

KADİR HAS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
PROGRAM OF ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN STUDIES



**CHARTING SPATIAL PRACTICES OF FEMINISMS IN
TURKEY: SENSITIVITIES, TOOLS, AND TACTICS**

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MASTER'S THESIS

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MASTER'S THESIS

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Kadir Has University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in the Program of Architectural and Urban Studies

ISTANBUL, FEBRUARY, 2020

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CHARTING SPATIAL PRACTICES OF FEMINISMS IN TURKEY:
SENSITIVITIES, TOOLS, AND TACTICS

ABSTRACT

Feminism has recently become a widely debated issue in political struggles and popular culture on a global scale. Some interpret these days as ‘fourth wave feminism’, fostered by concerted activities in both physical and cyberspace, such as *The Women’s March* and *#MeToo*. At the same time, the emergent proactive actions by movements like *Black Lives Matter*, *The Arab Spring* and *Occupy* movements, and *School Strike 4 Climate* have initiated a fresh dialogue in academia, where many scholars have argued for a greater role for feminism, and its bid for a more democratic and sustainable world, in our times marked by divisive politics, human catastrophes, and increasing austerity and precariousness on a planet that is seriously damaged. Discussions on the spatial implications of all these phenomena have found a particular transdisciplinary niche as well, with contributions from scholars like Judith Butler, Nikolaus Hirsch, Jane Rendell and Markus Miessen, leading, in turn, to the emergence of a number of autonomous groups around the world who adopt a feminist approach as ‘a critical modality of spatial practice’. These groups seek to alter dialogues, behaviors, processes, and methods of producing knowledge and space in order to build the foundations of a more livable world. They generate new perspectives that transgress conventional boundaries in our understanding of space and spatial production.

This thesis is written in the belief that this critical modality of spatial practice inspired by a feminist understanding of the world deserves a closer inspection if we are to construct a better future and a more peaceful and sustainable way of living on earth. My aim, in particular, is to seek local correspondences of the global agenda briefly described above, i.e. to follow the traces of a feminist understanding of spatial production in Turkey, where no feminist – or women’s – organizations in architecture and built environment have come into existence yet. To do so, I draw attention to the practices of a number of groups and individuals working in various fields, including art,

architecture, and urban activism, and try to unveil their ‘site-specific’ tools, tactics, and relationalities, which I interpret as exhibiting a feminist approach to spatial practice. I survey the distinctive social, political, cultural, and urban contexts in which these practices have settled in and to which they have reacted, in order to discuss ways of doing ‘otherwise’ and ‘otherhow’ from a feminist standpoint. I try to show how these practices both challenge marginalizations, dissolutions, and exclusions by power structures embodied in urban space, and resist the dominant orders through particular tactics such as subversion, appropriation, dissemination, and empowerment.

Methodologically, the study follows Jane Rendell’s (2007) concept of ‘critical spatial practice’. I focus on the practices of *Aslıhan Demirtaş, Atilkunst, Başka Bir Atölye / Another Kind of Workshop, Canan, Cins Adımlar / The Curious Steps, düşünce, Esra Ersen, Gülçin Aksoy, Hale Tenger, Istanbul Walkabouts, Kültür, Mutfak / Matbakh, Oda Projesi / The ‘Room Project’, Şükran Moral, and The ‘Purple Studio’* and discuss them through a set of particular features that I call ‘feminist sensitivities’ to interpret what Jane Rendell frames as a specifically feminist approach – that is, ‘alterity’, ‘collectivity’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘performativity’, and ‘materiality’. The groups and individuals whose practices I discuss under these titles are (and are formed by) women specifically, since, in addition to helping initiate a new discussion in Turkey, I also hope that this thesis will contribute to the empowerment of women practitioners.

Keywords: Feminism, Spatial Practice, Gender, Turkey, Architecture, Space

TÜRKİYE’DE FEMİNİST MEKÂNSAL PRATİKLER: HASSASİYETLER, ARAÇLAR, TAKTİKLER

ÖZET

Feminizmin hak mücadelelerinde ve popüler kültürde sıcak bir tartışma konusu olduğu, *Women’s March* ve *#MeToo* gibi kitlesel kadın hareketlerinin tüm dünyada yayıldığı, kimi görüşlerce feminizmin ‘dördüncü dalga’sı olarak yorumlanan zamanlara tanıklık etmekteyiz. Ayrılcı politikaların, felaketlerin, krizlerin ve prekaryalığın giderek arttığı, hasar görmüş bir gezegende bugün, feminizmin daha demokratik ve sürdürülebilir bir dünya için mücadelesi kritik bir anlam taşıyor. Bununla beraber, son yıllarda yeşeren *Siyah Hayatlar Önemlidir*, *Arap Baharı*, *işgal* hareketleri, *İklim İçin Okul Grevleri* gibi toplumsal hareketlerin işaret ettiği proaktif eylem biçimleri ve bunların mekânsal karşılıkları, akademide taze bir diyalog başlattı; Judith Butler, Nikolaus Hirsch, Jane Rendell, Markus Miessen son dönemde bu bağlam üzerine düşünen isimlerden bazıları. Bu ortamda ‘eleştirel mekânsal pratik’lere feminist yaklaşımlar benimseyen kimi grupların ortaya çıkışı dikkat çekiyor. Bu gruplar müdahaleler, yeni temsil stratejileri, yere özgü kolektif üretimler, yeni pedagojiler gibi araçlarla daha yaşanabilir bir dünya için yeni davranışlar, süreçler ve bilgi üretme biçimleri geliştiriyor. Tüm bu gelişmelerin bugün, mekânın kavranışına ve üretimine dair konvansiyonel sınırları aşan yeni perspektifler yarattığını öne sürmek mümkün. Bu perspektiflerin, yeni gelecekler ve yeni bir aradalık biçimleri inşa etmenin aracı olduğuna inanıyorum.

