Reinterpreting City as a Critical Ground in Atelier 1 Projects: Some Prospects and Projections on Ankara

Zeynep Uludağ and Gülşah Güleç

ABSTRACT
This article is based on the critical approaches developed in Atelier 1, an architectural design studio in the Gazi University Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture in Ankara, Turkey. The main theme of Atelier 1 Projects in the 2014–15 academic year was the ‘City as a Critical Ground’, in which the city, ground and criticism were discussed within the interdisciplinary theoretical field of architecture. Atelier 1, involving second, third and fourth year undergraduate students, reinterpreted and redesigned the urban ground of Ankara with a critical approach to reveal its unique identities and implicit values. Ground, accepted as the main critical material in the design process, was criticised not only in its physical sense, but also its social, cultural, political, economic, technological and even psychological aspects. The students were able to discover their own design methods from their criticisms of the urban ground, which also allowed them to determine their sites and programmes. In this way, Atelier 1 promoted freedom and flexibility as well as criticality in the design process, and pointed out that the relationship of architecture with city, ground and criticism should be discussed from a new theoretical perspective, primarily in the architectural design studio, as the core of architectural education. Atelier 1, as a theory-based architectural design studio, motivated the students to develop a critical approach to the urban ground of Ankara so as to replace the rising formalism with criticism in architecture.

KEYWORDS
architectural education, architectural design studio, criticism, interdisciplinarity, city, ground

“Critical” simply means the constant imagination, search for and construction of alternatives’ (Hays & Kogod 2002).

About Atelier 1
This article is based on the critical approaches developed in Atelier 1, an architectural design studio in the Gazi University Faculty of Architecture Department of Architecture in Ankara, Turkey. Atelier 1 in the 2014–15 academic year saw the involvement of second, third and fourth year undergraduate students, working under the main theme of ‘City as a Critical Ground’. The first semester of approximately four months saw 16 students taking part, while in the second semester, of again about four months, 8 students were involved. Each student developed his or her own critical approach to the urban ground of Ankara, while the studio conductors aimed to guide the projects within the site-specific approaches of the students. That said, it was the thematic and the theoretical context of the studio that established the conceptual framework of Atelier 1 Projects.
The thematic context

City, ground and criticism have always been on the agenda of architecture. While city is generally considered part of the domain of architectural practice, criticism is most often thought of as falling with the domain of architectural theory. Ground, on the other hand, covers both the practical and theoretical domains of architecture. In Atelier 1 Projects, ground was considered to be the main critical material during the design process, referring not only to the physical ground under our feet, but also the social, cultural, political, economic, technological and even psychological elements that surround us. In this regard, ground refers not only to a physical entity, in that there is an ambiguity that provides a great opportunity for reinterpretations of the ground from a critical and creative perspective.

Recently, architectural designs come to be created without consideration of their site through the use of advanced computer technologies, and this means of creation has become valid and commonplace in architecture. However, the strength architecture has always maintained with the urban ground makes it paramount that it not be completely ignored, and the relationship between the two demands the deep involvement of architectural theory, practice and education. In the architectural design studio, as the core of architectural education, the site analysis is generally acknowledged as the first step in the design process; however a noncritical approach to this process will lead to a simple mapping of the site without discovering its unique identities and implicit values. When criticism becomes a significant part of the process, the conventional processing of the architectural design studio changes, allowing students to be free and flexible, and able to determine their own concept, content and context. But how and on what terms can an architectural design be made during a process in which everything is free and flexible?

Starting with this question, Atelier 1, as a theory-based design studio, announced the main theme as ‘City as a Critical Ground’ in the 2014–15 academic year so as to motivate the students to gain inspiration from the urban ground of Ankara for their architectural designs. In Atelier 1 Projects, the site analysis was considered a deep questioning rather than a superficial and perfunctory research, and this demanded a deep critical analysis of the urban ground. This allowed students to develop their critical approaches related to ground, and to discover their own site-specific design methods.

Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, has witnessed such rapid and extensive change that it is significantly hard to grasp and follow. This uncontrolled and irregular development has impaired urban and architectural quality, and has led to banality in the city. That said, the contemporary city can be defined as a space that transforms with daily life practices and searches for its context within the speed and temporariness of this transformation. In fact, the concept of contemporary here refers to the temporary pattern of the urban ground, which is in a constant state of flux.

