploration of vernacular materials; more importantly, it entrenched contemporary ecological concepts such as co-housing, ecovillages, urban farming, communal self-built activities, providing a socially engaged perspective.

Additionally, Geodesic domes display a bizarre counter-argument against Farmer's technicist and arcadian separation. Scott portrays in her book⁷⁹ that the geodesic dome as a product of "awovedly apolitical technocrat"⁸⁰ is unlikely intended as a spatial template for constructing the hippie communes of the late'60s.⁸¹ The domes represent technology's power; since they were used as a Pavillion for

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ See Rawes, P. and Farmer, J.

⁷⁷ Farmer J. in Yazgan, B.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ See Scott, F. D. *Architecture or Techno-utopia: Politics After Modernism*

⁸⁰ Buckminster Fuller

⁸¹ See Scott, F. D.

World Trade Fair in 1956 and their military advantages were explored, not to mention their commercial success, making them still highly popular today. So how come the ecological communes of '60s heavily embraced these commercial, technicist domes? Ant Farm also utilized a geodesic dome that appeared as a darkroom in one of their inflatables. "Ant Farm implicitly recognized what Fuller repeatedly denied – that the geodesic dome was less successful as a model of material and technical efficiency than it was a highly functional semantic object."⁸² Ant Farm *subversed* the dome's position from a modernist object to a helpful element to counter culture's needs.

To conclude, the '60s provided the notions: *appropriation* with Fathy's New Gournia experiment and the *dissemination of knowledge* exemplified by Ant Farm's Inflatacookbook. Along with the zeitgeist of the era, they inserted a communal, participatory approaches for dealing with the built environment demonstrated by the concepts such as ecovillages or urban farming, respectively. Most importantly, the happenings, protests installations of the era displayed public space as an interactive playground to ask questions and raise awareness. So it might be argued that the main characteristics of the alternative practices of the '60s along with emerging ecological concerns are being discursive and socially engaged.

⁸² Ibid.

3.5 Contemporary Alternative Practices

3.5.1 Notable Attempts of Redefining Architecture

Especially in the last two decades, several attempts have been made to define the new ways of theorizing and practicing architecture. Some noteworthy examples from 2000s are Stan Allen's, hermeneutic practice and material practice in *Practice Architecture, Technique and Representation*, and 'Projective Architecture' suggested by Robert Somol and Sarah Whitting in their article "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism." They mutually problematize critical architecture's inclination to isolate criticality in historical and theoretical realm;⁸³ in other words, the separation between architectural practice and theory. As a response to this critique of separation, Hays -as one of the most prominent advocates of critical architecture along with Eisenmann- explains that⁸⁴ for architecture to be critical it needs to situate itself at a necessary distance to reflect upon the contemporary reality and autonomy as a form of resistance against this reality.⁸⁵ Gardner summarizes that Allen's critique against such arguments is that the result is either a formalistic architecture "protected" by the theory; or practice paralyzed by the theory that cannot engage with reality.⁸⁶ Further, in response to shortcomings of critical architecture, Somol and Whitting propose a kind of practice that engages with "topics that are seemingly outside of architecture's historically-defined scope [such as] economics or civic politics. [However; they argue that architects] don't engage those topics as experts on economics or civic politics but, rather, as experts on design

⁸³ From Doucet, I. & Cupers, K. In *Agency in Architecture: Rethinking Criticality in Theory and Practice*

⁸⁴ From Hays, K. Michael. "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form." *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 14. where "Hays uses the architecture of Mies van der Rohe as a paradigm to explain how architecture positions itself preexisting cultural values and a detached abstract formal system.

⁸⁵ Gardner, Edwin. *Revising Practice : Strategies and attitudes for architecture in the next century*. Projective Landscape Symposium, TU Delft, 2006

⁸⁶ Ibid.

and how design may affect economics or politics. [Also,] they engage these other fields as experts on design's relationship to those other disciplines, rather than as critics."⁸⁷

To sum up, Whiting's emphasis on architectural expertise reins theory back into a relationship with the actual production of architecture.⁸⁸ Projective architecture's attempt of positioning criticality back in the practice is very much on par with alternative practices; yet they do not offer clear methods for dealing with societal issues within the design. In fact, practice stays in the conventional lane where architects contribute to a small proportion of the built environment and remain dependent on their commissioners.⁸⁹ On the other hand Allen offers a method to be critical in practice without distancing practice from the very structures (societal or economical) it is dependent on. Allen refers to De Certeau⁹⁰ and argues that, one can outwit the structures which it is embedded by operating in the gray zones with creative 'tactical' functionings.⁹¹ Even though Gardner criticizes this method for not being cohesive enough to state a critique,⁹² the notion of 'tactics' and the fragmented nature paves the way to theorizing alternative practices.

3.5.2 Alternate Currents

In the year 2005, RIBA organizes an event to "address the outdated professional norms and behavior; acknowledge the architectural market's diversity. However, the

⁸⁷ Somol, R., & Whiting, S. (2002). Notes around the Doppler effect and other moods of Modernism. *Perspecta*, 33, 72. doi:10.2307/1567298

⁸⁸ Doucet, I. et al.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ De Certeau, M. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (pp. Xvii-Xxii). Berkeley u.a.: Univ. of California Press. (1980).

⁹¹ Allen, Stan. *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Presentation*. London: Routledge, 2000.

⁹² Gardner, Edwin. *Revising Practice : Strategies and attitudes for architecture in the next century*. Projective Landscape Symposium, TU Delft, 2006

resulting report fails to answer crucial questions such as: what alternative means in the architectural context, how an alternative model of architectural practice may be structured or how an alternative model might contribute to the future of the architectural profession.⁹³

In the atmosphere of 2007's financial crisis⁹⁴, the researchers and staff of the University of Sheffield started a research group called The Agency, which focuses on how architectural education and practice might evolve and transform in the future, especially regarding societal and environmental issues. The same year Agency Team hosts the AHRA Conference themed 'Agecny' to shift the inward-looking tendency of humanities research towards engagement.⁹⁵ Proceedings are published in the book *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures*. Three headings come forward: Intervene, Sustain and Mediate which will be explored in the next section.

A year later, part of the former team Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till organized the event Alternate Currents: a symposium on alternative forms of architectural practice in 2008 to thoroughly analyze and cumulate the practices operating outside the normative or mainstream. Their initial selection focused on alternative methods of thinking and doing rather than alternative forms of appearance, arguing that technical and aesthetic aspects of architecture can be easily commodified and loose its focus from the social and political aspects of practice and production.⁹⁶ The proceedings avoid offering a single definition, yet it can loosely concluded that alternative practices usually start from the standpoint of challenging

⁹³ Berglund, E. (2008). Exploring the Social and Political Are architects still relevant to architecture Notes on Alternate Currents: a symposium on alternative forms od architectural praxis. *The Classical Quarterly*, 12(2), 105-108

⁹⁴ The financial crisis in Europe and the resulting increase in the unemployment of architects, might be argued to increase the number of professionals (especially young profeesionals) who initiate their independent ways of engaging with the urban enviornment, which consequetively makes alternative architectures more apparent.

⁹⁵ Kossak, F., Petrescu, D., Schneider, T., Tyszczuk, R., & Walker, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures*. Oxon England: Routledge

⁹⁶ Schneider, T., & Till, J. (2008). Exploring the Social and Political Are architects still relevant to architecture Alternate Currents: An introduction. *The Classical Quarterly*, 12(2), 109-111.

neoliberal values and prioritize environmental effects and the empowerment of the user.⁹⁷

The abovementioned vague description and the book *Spatial Agency* edited by Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till help compose structure the frame for this study regarding alternative architectural practices⁹⁸. How refers to tactics of alternative practices which will be further explored in the next section

3.5.3 The Tactics of Alternative Practices

As suggested by Allen,⁹⁹ compared to strategies of the conventional construction market, operations of alternative practices might be called "tactics," referring to de Certeau.¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, they are tactical maneuvers that enable designers to work around the limitations of power structures such as bureaucracy and the conventional neoliberal construction sector. This section is intended as a literature review for the operations of alternative practices. The tactics of alternative practices have a mutual theory behind them here discussed by the studies of the Agency, MOM and Peg Rawes.

First, the proceedings of AHRA Conference in 2007, *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures* summarizes tactics under three main topics:

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Even though, the book refrain from using the words alternative, architectural, and practice for a plethora of reasons. For example, the term "Alternative" poses the threat of always functioning in the fringe always staying marginal compare to conventional practices. The term architectural is not preferred since it requires the presence of an architect however their standing challenges the autonomy of architects or any specialists. Also because the the term architectural connotes to a building, thus the commodification of architecture. In the words of Lebbeus Woods, they "resist the idea that architecture is a building."

⁹⁹ Allen, Stan. *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Presentation*. London: Routledge, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ De Certeau, M. General Introduction [Introduction]. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (pp. Xvii-Xxii). Berkeley u.a.: Univ. of California Press. (1980).

Intervene:

To intervene is discussed as an ethically or politically motivated action to empower those involved. Intervention is not executed forcefully; instead, it happens through negotiation¹⁰¹ and *mediation*. Intervention might include 'tactical' maneuvers, proactive and practical subversion of the space, and the present frameworks.¹⁰²

Sustain:

Similar to the view presented earlier in this study, the Agency team cautiously approaches the word 'sustain.' To summarize, sustainable design's direct and fixed problem-to-solution frame is found problematic and argued to favor the current conventional practices to continue to 'business as usual.' The entanglement of aesthetic, technical, and ethical issues in sustainability discourse is tackled through the resource of the writing of Deleuze and Guattari¹⁰³. Accordingly, Agency suggests that sustainability might bring awareness and increasing capacity for affect it its considered a notion to be acted upon rather than static.

Mediate:

In the chapter "Against Determination, Beyond Mediation" the authors, offer mediation as a tool to empower users by putting them in "more direct contact and relationship with their built environment," especially those who have limited access to products and processes of architecture. Also, they promote the production of interfaces or instruments for means of mediation.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Therefore interaction is required.

¹⁰² Kossak, F., Petrescu, D., Schneider, T., Tyszczuk, R., & Walker, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures*. Oxon England: Routledge

¹⁰³ In the chapter Ethics and Aesthetics: Deluze Diagrams and Sustainability.

¹⁰⁴ This section is written by MOM, accordingly their ideas will be further explored with relation to MOM's Article Architecture as Critical Exercise: Little Pointers Towards Alternative Practices.

In addition to theoretical grounds provided by the agency, alternative architectural group MOM (Morar de Outras Manerias) offers a different yet complementary set of operations which can be summarized as critique, mediation, and the production of interfaces.

In "Architecture as Critical Exercise: Little Pointers Toward Alternative Practices"¹⁰⁵ MOM critiques the historical relationship of architecture with power structures and challenges the insistence of architects' autonomy by radically expanding the definition of architecture as "the transformation of space by human work."¹⁰⁶ Their approach describes architecture as a process rather than an object; more importantly, it resolves the autonomy of architects (and specialists) on the built environment and suggests that the new task of architects should be providing autonomy for people involved in the production of space. They propose three methods for this: theoretical and practical exercise of critique, mediation (if desired by the people), and production of interfaces and instruments to guide and assist actors in realizing their own critical actions on space.