Tez çalışmam ile bu gündemi mimarlık ve yapıllı çevre alanında feminist bir örgütlenmenin henüz olmadığı Türkiye’ye taşımayı amaçlıyorum. Türkiye’den kimi grupların ve bireylerin pratiklerini feminist yaklaşımlı mekânsal pratikler olarak öneriyorum ve bu pratiklerde gözlemlenebilecek ‘yere özgü’ feminist araçları, taktikleri ve ilişkisellikleri tartışıyorum. Mimarlık, sanat, kentsel aktivizm gibi alanlardan farklı pratikleri ‘mekânsal pratik’ kavramında birleştirerek, yapmanın ‘öteki’ biçimlerini feminist bir çerçeveden tartışmayı amaçlıyorum. Bu pratikler hem kentsel mekânda

cisimleşmiş ötekileştirme, dışlama, çözülme gibi güç yapılarıyla mücadele ediyor hem de uyarılma, tersine çevirme, güçlendirme gibi özgün taktiklerle baskın sistemlere karşı koyuyor.

Çalışma, Jane Rendell'in (2007) 'eleştirel mekânsal pratik' kavramından faydalanarak *Aslıhan Demirtaş, Atilkunst, Başka Bir Atölye, Canan, Cins Adımlar, düşhane, Esra Ersen, Gülçin Aksoy, Hale Tenger, Istanbul Walkabouts, Kültür, Mutfak / Matbakh, Mor Stüdyo, Oda Projesi ve Şükran Moral*'ın pratiklerine odaklanıyor. Bu örnekleri 'hassasiyetler' olarak ifade ettiğim bir dizi özelliğin başlıklarında inceliyorum; Rendell bu özellikleri, eleştirel mekânsal pratiklere özgün bir feminist yaklaşım tanımlamak için ortaya koyuyor: 'başkalık', 'kolektiflik', 'öznellik', 'performatiflik' ve 'maddesellik'. Tüm pratiklerin kadın öznelerce icra edildiği çalışmamın çıkış noktası, kadın özneleri güçlendirmek ve farklı mekânsal pratikleri politik, toplumsal, kentsel bağlamlarıyla feminizm müşterekliğinde haritalamak. Böylece hem Türkiye'de yeni bir tartışma başlatmayı hem de bu konuda gelişmekte olan küresel diyaloga katkıda bulunmayı umuyorum.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Feminizm, Mekânsal Pratik, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Türkiye, Mimarlık, Mekân

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For my mother

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why a Feminist Spatial Practice?: The Statement and an Overview of Concepts

How can feminism provide a ‘ground of hope’ in our ‘crisis-riddled times’ – during which xenophobia is escalating, hate crimes are becoming almost everyday occurrences, and the climate crisis is ever more widely felt? How can we actualize practices of “affirmative ethics” that are “worthy of our times” to resist the injustice, violence, and the vulgarity of today (Braidotti, 2011, p. 178)?

I find value in *The Rapid Transition Alliance*’s perspectives, which are animated by neither panic nor grief. For *The Alliance*, climate change may engender swift and profound new social norms, possibilities and hidden capacities for a more sustainable world. Drawing on recent social movements such as veganism and #MeToo, they suggest that we might be entering a phase in which more rapid behavioral changes become possible, and that these changes targeting dominant social orders “could be our saving grace” (Simms, 2018, cited in Açık Radyo, 2018). Such an interpretation has the potential to provide fertile ground for discussing what Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal (2017, p.1) define as today’s ‘crisis of reproduction’ – a crisis not only of production, but also in the very basis on which things and life itself are produced and thus a crisis marking this era as different from all others.

In the complex landscapes of the crisis of the third millennium, the year 2019 was marked by upheavals for transformative action: from Hong Kong to Chile, millions flooded the streets against the social, political, and economic mechanisms of oppression, while more than eleven million school children participated in the school strikes as the foundation of the climate protests led by the 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg, who

has recently been named ‘Person of the Year’ by *TIME*.¹ Reflecting this atmosphere, various architectural and cultural platforms, from the *Oslo Architecture Triennale* to the *Cooper Smith Smithsonian Museum*, have focused on debates about the planet’s present and future, while calls for urgent action against climate emergency have been made simultaneously by public figures from Pope Francis to the 17 recipients of the prestigious *Stirling Prize* (Yıldırım, 2019b, p. 80). The forthcoming *Venice Biennale 17th International Architecture Exhibition* has proposed the question ‘How Will We Live Together?’ to address the need for a new spatial contract in the context of “widening political divides and growing economic inequalities” (Sarkis, 2019). In Turkey, the recent *16th Istanbul Biennial* sought to explore the geographies of the Anthropocene, while the forthcoming *5th Design Biennial* has called for a ‘revisiting’ of ‘empathy’ through relationalities of territorial practices in a time marked by technological speed and environmental crisis (Yıldırım, 2019c; Pestana, 2019).