Taking this into account, in Atelier 1 Projects the city was considered as a constantly changing ground, and was criticised in many aspects to reveal its potentials, with the aim being to create a new ground within the design process. However, the new ground still included some of the visible (concrete/formal) and invisible (abstract/conceptual) patterns of the existing ground, and so Atelier 1 considered architectural design to be a process of bringing together the new and existing based on the critical approaches developed by the students in a free and a flexible manner.
The theoretical context

Whether in the domain of theory, practice or education, the relationship between architecture and the urban ground has, on the whole, been discussed from the two opposite perspectives laid out in two cult books, *Towards a New Architecture* (Le Corbusier 2014 [1923]) and *Delirious New York* (Koolhaas 1994 [1978]) (Tanyeli 2015). In the first book, Le Corbusier suggests the creation of a completely new urban ground by neglecting the existing one; while in the second book, Koolhaas suggests considering the existing urban ground while creating the new one. Both books make compelling arguments, but Atelier 1 chose to deal with the existing ground considering all of its patterns in the creation of the new ground, as Koolhaas suggests in *Delirious New York*. In following this critical perspective, Atelier 1 discussed the existing urban ground in many aspects, and transformed it into an inspirational opportunity for the projects.

Metaphorically, ground refers to the patterns of physical, intellectual, poetic and political structures that intersect, overlap and weave together. Even though ‘ground’ is generally thought to be synonymous with ‘site’, site actually possesses a degree of certainty but ground is always in flux. Dripps reveals that the edges of site are known and its centre can be defined. But ground does not have any axes, centres or other obviously explicit means of providing orientation. Ground has a complicated structure composed of networks, fields and fragments that are constantly transforming. Field, especially, is one of the most common analytical tools used to make ground perceptible and interpretable at least as much as the figure on it (Dripps 2005).

‘The field describes a space of propagation of effects. It contains no matter or material points, rather functions, vectors and speeds.’ Referencing this 1986 statement of Kwinter, Allen (2009) discusses the concept of ‘field conditions’, suggesting that the concept treats field constraints as an opportunity. ‘Field conditions’ are relational rather than being figural. So there has recently been a shift from object to field in architecture. And figure is no more an object but it is an effect emerging from the field itself, as a moment of intensity. A similar discussion is made about Cubist paintings, in which the figure’s constituent pieces are decomposed and displaced to engage the ground. The decomposition and displacement shift attention from object to relation, and so to field. These paintings lead architects to question the way of thinking about and designing the building as a closed box (Dripps 2005), and so, as in art, the way of dealing with ground has also changed in architecture.

This change in architecture can be seen in the drawings of Zaha Hadid from the 1980s and 1990s, which are considered as if they were intended to make a number of forces hidden in the ground visible. In these abstract drawings, Hadid was portraying new forms of spatial order governing the relationships between sky and earth, horizon and ground, artificial and natural (Woods 2015). These drawings reopened the discussions on autonomy in architecture, based largely on the understanding of architecture as a self-sufficient discipline, which have always existed in architectural theory. That said, autonomy has two different meanings in architecture, with the first related to remaining within the disciplinary limits (disciplinary autonomy), while the second related to being indifferent to contextual constraints (contextual autonomy).

Within critical architecture, autonomy is generally discussed in terms of its second meaning. For example, Hays defines the architecture of Mies as autonomous, because it creates its own context. He also defines it as critical, oppositional and resistant. For Hays, critical architecture, as in the architecture of Mies, is ‘being between cultural and autonomous production’ (Hays 1984), although it is
important here to remember that Hays refers to ‘contextual autonomy’, not ‘disciplinary autonomy’. It is put forward in Atelier 1 that criticism necessitates going beyond the disciplinary limits of architecture, and so considers criticism and interdisciplinarity as closely related issues in architecture, and it is with this in mind that students are encouraged to research within an interdisciplinary field so that they develop their own critical approaches to the urban ground.

Rendell suggests that architecture is able to develop a critical approach towards the existing due to its interdisciplinarity field (Rendell 2007). The multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary field of architecture changes the understanding of being critical and creative. The most intense interdisciplinary relationship of architecture has been with art throughout its history (Bednarski & Fink 2001; Melhuish 2001). As in the case of the Cubist movement, art can bring new perspectives to architecture, with the disciplinary limits between the two becoming blurred and, from time to time, disappearing altogether. Art has been a tool for both design and representation in architecture, although it has been suggested that it is function that distinguishes architecture from art. But art is also functional in providing certain kinds of tools for critical thinking and even for social change (Rendell 2006), and architecture has had the potential to fulfil these functions through the art of criticism.