Critique:

First, the MOM Team criticizes the culture which frowns upon critique without offering a precise solution. By citing Adorno and Horkheimer, they argue that disagreements, concerns or even uneasiness should be vocalized, even if a quick fix is not provided. Critique aims to make individuals informed about specific issues to decide for themselves. They separate the theoretical and practical exercise of critique that it is "theoretical as long as it concerns society as a totality, and becomes more practical as it approaches specific situations."¹⁰⁷ Though theoretical critique is cautioned to be not understood as a manifesto or a universal strategy, citing Lefebvre, their aim with critique is to "overcome the

¹⁰⁵ Kapp, S., Baltazar, A. P., & Morado, D. (2008). Architecture as Critical Exercise: Little Pointers Towards Alternative Practices.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

production of space as 'reproduction of the social relations of production.'¹⁰⁸ Self-building¹⁰⁹ activity and event-based principle architecture are discussed as tactics to alter the passive role of the user and challenge the conventional hierarchical structure of the production of space. Here, the event-based architecture is discussed as "seeing architecture more as an event than as an object."¹¹⁰ Thus, the proposed design of the process is not interested in what the architect wants to do; instead, it must be understood as "design for action," which intends to reveal the needs of the user or the patterns of use. To sum up, their ideas of critique revolve around the notion of 'autonomy' to challenge norms of production of space they offer to "privilege autonomy of people affected by the architectural practice over the autonomy of specialists.

Mediation:

Following the abovementioned arguments of autonomy, an architectural practice as mediation **is** offered for the service of people's autonomy. Accordingly, "mediation means that architects act upon users' requests for removing obstacles to the construction of knowledge and taking of action."¹¹¹ Lastly, sometimes mediation refers to negotiating people's interests with power structures like government bodies. Accordingly, mediation might be useful regarding public infrastructures or facilities, especially in unprivileged communities. To summarize MOM does not refer to mediation as in reconciling two agents.

Interfaces:

Interfaces and instruments are offered as tools to ensure the independency of the users and transformers of space. Accordingly, this means an empowerment of the user in a way that the transformation of space can continue without the presence of

¹⁰⁸ Lefebvre, H. *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

¹⁰⁹ Will be further discussed in the next section.

¹¹⁰ On another note Peg Rawes emphasize the role of architects

¹¹¹ Ibid.

an architect. In the architectural realm, this notion resonates to a "shift from product-oriented to process-oriented design."¹¹² MOM refrain from using the term tool instead of interfaces and instruments arguing that 'tool' might connote to an object and objects might limit possibilities themselves, or become commodified. Contrarily, "an interface is something that separates and connects at the same time; something that does not even determine the nature of the mediation it enables."¹¹³

In addition to theoretical ground provided by the Agency, MOM and Peg Rawes, the book *Spatial Agency* discusses some common operations of alternative practices. These operations are: expanding briefs, initiating, creation of alternative economies, appropriating, the indeterminacy of the design, making things visible, networking, sharing knowledge, and lastly subverting and opposing. This compilation of tactics also aligns with the operations provided by Singha and Scarpe.

Sumita Singha in her book *Architecture for Scarce Resources and Rapid Change*¹¹⁴, coins the term 'development activist,' to Sinha, development activists work in a realm of architectural practice which requires development skills, *fundraising abilities*, management skills, and *hyper-resourcefulness*. Furthermore, development activists work in the areas such as infrastructure, community projects, community-based social housing and interacting with housing associations. Also, mediate the needs and requests of disadvantaged communities with local government bodies. Lastly, Kate Scarpe as an practicing landscape designer offers some notions for ecologically motivated urban actions in her book *Towards an Urban Ecology*. To conclude, an illustration of overlapping theories and operations is provided in the next page.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Singha, Sumita. *Architecture for Rapid Change and Scarce Resources*. London: Routledge, 2012

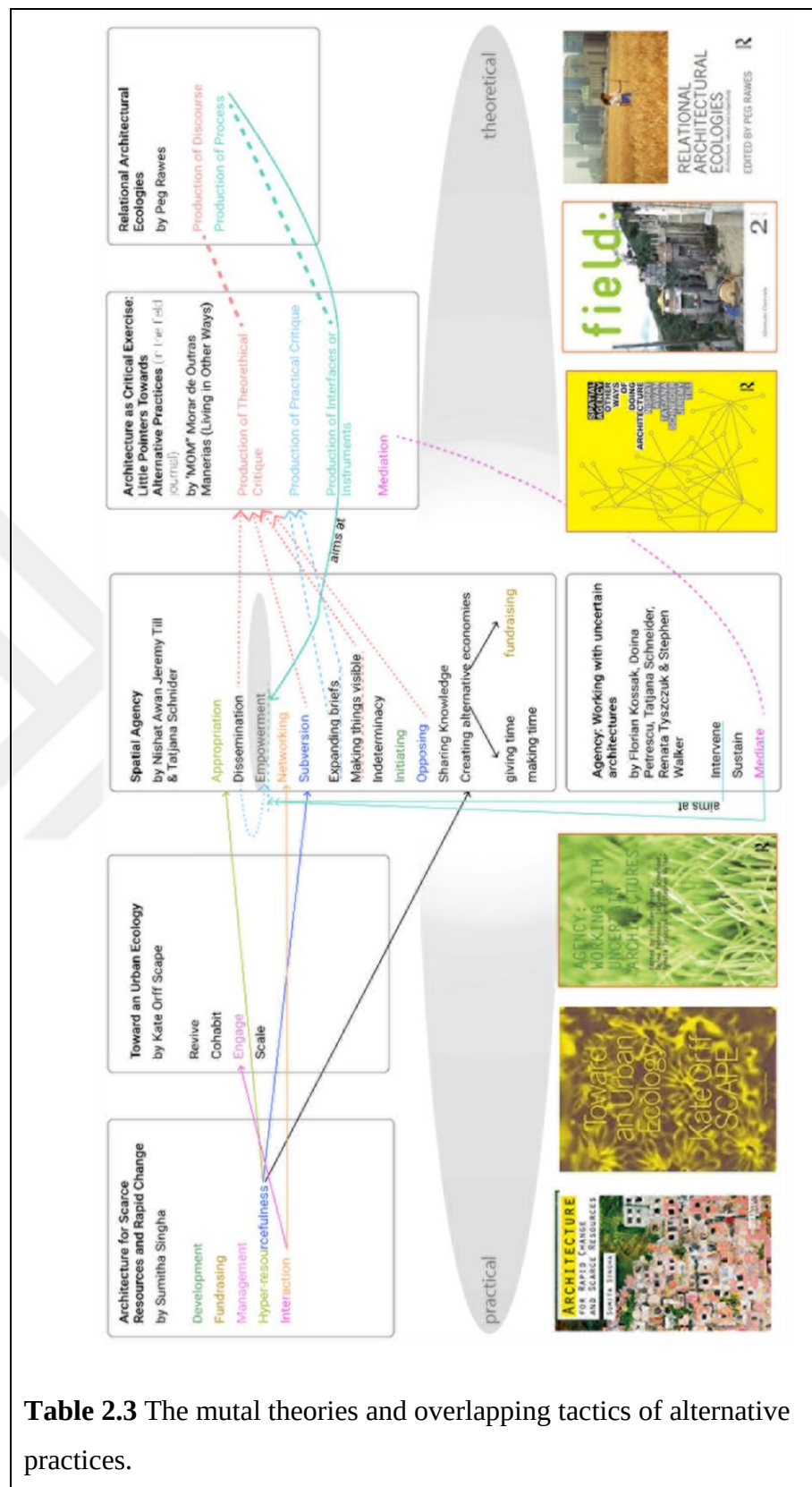


Table 2.3 The mutual theories and overlapping tactics of alternative practices.

3.6 Self-Building Activity

Self-building is an expression of freedom and identity. MOM refers to Lefebvre and argues that the "very concept of 'user' [...] only makes sense in the capitalist production of space,"¹¹⁵ which places the user as a receiver of space incapable of diagnosing their needs and accordingly conducting their own transformations. Conventionally, self-building activity is associated with low-income groups since it implies squatting or communal building activity (imece) in rural areas, especially in developing countries.

As mentioned before, self-building is an integral part of '60s communes. Currently, new ruralism is a popular trend among ecologically-concerned individuals. These new-rurals prefer to build ecologically with natural materials and sometimes with low and intermediate technologies. These materials and technologies ease the participation of user during the construction phase. Accordingly, self-building is a major consideration for these individuals. User participation creates active individuals who are self-confident in forming their environments.¹¹⁶ Also, collective work has economic benefits; it inevitably it reduces the cost of production by freeing dwellers from hiring laborers, which has great value for people who meticulously save for construction expenses.¹¹⁷

Self-builders are usually not professionals who can make sense of technical drawings; thus, architects need to find ways to guide laypeople to transform abstract drawings into tangible objects. Consequently, literature provided on ecological architecture often includes a building manual. A prominent example is Barefoot Architecture by Johan van Lengen; also, Ruhi Kafesçioğlu's Çağdaş Toprak Yapılar

¹¹⁵ Kapp, S., Baltazar, A. P., & Morado, D. (2008). Architecture as Critical Exercise: Little Pointers Towards Alternative Practices. *Field-journal.org*, 2(1), 7-30.

¹¹⁶ See Taştan & Ciravoğlu.

¹¹⁷ See Klaufus

ve Alker & Uygulayıcının El Kitabı, also geleneksel yapı teknikleri doğal ve ekolojik yapı rehberi by Melih Aşanlı and Kent Reformu ve Yeni Gecekondu Hareketi by Metin Yeğin and Merve Tanok are examples from Turkey. Similarly, some builder groups prepare how-to-build manuals for their clients, such as Obaruhu Builder Group's manual for Umcali House.

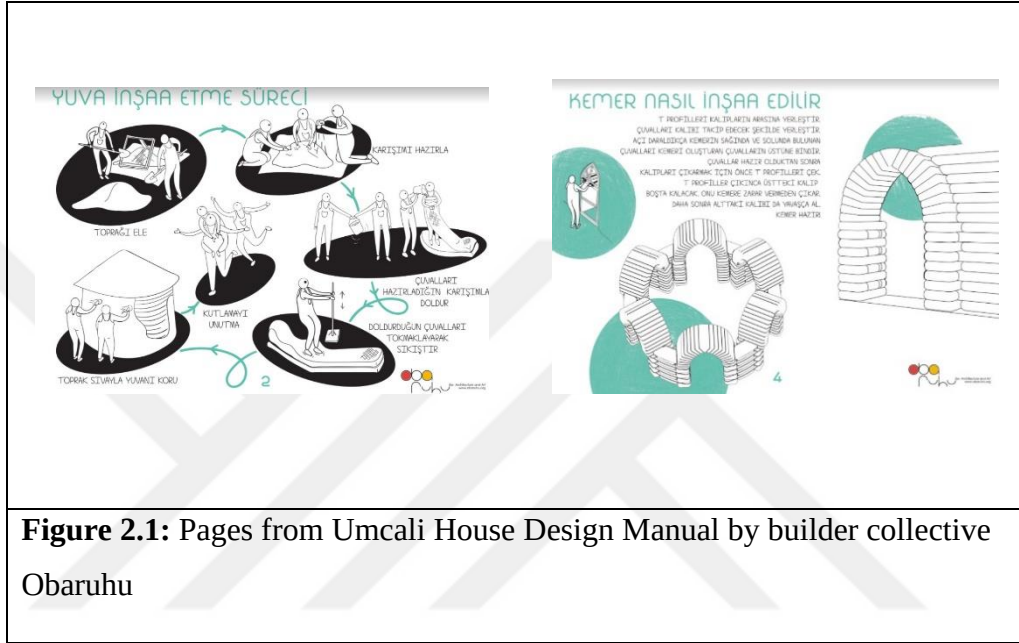


Figure 2.1: Pages from Umcali House Design Manual by builder collective Obaruhu

3.7 Concluding Remarks

In the face of the current climate crisis, mainstream sustainable practices which only employ advanced technologies are senseless toward core ecological ecocentric philosophy, namely viewing the world as a resource base for humans and hierarchically placing humans above all. More importantly, these conventional methods are inadequate to engage with people and provide *collective action* against infused ecological and societal issues for three reasons. First, mainstream sustainable construction negates architecture's ability to convey messages for people to assess their role in changing the world orders regarding the climate crisis and the surrounding societal injustices. Second, dominance of ecotechnic approach favors

the continuation of conventional construction processes where people other than specialists have a passive role. Also, "the techniques and materials [of conventional construction] do not favor autonomous process, for instance making difficult the engagement of women and children, the reuse of building components, or open experimentation."