In this context, where “new forms of organizing and sustaining ourselves in the world” are needed (Petrescu and Trogal, 2017, p. 2), the potential for feminist positioning as an imperative to change has drawn renewed interest and undertaken a new meaning. We may easily observe that collective demands for change in recent years have rendered feminism a widely debated issue in both political struggles and popular culture. The publishers of the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, for instance, named ‘feminism’ ‘Word of the Year 2017’. The word ‘feminism’ was a top search throughout the year, with a 70% increase over 2016, which seemed to correspond with an increase in related news reports and events (Merriam Webster, 2017). To give one example, the *Women’s March*, which was triggered by sexist and racist discourses and violation of rights in the US and Europe, itself sparked a myriad actions and discussions around the world. The issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault have been breaking news, as many women, including well-known public figures, came forward to share their own experiences with journalists – a movement joined by thousands of women from around the world and

¹ Fridays for Future (2019) ‘Statistics/Graph’, 31 October. Available at: <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/statistics/graph> (Accessed: December 2019). TIME (2019) TIME 2019 person of the year: Greta Thunberg. Available at: <https://time.com/person-of-the-year-2019-greta-thunberg/> (Accessed: December 2019)

coalescing into the *#MeToo* campaign in social media. We may also argue that the popularity of TV series such as *The Handmaid's Tale* might have played an important role in drawing attention to a variety of feminist issues. Furthermore, prestigious music, film and art events were targeted by protests and powerful speeches on the women's struggle: the atmosphere during the 75th *Golden Globe Awards* ceremony was summed up by the award recipient Oprah Winfrey as "a new day is on the horizon" (CGTN, 2018). As Merriam Webster's announcement strongly suggests, the recent period has been marked by a debate on feminism – what it is, the forms it can take, and the variety of actions by which it can be supported.

Some have interpreted this trend as 'fourth wave feminism', which implies emergent diversified notions of feminism(s). The word 'feminism' first emerged in the English dictionary of Noah Webster in 1841, with the definition "the qualities of females" (Merriam Webster, 2017). Today's definitions read: "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" and "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests" (Ibid.). Feminism has been continually evolving toward a more pluralistic and diversified notion throughout its history, which is usually framed as an array of 'waves'. After 'first-wave feminism' sought to enter into the political realm dominated by men, the so-called 'second-wave' emerged during the political and social upheavals of the 1960s and 70s, concerning itself with a larger prospect of political and cultural inequalities, in conjunction with the labor movement and anti-war protests (hooks, 2015[2000], pp. 41-43). An influential feminist slogan of the period was 'the personal is political', meaning that personal issues had to be addressed within the political realm, since they were created by prevailing political and social structures (Räthzel, 2017, pp. 217-218). Through the 1980s, feminist thinking adopted an attitude that celebrated femininity and sexual difference, inspired by new studies in psychoanalysis and poststructuralist theory, particularly the works of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous. Following a rising debate on identity politics concerning ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and sexuality in the 1990s, the so-called 'third wave' made its appearance in tandem with post-colonial and queer expressions (hooks, 2015[2000], p. 93). Criticizing the discourses of the second wave as essentialist definitions generating a supremacist white middle-class bias, feminism began to take on a more fragmented and comprehensive approach, since, as bell hooks wrote, "There is

no one path to feminism” (2015[2000], p. 116). Concordantly, contemporary feminist thinking challenges fixed binary structures such as man and woman, culture and nature, public and private, and demands new understandings of these structures as pluralistic and fluid notions rather than as dichotomies.

Today, it is reasonable to argue that feminism approaches gender not only as a biological difference, but also as a political claim with which to address power relations, explore differences, and empower the construction of social and ethical justice through scholarship, critical thinking, and activism. As hooks explains, a feminist movement “happens when groups of people come together with an organized strategy to take action to eliminate patriarchy”, as “a broad vision for the rights of all bodies, identities, voices and viewpoints” that are ignored or suppressed by the dominant patriarchal culture (2015[2000], p. xi, cited in Schalk et al., 2017, p. 13). In regard to feminism’s pursuit of “liv[ing] together in a lasting way” (Irigaray, 2008), it is particularly essential to draw attention to recent debates on ‘intersectionality’.² Sara Ahmed defines intersectionality as a “starting point” from which to proceed “if we are to offer an account of how power works” (2017, p. 5). As “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect”, intersectionality implies the understanding of categories of oppression as “overlapping and mutually constitutive”, rather than distinct.³ Three decades after its conceptualization by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to illuminate the oppression of African-American women, the political potential of intersectionality has become a widely debated issue particularly in recent years. The protesters who took part in the *Women’s March* and *#MeToo* emphasized their solidarity with *Black Lives Matter* movement, LGBTQI+ people, immigrants, refugees, Muslims, disabled people, disaster victims, and other identity and interest groups comprising people who are vulnerable to oppression under our current political and economic systems. As Ahmed elaborates, to be a feminist today is “to make everything into something that is questionable”, to ask ethical questions in order to promote a better way of life in an “unjust and unequal world”, to create relationships with others, to find

² Accordingly, the word ‘intersectionality’ is included in the dictionary Merriam Webster in April 2017.