On the other hand, it has also been suggested that while art is a representation, architecture is a reality, although architecture can also be considered a representation of both the material and immaterial worlds. Besides its symbolic meanings and values, architecture has also spatial qualities, being represented with two-dimensional drawings such as plans and sections, and three-dimensional images such as perspectives and renders. More recently, four-dimensional images in the form of films and animations have also been used to represent space in architecture when two-dimensional drawings and three-dimensional images have been deemed an inadequate means of representation. In this respect, designing a space in architecture has been likened to creating a sequence in cinema. Today, the significance of animation in particular has been discussed in architecture, and has become a fundamental tool for showing realistically how an architectural design will look both during the process and at the end of it. The tools of film and animation that are in common use today enable the architectural discipline to become process-oriented rather than product-oriented. Designing the process allows the rising formalism in architecture to be questioned, moving away from the desire to produce singular objects that are independent of their contexts. Atelier 1 believes that this questioning should begin primarily in the design studio, and that formalism should be replaced with criticism in architecture.

Today, there is no longer a distinction between the disciplines of urbanism, landscape architecture and architecture. Holl defines this with the concept of ‘fusion’, while Tschumi claims that architectural designs are becoming ‘a city within a city’ in terms of their scales and programmatic diversities and complexities (Tschumi 2000, 2005). This opens up a new ground of exploration for contemporary architects (Holl 2009). Atelier 1 suggests that this is clearly and definitely a critical ground. It is already known that no matter how much technology advances, ground and criticism can never be ignored in architecture (Graafland 2010), and in Atelier 1 Projects, criticism entered the design process as a means of reinterpreting and redesigning the urban ground of Ankara.

Ground cannot be considered as a conventional case study in architecture. So it cannot be discussed in a nostalgic perspective such as locality or genius loci any more (Buchanan 2012). However, the concept of genius loci, which was theorised by Norberg-Schulz, is generally confused with the concept of ground in architecture because genius loci is about the sense of place and the murmur of place (Norberg-Schulz 1980). But ground also covers potential, and so the future of that
place. In Atelier 1 Projects, the existing urban ground was discussed from a critical perspective, considering all of its visible/invisible, concrete/abstract, formal/conceptual or built/un-built patterns together. In this way, the existing ground was reinterpreted and redesigned critically as a whole, and was transformed into an inspirational opportunity in the projects.

Rendell (2007) states that criticism is not only the task of the critics. It is also the task of the designers. Criticism can be defined as ‘self-reflectivity’ and ‘desire to change the world’. According to Rendell, it has a specific purpose which is to provide a commentary. On the other hand, criticism is generally understood as negation. But even when Holl (2009) defines it as ‘negative capability’, it is actually discussed with its positive meaning defined as ‘to be able to take in all the problematic aspects of the surrounding world, to see and acknowledge, to entertain uncertainty and still be able to act’. Allen (2009) also offers a similar definition of criticism as ‘the acceptance of the real in all its messiness and unpredictability’. Within this theoretical context, Atelier 1 defines criticism not as negation, but rather as being in negotiation with the urban ground. It believes that the search for alternatives in the domains of architectural theory, practice and education depends fundamentally on this negotiation.

**The search for alternatives in Atelier 1 projects**

The architectural design studio, as the core of architectural education, aims to enhance the theoretical knowledge and design experience of students, and to this end, criticism was a key part in the design process in Atelier 1 Projects. In this way, Atelier 1 aimed to manifest that criticism cannot be restricted only to theory, in that it can also be a part of architectural design. That said, theory is not only an epistemological field in architecture, being also an ontological field. Architecture not only explains itself with theory, it exists with theory. Atelier 1 considers theory to be an initiator and motivator of creative thinking and designing, and it believes that this creativity is possible through criticality. Here, criticality refers to dealing with architectural theory from a critical perspective and integrating it into architectural design in a creative way, while architectural theory, in turn, enables architectural design to perform with a convincing and an inspiring content. Criticism enhances this performance by providing the opportunity to discover new ways of thinking and designing in architecture.

It is for this reason that Atelier 1 focused on critical theory, motivating the students to make a research of criticism and ground within an interdisciplinary theoretical context. The students developed their own critical approaches to ground, based on the theoretical researches and discussions in which they engaged in the studio. As a result, they were able to criticise the urban ground of Ankara in many aspects, from physical to psychological, whether looking at a square, a main road, a housing area or a business district, as can be seen from the sample projects presented here. The students reinterpreted and eventually redesigned that ground in a critical way, and during the design process, they benefited from both disciplinary and interdisciplinary methods, varying from cognitive mapping and gridiron pattern to moiré effect and space syntax. In this way, interdisciplinarity supported criticality and creativity, and in the process, opened the way for discovery.