Additionally, abovementioned condition is argued to facilitate the commodification of architecture which jeopardizes the profession's relevancy in the near future. When we look at the diverse actions of alternative practices, two key notions come forward: critical action and engagement for the empowerment of those who are traditionally excluded from the production of space. It is argued that this understanding requires architecture to be understood as a process.¹¹⁸ As Rawes and MOM explicitly discuss, being a process designer and designer of instruments and interfaces that allow people to communicate their desires: to simultaneously design, build and use their spaces"¹¹⁹ might secure the profession's relevancy in the future.¹²⁰ Incorporating and facilitating self-building activity is suggested as a field of experimentation for such a perspective of architecture. In that sense, ecologically-motivated practices' intermediate technologies and materials are beneficial; since they allow people's initial and continuous (also sustainable) actions in the production of space.

¹¹⁸ See Awan et. al., Kapp, S.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ See Rawes, P. And Kapp, s. and Rawes, P.

CHAPTER III

ECOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES: ROOTED IN TURKEY

This chapter is composed of two sections: The first section examines the backgrounds of the architects Aslıhan Demirtaş, Özgül Öztürk, and Aslı Tekin and their motivations toward architecture. Also, the *Ax u Av* provides a complimentary example of alternative practice since the project is not initiated or executed by an architect. Additionally, the first section offers detailed records of the production processes of each case study. These details include the various contributions of diverse social actors for each project. Also, some limitations or failures the designers faced are recorded since ‘alternative’ solutions often emerge from such conditions. Followingly, the second section offers a comparative analysis of the case studies. The first table offers an examination of static qualities whereas the second table critically reviews the design and construction process. The first table portrays the mutual static characteristics of the case studies, namely their rural locations, ecological materials, and low-impact building technologies. Also, the employment of self-building activity is indicated. More importantly, the second table points to certain nuances of the design and construction process. These nuances are the tactics of the alternative practices displayed in the previous chapter. Accordingly, the last section aims to showcase that the case studies employ similar tactics with the contemporary alternative practices.

4.1 Ax u Av (Water and Earth) Project

Ax u Av, earth and water is an ecological and communal village experiment initiated by Metin Yeğın in 2009.¹²¹ Metin Yeğın is a journalist who deals with issues such as the right to adequate housing and ecology. He closely records and observes the Movement Sans Terre movement in Brasil, inspired by it; he aspires to a similar project in Turkey.¹²² Viranşehir, Şanlıurfa is chosen for the location of the project. Viranşehir is suitable because it has received domestic migration; yet feudal mechanisms in the region prevented migrants from owning houses.¹²³ The project group saw this as an opportunity to initiate an equal non-hierarchical way of living.

Moreover, the Viranşehir Municipality supports the initiative by donating 35 hectares of land for housing and agricultural fields.¹²⁴ The only condition for citizens to apply for the project is not possessing a house. Additionally, the municipality provides a space for meetings to be held. Later, the agricultural and housing zones, communal areas, and playgrounds are planned by Prof. Dr. Bilge Işık and students.¹²⁵ A participatory process is conducted during the design phase; for example, initially proposed 110 square meter houses are increased to 140 square meters.¹²⁶ In addition to participation in the design phase, the houses are constructed by the prospective owners.¹²⁷ It is important to note that while men worked in the construction site, women cultivated the land donated by the municipality to support the construction and financially; also, by doing so, they initiated the commune's economic maintenance mechanism. Women primarily grew an endemic species called

¹²¹ From Gülcan Ay's Master's thesis: Investigation of User Participatory Process in the Production of Social Housing for Low Income Groups

¹²² From the article "Türkiye'de Bir Komün Denemesi: Ax u Av Komünü" (A Commune Experiment in Turkey: Ax u Av) in gaiadergi.com.

¹²³ From an interview with Project coordinators and inhabitants in Açık Radyo.

¹²⁴ See, Ay, G.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ From an interview with Project coordinators and inhabitants in Açık Radyo.

¹²⁷ From an interview with Project coordinators and inhabitants in Açık Radyo; also, from Ay's master's thesis.

şelengo¹²⁸ with local agricultural knowledge. In the first years, by selling pickled şelengo and other vegetables, women generated significant income.¹²⁹

Furthermore, one of the conditions for applying to the project is acknowledging that this is a communal life experiment. The insistence on communal lifestyle might be argued to contribute to social life and societal issues among the commune. The women participants report that the work opportunities and the communal lifestyle enabled them to be engaged citizens.¹³⁰ Also, it made the equality of women in the social sphere a visible issue among the commune. Some of the women interviewees stated that they felt more at ease socializing after a while, especially with the male members of the commune who are not their family members.¹³¹ In addition to women, young commune members also benefited from the agricultural job opportunities the project provided. Before the Ax u Av experiment, students worked as seasonal workers, mainly in Adana and Giresun, which interfered with their education. However, the agricultural production aspect of the project enabled them to contribute to their family's income and continue their education simultaneously.¹³²

An essential aspect of the project concerning this study is that Alker is used as a load-bearing construction method. First, the project proves that, as Kafesçioğlu points out, Alker is an applicable method for laypeople since the commune has only one former construction worker. Also, Kafesçioğlu's visit to the construction site with architecture students during the construction must be noted. Secondly, Alker is a suitable choice for the project since it resembles the local building heritage.

¹²⁸ An endemic species in gourd family like melons and cucumbers.

¹²⁹ From an online article in odatv4.com

¹³⁰ From an interview with Project coordinators and inhabitants in Açık Radyo; also, from Ay's master's thesis.

¹³¹ From an interview with Project coordinators and inhabitants in Açık Radyo

¹³² Ibid.

Commune members report that they are happy with the selection, some from a nostalgic point of view and some for the health benefits of the material.

Eventually, the experiment fails. According to Metin Yeğin, one of the reasons for failure might be that the houses' size is increased according to the request of owner-dwellers which increased the time and cost of construction. Currently, the houses are inhabited by Syrian Refugees.



4.2 Aslıhan Demirtaş

Aslıhan Demirtaş's practice ranges from research, curation, activism, installations, interior design, renovation, gardens, workshops, and eventually to built architectural works designed from scratch by Demirtaş and her design office, Khora. Her works in Turkey offer a narrative of ecocentric praxis in varying scales. Her artistic works are often centered around the human-nature relationship. Demirtaş admits that art projects, installations, and other small-scale interventions "provided

an atmosphere of interrogation and research"¹³³ to play with the crafting aspect of design and alternative production processes. Her experience and experiments with art projects enable her to play with similar issues of 'techne'¹³⁴ and human-nature relationship on a conventional architectural scale. Also, in her praxis Demirtaş embodies roles, such as an enabler and process designer, that parallel the aforementioned skills of an alternative architect.

4.2.1 Ecocentric Perspective in Demirtaş's Artwork's and Activism

Graft is first exhibited in Salt in 2012; it is derived from the Demirtaş's Master's Thesis written with her supervisor Sibel Bozdoğan in MIT. The thesis examines modernity's effect on human-nature relationships from building dams and dam lakes in Turkey.¹³⁵ Grafting is represented as a different scale of domination of human technology on nature. "As in the case of the grafted tree, rivers are not asked for their consent in the process of becoming "natural and national resources."¹³⁶ Similarly, the "It Is Always Spring" exhibition questions humans and their technology's right to force seeds into uninterrupted growth.¹³⁷ It might be summarized as that Demirtaş problematizes the human technologies' aggressive and undoubtedly righteous (!) acts on nature. Architects, by nature, are responsible for utilizing certain technologies and transforming the environment. In her practice, Demirtaş interrogates these interventions' scale and the aggressiveness of the technologies used; she seeks less violent technologies and ways to work with nature harmoniously.

¹³³ From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.

¹³⁴ By techne Demirtaş means, the act of producing making, doing.

¹³⁵ From grahamfoundation.org.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ From aslihan-demirtas.com

Bostan is an urban vegetable garden. Demirtaş takes part in of Yedikule Vegetable Gardens Conservation Initiative.¹³⁸ Despite their name, it is more fitting to define this initiative as a deep ecology movement, not only conservationist. Their approach is action-oriented; equivalently, Naess describes deep ecology as a movement, not a philosophy "rather what happens is various persons come together in campaigns and direct actions,"¹³⁹ as in the case of Yedikule Bostanları Conservation Initiative. Even though the motivations or the cause of the problems they face are generally global, Deep ecologists are known for seeking local solutions to the issue at hand, with the involvement of the local community. Likewise, the initiative emphasizes bostan's relationship with its local community; and they organize workshops and invite locals to establish a dialogue.¹⁴⁰ Deep Ecologists are an advocate of cultural and biological diversity and appropriate technology.¹⁴¹ Similarly, the Yedikule Bostanları Initiative describes bostans as a practice, an urban landscape, and cultural heritage.¹⁴² Compared to the municipality's polarized approach, park vs. bostan, the initiative strives to find mutual ground.¹⁴³

Demirtaş's affiliation with the group displays her as an activist on the urban environment, urban ecology, and agriculture issues. Accordingly, her design practice is nourished by her activist work. Why Not Bostan and Kaide installations reference Yedikule Bostanları.

Why Not Bostan is a minor agricultural installation commissioned by Studio-X, the installation aims at calling attention to the struggle going on in Yedikule Bostanları (vegetable gardens.)¹⁴⁴ The work presents bostancılık as an urban practice with a history of 1500 years; and tackles the question of whether this practice needs

¹³⁸ From an Interview with Demirtaş in sivilsayfalar.org

¹³⁹ From "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects" by Arne Naess.

¹⁴⁰ From an Interview with Demirtaş in sivilsayfalar.org

¹⁴¹ From "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects" by Arne Naess.

¹⁴² From an Interview with Demirtaş in sivilsayfalar.org.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ From aslihan-demirtas.com.

to end now and why. The work was created with the collaboration of an urban gardener (bostancı), Ahmet Öztürk, who cultivated all the produced hanging in the installation.