³ Merriam Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality> (Accessed: December 2019)

ways “to support those who are not supported or less supported by social systems”, and to continue challenging histories “that have become as solid as walls” (2017, pp. 1-2).

If we follow *The Rapid Transition Alliance* in conceiving of feminism as a ‘saving grace’ in our times, we should consider the role of spatial practice as a major agency for new politics and actions. By shaping the built environment, spatial practice directly intervenes in the power networks embodied in space and reformulates the ways in which they generate effects. Hence, we may argue for the significance of spatial practice in the reproduction of values, which opens up the possibility “either for conforming and affirming existing values, or for divergence, transformation, and change” (Schalk et al., 2017, p. 13). Luce Irigaray draws attention to spatial production as a practice that has “never been neutral” in influencing social relations (2008, p. 68). In this regard, she points out the essentiality of a feminist approach to space in order to rethink democracy (Ibid.). Irigaray elaborates by underscoring how a feminist understanding of space has the potential to construct a common ground that responds to demands of each subject’s own expressions and to build sustainable ways of living in respect for differences.

Recently, the emergence of a growing number of groups, particularly in the Global North, has emphasized the importance of a feminist approach to spatial practice, through interventions in space, initiatives on new discourses, new representational strategies, and new methods of producing knowledge. Their projects range from compulsory historiographies and site-specific, community-based spatial productions to gender-sensitive pedagogies and efforts to develop new ambiguous roles for practitioners. These groups seek to construct new dialogues to build the foundations of a more democratic and pluralist world, fostering alterities to overturn dominant orders. *ArchiteXX*, *Architecture + Women NZ*, *Chicago Women in Architecture*, *Creative Skirts*, *Design for Equality*, *F-Architecture*, *FATALE*, *Matri-Archi(tecture)*, *muf*, *MYCKET*, *Negotiating Women*, *Parlour*, *Rehearsals*, *Tactility Factory*, *taking place*, *The Missing 32% Project*, *The New Beauty Council*, *The W.H.Y. Project*, *Women Design Arizona* comprise but a few such recent initiatives whose work stands out. This

lively field of production has also increasingly attracted thoughtful critical evaluation from a number of publications, lectures, and panels about practicing feminism(s).⁴

This study gives preference to the notion of ‘spatial practice’ over ‘architecture’, since spatial practice implies not only the design and construction of the built environment but also the use and occupation of it. More importantly, ‘practice’ implies things we actively make happen in everyday life – it is different from mere ‘experience’ (Stanley and Wise, 1993). This is also the basis of what Jane Rendell (2007) initially defined as ‘critical architecture’ and conceptualized more fully later as ‘critical spatial practice’, a more inclusionary expression embracing diverse modes of knowledge to describe, analyze, and interrogate space (Rendell, 2011; 2018).⁵ Rendell interprets critical spatial practice as a transformative act to question norms; as a term that “serves to describe both everyday activities and creative practices which seek to resist the dominant social order of global corporate capitalism” (2011, p. 25). Her conceptualization is rooted in the writings of Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, who introduced a distinction between practices that maintain existing social and spatial orders and those that resist them (Ibid.). In ‘The Practice of Everyday Life’, de Certeau (1984) explains this distinction as ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’. He argues that tactics are generated by the precarious in everyday life against strategies, which he frames as a typical attitude of a subject with will and power, such as modern science, politics, and military (Ibid.). Lefebvre (1991) explains the production of space within a trialectical model in which

⁴ For instance, field (2017), Frichot (2016), Frichot, Gabrielsson, and Runting, H. (2017), Petrescu and Trogal (2017), Schalk et al. (2016), and as an earlier example, Brown (2011). Among the influential events, we may mention the panel *Feminist Design Practices* in 2015 at the *Center for Architecture*, New York; the conference *Architecture & Feminisms: Ecologies, Economies, Technologies* in 2016 in the *Royal Institute of Technology* (KTH) in Stockholm; the panel series *Parlour* since 2016 in diverse venues in Australia. We may also include the recent increase in exhibitions, awards, and publications on ‘forgotten’ women practitioners in architecture and design, both as a part and an impact of these debates.

⁵ The notion ‘critical architecture’ was introduced and widely discussed at the conference with the same title, which was held in November 2004 at *The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London*. It was organized by Jane Rendell and Jonathan Hill, in association with *Architectural Humanities Research Association*. In 2007, the book *Critical Architecture* was published, edited by Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Mark Dorrian, and Murray Fraser. Furthermore, in 2011, a specialization in *Architecture and Critical Spatial Practice* was initiated in *Städelschule Architecture School*, Frankfurt, in collaboration with Zak Kyes, Joseph Grima, Nikolaus Hirsch, Matthias Görlich, Tim Schuster, Erhan Oze, and Occupy Frankfurt. In the following year, the publication series *What is Critical Spatial Practice?* were initiated by Markus Miessen and Nikolaus Hirsch from the specialization program, with contributions by people from the fields of architecture, art, literature, and philosophy to reflect their current modes of spatial practice.

space is perceived, conceived, and lived. Not unlike de Certeau, Lefebvre distinguishes between ‘representations of space’ and ‘spaces of representation’, arguing that the latter have the potential to become spaces of resistance in which critiques of existing social orders can flourish (Ibid.).