Depending on the critical facts related to the ground, the students were asked to specify a sub-theme, such as ‘Lack of Common Ground’ or ‘Congested Order’, under the main theme of the studio, ‘City as a Critical Ground’. These sub-themes signified their critical approaches to the urban ground, and they determined a relevant architectural programme based on their critical
approaches. In this way, Atelier 1 did not distinguish between theory and design, but rather combined the two by integrating critical theory into the design process. This combination is especially significant in architectural education, in that projects in architectural design studios today are generally produced following images of popular designs shared by popular websites. It is for this reason that architecture today risks becoming a discipline without theoretical content or context.

Architectural design studios, as the core of the architectural education, should develop a strategy to avoid this risk, for which Atelier 1 motivated the students to make a research of criticism and ground within an interdisciplinary field (step 1); to develop their own critical approaches to the urban ground of Ankara (step 2); to reinterpret that ground from a critical perspective (step 3); to discover their own design methods (step 4); and eventually, to redesign the ground based on their own critical approaches (step 5). This strategy, which actually built the steps of the process, depended not on the form finding efforts, but instead on the critical and interdisciplinary theory of architecture, which certainly helped support and enhance each project.

Some prospects and projections on Ankara

In Atelier 1 Projects, urban ground was not considered as a singular site with clearly defined borders. The students dealt with the existing system of relationships of the urban ground critically so as to discover its potentials, and in doing so, they were able to develop site-specific sub-themes, methods and programmes (Table 1).

The students experienced a unique design process in Atelier 1, in that they found the opportunity to determine their own site and programme. In architectural design studios, students are generally expected to work on a predetermined site and programme; however Atelier 1 encouraged the students to be free and flexible in the design process, choosing the site and the programme according to their own critical approaches to the urban ground.

The most common criticism raised by the students to the urban ground of Ankara was the rapid, uncontrolled, congested and monotonous development of the city and the resulting adverse effect on urban and architectural quality in Ankara. Accordingly, the final designs were geared towards improving quality in the city, with the main purpose being to reveal the unique identities and implicit values of the city through critical approaches developed to the ground. In this sense, the inspirational and motivational source of each project was the urban ground itself. Here, four projects are presented that were considered as most obvious manifestations of the criticisms developed on the urban ground of Ankara.

In Project I, the high occupancy rates in Ankara’s housing districts was the leading criticism (Figure 1), with Demetevler (a housing district in the city) being singled out for its highly congested and monotonous perspective. The identical and similar solids, which outnumber the voids, have led to the emergence of a disturbing cityscape, and so ‘Urban Occupancy’ was considered as the main critical argument of the Project. In this regard, the purpose of this Project was to create a new order through the distortion of the existing solid–void relations in the district.

For this purpose, a number of two-dimensional planes were prepared using an existing site plan of Demetevler. While one of the planes represented the real solid–void relations, others represented the distorted relations. Each plane was filtered with sunlight and their shadows were recorded with photographs. Various irregular patterns were formed by the shadows of these planes by distorting and superimposing them at different angles, with each pattern creating a moiré effect, one of
### Table 1. Sample projects conducted in Atelier 1 under the main theme of ‘City as a Critical Ground’ in the academic year 2014–15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>CRITICS</th>
<th>SUB-THEME</th>
<th>SITE</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>PROGRAMME</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROJECT I</strong></td>
<td>THE CONGESTED, REGULAR AND MONOTONOUS PERSPECTIVE OF DEMETEVLER</td>
<td>URBAN OCCUPANCY</td>
<td>DEMETEVLER, ANKARA</td>
<td>DISTORTION, SUPERIMPOSITION, FILTRATION, MOIRE EFFECT</td>
<td>HOUSING, OFFICE</td>
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<td><strong>PROJECT II</strong></td>
<td>THE CONGESTED BUILDINGS ACTING LIKE A WALL BY BLOCKING THE FLOW OF PEDESTRIAN IN KIZILAY</td>
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<td>KIZILAY, ANKARA</td>
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<td>2014-15</td>
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<td><strong>PROJECT III</strong></td>
<td>LACK OF OPEN SPACE, GREEN AND PEDESTRIAN PATHS IN THE GRID PLAN OF SITELER</td>
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<td>GRID, SHIFTING, OVERLAPPING, LAYERING</td>
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<td><strong>PROJECT IV</strong></td>
<td>SHOPPING MALLS MUSHROOMING AND CHANGING THE UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC SPACE</td>
<td>RE-GENESIS OF PUBLICITY</td>
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which was selected as the new urban ground of the district. Moiré signifies the emergence of unexpected effects that exhibit complex and irregular behaviours, and result from the combination of elements that are, in and of themselves, repetitive and regular. As Allen (2009) explains, moiré effects are often used to measure hidden stresses in continuous fields.