Figure 3.2: Why Not Bostan (Neden Olmasın Bostanı)



Figure 3.3: Plinth (Kaide)

Plinth (Kaide) is a sculptural work made of rammed earth; it connotes to traditional growing beds of Yedikule Urban Vegetable Gardens with its material and size.¹⁴⁵ The sculpture interrogates soil's value beyond its practical possession and cultivation purposes by opening discussions on ownership, inheritance, and cultural heritage.¹⁴⁶ The work is exhibited in multiple places and is finally gifted to Roma Bostanları.¹⁴⁷ Apart from the issues the work investigates, Plinth is notable for two reasons. First, while displayed in collectorspace, the installation becomes an interactive performance with the participation of collectors, artists, philosophers, and farmers, which underlines the collective nature of Demirtaş's practice. Secondly, the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ From Kaide in *Arredamento Mimarlık*.

rammed earth technique is an ecocentric building technique, which she later utilizes in interior design work.

4.2.2 The Salt Winter Garden

The Salt winter garden is an interior design work that can also be described as an art installation. It is situated on the fourth floor of a historic apartment building in one of the densest streets of Istanbul.¹⁴⁸ Fundamentally, it can be recounted as an ecocentric architectural work because it creates a place with an unindustrialized, non-pollutant building technique: rammed earth. Of course, given its location in the city, the ecologic consciousness of transferring thirty tonnes of soil on the fourth floor might be arguable. Nevertheless, the design's location in an exhibition and research space might redeem the dislocation of tonnes of soil. Even it can be considered necessary since the design intends to query "how to live together?"¹⁴⁹ The question refers to living along with other species, revealing the ecocentric quest of the design. The plants are no doubt symbolic of the biosphere; but the earthen floor and seatings might be referring to the other natural elements of the earth. Also, the earthen design is intended as a reminder of the soil beneath the foundation of the building.¹⁵⁰ The parallelism of the design's query and 17th Architectural Biennales title "How will we live together?" must be underlined. In addition, Demirtaş, inspired by the theories that define corinthian ornaments as attribution to nature that the buildings displace, includes floral decorations on the walls. They also connotate the floral ornaments of the building's façade.

¹⁴⁸ From Kış Bahçesi ve Ofisler in *Arredamento Mimarlık*.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.



4.2.3 İkiz Çam Evi (Twin Pine House)

İkiz Çam House is commissioned by a farmer teacher couple for a farm on the skirts of Ida Mountain in Edremit, Çanakkale.¹⁵¹ The house is situated delicately between pine and olive trees without the need to cut any of them.¹⁵² The house occupies thirty-five meters square and has a floor area of forty-five meters square in total.¹⁵³ The modest size of the house is a relevant detail for intertwined reasons. First, since the act building is an anti-ecologic activity, an ecocentric architectural design is expected to be mindful of the energy¹⁵⁴ and resources it consumes; a critical aspect of this issue is the size. In this case, the labor, which goes into construction is even more visible in this project because the clients build the house themselves without workers except for an experienced carpenter. Also, this modesty of the size is representative of the client's lifestyle. Lastly, about 90% of the building materials

¹⁵¹ From İkiz Çam Evi in *Arredamento Mimarlık*.

¹⁵² From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Energy consumed by processing and delivering the architectural elements and also the human labor.

used are natural. Demirtaş explains that here natural means "when demolished, 90% of this building can quickly become part of the nature without polluting it,"¹⁵⁵ a phrasing common in ecocentric logic. It also showcases that Demirtaş's ecologic design criteria are not limited to constructing and maintaining the building. She thinks about the effect of the building on nature after it served its purpose, abandoned, or demolished. The subbasement is built with the stones gathered from the surrounding environment. The structure is a timber frame, and the walls are built with bricks made of pumice stone.

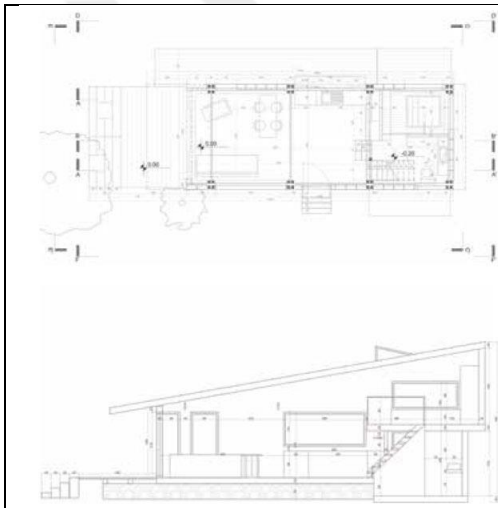


Figure 3.6: Plan and Section of the İkiz Çam House.



Figure 3.7: İkiz Çam House between the trees.

¹⁵⁵ From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.

4.2.4 Yayla House

Yayla Evi is situated in Yürük Yaylası (Plateau) in Giresun. The project is commissioned by Alp Tekin Ocak and his large family. Demirtaş's task is to renovate and extend the house for the accommodation of the extended family.¹⁵⁶ Ocak portrays her task as a 'mediator' among the varying demands of family members.¹⁵⁷

Demirtaş approaches the project by observing the local building culture and way of life. She remarks that vernacular architecture has peculiar 'inventions' that are not thought of in school but derived from the life that surrounds it.¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, the solution she comes up with has no windows; since yayla houses are abandoned during the winter and need to be protected from cold, burglars, or wild animals.¹⁵⁹ More importantly, she strives to preserve local masonry culture. The stones that constitute the walls of the building are not purchased but gathered from the surrounding area as it is the tradition.¹⁶⁰ With Demirtaş's guidance, Ocak talks to locals about their experiences and the knowledge they inherited on building stone walls.¹⁶¹ As a result, valuable local knowledge on building culture is disseminated orally. The local stonemason is motivated to use khorasan mortar as is the tradition and because the commissioners wanted to use a more ecological alternative to conventional materials.¹⁶² Demirtaş guides the stonemason with the mixture and the testing of the khorasan mortar; she evaluates the quality of the stonewalls.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ From Alp Tekin Ocak's article "Yörük Yayla Evi Yapım Sürecine Dair" in *Arredemento Mimarlık*.

¹⁵⁸ From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ From Alp Tekin Ocak's article "Yörük Yayla Evi Yapım Sürecine Dair" in *Arredemento Mimarlık*.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Demirtaş cautions the stonemason to use the original walls of the building as a prime example.¹⁶⁴

The interventions Demirtaş makes might be called respectful to the original building. Initially, the building has a linear plan and no openings except two opposing doors on longer walls and an aperture for light on the roof covered with a translucent material.¹⁶⁵ She expands the house linearly towards each side, and the roof is elevated to 2.10 meters, as a photographic expansion of the original house.¹⁶⁶ Also, the plan of the renovation project mimics the original corresponding doors.

On the ecological material side, in addition to stones gathered nearby and Khorasan mortar, sheep wool is used as insulation. Sheep wool is currently a purchasable ecologic insulation material. Using sheep wool in this project is resourceful and might be more eco-conscious since the sheep wool used here came from the family's herd.¹⁶⁷ The tree trunk that serves as the ridge beam is minimally processed; so, the beam's radius is smaller in one end. Accordingly, when working with natural or minimally processed materials, the design needs to accommodate such permutations of the elements.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

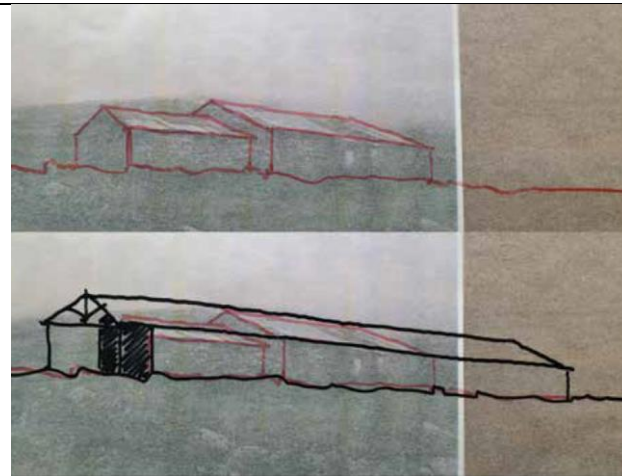


Figure 3.8: Preliminary Sketches of Yayla House



Figure 3.9: Plan & Section of Yayla House



Figure 3.10: A photograph from Yayla House Construction Site

4.2.5 Participation of Inhabitants in the Building Process in İkiz Çam House and Yayla House

In her practice, Demirtaş values collaborative shared design and production process more than the end-product.¹⁶⁸ This approach is apparent in her activist work and installations; it is also creatively displayed in architectural works where the autonomy of the architect is conventional.

Fundamentally, 'imece,' collective activity¹⁶⁹, is part of Anatolian building culture. Participation of the inhabitants mainly in the building process is generally linked to rural or low-income groups as means to affordable housing, as mentioned in the case of the Ax u Av Project. However, empowerment does not have to be a top-to-bottom movement; actors can demand authorization. Besides, currently, building your house is a popular trend, especially among neo-rurals or people who aspire for an ecocentric lifestyle. Demirtaş's İkiz Çam and Yayla House Projects exemplify this demand; but the usual patterns of practicing architecture need to be altered to respond to such demand. Demirtaş points out two methods to transform the act of architectural practice.

First, the design needs to be flexible enough for 'improvisations' on the site.¹⁷⁰ Especially when building an ecologically conscious building, the processed, industrialized materials are kept to a minimum, which means the details might change on the construction site. This 'indeterminacy' of the design is a recurring aspect of Demirtaş's practice.¹⁷¹ According to Demirtaş, when design provides such flexibility, then, designing becomes a shared mutual activity, and unique solutions

¹⁶⁸ From Sibel Bozdoğan's article "Ekolojik Düşünmenin Mimarı: Aslıhan Demirtaş" in *Arredemento Mimarlık*.

¹⁶⁹ In this case collective building activity.

¹⁷⁰ From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.

¹⁷¹ From Sibel Bozdoğan's article "Ekolojik Düşünmenin Mimarı: Aslıhan Demirtaş" in *Arredemento Mimarlık*.

that the architect cannot arrive at on her own are manifested.¹⁷² She cautions that the concept and the process design must be tenacious to let go of design determinism.¹⁷³

In Yayla House, Demirtaş mediates the process and actors with visits; but mainly through WhatsApp messages and by drawing on the photographs sent by Ocak and his family. However, in İkiz Çam House Demirtaş tries an innovative method to enable commissioners to build their houses. Demirtaş models the project with precise detailing on the Sketchup Modeling program then invites her clients to her office and teaches them how to use the modeling program on a basic level.¹⁷⁴ Eventually, the clients were able to build their houses by examining and taking measurements from the model. Plus, no shop drawings were made since there were not any professionals who needed them.¹⁷⁵ To conclude, Demirtaş's different approaches showcase that apart from the design or a tangible outcome, the process itself is an issue that requires the architect's attention; and there is room for creativity and innovative thinking for designing the process. Demirtaş calls this aspect "the techne of process."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² From Demirtaş's presentation for Aura İstanbul.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

4.3 Özgül Öztürk's Praxis and Anotolian Angel Project

Özgül Öztürk is an interior designer; she graduated from Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture in 1992. After working in a prominent interior design office for six years, she started her private practice in 1998. Her affiliation with KAGİDER contributes to her societal approach to design. Nimri Project is her first endeavor to respond to social and ecological concerns in an architectural manner. Yet, her first experiment with the alker technique is the alker wall in Beşiktaş Cultural Center. Also, she collaborates with other architects and students to integrate alker in various designs. For example, she is an advisor in Pot+ Design and Research Group's design, The Common Action Wall (Komün Aksiyon Duvarı), which is selected for the Turkish Architectural Yearbook.