Lefebvre’s spaces of representation and de Certeauan everyday life tactics provide a supplementary context in which to reconsider one’s modes of practice and codes of conduct to reproduce or resist norms. A number of scholars have advanced critical understandings of spatial practice, particularly in the last decade. Jane Rendell addresses the potential of critical spatial practice to tackle today’s radical discrimination and inequalities generated by capitalist global economy (2018, p. 11). Nikolaus Hirsch and Markus Miessen assess critical modalities of spatial practice in the global landscape of occupy movements and the turmoil in countries of the *Arab Spring* (2012, p. 3). Judith Butler suggests that concerted actions such as the *Arab Spring* and *Gezi Park* may comprise a collective rejection of precarity and analyzes their spatial denotations as acts of claiming public space (2018, pp. 15-17). Sadie Plant draws attention to contemporary paradigms generated by technology, cybernetic space, and virtuality, which have introduced new possibilities for understanding space and blurred distinctions between the natural and the artificial, the organic and the inorganic, the authentic and the fake (2007, p. 300). She points out the contemporary dissemination of self-organizing systems, fluid dynamics, and distributed networks that challenge conventional assumptions about central and governing structures (Ibid.).

In this regard, we may unfold the feminist ethos as a supportive framework for critical spatial practice. Featuring an ethics for mutuality and interdependency in a world that is “becoming increasingly unstable and contested” (Frichot, Gabrielsson, and Runting, 2017), we may argue that the feminist ethos not only exposes one to “other worlds” and subjectivities, but also has the potential to unsettle the status quo and the “hegemonic image of thought” (hooks, 2015[2000], p. 117; Frichot, 2016, p. 8). As H  l  ne Frichot elaborates, the modifier ‘feminist’ as a position not only implies the understanding of women as a minority group that are “underrepresented in the teaching, practice, and leadership of architecture”, but also welcomes various intersections and concerns, including class, race, ethnicity, and corporeal capacity (2016, pp. 10-11). Furthermore,

we may suggest that a feminist positioning embodies a *Do-It-Yourself* and *Do-It-With-Others* approach, in which one's performance takes place on a "larger, more complex geopolitical stage that is filled with other subjectivities and concerns" rather than as a singular and independent actor (Ibid., p. 13). The understanding of knowledge as 'situated' (Haraway, 1991), and notions of fluidity (Irigaray, 1985), mobility and relationality (Braidotti, 2013) may well be interpreted as radical tools of a feminist approach to space, challenging, for instance, the central, organizing, and transcendent conceptions of architecture (Petrescu, 2007, p. xviii). In other words, feminist modalities of critical spatial practice may serve as ideal examples of Certeauan tactics against strategies, enable new ways in which space is perceived, conceived, and lived.

1.2 Which Feminist Spatial Practices?: The Cases and the Methodology

What can we say about the possibility of a feminist spatial practice in Turkey? To which groups or individuals can we draw attention and thus shed light on feminist sensitivities? How can we discuss their ethos, and their contextual circumstances? What are the social, political, economic, and urban contexts in which they have emerged and evolved? What challenges have they faced, and what can we say about their relationalities and outreach?

In this study, I aim to unveil a number of practices in Turkey in the period extending from the mid-1990s until today. All these practices share two aspects in common. First, they are *spatial* – they interrogate, intervene in, produce or transform spaces. Second, through *feminist* modalities of spatial practice, they address and challenge structures of power and oppression, such as patriarchy, advanced capitalism, and anthropocentrism. They think, act, and make collectively, 'otherwise' and 'otherhow'. Although the majority of the subjects do not identify themselves as overtly 'feminist', I suggest an array of their sensitivities that might characterize feminist approaches to spatial practice, whereupon we may survey their diverse forms, tools, and tactics.

This study focuses predominantly on practices based in Istanbul. I also discuss a number of practices from other cities, including Izmir, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa. We may trace

feminist spatial practices since the mid-1990s, a period of major shifts and globalization through consistent expansion of trans-nationalized capital, commerce, communication and urbanization (Bartu and Özbay, 2014; Keyder, 2008; 2009; 2010a). As the starting point of the study, I take the year 1995, the year after local elections were won by the ‘moderate’ Islamic party *Refah* – a key event in understanding Turkey’s current political and urban landscape, especially in Istanbul (Keyder, 2009). In that year, new local authorities aimed to reanimate a longstanding vision for the globalization of Istanbul, i.e., putting the city ‘on the map’ of the world cities.⁶ Indeed, during this period, Turkey gradually became more integrated into an internationally institutionalized culture scene. One of the most seminal Istanbul biennials, *ORIENT/ATION*, took place in 1995. In the landscape that took shape following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, where ‘regional metropolises’ gained further importance, *ORIENT/ATION* sought to ‘orient’ Istanbul in this emergent global topography (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 1995; Graf, 2015, pp. 113-114). It hosted influential participants whose practices had a significant impact on Turkey’s cultural environment thereafter, a number of whom are included in the study. This climate also grounded the revival of identity politics by a generation exposed to the impacts of the military coup in 1980. This inspired a search for many new forms of identity and their representations, which we may trace in the feminist debates of the time (Antmen, 2015a). On the other hand, the 2000s are regarded as the successor to a period of violence and inequalities that brought a political dimension to the production of women. It was the time when women artists began to problematize issues such as the living conditions of women, patriarchal systems, and the construction of female identity (Antmen, 2015b). In this period, a complex layer of urban issues and new conditions of everyday life emerged as impacts of globalization (Keyder, 2010a, pp. 179-184; 2010b, pp. 27-28).

