

## Designing Today is to Design the Borderlines and the Passages...

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### Abstract

Building or space is not a single entity, it is a (piece of) manifestation of life and the environment. Architecture is about the whole, including individual space, building and all surroundings - urban and rural - rather than treating it as if it were a single, abstract phenomenon. Architecture is about life; its connection with life is existential... And if the motto of life at present can be stated as "living in the city or the city life," today's architecture can also be stated as a manifestation of the city life.

City life means having privacy, joining the public life, and moving about easily. This can also be summed up as private in the public and public in the private. Briefly, living in the city is being able to join both parties, belong to both parties: public and private, and to move somehow, mentally, emotionally, virtually or physically. Therefore, borderlines appear as important accesses as well as problematic of today's cities. Designing today can be called designing the borderlines and the passages, which is designing the interactions... Borderlines give opportunities for passages, mix usage and open structures. They make possible the moving from one side and situation to another side and situation... From several perspectives, borderlines look like the places for the creation of new knowledge and new settings of life, city and architecture...

Briefly, this paper will look at the possibilities of borderlines... the possibilities of enlarging them into the passages... the necessary life corridors.

## 1 Introduction: Borderlines

If the motto of today's life can be stated as "living in the city or the city life," today's architecture can also be stated as a manifestation of city life. City life means having privacy, joining the public life, and moving about easily. This can also be summed up as private in the public and public in the private. Briefly, living in the city is being able to join both parties, belong to both parties: public and private, and to move somehow... mentally, emotionally, virtually or physically from one side and situation to the other side and situation. Therefore borderlines appear as important accesses as well as problematic of today's cities.

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Borderlines get their definitions from the conditions of their very nearby neighborhoods, which are usually strictly defined, formed areas. The contact between different areas defines or gives the settings of the borderlines. Settings could include the conditions of these two or more parties, or they could belong to none of them. Borderlines, thus, act usually as separators, sometimes as parentheses, and rarely as passages.

The main problem of borderlines, which is the same of their possibilities, is the connection of different or opposite parties even though they are next to each other. They can be two or more different materials, activities, usages, conditions, cultures, topographies. (But here, the artificial borderlines such as governmental or administrative ones are not discussed.) These neighborhoods are totally different from each other, and it is difficult to put them together - without losing their identities or formation qualities. However, although the neighborhood areas of the borderlines are usually totally different from each other, this property makes the borderlines rich in position. They have the opportunity of having different parties together. They have also the shortest contact possibility among those different parties.

Moreover, the situation at the borderlines is very close to the condition of the crisis, which forces people to think about the problem of the togetherness of oppositional or different parties - and to solve them. It calls and brings up critical thinking, which necessitates dialogue, democracy, and a holistic approach. These are also the conditions of being conscious or being aware of the things. Therefore, borderlines, not only because of their being problematic but also because of some very important projective possibilities, need to be worked on... From several perspectives, borderlines seem to be the places for the creation of new knowledge and new settings of life, city and architecture.

Those are the fundamental, problematic and projective conditions and capacities of borderlines (or the very close togetherness of different parties). And we know that, especially today, cities and architecture have borderlines waiting to be activated and participated in to the space, time and life. Today, it appears, it is essential to open up new channels, to create new paths or parentheses, or better passages among the different parties... Thus architecture today has to move to the borderlines...

There are already some attempts, such as hybrid architecture, surface architecture, diagrammatic architecture, virtual architecture, etc. However, it doesn't seem that there is enough effort to be critical (to move about the borderlines) and to put forward the new ways of life and architecture on a larger scale... This paper will look at the possibilities of borderlines, the possibilities of enlarging them into the passages, necessary life-corridors.

## 2 Borderlines of the City (and Architecture)

Living in the city and being a citizen is the reality of today's life. This is the way of living that through architecture and socialization stimulates all the human senses, mediates him/her to present himself/herself and disclose his/her existence. Apart from that, the 'city' presents a democratic platform for every kind of presentation, participation and production... or if the city gives these opportunities to its citizens, it could be called a 'city'; if it doesn't, it is only a mass of buildings, but not a 'city.'