The moiré effect in this Project revealed the potentials of the existing order of the district, and a new order was created using this effect. This new order, as the urban ground of the new housing and office district in Demetevler, involved many more voids than solids, and so the congested and monotonous perspective of the district was changed radically.

In Project II, the congested layout of the buildings in Kızılay were criticised in terms of their huge masses that often block the flow of pedestrians (Figure 2). Kızılay has a history of being the most
important square in the city centre, however today it is merely a traffic junction, and so has lost its characteristic as a common ground for the public. It was this ‘Lack of Common Ground’ that was the main subject of discussion in this Project, and so an attempt was made to deal with the urban ground of Kızılay critically.

Due to the critical approach of the Project, a new ground was proposed for Kızılay with the necessary paths and passages for the flow of pedestrians, but first, the existing trajectories and the targets of different pedestrian profiles in the district were analysed to obtain the necessary data for the development of the proposal. These analyses, which were similar to the cognitive mappings of Kevin Lynch (1960) based on a spatial reading with nodes, districts, landmarks, paths and edges, revealed that Büyüklü Fener, the movie theatre in Kızılay, was one of the nodes of this district. Moreover, the analyses made in the Project revealed that the trajectories of pedestrians changed and were longer due to the congestion in the buildings here. So a new network of spatial relations was designed for the area between Mesrutiyet Street, one of the main streets in Kızılay, and the movie theatre, using another analytical method known as space syntax. According to this, the upper floors of the movie theatre were designed as an outdoor festival hall, in line with the existing programme of the building. The critical approach of this Project was defined as positive aggression, which it was foreseen would have a transformative effect not only on the surrounding buildings, but also on the overall district.

In Project III, the congestion in Siteler, a district in Ankara of furniture ateliers and galleries, was criticised (Figure 3). Like many districts of the city, Siteler has a gridiron pattern, which is a commonly used system in most cities in the world due to the advantages it offers to infrastructure and transportation in particular. In this Project, however, it was criticised as creating a ‘Congested Order’. That said, a grid can sometimes form an inspirational pattern, as in the paintings of Piet Mondrian and Paul Klee. Taking this into account, the gridiron system was considered in the Project with particular focus on its inspiring aspects.

Using the formal logic of the system, three identical layouts were created that were then shifted and overlapped to create an irregular three-layered pattern that would form the new ground for the furniture ateliers and galleries. As an additional advantage, this new ground in Siteler would be
able to adapt itself to different uses in the future, and replaced the existing ground that lacked any open space, green areas or even pedestrian paths. The new ground revealed that it is possible to design a gridiron pattern by changing the basic rule of the system, which is the creation of a rigid order. Eventually, the new ground takes on a multi-layered and a multi-dimensional gridiron pattern, but in a flexible order in terms of both form and function.

In Project IV, the shopping malls and commercial centres that are mushrooming in most of the big cities in Turkey today were criticised as having changed the understanding of publicity and public space (Figure 4). With their attractive stores, restaurants, cafes, cinemas and artificial landscapes, these buildings have been welcomed by the citizens, and have become the most popular 'public' city spaces. In the Project it was asserted that they are generally constructed as introverted point blocks, and thus they create a restricted and defined publicity. In complete contrast with the nature of public spaces, the entrances and exits of these blocks are controlled, and people actually have no rights related to the utilisation of the spaces inside. These critical factors on the urban ground of Ankara compelled the student to determine ‘Re-Genesis of Publicity’ as the main critical approach of the Project.

Recently, new city centres have emerged in Ankara as a result of rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation. Ismet Inonu Boulevard in particular has become a new city axis, lined with shopping malls and commercial centres constructed as introverted point blocks along its route, and the result is a motorway into Ankara that disregards the flow of pedestrians. To address this issue, the Project aims to come up with a new ground reserved exclusively for pedestrians next to Ismet Inonu Boulevard featuring new extraverted buildings, and defined as an urban square in the Project.