In this framework, I will elaborate on a number of practices from 1995 onwards to highlight them as spatial practices of feminisms, with more recent examples as my key case studies. The practices included in the study are performed by *Ashhan Demirtaş*,

⁶ In 1991, Saskia Sassen pronounced the emergence of ‘The Global City’, with its cross-border dynamics and networks beyond the nation-state. (1991) Having common characteristics such as transit networks, a media hub, international cultural institutions, and business activity, global cities around the world have similar progresses and differentiations; which are stirred up by the ascendant mobility of the capital, labor, goods, and the advancement in information technologies.

Atilkunst, Başka Bir Atölye / Another Kind of Workshop, Canan, Cins Adımlar / The Curious Steps, düşünce, Esra Ersen, Gülçin Aksoy, Hale Tenger, Istanbul Walkabouts, Kültür, Mutfak / Matbakh, Oda Projesi / The 'Room Project', Şükran Moral, and The 'Purple Studio'. I include diverse spatial practices that range from pedagogic experiments and urban activism to event-making and artistic productions, in order to cover diverse modes of interrogating and intervening in space. Only a number of practitioners in the study are architects – rather than creating an anthology of architects, I seek to more inclusively focus on diverse practices that produce difference. Therefore, I seek to blur the boundaries of dominant, supremacist, and singularizing conceptions in architecture, which celebrate particular figures and ways of making and thinking. This study relates to a number of issues, such as urbanization, globalization, social shifts, the anthropocene, the architecture profession and architecture education, which may embody exclusions and marginalization in space, and explores how these issues may be challenged by those practices through particular tools and tactics, such as subversion, appropriation, dissemination, and/or empowerment.

From a feminist standpoint, one of my main considerations in the study is to reflect as many diverse voices as possible. I thus conducted in-depth interviews with my three case studies – İlayda Ece Ova and Sema Semih from *The Curious Steps*, Özlem Erdoğan Erkarslan from *The 'Purple Studio'* and Aslıhan Demirtaş – and include episodes of my radio program *Açık Mimarlık (Open Architecture)* from 2015 to 2019, where I hosted Aslıhan Demirtaş, *Another Kind of Workshop*, and *The Curious Steps*. Furthermore, I include my experience of walks led by *Istanbul Walkabouts* and *The Curious Steps* and of working with Aslıhan Demirtaş. Other primary and secondary sources include personal archives and blogs, exhibition catalogs, course syllabi, lectures, monographs, articles, video documentations, radio programs, press conferences, and panel talks.

The practitioners involved in this study are either women or non-cisgender people. This choice reflects two major goals. First, I seek to empower women and non-cisgender people in the extremely masculine environments of both academia and architecture in

Turkey, where feminist and queer organizations in spatial practice remain non-existent.⁷

⁸ Second, I seek to explore feminine textuality, a “collective bag woven by women’s voices to host their yearnings of space and transformation” in Doina Petrescu’s (2007, p. 31) words, as a means to delve into practices that perform the embodied experience of womanhood.⁹ This embodiment, as pointed out by Iris Marion Young, addresses women’s distinctive feelings and modalities of ‘being-in-the-world’ (2005, p. 6). As Young asserts, this understanding of feminine motility and spatiality can raise generative questions such as:

“How do girls and women constitute their experienced world through their movement and orientation in places? [...] How do the things and people we touch and are touched by become a material support for or extension of ourselves? To the extent that women occupy relatively disadvantaged positions in gendered power and role structures, how, if at all, is our subordination embodied?” (Young, 2005, p. 9)

Therefore, initiatives of critical spatial practice such as *Düzce Umut Atölyesi (Düzce Hope Workshop)*, *Herkes için Mimarlık (Architecture for All)*, *Kampüssüzler (The Campusless)*, *Kuzguncuk İlya’nın Bostanı (Kuzguncuk İlya’s Urban Garden)*, *Mimar Meclisi (Architects Assembly)*, *Roma Bostanı İnsanları (People of Roma Urban Garden)*, *Tarihi Yedikule Bostanları Koruma Girişimi (The Initiative for the Preservation of Historic Yedikule Gardens)* are not included as case studies. However, a

⁷ According to the global ‘Women in Architecture’ survey by *The Architectural Review* in 2016, 67% of the participants respond negative to the question ‘has the industry fully accepted the authority of the female architect?’. The survey also demonstrates that the wage gap is 10% between female and male practitioners in the beginning of their career, and 58% for founding partners. (The Architectural Review, 2016) 42 to 52% of women indicate that within the past year they have experienced sexual abuse in their professional life. (Ibid.) According to the report ‘Why Do Women Leave Architecture?’ by the *Royal Institute of British Architects* in 2003, women constitute 38% of the students in architecture schools, however, 18% in professional life in the UK. In Turkey, according to the report of *The Chamber of Architects* in 2014, 57% of the students in architecture schools and 53% of the architects who are enrolled in *The Chamber* are female, however, only 30% of office registration certificates are held by female practitioners. In architecture competitions held in Turkey in 2012 and 2013, 23% of the prizes are won by female participants. (Kayım, 2015a; Kayım, 2015b; Yıldırım and Uzer, 2017) These findings demonstrate the ‘leaky pipeline’, a metaphor used to address the disappearance of women in their further careers.