In that context, a contemporary city (life) is supposed to present a web of communication, circulation, transportation, and provide a presentation, production/creation and transformation platform. However, when looking at today's cities, their life and discourses, it is possible to talk about the gated communities, limited transitions or in-transitive relations, getting thicker borders among the different socio-cultural groups, ways of life including the public-private relationships. [1]

Especially when the non-living part of the cities is looked at, it is clearly seen that there are strong interruptions. There is not enough connection and integration between the different layers, its parts and the whole. There is not enough public space. There is almost no common language, the sharing of a platform again among the different parties. As a matter of fact, these are the borderlines of the city (and architecture): [2]

- Different socio-cultural groups are next to each other, little or no interaction among them (low-income groups living in squatter settlements next to very high-income groups living in luxury apartments...).
- Different activities, typologies are next to each other, again little or no interaction (apartments / housing neighborhood next to a large semi-public area such as a university campus or blocks of offices, and no interaction; or a university surrounded big and high walls next to a *killiye* – a collection of social, cultural buildings surrounding a mosque – and a housing neighborhood, no interaction among them).
- Different sizes, scales, densities are next to each other (high-rise building next to one or two story buildings; a very dense city fabric is next to a very large empty area; or an old city fabric is next to an extremely large, metropolitan scale transportation area).
- Big seasonal usage differences, big daily (day and night) usage differences...
- City centers without housing / 24-hour life or housing areas without any city and public life, or a city center without enough public space... and the public-private dilemma.

These are some of the visible borderlines, but there are also invisible borderlines. Cities, apart from activity zones or size and scale differences, also have social, economical, cultural zones and barriers...

Therefore it is possible to announce that the transitions in between different parties including public-private relations are quite poor in today's cities. There are just a few intervals (passages or corridors) supplying the transitions in between different socio-cultural groups, layers, activities, sizes, and spaces or none; or the connections are set over the very sharp lines and thus are easily cut. ... Today, we also came to the point that zoning is not working and not a good idea; it helps, even causes the creation of the borderlines and barriers. ... Beyond that we know that without having a private life, it is not possible to speak about a public life or vice versa; and also if the public space does not include different activities, usages, layers, socio-cultural groups, briefly, if there is no cosmopolitan life or mixed spaces, it is not possible to talk about a real 'city.'

Cities need to be removed of those barriers across the borderlines to have a real 'city life' where people can communicate, participate, share, create/produce, and present their own selves. Therefore, taking architectural design as a transitional urban, landscape and surface design, which concentrates on the problematic areas and the possibilities of the borderlines beyond interior and exterior design, is very

important! Therefore the projections or the possibilities of an individual building (and space), its participation into the public space is very important... Therefore designing today can be called: designing the borderlines... transitional spaces, passages, surfaces, lines... through concentrating movement and flow... individuality, multiplicity and sharing.

### 3 From Borderlines to Passages, Life Corridors

The users of today's cities can be defined simply as 24-hour citizens, short-time citizens coming from other cities/places, and tourists. Twenty-four hour citizens live and use all the activities of the city (from sleeping to educating, trading, entertaining...); short-time citizens use some of the activities (usually they use some services include trading, education, entertainment...); and tourists again use some of the activities of the city (from sleeping to entertaining...). And all of them somehow participate to the city life and their reasons for being there / in the city is to participate in these activities, life. One of these activities is taken or pushed out of the city; citizens' relationship with the 'city (life)' gets poor or cut. They lose the possibility of participating, sharing, producing... and presenting themselves, which is the basic reason of being a 'citizen'. And the place has also lost its possibility of being a 'city.'

Today's way of living can be also defined simply with the concepts of 'fast,' 'variety' and 'consumption.' Reaching and attaining very fast, having the variety of things (human, job, activity, etc.), and buying every kind of thing are the characteristics of today's city life. And thus 'distance,' 'scale' and 'speed' and the 'ability of circulation, transportation and communication' and thus the 'web systems' are very important in today's city life. In another words, corridors, roads and waves as the connection intervals and lines; holes, centers and stops/stations as the distribution or meeting points are very important; these are called services. Certainly, they are as important as, even more important as, the areas called the main spaces, since life flows through them. They supply the possibility of reaching, attaining, and communicating. Again these web systems via technological developments, today, give the very fast and widely spread opportunity of reaching, attaining and certainly consuming apart from communication.