Figure 3.11: Alker Wall in BKM. Photograph by Sahir Uğur Eren.



Figure 3.12: The Common Action Wall

4.3.1 Özgül Öztürk's Design Practice

Öztürk states that ecological concerns are part of her personal life. Accordingly, she describes the spaces she designed for herself as sensitive to environmental concerns. For example, she renovated old buildings for her office space for years by not necessarily, tearing down but upcycling every possible part. Also, having a garden as an extension of the office was essential to her. She practiced gardening (bostancılık) in an urban context, produced her own food, and tried reusing rainwater with improvisational methods. While these practices are prevalent in ecological architecture now, back then, they were fringe interests. Öztürk struggled to incorporate these environmental concerns, which shaped her personal space into her architectural practice. She explains that "there was not any market demand" ¹⁷⁷ for an interior design work that problematized the corruptive effect of the construction sector on the planet. For the scope of the thesis, it is meaningful to record the transformation Öztürk's practice took. She points to 2005 as a pivotal stage in her career where her decisions in her practice which are in line with the current approach among interior designers and market demand, disturbed her conscience. Öztürk portrays the situation "Textiles came from India, wallpapers from the U.S., ceramics from Italy, Granite from Germany, etc. [...] the energy consumed in delivering these goods and the increase in cost by delivery fees and tax, led me to question what the alternatives to this process are. How can I meet this demand locally?"¹⁷⁸ She reports that when she did manage to source some of the materials locally, the clients were not fond of the simplicity of the result; so, she could not include these principles into her design practice for years. However, she adds, "during that time [she] came across some concepts such as ecological architecture or sustainable architecture and started thinking about how to incorporate these approaches into [her] practice."

¹⁷⁷ From a author's personal interview with Özgül Öztürk.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Accordingly, Öztürk volunteered in Ruhi Kafesçioğlu's research on Alker, which later will be critical in her practice. Additionally, Öztürk proposes organizing workshops to introduce Alker to professionals and students.¹⁷⁹ Sharing the building technology with crowds is one of the traits of an alternative praxis.

So, it can be commented that for Öztürk, incorporating local resources was an instinct of her before studying concepts on ecological architecture. Öztürk separates ecologic architecture from sustainable architecture. In sum, according to Öztürk, ecologic architecture connotes to use of natural and often locally available materials. Also, it has some eco-medical value, since using natural materials has beneficial effects on human health. For example, interior air quality is better due to the use of natural porous materials. Öztürk describes ecologic architecture as more rural and sustainable urban since unprocessed materials are harder to access in an urban environment. Therefore, for Öztürk, sustainable applications are more focused on reusing or upcycling the materials found in the building site or available even if they are industrialized, such as plastic or concrete. Öztürk finds value in reusing abundant industrialized materials since they have a long life cycle; they should be incorporated into the design, especially in an urban context where resourcing natural materials from afar is energy consuming. So, the life cycle of the materials is essential to Öztürk's design practice. Therefore, she describes her practice as circular design (*döngüsel tasarım*); however, she adds, "in circular design approach the focus is on waste and energy cycle, whereas my design practice is inclusive of the social sphere."¹⁸⁰ The following section will explain how she incorporates the social sphere into her design practice by examining her Project Anadolu Meleşi.

Before hastily analyzing the project, the conditions which sprouted the idea will be described. Even though Öztürk is from Nimri Village of Keban, Elazığ, her first visit was in 2007. When she entered the village, she had a revelation described

¹⁷⁹ <https://www.arkitera.com/author/ozgul-ozturk/>

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

as "[she] had found the answer to all her ecological, spiritual investigations when she met with her roots." Comparing newly built houses "[which had] aluminum railings, plastic casework, and sheet roofs" with decaying vernacular buildings with their earthen roofs, and earthen walls and timber casework, she uttered, "what can I do for this village?" Her first reflex is to conserve and restore the houses. She quickly realized that was not what the few permanent inhabitants of the village wanted. It can be deduced that the new is the better attitude she faced among urbanites is also present in Nimri. Instead of insisting on her vision, she focuses on gathering a more extensive community of Nimri.

4.3.1.1 The Nimri Village Association

The children and grandchildren of villagers who migrated from Nimri during the 1940s to 1970s first gathered via Facebook. Then, they intended to form a village association, only to discover there is already one. However, with Öztürk's significant contributions, they re-activated and re-structured the village association in an egalitarian manner, equal female and male members with varying ages and educational backgrounds. According to Öztürk, "[they] conducted activities regarding environment, culture, and solidarity. [They] located sixty-nine old fountains surrounding the village and restored some of them with the help of young volunteers from İstanbul. [They] planted six thousand pine trees and conducted a workshop on ecologic architecture for the villagers. [They] organize a festival each year, bringing the community together and revitalizing the village's authentic spirit with related cultural activities."¹⁸¹

Recording this process in the scope of this study is critical because before proposing an architectural project, Öztürk engages and aims at transforming both the

¹⁸¹ Translated and retrived from Öztürk's promotion video for Yves Roche Women of the Earth competition.

ecologic and the social aspects of Nimri's environment¹⁸² while employing skills such as 'fundraising abilities' and 'volunteer coordination.' Also, Öztürk focused on revealing an extended community's needs while becoming an 'engaged community member' herself. Lastly, Öztürk presents a design proposal after getting to know the community members and their strengths, shows that she employs a 'bottom-up approach' in her praxis.

4.3.2 The New Life in Nimri Project

Architects who conduct alternative praxes with humanitarian or ecologic motivations often benefit from new financial mechanisms¹⁸³ to fund their projects. The Earth of Women Award (Prix Terre de Femmes) is launched by cosmetic brand Yves Rocher. The award acknowledges that "women [...] often most exposed to consequences of climate change, [...and is presented] to support the [women] who strive to protect the biodiversity and change the world."¹⁸⁴ The scale of the previously submitted projects varies. They offer solutions to 'local' environmental problems, often involving the community surrounding it, where Vandana Shiva is one of the first winners of this award. Öztürk's "New life in Nimri Project" is the winner of the year 2016.

According to Öztürk, "the aim of the project in the medium term is to generate a shared village garden which is administered by women and cultivated according to permaculture principles. The products will be sold to İstanbul and other urban areas; plus, the products will be stored in an earthen building. The earthen building also functions as a prototype for the possible forthcoming housing projects in the village.

¹⁸² The workshop on ecologic architure and planting trees can be considered ecologic aspects, and engaging women in village association, and organizing festivals can be considered in social aspects.

¹⁸³ Non-architectural competition awards, applying for various funds etc.

¹⁸⁴ Retrived from the award's website: from <https://www.yves-rocher-fondation.org/en/terre-de-femmes/>

The long-term goal is to build a museum of the history of the village and an earthen oven. [Additionally, the project aims at,] reforming the network [...] among the youth of Nimri, who aspire to make an environmental and societal change."¹⁸⁵

Evident in the proposal, the project envisions the societal and environmental transformation inseparable. It aspires to empower women and strengthen the bond among the community while performing regenerative agriculture and creating profits. Thus, the earthen building as an architectural intervention is not located on the project's focus but rather has a complementary, symbolic role; it is also from Öztürk's point of view.

4.3.2.1 Contributions I

After winning the competition, Öztürk focuses on providing additional resources for the realization of the project. In addition to 20.000 €, supplied as the prize (64.000 TRY in 2016), she prepares a proposal and applies for Fırat Development Agency Fund. She was also able to get some sponsorships. More important than financial contributions, she also starts forming a community around the Project with Ruhi Kafesçioğlu and volunteer-builders. Some are young architects willing to learn about the alker technique and volunteers from outside the profession.

The proposed location of the building is revised in search of a more accessible position. To start the construction and complete the proposal for the development fund, a central location needed to be found in the village. Offers came to build the project in central Elazığ or even İstanbul; however, Öztürk stands her ground and explains that the project has a transformative power if it is accessible for unprivileged rural women. At last, Öztürk, using her social capital, convinces a villager, İsmail

¹⁸⁵ Translated and retrieved from Öztürk's promotion video for Yves Roche Women of the Earth competition.

Amca, to endow part of his land to this community project. After the proposal for the development fund is submitted on July 13, the coup occurs on the 15th. As a result, the project was suspended.

4.3.3 Re-birth: The Anatolian Angel Project in Keban

After waiting for two years, Öztürk commences the project again, however during two years, the administration of Nimri association has changed, and the new administration insisted on waiting for longer. Disappointed with another setback, Öztürk decides to move the Project to Keban, where she discovers no communal public space for women to interact with each other. Keban Municipality endows a lot across the municipality building in the town center.

Inevitably when the location of the building changed (not only geographically but also moved to an urban area from a rural area), it is re-designed. The previous exhibition areas for the sale of the products are excluded. More importantly, the program of the building is updated. Previously the earthen building was designed as a storage unit. Since Keban lacked a hotel space, Öztürk improved the design to double as a guesthouse when needed. Additionally, the income generated from the building's function as a guesthouse is proposed to fund the education expenses of a young girl.

4.3.3.1 The Design: A Study on the Vernacular

Öztürk studied the old photographs of the vernacular Nimri village houses, posted to Nimri Village Association group on Facebook. Öztürk was also inspired by the stories people shared along with the photographs. General decisions and some of the interior detailing are made according to the study of the photographs. Öztürk imitates the continuous wooden frame at the window bone beam level (which she recognized while studying the photographs), which provides a surface to hang objects without damaging the earthen walls. In parallel with vernacular tradition, the

window openings are diagonally cut to increase the benefit of the natural light, though the windows are oversized compared to vernacular types. According to Öztürk, "windows do not need to be that small in size anymore because of climate change Elazığ is comparatively warmer." ¹⁸⁶Also, this way, the bottom level of the windows meets traditional low seatings (sedir). The timber headpiece over the fireplace is revived from an abandoned house in Nimri. The door handles are the work of a local ironmaster who is the last iron craftsman of the region. This involvement of a local craftsperson accentuates the Öztürk's intentions of reinforcing and promoting local skills. The interior is decorated with items the local women brought, which showcase the old rural life, such as sieves and cruses. Skep lighting fixtures are designed with the help of a member of Nimri Village Association, who is an electrical engineer.

The rammed earth technique is employed to build the walls consisting of a slightly different mixture than alker. The use of rammed earth is notable since it is a development on the local building technique kerpiç and demonstrates an ecological, healthy construction alternative suitable to local building tradition. Instead of a traditional earthen rammed flat roof, Öztürk implements a green roof to the design because it is easier to maintain. Also, to depict a contemporary ecological alternative.

¹⁸⁶ From aauthor's personal interview with Özgül Öztürk.