⁸ Within the process of the study, the *Foundation for Women in Interior Architecture (Kadın İç Mimarlar Derneği)* was established in 2018 in Turkey, in order to “question the educational and working conditions for women”, and to “increase women’s efficiency in the field” (Kadın İç Mimarlar Derneği, 2018).

⁹ Introduced by black feminists, the notion of ‘yearning’ implies hope and desire, which ‘transform the soul rather than be appropriated by it’ (Petrescu, 2007, p. 4; hooks, 1989).

number of them appear in the relational chart of studied practices, and it is essential to mention their significant contributions, which have enriched know-how. On the other hand, due to the limited extent of the study, practices that deal with representations of space in such mediums as photography or video have not been included. Within these limitations, my aspiration in this study is to initiate a dialogue about new futures by charting an ecology of spatial practices of feminisms that is heterogeneous, undetermined, and reflexive as ‘one’s own map of local environment’ – an exposure that H  l  ne Frichot proposes as a ‘step’ towards a feminist power tool (2016, p. 11).¹⁰

In this respect, to elaborate on the feminist approaches, tools, and tactics of these practices, I use a series of features that I call ‘sensitivities’, suggested by Jane Rendell (2018) to outline a particularly feminist approach to critical spatial practice: ‘alterity’, ‘collectivity’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘performativity’, and ‘materiality’.¹¹ These five features for Rendell define the “task” of feminist spatial practices to tackle the three-stranded “collapse” of ecology, energy, and economy in our times (2018, p.11). With reference to Rendell’s conceptualization, I discuss practices in Turkey through these five titles as the chapters of the study; however, I utilize my own interpretations to explain these titles. They frame the five common feminist sensitivities of the practices I study, which are juxtaposed and not entirely separated by clear boundaries. I call these five overlapping titles ‘sensitivities’ to suggest that they are neither distinct nor organized reactions. As Sara Ahmed states, feminism is strongly bonded with the word ‘sense’, as it refers to not only how a body is in contact with the world, but also the arousal of strong curiosity, interest or excitement (2017, p. 22).

¹⁰ In the 1990s, feminist researchers began to challenge objectivist social science and the hegemony of structural approaches that overlook the political potential of everyday life and experiences. They argue that since one’s location effects the questions one asks, the greater reflection of the researcher could produce more inclusive and flexible methodologies. (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 103; England, 1994, p. 87)

¹¹ Rendell defines these five concepts as ‘qualities’, however, I prefer to call them as ‘sensitivities’, which I believe corresponds to the feminist ethos. Rendell introduces these five concepts firstly in in her article for Lori A. Brown’s (2011) anthology of *Feminist Practices*. There she uses ‘interiority’ instead of ‘subjectivity’, as a concept to deal with marginalized issues within “gendered binaries of mainstream architectural discourse” (Rendell, 2011, p. 21). However, in her *The Architectural Review* article in 2018, she reinterprets these five concepts and uses ‘subjectivity’ instead of ‘interiority’ (Rendell, 2018). For this study, I borrow the latter, in order to accommodate discussions regarding the concepts of feminine subjectivity, feminist standpoint, and situated knowledge.

The first chapter, ‘Alterity’, takes its name from approaches to make and become ‘different’ (Petrescu, 2007, p. 3) against ‘objective reality’ and ‘typical’ assumptions (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 135). The practices of *Another Kind of Workshop*, *Aslıhan Demirtaş*, *Istanbul Walkabouts*, *The Curious Steps*, and *The Purple Studio* are discussed in this chapter as practices of alterity that challenge the myths and norms of everyday life as well as the architecture profession and architecture education. This chapter might be considered an introduction to a feminist positioning for doing ‘otherwise’ and ‘otherhow’ so as to resist dominant conceptions generated by power structures.

The second chapter, ‘Collectivity’, exposes an understanding of practice not as an individual act, but as an interactive and reflexive process generated through exchange and collaboration. This chapter pursues the roots of feminist collectivity in Turkey through the feminist movement in the 1980s and 90s and renders its reflections on the spatial productions in the 1990s and 2000s, particularly those by *Esra Ersen*, *Kültür*, *The Room Project*, *düşhane*, and *Mutfak / Matbakh*. Among contemporary approaches, *Another Kind of Workshop*, *The Curious Steps*, *Istanbul Walkabouts*, *The Purple Studio*, and *Aslıhan Demirtaş* are discussed as practices that embrace collectivity to reject heroic individual male figures, such as the ‘walker-explorer’ of modernity and the ‘star architect’ of advanced capitalism.