*Communication and sharing*, in addition to these opportunities, necessitate especially interaction and meeting spaces (stops and holes or lines), which web systems have, but mostly for the distribution not for the meeting and interaction. Meeting and interaction, which means the chance of being face-to-face, having dialogue, getting close, thinking, re-searching... briefly it is the presentation possibility of the self and needs greater time, space, facilities, and equipment! Today, being and passing fast is the demand and the reality of life. But it appears, it is in opposition to have and extend the time/duration, to stop, and to have a space, which communication needs... Although the web systems seem to be supplying a rich public space/life as well as a private space/life in a short time and distance; and although it seems there is no problem about the transitions and passages from one side to the other side... there is a serious communication problem in today's life and in the cities that is another reality.

We have already mentioned that: *"The transitions, passes in-between different parties including public-private relations are quite poor in today's cities (and architecture). ... There are just a few intervals (passages or corridors) supplying the transitions in between different socio-cultural groups, layers, activities, sizes, and spaces or none. ... Cities need to remove the barriers across the borderlines to have a real 'city life' that people can communicate, participate, share, create/produce, and present their selves."* Then the question here might be: *"Do we have a real, enough developed web of communication, circulation, transportation systems, which would be an answer for crossing the borderlines?"*

On one hand, within this communication age which is referred as such, it looks impossible to say no, but it is definitely possible to say: “No, it wasn’t,” which was indicated. There are a lot of regions, areas, places, and web systems that don’t have enough roads/corridors, and in particular stops and holes or centers... and the real city life. On the other hand, it is possible to say: “Yes, it was,” which was also indicated. If we consider again some regions, areas or systems that have highly developed - especially very fast - communication, transportation systems moving quickly without stopping! That is also the reason that they work as borderlines instead of working as communication and interaction corridors or meeting spaces.

Then again, these *webs of communication, circulation, and transportation systems* have many possibilities. They can act as *life corridors* - as an interaction, a meeting, a creation, and presentation points, lines, and spaces of the city and architecture, which is the requirement of the borderlines. They can also act in both directions as for moving and stopping, being fast and slow, placing in private and public... and as a line and a point, a corridor and a room, a space and a membrane... which can be extended. Corridors, elevators, stairs, and holes; streets, stops, stations, and centers; waves, lines, and hubs... are the examples of the places that can be worked on and extended as communication and transition spaces as well as circulation lines and points.

*Acting as a life corridor* brings the necessity and the opportunity of *being interactive*, which necessitates those kinds of qualities in the space. It also underlines the importance of movement, circulation, and flow, which make important the *conditions of transitions* again in terms of space, and its physicality, and the usages. Therefore, not only the condition of space and activity but also the condition of membrane is very important; they participate in the formation of a space or it can act as a space, and this taking of space opens up some new possibilities. Besides *acting as a life corridor* necessitates the togetherness of the different parties, which will also open up some other new possibilities... such as having the chance of being free - within their own conditions - and together - within their special conditions.

Consequently, the necessities and the qualities of borderlines meet the necessities and the qualities of communication, circulation and transportation systems; they can overlap and complete each other. Each formation system has some important potential apart from their basic condition, since then both need to be critically re-viewed, re-researched and re-established. ... It seems these are the works that will push forward to design, architecture, and the city. It will help to convert the borderlines to the passages or life corridors. Finally, it will expand the architectural knowledge, probably architectural profession and life itself.

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It is also possible to make some other proposals to transform the borderlines:

- For example, the praxis of the city itself (its interactions) could be one of the other important focal points for finding some solutions to overcome these barriers; the interactions of the city itself could be a model to work on. Critical-cultural reading of the city will help this situation, which is one of the certain conditions for working on the borderlines that has already been mentioned.
- There might be something to learn from the ancient cities although there is a big time difference, in which the city itself acts as a public platform with its agoras, amphitheatres...
- And perhaps something can be learned from the Mediterranean life that goes on in the street.
- Certainly there must be some research, especially on today’s metropolitan life, its concentrations, and its time and space usages. For example who are the users of today’s house, who uses the house, how long and in which context?... Again the critical-cultural conception of the city will be a necessary tool kit in that kind of research.