Figure 3.14: Exterior of the Anatolian Angel Project



Figure 3.15: Interior of the Anatolian Angel Project

4.3.3.2 Financial Contributions- Fundraising

Öztürk starts fundraising once again, both from governmental and private agencies. Economic contributions are listed as follows: Elazığ municipality provides some of the workers, a woodmaster, not to mention the land they donated. Elazığ Chamber of Commerce provides reinforcement and concrete for the foundation. Keban District governorship arranged seventy-five tonnes of soil from a nearby village to the construction site. Onduline Avrasya donated the green roof materials and application.

4.3.3.3 Social Contributions-Community Engagement

Before the Project in Nimri, Öztürk had years to cultivate a community and a communal spirit. However, when the Keban project started, she had not formed a network with local social agents, that she worried about how the project would keep alive without a community. Thus, she started building a network that, in the end, would form the community. To reach the women, especially not very engaged in social life, she presented her project in local primary schools and asked children to tell their mothers, sisters, and aunts. Additionally, she gave a lecture about the Project at Fırat University and invited architectural students to volunteer in construction and learn about the rammed earth technique. She made visits to different political parties and told them about the project. She formed alliances with other women initiatives in the region.

The help of a local community member on the lighting fixtures and the local women's gifts are previously mentioned. Also, on the last days of the construction process, local women help with landscape arrangements. It is important to note that, Öztürk's vision was to establish this solidarity in the earlier phases of the construction. Öztürk sought assistance from the elders for finding suitable soil, the architect aimed to learn about the local building tradition from their wisdom and experience.

Lastly, Öztürk's praxis can be described as a social impact designer or a socially- active designer since she embodies fundraising skills and pays attention to designing a process that various social actors can contribute. She creates a community by mediating between different social actors and by being an engaged community member herself. Also, her project aims to raise awareness on ecological and women issues and empower women by providing income and a dignifying public space.



Figure 3.16: A photograph of local women helping with landscape arrangement.



Figure 3.17: A photo of Öztürk with a local elder woman of Nimri at the opening. The woman helped Öztürk with the selection of suitable soil, by showing the exact location of specific soil used to be preferred for the adobe bricks of the Nimri Village.



Figure 3.18: Öztürk with the only woman elderman (muhtar) of Keban, Aynur Hanım who supported the projected, and helped Öztürk to reach women of Keban.



Figure 3.19: A photo in Keban Public Education Center (Halk Eğitimi Merkezi) after finalizing the design for handbags to be crafted and sold.



Figure 3.20: A photo taken after Öztürk’s presentation titled “What is ecology? What is entrepreneurship?” at the local Vocational High School for Women (Kız Meslek Lisesi)

4.4 Aslı Tekin

Aslı Tekin is an interior designer who graduated from Marmara University in 2012; and for several years she is employed in various interior design offices. Tekin volunteers for greenpeace and ecological concerns are a major consideration for Tekin's personal lifestyle choices. Therefore, similar to Öztürk, Tekin expresses unease with the consumerist attitude and disregard for ecological issues with her experience in conventional practice.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, Tekin's first encounter with natural buildings is by chance when a friend of Tekin invites her to volunteer and cooperatively discover how to build a strawbale house. After, that first experiment and experience with an ecological building, Tekin decides to advance her career in ecological building techniques and materials. Followingly, she participates in educational workshops; volunteers, and later works in various ecological projects in Turkey and abroad. Her volunteer work in Manure Houses Project (Tezek Evleri) in Silivri is especially important; since some builders from Manure Houses Project initiated the Koluba Natural Builders Collective in 2017 and, Tekin is one of the founding members. Yet, later she leaves the collective. Currently, she mainly offers her services as a natural builder during the construction process. EcoDemo House is the first project Tekin commissions for her private practice where she also designs.¹⁸⁸

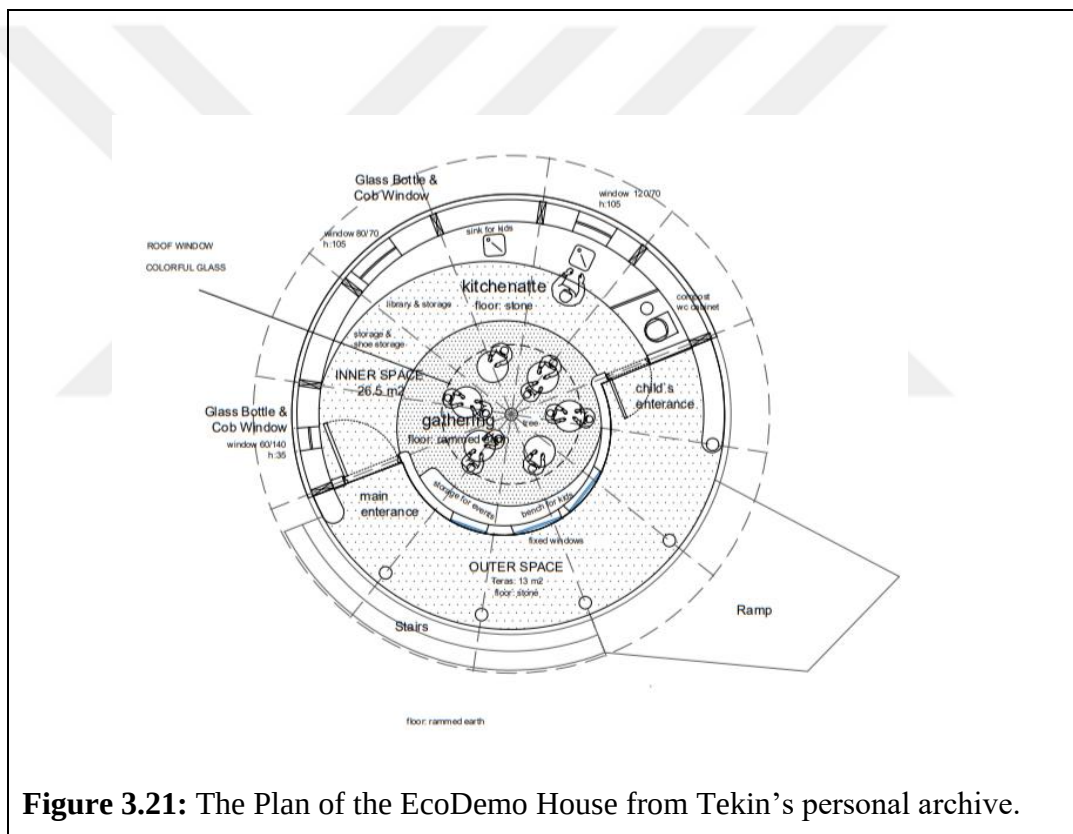
4.4.1 EcoDemo House

EcoDemo House is commissioned by the Marmaris Municipality. The Project is offered to Aslı Tekin due to her previous affiliation with Greenpeace, since an employee of the Municipality is also a member of Greenpeace. The previous brief for the building is an eco-friendly mobile house prototype for the EcoFest in

¹⁸⁷ From the interview with Aslı Tekin.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

Marmaris. The Marmaris Municipality expects the project to be ready for the EcoFest, which will be moved around the park to demonstrate an eco-friendly building type during the festival; and demolished after the festival is over. First, she expands the brief she is presented with to a permanent building, convincing the municipality members that to build with the intention of demolishing solely for advertising purposes is essentially anti-ecologic and contradictory with the festival's objectives. Thus, she proposes a program to attain a purpose for the building as a kid's activity area which various schools, kindergartens, or other independent actors can use.



The design employs various natural building techniques like stone foundation and timber structure which complies with vernacular tradition. Mainly, the straw-bale technique is preferred for the walls; some parts demonstrate the cob technique with glass bottles. Straw-bale is a prevalent ecocentric construction technique and in this case, it is preferred for its rapidity during application. Yet, it is imported from Europe and might be criticized for its irrelevance with the vernacular building culture. The project upcycle waste wood from the construction and incorporate waste materials into the project's elements; for example, broken branches gathered from the park become the railings.

Tekin designs the building with collaboration to young female architects. Also, she proposes to construct during the festival so that the local participants of the festival can observe and take part in the building process. Accordingly, she provides a participatory building process, especially welcoming local people to participate. Plus, knowledge regarding natural building techniques is shared, with the volunteers and the festival participants. Several workshops are held for children and adults on varying topics such as building techniques or natural dyes, which contribute to creating a community and sharing knowledge.



Figure 3.22: A photograph from the construction site of EcoDemo House.

4.5 A Comparative Analysis of the Case Studies

The cases studies are compared, examined and reviewed under two tables. The case studies are argued to be alternative practices for three main reasons: their utilization of ecocentric building techniques, the incorporation of self-building activity, and employment of various skills that intersect with emerging and expanding tactics of alternative practices, which will be further examined in an accompanying table.

Designed by	Project Name	Location	Built by	Materials and techniques	Building Technique's Compatibility with Vernacular Tradition	Usage
Aslıhan Demirtaş	İkiz Çam House	Çanakkale	User-builder	Stone Foundation, Timber Structure, Pumice Stone Bricks	Compatible Pumice Stone Brick is a new material	Public
	Yayla House	Giresun	User-builder	Masonry Structure Timber Roof	Compatible Exact technique	Public
Özgül Öztürk	Anatolian Angel	Elazığ	Workers	Reinforced Concrete Foundation, Alker Walls Green Roof	Compatible	Private
Aslı Tekin	EcoDemo House	Marmaris	A natural builder team composed of architects & designers Volunteers Workers	Stone Foundation Timber Structure Stone Floors Straw Bale Walls	Compatible Straw Bale is an imported technique	Private
Participatory Design Process led by Metin Yağın with the Contributions of Bilge Işık and İTÜ Students	Ax u Av (Water and Earth) Project	Şanlıurfa	User-builders	Alker	Compatible	Public

Table 3.1: Comparison of the case studies

The case studies are in rural areas, either the wilderness (İkiz Çam and Yayla Houses) or small-town centers. The operations of alternative practices, in general, mainly stem from challenging norms and values of neoliberal structures, so it is not surprising for case studies to perform in rural areas where the limitations of the neoliberal real estate market are less pressing. Another reason is that since these are ecologically motivated works, they appropriate vernacular construction methods and materials. These techniques might not always be ecological in an urban context since the materials need to be supplied from a nearby environment.

In Yayla House, Demirtaş preserves the existing walls and utilizes the local masonry technique for the newly built walls. It is important to emphasize that in parallel with the tradition of vernacular stonework and ecocentric logic, the stones are gathered from the surrounding environment not mined and purchased. In İkiz Çam House, Demirtaş uses stone foundation and timber structure compatible with the vernacular tradition; however, for walls, she prefers a contemporary yet ecological material, pumice stone. Her preference is not aesthetic or solely technical. Demirtaş takes the construction process, namely the self-building activity, into consideration and proposes using pumice stone since its lightweight protects the builders' health and allows women and children to participate.

Similarly, Aslı Tekin complies with vernacular tradition with stone foundation and timber structure; however, she applies the straw bale technique for the walls. Straw-bale is a prevalent ecocentric construction technique and in this case it is preferred for its rapidity during application. Yet, it is imported from Europe and might be criticized for its irrelevance with the vernacular building culture.