The proposed extraverted buildings in the square had various functions, including art studios and galleries, sports facilities and new generation libraries that stored only downloadable e-books and e-journals. The Project also provided the possibility of multi-purpose use considering the fact that utilisation in architecture has changed with the concept of event. Event leads architects to question the conventional meanings of the concepts of function and programme. It signifies an architecture that has an ability of adapting itself to temporary activities (Tschumi 1996), and so it was suggested in the Project that architecture had the potential to create a sequence of events. By understanding construction as a sequence of events, it becomes possible to imagine an architecture that can

Figure 4. Project IV: Reinterpreting the critical ground of Ismet Inonu Boulevard, Ankara. The students gave the permission for the publication of the images of their projects conducted in Atelier 1.
respond fluidity and sensitively to local difference (Allen 2009), and taking this into account, the new urban ground in this Project was designed within the possibilities of event architecture.

On the other hand, it can be said that the introverted point blocks criticised here have come to be landmarks not only in their own districts, but also in the city, and so they were considered as reference points during the design process with some reference axes drawn from these blocks to the project site. This method brings to mind the drawings of such contemporary architects as Eisenman (Bédard 1994) and Allen in its determination of the linear composition of the design. This linearity enabled the design to spread across the entire site, and so while linearity differentiated the new ground of the Project formally, the event differentiating it functionally from the existing ground of Ismet Inonu Boulevard.

Conclusion

Criticism in architecture is not only in the domain of architectural theory, in that critical practice in architecture is also possible. Dealing with architectural theory and practice in a critical way allows the conventional design process in architecture to be transformed. Criticisms of conventionality in architecture should be primarily in the field of architectural education. In Atelier 1, it is proposed that architectural design studios, as the core of architectural education, should be aware of the fact that critical theory has the potential to change the design process radically. The development of architecture in educational, theoretical and practical terms depends on dealing with critical theory from a new interdisciplinary perspective. In Atelier 1, interdisciplinary research into critical theory enabled the students to develop their own critical approaches to the urban ground, and through these self-developed approaches, they discovered their own methods and developed their designs formally and functionally (see Table 1).

Criticism was deliberately considered in terms of its potential to make not only urban and architectural change but also social change in Ankara. So the way of considering and creating a new urban ground in the city mainly depended on this potential. What makes this different from other critical approaches in architecture is clearly the specific ground of Ankara, and the specific relations of that ground. Therefore criticism becomes site-specific and time-specific and so cannot be repetitive or reproductive.

Due to the critical approaches developed in Atelier 1 Projects, a new-layered matrix of perceived forces, hidden forces and potential forces was discovered and ‘meaningful’ spaces were generated in the projects by bringing out these forces. Modernism and Neo-modernism were criticised on the grounds that they have both utilised generative technology to create an architecture that is unrecognisable, alienating or bereft of meaning. But Atelier 1 Projects showed that the underlying desire of architecture is quite the opposite. So the aim was to decipher the meaning of ground in Ankara, and transform it into something material, that is to say architectural space. This transformation was made through the critical approaches to the urban ground that were developed.

As can be seen, criticism was both a theoretical and a practical tool in Atelier 1 Projects. Criticism in the studio served not only to justify the projects, but also to highlight their differences from those produced with a strong formalism, and in some cases, their weaknesses. This raises an essential difference within architecture between originality, coming usually from conceptual intelligence, and pseudo-originality, coming usually from formal intelligence, and Atelier 1 Projects were designed with an awareness of this difference. Atelier 1, as a theory-based architectural design
studio, can serve as a model in which the traditional start of the design process with a perfunctory site analyses followed by form finding efforts is abandoned. The intention instead is to show that it is possible to transform the process in the architectural design studio through criticism and, as a result, the form of the design emerges almost spontaneously at the end of this critical process.

Whether discussed in terms of interdisciplinarity, autonomy or resistivity in architectural theory literature, criticism principally and inevitably requires negotiating with the urban ground. The students in Atelier 1 negotiated with ground by reinterpreting and redesigning it critically, and this means of negotiation revealed both the visible and invisible patterns of ground. The studio culminated in the students designing a new urban ground that proposed new relationships among these existing patterns, and the proposals manifested the understanding of originality in Atelier 1. Here, originality is considered as the ability to design the relationships between things rather than the things themselves, and Atelier 1 believes that theory-based architectural design studios are able to develop this capability, suggesting further that criticism is the key to this development.

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