- Density is another very important subject for working on the borderlines (and the city / architecture). If there is not enough density in terms of population, activity and building stock, it is difficult to talk about any public or private life and the city.
- And approaching on different scales, simultaneously taking care of the users of different scales, is other important subject that can bring some (new) perspectives to the cities and architecture; such as taking care of the buildings, neighborhood, city, and global scales together, in parallel to taking architectural, urban, landscape even industrial design together.

Certainly, there are some attempts, which were mentioned, such as hybrid systems concentrating on mixed usages, or diagrammatic architecture concentrating on flow and movements (on the circulation dynamics of the city), or surface architecture concentrating on the possibilities of surface, or virtual architecture... But most of them are still very individual works or very much in the building scale. They are not about the general, socio-cultural and architectural problems of the city. However, *being situated at the borderlines of the city and architecture (critical-cultural reading of the city) can help these developments!*

#### 4 Design Practices at the Borderlines of Istanbul

*Situating at the borderlines of the city (and architecture)* is taken as a target for our studio work at Istanbul Technical University, Department of Architecture, Architectural Design Studio 6-7 in between the 2003-2004 fall and the 2004-05 spring semesters. It was thought that concentrating on those aspects of the city would be a good starting point for understanding the problems, potentials, and the intersections of design, architecture and the city. Therefore projects sites or, better to say, working fields were chosen at the borderlines or the very complex parts of the city/Istanbul.

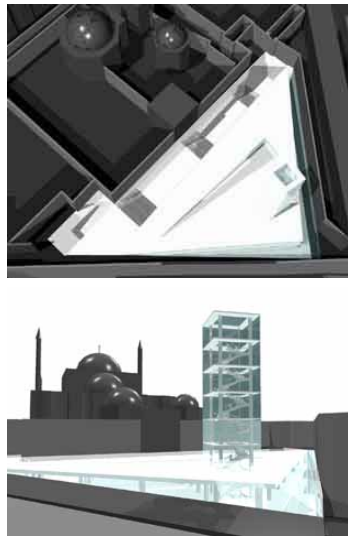
The studio approach was called, “*new proposals for the city life: critical-cultural (and cinematographic) ‘city’ conceptions*”; and the topics of the studio were “*designing/expanding the public space*” in the fall semesters, and “*housing +*” in the spring semesters. [3] With these approaches, it was thought that as a “dialogical, democratic, situational, contextual, and holistic” attitude, the critical-cultural attitude would be a good and necessary tool to understand the situation, get the main theme and the concept, which moves into time, creates its time, its emphasis and its themes. And cinematography was a very good tool to carry out that target, which is enable moving into time, recording, documenting, and projecting (making new connections); it was also arising originally from the city context. Both of them together could be a very good critical tool in the design process to re-present and to transform the reality (the borderlines). [4]

And the process at the studio acted like that: Students had their own critical readings and applied cinematography to document them and then to present their original ideas. ... And at the end, almost all the projects carried the possibilities of acting (moving) simultaneously in time and space in different levels, such as the possibilities of being in different places (multiplicity of places), having different usages (multiplicity of functions), different users (multiplicity of user profiles); therefore it was possible to talk about the expansion of the public space. Or about “housing +”, we saw that it was possible to place the housing at the very center and complex part of the city without disturbing its privacy and expanding its publicness. Briefly, the projects were promising about conceiving and transforming the reality. [5]

**Expanding the Public Space:** One of these complex parts of the city/Istanbul, which has several borderlines, with its age and history, and complex in its social and cultural life was ‘Süleymaniye.’ It takes its name from one of the most magnificent buildings of Istanbul, the ‘Süleymaniye Mosque’ with its public buildings and old housing areas that is also in the neighborhood of the biggest and oldest state university of Turkey, ‘Istanbul University.’ It is also next to important commercial areas, such as the

‘Egyptian Bazaar, the Covered Bazaar and Eminönü,’ and at the edge of the ‘Golden Horn’ waterway. Süleymaniye is in the historical, touristic, educational, housing, and commercial circle of the city, representing all complexities of the metropolitan life. It is also possible to see the people who belong to different social and cultural income groups, such as the very poor immigrants and workers or the students and intellectuals, or the high-income moneymaking people, but they do not have almost any contact with each other, which were indicating some of the borderlines of the city. Therefore, it was a critical part of the city to touch and to project its reality. And the topic, here, was “designing/expanding the public space.”