As final examples, the Anatolian Angel and Ax U Av projects make use of Alker. As previously discussed, Alker as a material and construction technique is an appropriation of vernacular adobe; it distinguishes itself from others with its performance by means of energy efficiency, maintenance and durability against earthquakes. More importantly, adobe is the most prevalent vernacular construction method in Turkey; therefore, Anatolian Angel and Ax u Av might be claimed to demonstrate a convenient example for further experimentation for contemporary architecture. Lastly, it is emphasized that all these materials and techniques facilitate self-building activity.

All case studies employ various levels of self-building activity except for Öztürk's Anatolian Angel. Yet, it must be noted that Öztürk intended the project to

be communally constructed¹⁸⁹. The Anatolian Angel Project is not initiated with the request of a local community; instead, it is humanitarian motivation of the architect to offer a communal space for women. Followingly, there were no volunteers to participate in the construction when the project started. In other words, in the case of Anatolian Angel, the architect acts independently, without first establishing bonds with the community and hearing their needs, which might be the reason behind the lack of self-building activity. However, it must be mentioned that due to the architect's efforts to establish a community at the last stages of the construction, women participate in landscape arrangements and decoration.

Although self-building activity is mutual in other cases, it also differs. Similar to Öztürk's case EcoDemo House is not a request of the inhabitants of Marmaris, rather it is commissioned by the Marmaris Municipality. In both projects constructing a public building without the initial demand of locals hinders self-building activity. However, since EcoDemo House is commissioned to acquaint the citizens of Marmaris with ecological buildings, and it was built during an ecological festival, Tekin was able to accommodate a volunteering option for the locals during construction. Tekin especially, favors locals for volunteering in the construction with the intention to create a community who will undertake the ownership and responsibility of the public space; so, in a sense, it might be considered self-building activity. Also, as a natural builder, Tekin herself and a natural builders' team composed of young architects work and volunteer in the construction.

In Ax u AV, first, a community is established with people who need houses and are willing to work in the construction. Inhabitants of Ax u Av both participate in the construction of the public facilities and the construction of each other's houses. First, building the public facilities caused certain uneasiness and exhaustion among the participants; because people who worked in the construction were not able to

¹⁸⁹ Initial design was made for Nimri Village where there was already a local community willing to participate in the construction.

work elsewhere and gain their livelihoods, did not obtain houses, and were still paying rent. Also, the people who withdrew after the construction of their houses and the people who abandoned the project entirely might be the reasons behind the project's failure. Compared to Anatolian Angel and EcoDemo House, Ax u Av is a community-based spatial endeavor; yet still, mediating self-building activity for public facilities is not accomplished. On the other hand, in Demirtaş's residential projects, the clients approach the architect to request a design that can be self-built. The architect is not present in the construction site nor manages the process. However, she supplies the necessary tools for self-building activity. Therefore it might be deduced that for the examined case studies self- building activity is truly present and successful only in residential projects where the user, owner and builder is the same people. And request came from the people themselves.

4.5.1 Alternative Tactics of the Case Studies

	Project Name				
	İkiz Cam House	Yayla House	Anatolian Angel	EcoDemo House	Ax u Av (Water and Earth) Project
Facilitation	●	●	●	●	●
Mediation	●	●			●
Interaction with various social actors			●	●	●
Production of interfaces & instruments	●				
Appropriation (of land)			●		●
Appropriation (of vernacular techniques)	●	●	●	●	●
Empowerment	●	●	●	●	●
Networking for creating a community			●	●	
Expanding briefs				●	
Indeterminacy		●			
Initiating			●		●
Sharing Knowledge		●	●	●	●
Fundraising			●		
Creation of other alternative economies			●	●	●
Hyper-resourcefulness			●	●	

Table 3.2: Comparison of the case studies with regards to tactics of the alternative practices

Mediation understood as someone trying to resolve disputes among other bodies is something all architects do, maybe from the dawn of the profession. However, as earlier argued by the MOM team, mediation in the context of alternative practices refers to a "practice [...] in the service of people's autonomy. Therefore, to distinguish these different actions, I offer the term facilitator for the former definition of the term. Also, facilitation implies non-hierarchical moderation of discussion and activities in contrast to management which means a hierarchical organization. Facilitation is present in all case studies.

Previously, mediation is claimed to constitute one of the core notions of alternative practices. Yet, it is argued to be only apparent in Demirtaş's residential projects and Ax u Av for the following reasons. In Demirtaş's residential projects,

mediation occurs 'upon the request of users.' In the case of Ax u Av, Yeğın 'negotiates people's interests with power structures like government bodies,' namely the local municipality.

In the case of residential projects of Demirtaş, *empowerment* is evidently displayed as not a top-to-bottom endeavor. In fact, the commissioners in both projects reach out to the Demirtaş to design houses that they can build independently. Accordingly, here the mission of Demirtaş is not to awaken her clients about the pressing issues of the climate crisis or to inform them about the benefits of self-building activity. Instead, Demirtaş's task is to offer *instruments or interfaces* which enable the clients to act on their spatial needs in a way that agrees with their worldview and lifestyle. In İkiz Çam House, Demirtaş creatively *subverts* the Sketchup interface, a tool commonly used by architects for design and representational needs to guide the clients on how the construction process operates and how different architectural elements come together. Also, in both projects, Demirtaş *appropriates* vernacular materials and construction methods. In Yayla House, Demirtaş strives to utilize the local masonry technique for the newly built walls; with her guidance and direction, the client talks to elders, accordingly local *knowledge* about a local building technique is *made visible* and *shared*. Plus, she conducts a participatory design process and *mediates* between family members; she also *mediates* the construction process between family members, local craftsmen, and other contributing actors.

In the case of the Anatolian Angel Project, first, Öztürk critically observes the lack of communal space for women in Keban. Accordingly, she aims to empower women socially by providing communal space. Partly, to ensure the use of the space, the project also has a business aspect, a business plan for women to generate income with their craftwork which aims to *empower* them economically. Further, she *initiates* the project independently and implements it by *creating alternative economies*: first *donating her time* for the design and business plan, which eventually generates budget through winning a non-architectural but ecologically focused competition: Terre de Femmes. Second, she continues to *create alternative*

*economies by donating her time and expertise*¹⁹⁰ in the construction process; but also *networks* and uses her network to *fundraise*. Also, she utilizes her *network* in terms of the advertisement of the project and the sale of the products.¹⁹¹ Additionally, she *appropriates* the unused land in the city center of Keban. Plus, her preference to utilize the Alker construction method can be argued to be an *appropriation* of vernacular building technique adobe. Further, she *interacts* with various social actors in the city, from children to university students, local women, craftsmen, and governmental figures, and becomes an engaged citizen to build a community around the spatial and non-spatial aspects of the project to ensure its continuity. Öztürk presents *hyper-resourcefulness* with the way she fundraises but, more specifically, by incorporating elements from abandoned vernacular houses by recycling them and using materials the local women brought from their houses for the interior decoration.

In the case of EcoDemo House, Tekin critically evaluates the project's brief: an eco-friendly mobile house prototype for the EcoFest in Marmaris. The Marmaris Municipality commissions the project to be ready for the EcoFest, which will be moved around the park to demonstrate an eco-friendly building type during the festival; and demolished after the festival is over. First, she *expands the brief* she is presented with to a permanent building, convincing the municipality members that to build with the intention of demolishing solely for advertising purposes is essentially anti-ecologic and contradictory with the festival's objectives. Thus, she proposes a program to attain a purpose for the building as a kid's activity area which various schools, kindergartens, or other independent actors can use. Secondly, she proposes to construct during the festival so that the local participants of the festival can observe and take part in the building process. Accordingly, she presents a *participatory building process*, especially welcoming local people to participate,

¹⁹⁰ Expertise in construction and *management* of the construction process.

¹⁹¹ Generating income through the craftwork of the local women is an essential (and non-spatial) aspect of the project.

allowing a community composed of local people to gather around the spatial object. Additionally, the employment of volunteer work is considered as *the creation of an alternative economy*, in a sense that people donated their labor and in return gained building skills and interacted with like-minded people, had the opportunity to be part of a community if they choose to. Plus, *knowledge* regarding natural building techniques is *shared*, with the volunteers and the festival participants. Several workshops are held for children and adults on varying topics such as building techniques or natural dyes, which contribute to creating a community and *sharing knowledge*. Tekin presents *hyper-resourcefulness* with her ability to upcycle waste wood from the construction and incorporate waste materials into the project's elements; for example, broken branches gathered from the park become the railings. Also, she *interacts* with local artisans and incorporates her work into the design of the building as a mural. Lastly, she facilitates the construction process among members and workers of the municipality, volunteers, the builders' team, and local craftspeople.

Lastly, Ax u Av, is *initiated* by Metin Yeğin for the *empowerment* of unprivileged people in Şanlıurfa, by enabling them to provide houses for themselves. Accordingly, a construction method is chosen, a process design and economic plan is offered. Yeğin *mediates* the needs of the commune to technical actors (architects and student from ITU) and the municipality. Through negotiations with the municipality, unused land *is appropriated* for dwelling and ecological agriculture. More importantly, the economic model developed is an example for both the notions of *production of interfaces* and the *creation of alternative economies*.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The study starts with the premise that conventional sustainable buildings, which depend on technical solutions, and the mainstream architectural practice which utilizes them are inadequate to respond to the necessities of the climate crisis. Apart from the ecological crisis, architecture as a profession is in crisis to redefine its field of action, motivations, and operations to stay relevant in the abruptly changing world. So that, in the last twenty years, several attempts have been made to redefine theorizing and practicing architecture. In the last, ten years unusual, fragmented, solo undertakings of various groups, architects, and non-architects have been cumulated under the notion "alternative architecture." Accordingly, the study focuses on the ecologically motivated works of three female architects from Turkey. The study positions case studies as *alternative practices* by displaying that they employ similar tactics, and their ecological and social concerns are also common around these uncommon ways of spatial interventions.

First, the mutual ecological motivations of the case studies are associated with the broader scope of ecocentric logic and deep ecology movement for two reasons. First, the obvious, their mutual understanding of environmental ethics, is discussed as ecocentrism that situates humans as equal creatures with the rest of the living and non-living components of the world. Also, it does not treat them as resources which the study argues to be the problem with mainstream sustainability

perspective and the objects it produces. Secondly, the case studies are associated with the deep ecology movement because they took action on their criticism concerning ecological issues, whether through activism or professional endeavors, rather than leaving their critiques in the theoretical realm. According to Naess, a definition of Deep Ecology Movement is a social movement where groups of people come together indirect actions. Similarly, the architects mediate various social actors via spatial action in the case studies, directed at the groups' ecological and social concerns.

Additionally, the architects Demirtaş, Öztürk, and Tekin all have affiliations with contemporary civil movements; Yedikule Urban Vegetable Gardens Conservation Initiative, KAGİDER, and Greenpeace, respectively. They benefitted from these associations in their professional endeavors as *engaged citizens*. Demirtaş's involvement with the Yedikule Urban Vegetable gardens may be the most akin to Deep Ecology Movement since it is local urban activism towards conserving an ecological practice. Plus, her affiliation inspires her artwork and acquaints her with like-minded people who provide commissions and other opportunities. Öztürk's affiliation with KAGİDER, years in advance, informs her about societal issues regarding women, sets the foundation for her women-oriented spatial initiative, and prepares her regarding the issues to tackle and how to approach and connect with women in rural areas. Lastly, Tekin's earlier activist work in Greenpeace connected her with like-minded people, which eventually brought her the opportunity to realize EcoDemo House.