### Some examples from the projects:



“a cultural center will be patched to the transition points, on blanks, on streets, on walls, underground...”

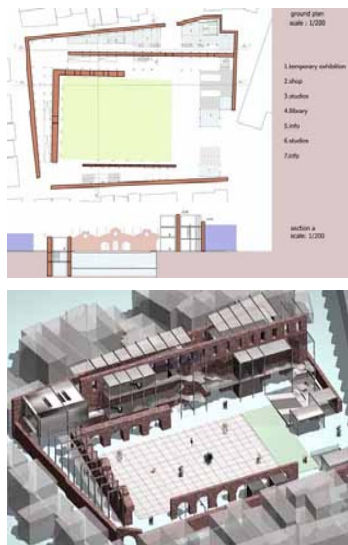
...meeting points, transition points, interaction points...

...be located underground as a public space for closed mass, leaving the ground level for open public spaces...

...benefit from the panorama on the ground level and use this level for an open public space, by the way attracting attention to the closed public space underground...

...being patched to süleymaniye by a cultural center, on the stress points, for people from outside, from inside and also for students and tourists, and by public spaces touching süleymaniye, adding him to istanbul, adding istanbul to him, forcing him to live 24 hours...”

Figure 1: *Be Patched* by Ipek Dincer



“... külliye was the ottoman city forum where u could also get services like health, education, and meet other people...”

what is today's city forum or public space?...  
...to convert an old mill into a public area, where, past and present, life and space meet...

...to flow from istanbul to süleymaniye by transportation.. to use the sea and highway while encouraging pedestrian movement inside the süleymaniye..

...a central square among süleymaniye's dense housing characteristic.. ..open-minded for different city scenarios, like concerts, festivals, bazaar etc..

...information spaces, galleries, library, studios, cafes, bars surrounding the square; to be integrated to the events with a platform system wherever you are in the mill... ..to link the mill to süleymaniye and the university by the stops; and to the sea by direct passage ”

Figure 2: *Flow from Istanbul to Suleymaniye* by Yelda Gin

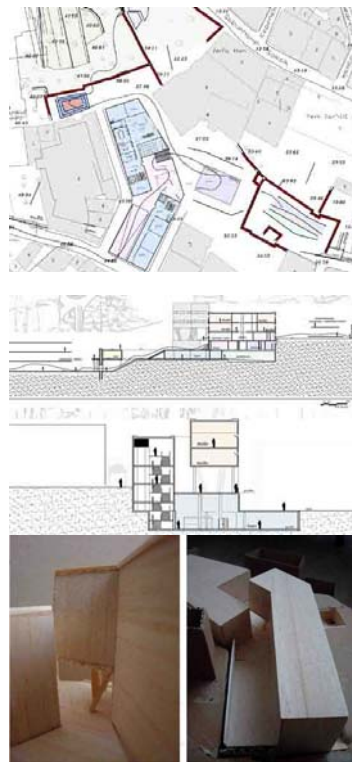


Figure 3: *Fragmented-blend* by Duygu Göcmen

“The question that whether in Süleymaniye the present ‘public’ consists only of “publicized images,” was my starting point. The mosque and the university were “saving the situation” by taking big pieces from the “public space cake.” However, getting into the university was not possible, and the mosque, with its decreased community, was merely enduring its past magnificence. If they had been a circle they were being closed, they were multiplying their high potentials just by one.

Like many other spaces that were non-living, ignored in the net of Süleymaniye that was woven with small factories and low quality residences... Beside the squeezed and clogged character of the place there were also spare spaces, unknown, unused, hidden Eden gardens, surprises. Place images whose image planes I hit, just like hitting a movie screen.

So, the key idea was “re-valuation” of the “devaluated”... To solve the clogged “publicness” to produce models for “transitiveness” between spaces and to give the people, who are pushed into a corner, a chance to transform themselves, were my proposals, which were embodied as a “complex,” sheltering various workshops for apprenticeship education, craft obtaining courses, “leisure time occupations,” spaces for exhibitions, gatherings, eating-drinking and rental shops, which may provide income for the building.”

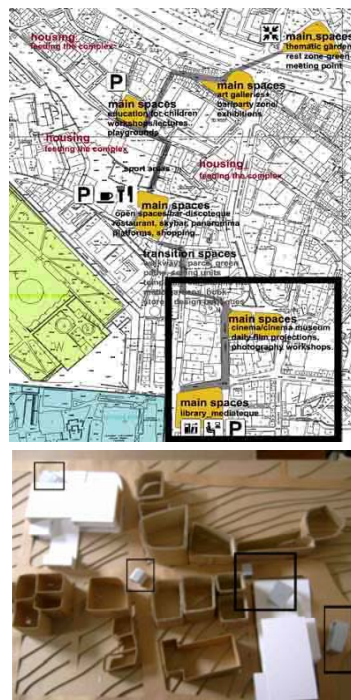


Figure 4: *Flow-motion* by Duygu Karpınar

“Considering the potentials and physical + social-cultural structures of Süleymaniye, the area needs to be transformed in order to gain back its identity. Attracting the 24H users has a big role in this. Different types of users from different scales (world/city/place) should be the main issue. The users for the place would be carried mainly from the two points: Eminönü - touching the water and Beyazıt - the university...”

So: The spaces created on the topography adapt themselves to the structure of the earth in a flow... From the university to the water... This dynamic public layer is fed by the street structures->transition spaces and basically shaped by the main event spaces. Finally the transition spaces flow, in between the main spaces expanding the surface, expanding the public space...

The main event spaces are programmed due to realize the cultural ignition. And the transition spaces expand it, with the mobile units; having different types&uses, sizes&modes like: Art Mode\_- an art gallery, Movie Mode - a ‘watch a movie’ house, Bookshop Mode, Tourist-Info Mode, Partyzone Mode etc...”



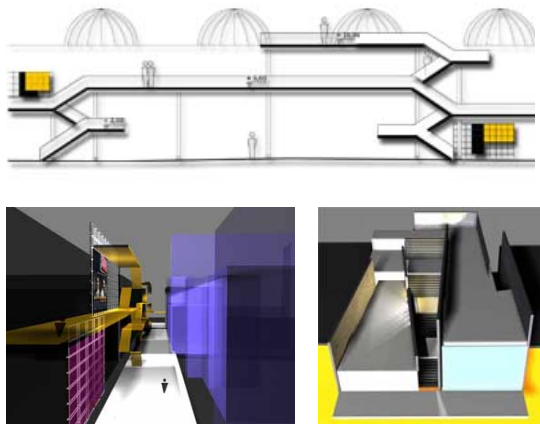


Figure 5: *Suleymaniye in Different Scales* by Hande Yildiz

“...The idea is to bring the people from different cultures together, so that they will be able to meet and overlap. The square can actualize this event. However Süleymaniye because of its building structures has a very dense city fabric and there exist just a very few open spaces.

Two different characterized areas are chosen as the project spaces to actualize the idea of a square with its new meaning.

Project area No: 1 is a narrow street that is near the wall of Süleymaniye’s külliye. Folded platforms are used allowing the sight of Haliç (Golden Horn), each used as exhibition spaces.

Project area No: 2 is close to Haliç and Eminönü that has the view of Haliç but still used as a dump. The topography is used as a design element. Different leveled spaces are used as sight terraces and there is a cafe under these open spaces.”