The most easily recognized characteristic of the case studies is their mutual employment of low-impact intermediate building techniques, generally visually represented as an earthen building technique (alker) or an earthen finish¹⁹². These earthen materials and intermediate technologies are argued to have two main

¹⁹² With the exception of Demirtaş's Yayla House which is a masonry building compatible with the vernacular culture of the region.

functions. First, they convey a message of ecocentric worldview to its viewers; in contrast to conventional sustainable buildings that cannot be visually separated from the majority of the designed, built environment. Both Öztürk and Tekin report that people effortlessly associate these buildings with vernacular architecture (specifically their home in the village or their grandfather house etc.), even though both of the projects, Anatolian Angel and the EcoDemo house, do not utilize the exact vernacular techniques. Accordingly, people are presented with an image that connotes to a lifestyle in harmony with nature. Also, this communicative aspect of ecocentric buildings underlines the climate-responsive ability of people's ancestral houses or may compel laypeople to be more conservant towards vernacular architecture in general, especially in the face of contemporary issues of the climate crisis.

Additionally, it must be noted that Demirtaş, Öztürk and Tekin's expertise includes a certain amount of craftsperson's knowledge regarding the unconventional ecocentric building techniques: rammed earth, alker, or straw bale. The architects experiment with these techniques on varying scales. Demirtaş experiments with the rammed earth technique in her installation *The Plinth* before applying the technique in the *Slat Winter Garden Project*. Öztürk tries alker fist in her interior design project for BKM, not to mention her volunteer works with Ruhi Kafesçioğlu and building experience gained by volunteering in various earthen buildings. Also, Tekin's experience with natural materials starts with volunteering in various off-grid ecocentric building constructions in Turkey and abroad. Lastly, Tekin brings design and making to the closest proximity between the three architects; since she continues her profession as a designer and a natural builder. Combining design and making is also an alternative practice. Lastly, the architects' involvement in the craft of building might be argued to contribute to reflective expolaritons similar to what Sennet argues in *The Craftsman*. Their own experience in 'making' provides the foundation for incorporating volunteer participation or self-building activity in their designs and construction processes.

Moreover, these intermediate technologies allow for self-building activity; also, they allow for alterations if the design accommodates *indeterminacy*. We will come back to self-building activity, but on the issue of indeterminacy, the case studies do not display clear opportunities for alterations. Even though intermediate technologies are expected to facilitate further improvements, Öztürk's alker building (as a load-bearing building) and Demirtaş's masonry Yayla House do not allow easy expansion. Additionally, the scale of all projects complicates offering a flexible design. Öztürk and Tekin's public buildings aim to accommodate various activities, and they provide a functional space by completing the project with furniture that might be argued to prohibit unanticipated activities. Lastly, in Demirtaş's Yayla House, *indeterminacy* is limited to joint details, accommodating unprocessed building elements.

Conventionally, self-building activity is associated with low-income groups since it implies squatting or communal building activity in rural areas, especially in developing countries. Yes, incorporating self-building activity enables commissioners to preserve funds. But, more profoundly, it provides a flexible construction environment partially free from the pressures of the construction sector, which more easily accommodates the tactics of alternative practices if an architect is present. The commissioners of İkiz Çam and Yayla Houses exemplify a demand that is interested in self-building and still requires an architect's expertise and mediatory skills.

Perhaps, ecocentric building techniques' ability to incorporate self-building activity, or at least the ability to include people in varying degrees, acts as the bridge between ecocentric technologies and the operations of alternative practices. As Lefebvre declares, "(social) space is a (social) product." The study argues that alternative practices challenge conventional production models, or in other words,

"the reproduction of the social relations of production."¹⁹³ In the case studies, this is displayed by incorporating self-building activity. First, self-building liberates the building activity from the unquestioned possession of the specialists such as architects, urban planners and contractors; acknowledges the contributions of other actors; and recognizes the ability of users to perform their own spatial interventions. In this sense, incorporating self-building activity (along with *mediation* instead of management) portrays a non-hierarchical organization of building activity that resembles ecocentrism's non-hierarchical worldview.

As argued in several papers by The Agency Team¹⁹⁴ and MOM,¹⁹⁵ defining space as a social product; also expands the definition of spatial work from an object to a process. In fact, MOM further defines architecture as "the transformation of space by human work,"¹⁹⁶ which involves all contributing actors, not just specialists, while highlighting architecture as a process. Understanding architecture as a process makes alternative practices' operations and tactics more visible, whereas, in the conventional narratives of architecture,¹⁹⁷ a building is frozen in the moment of its completion, the lifecycle regarding the design and construction process, and how it is used is invisible.

Furthermore, when analyzed the case studies and their operations, as a group, and on par with alternative practices as a broader umbrella, indicate a kind of practice, or to use the accepted term praxis, in Freire's terms that "through praxis, the oppressed crowds can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition and pursue

¹⁹³ Lefebvre, H. *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

¹⁹⁴ I refer to the initial research group in the Sheffield University, the contributors of the book *Agency: working with uncertain architectures* and the authors of the book *Spatial Agency* since they all intersect one way or another.

¹⁹⁵ MOM: Morar de Outras Manerias, in their paper "Architecture as Critical Exercise: Little pointers toward Alternative Practices" in the field journal.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Aga Khan Award is an renowned exception which evaluates the architectural works after they have been used for a while. Also it takes the process of the projects and the views of the people involved into consideration.

liberation."¹⁹⁸ Similarly, the discussions around the alternative practices revolve around the term "agency," which may be understood as "freedom to act for oneself," but, in the discipline and professional fields of architecture, it involves the responsibility and ability to "act on behalf of others."¹⁹⁹ Followingly, first and foremost, their operations mutually focus on the *empowerment* of the users. Yet, this is not a top-to-bottom imposed empowerment that works with the 'strategies' and tools of power structures. Instead, these operations might be called "tactics," referring to de Certeau²⁰⁰ since they are creative subversions of certain opportunities that enable designers to work around the limitations of power structures such as bureaucracy and the conventional neoliberal construction sector.

This notion of empowerment unfolds variously in case studies. In the case of residential projects of Demirtaş, *empowerment* is evidently displayed as not a top-to-bottom endeavor. In fact, the commissioners in both projects reach out to the Demirtaş to design houses that they can build independently. Thus, here the mission of Demirtaş is not to awaken her clients about the pressing issues of the climate crisis or to inform them about the benefits of self-building activity. Accordingly, the forthcoming aspect of Demirtaş's architectural works examined here is *mediation* and *production of interfaces*, namely, the creative subversion of the tool Sketchup. Also, her activist work and artwork must be emphasized since they raise critical questions about ecology and the processes of production.

In the case of the Anatolian Angel Project, Öztürk aims to empower women socially by providing communal space; the business aspect of the project aims to *empower* them economically. Further, she *initiates* the project independently eventually generates a budget through winning a non-architectural but ecologically

¹⁹⁸ Freire, P. (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Bloomsbury Academy, p. 126.

¹⁹⁹ Kossak, F., Petrescu, D., Schneider, T., Tyszczyk, R., & Walker, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures*. Oxon England: Routledge.

²⁰⁰ De Certeau, M. General Introduction [Introduction]. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (pp. Xvii-Xxii). Berkeley u.a.: Univ. of California Press. (1980).

focused competition: Terre de Femmes. Accordingly, the highlight of Öztürk's practice is that she is a humanitarian and environmentally motivated architect who does not wait for a job to come to her but creates her own opportunities and develops her project via uncommon yet widely spreading tactics such as fundraising and networking.

In the case of EcoDemo House, the *expansion of briefs* distinguishes it from the other case studies. Also, Tekin's practice as a designer and a natural builder presents an alternative approach to practicing architecture. By setting an example and providing job and volunteer opportunities, Tekin empowers young (especially female) architects to walk a less-traveled path. Lastly, alternative practices embrace the expansion of the definition of architecture which does not limit architecture with the critical thinking and actions and initiatives of architects. Accordingly, Metin Yeğin's ecological and communal initiative displays an example of a spatial agency inducted by another social actor, a journalist.

Architectural culture is accustomed to critiquing buildings according to their static properties, such as the aesthetic or technical, hence atemporal; however, all these tactics are noticeable when we are able to examine the process of spatial interventions via interviews, presentations, and lectures. Luckily, currently, architects are willing to share the once informal nuances of their projects, such as their encounters with the workers, artisans, and other social actors. Accordingly, this study documents an adequate amount of information regarding the process of the projects and their interactions with various social actors. By means of continuous use of the spaces, the social success of the public projects, Ecodemo House and Anatolian Angel will reveal in time; since the first years of their animation coincides with a global pandemic. However, all case studies tell an alternative story in the process of their making; still, the motivations and tactics intersect with each other and many other, 'fringe,' 'unusual', fragmented spatial interventions from all over the world. Therefore, it is safe to claim that these works start to define a new way of practicing architecture, not alternative as in the periphery of conventional practice

functioning on issues and places that it cannot reach; but as an alternative to its approach and values.

Summarily, this study presents five ecologically motivated alternative spatial interventions from Turkey, one led by a journalist and others by three ecologically motivated women professionals. Also, the number of young women architects who participate or volunteer in ecological building activities (also apparent in the construction of EcoDemo House) presents an interesting case. This condition brings out the questions: Are women more involved in ecological issues? Or Why are women more akin to operating in fringe areas like the rural, alternative, or ecocentric? Or How does feminism relates to these issues?

Women are often pioneers in multiple arenas of the ecologic movement, such as Rachel Carson, Vandana Shiva, and Greta Thunberg. Similarly, the dominance of women operating around the issue of 'alternative' in theory²⁰¹ and practice (as supported by the case studies) is striking. For example, Doina Petrescu's theoretical work operates mainly at the intersection of feminism and alterity. Plus, Atelier d'architecture Autogérée (AAA), co-founded by Petrescu is an alternative practice that operates on the subversion of the urban leftover space and often brings ecology into the discussion. Likewise, Peg Rawes continues her research on the junction of ecology, architecture, and feminism. Like the imprecise boundaries of alternative practices, the confines of the notions of alterity, feminism, and ecology are muddy. I have partly constructed this study on specific binary structures such as ecocentric vs. ecotechnic or mainstream vs. alternative, and the repeated appearance of women was a result. However, contemporary feminist thinking challenges fixed dichotomies such as male-female, technology-nature, urban-rural, etcetera, and operates among cumulative fluid notions.

²⁰¹ Doina Petrescu, Peg Rawes, Renata Tyszczuk, Sumitha Sinha, Tatjana Schneider just to name the ones which contributed to this study.

In the end, alternative practices seem to me, understanding architecture as a process more than anything; even so, the discussions about alternative practices refrain from technical and aesthetic, hence material aspects. Therefore it has been an interesting experience for me to combine process with materiality. However, feminist approaches to materiality are "non-linear, zigzagging and process-oriented;" consequently, they might be beneficial to bring the notions of practice, theory, and medium together for future research.



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