**Housing +:** The following semester, we worked another very complex part of the city/Istanbul. This was the Beyoğlu-Galata axis: It is the most important axis of the city with its historical background, central position, and very cosmopolitan (multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-functional, etc.) and active life. It includes almost every kind of activity from shops, offices, cafes, restaurants, bars/night-clubs to high schools, galleries/culture centers and consulates, and some housing. Although it appears to be one of the good examples of cosmopolitan life, housing parts of the area are very poor in terms of both the density/scale and the quality – physical and social conditions. For example, there is no name for the children and women who live near the housing area or the schools; and there is almost no greenery space for public usage. ... We called the topic “housing +” so as to discuss the housing and the city and the borderlines of the public-private life and space.

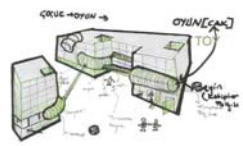
**Some examples from the projects:**

**house+ project**

Galata has an important children potential, and this potential have some problems within. Places that children will learn and play is a veeey important concept, by this way apartment with a game concept came true. This game was also a toy called “worm” is the children areas. this spaces walls, stairs panels are all movable and interactive.



Dwelling was the other question for me, dwelling for whom, and my hopes are all came true with this project. I was aiming for gathering of people, and also aiming for more open spaces. Open space concept would make my project more interactive.



house and children spaces in galata project contains a worm and this worm is a toy and a game for children. Worm lives as a parasite on the building. This building is aiming for a gathering of people within the children areas. As a critic to the public private concept and as a necessity of galata i suggested children spaces in my project.



Figure 6: *Highlighting* by Bilge Kalfa

**helping hand FIRM\***

a non profit organization, creates connections between; government, inhabitants, users, finance sources and design groups

to use the empty parcels and creates projects with the presence of inhabitants finance sources and government

to use site by the inhabitant

to produce alternative housing and infrastructure for galata

inhabitants joins the cycle with their positive or negative comments about the project

to create projects with participation, makes the transformation of the area easier and cheaper for the homeowners and inhabitants

**inbetween places**

the project aims to mix the regular housing functions with public and semi public functions. for providing these needs, three different axes have been created.

(1) the public axis: it is a shortcut between the upper and lower levels of the project area. it creates a passage a walkway and a shortcut in the program of the design, except the shortcut function, it gets the other functions in time depending on needs. ( shop, cafe, atelier )

(2) the semi public axis: this is the area which belongs to the inhabitants of the housing blocks. it contains the collective usage areas: lounge, garden, bridge, semi public vista, meeting room, kindergarten.

(3) public vista: this is the way which leads to the view of the bosphorus. it is reachable by everyone. it has its own circulation system and it's not directly related to the circulation system of the housing blocks.

h.cenk dereli 020010029 project 6 prof. dr. ayse senturer

Figure 7: *Helping Hand* by Cenk Dereli

## 5 Conclusion

Borderlines are the problematic parts of the cities, but at the same time, they are the promising areas. In both directions they are needed to be worked on... to solve the problems and to open up the new horizons related to design, architecture and city (life).

The main problematic parts of these areas, which create cuts or cul-de-sacs in the city life, are the communication, interaction and security problems that are directly related to the public space. The new possibilities, new intervals of public space, its contents, contexts and borderlines need to be thought about. It certainly necessitates concentrating on today's public-private relationships.

The difficulty in those areas, which at the same time are their potential, is to be at the intersection of different, strictly defined parts (socio-cultural levels, activities, scales, sizes, densities, etc.). It is difficult to bring these different parties together by keeping their properties, and to propose to them some new spaces, dialogic platforms to be participated in and shared.

However, concentrating on the networks of today's life together with concentrating on its problematic sides, which are the borderlines of the city and architecture, could be an answer. Since, here, the potentials of the communication, circulation and transportation networks connecting different parties meet the problems and potentials of the borderlines of the city (and architecture). And this concentration brings "the links, in-between spaces and usages, and the surfaces/membranes - the borderlines of the spaces and activities" to the front to be worked on...

Therefore, it seems it is possible to open up new intervals over those networks and their potentials and to expand the 'public space' in addition to the other discoveries of the city (and architecture) including past and contemporary experiences. It seems it will also extend the knowledge area of architecture related to the new ways of communication then the new settings of life, space and time, representation and design, and the borderlines of the architectural profession.

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