The chapter ‘Subjectivity’ explores feminist interpretations of ‘difference’ and ‘subjectivity’ to conceive one’s own position in a complex world of other subjectivities and relationalities (Frichot, 2016, p.13). The practices of *Another Kind of Workshop*, *The Purple Studio*, and *The Room Project* are discussed in light of Donna Haraway’s concepts of *situated knowledges*, *critical reflexivity*, and *diffraction* to resist systems of stratified inequalities (1988; 1997, p. 36). To exhibit earlier approaches to these concepts, spatial productions by *Esra Ersen*, *Gülçin Aksoy*, and *Hale Tenger* in the 1990s are interpreted within the political, social, and urban contexts of their time. As a contemporary understanding of feminist subjectivity, the practice of *Aslıhan Demirtaş* is explored through Rosi Braidotti’s (2013) and Donna Haraway’s (2016) conceptualizations of radical relationality.

As “what is new in the feminist work in this area”, the chapter ‘Performativity’ explores one’s position to not only objects and spaces, but also “the site of writing itself”

(Rendell, 2011, pp. 33, 35). The performative pedagogies of *The Curious Steps*, *Istanbul Walkabouts*, *The Purple Studio* and the processes of the making of *Aslıhan Demirtaş*, *düşhane*, *Kültür*, *Mutfak / Matbakh*, *The Room Project*, and *Atilkunst* are included this chapter with the aid of the conceptualizations by Sara Ahmed (2017), Judith Butler (2018), and Donna Haraway (2016). To contrast different perspectives on performativity as a bodily act to resist norms and oppression, *Gülçin Aksoy*, *Canan*, and *Şükran Moral* are discussed as practices that focus on the body as a political subject and explore its relations to power mechanisms embodied in space.

Since contemporary feminist thinking challenges fixed binary structures such as male and female, nature and technology, public and private, local and global, past and present, the chapter ‘Materiality’ emphasizes the material possibilities of these practices so as to activate new understandings of space as a multiplying and fluid notion. An attention to material, in Hélène Frichot’s terms, is ‘what is new’ as a feminist project since “it is time to return to the most fundamental questions about the nature of matter and the place of embodied humans within a material world” (Coole and Frost, 2010 p. 3, cited in Frichot, 2016, p. 128). In this manner, the materialities by *Aslıhan Demirtaş*, *Atilkunst*, *Another Kind of Workshop*, *Canan*, *The Curious Steps*, *düşhane*, *Esra Ersen*, *Gülçin Aksoy*, *Hale Tenger*, *Istanbul Walkabouts*, *Kültür*, *Mutfak / Matbakh*, *The ‘Room Project’*, *Şükran Moral*, and *The ‘Purple Studio’* are unfolded through the concept of ‘becomings’. These materialities of transformative processes open the way towards a feminist ethos with respect to different beings, desires, and places that have been overlooked by dominant conceptions (Frichot 2016, pp. 127, 133). Furthermore, these materialities, I believe, might be the key to realizing livable futures on a damaged planet.

2. ALTERITY

The notion of alterity, referring to the Latin word ‘alter’, meaning ‘other’, was propounded during the *Alterities* conference in Paris in 1999 thanks to Doina Petrescu (2007, p. 3), and acknowledged as a pivotal moment for feminist spatial practices. A feminist understanding of alterity aims change by alteration, and challenges the notions of ‘objective reality’ and ‘typical’ assumptions. Petrescu defines alterity as “multiple possibilities of praxis” (2007, p. vii) and positions for “making and becoming different” to subvert binaries, received identities, and authoritative rules (2007, p. 3). This definition opened up new perspectives that rely on processes with “positive and critical dynamics”, and a number of initiatives have emerged out of *Alterities* (Ibid., p. 4). They have embraced *écriture féminine* (*feminine writing*) as a main formula that opposes conventional categorizations, getting their inspiration from Luce Irigaray’s ideas on difference and femininity. A series of concepts from the feminist imaginary, for instance, ‘chaos’, ‘complexity’, ‘fluidity’, ‘emergence’, ‘lightness’, ‘connectionism’, ‘multiplicity’, ‘networks’, ‘self-organization’ are adopted to generate a lexicon of alterity (Burns, 2013, p. 32; Petrescu, 2007, p. 4). As such, practices of alterity can be understood as practicing ‘otherwise’ and ‘otherhow’, in order to enable “new coalitions between different intellectual, aesthetic, and political positions” by transcending boundaries between theories and practices, academia and activism (Petrescu, 2007, pp. 5-6; Rendell, 2018, p. 22).

To illuminate further what alterity means for a feminist spatial practice, it would be useful to take a closer look at two collectives. The first collective, which was one of the sources of inspiration for the *Alterities* gathering, is *muf architecture/art* from the UK. The collective has influenced feminist discourses over more than two decades, even though they do not overtly call themselves as a feminist collective. *muf*, as described by the collective, is “the antithesis of the mentality of the 1940s and 1950s town planning”

(Shonfield, 2001, p. 17). They are frequently criticized for “not producing architecture”, however, they explain their ‘not to build’ approach as a determined ethical position to question the aesthetics, limits, and roles of architecture (Fior, Clarke, and Handler, 2005, p. 56; *more than one (fragile) thing at a time*, 2016).¹² They imagine public spaces which are “characterized by contested claims and frictions that can never be resolved neatly” (Dodd, 2012, p. 54). By offering “fleeting moments of generosity and hospitality”, they seek to alter the notion of publicity through works that range from spontaneous events and occupations to temporary urban squares (Ibid.). We may consider their UK pavilion in Venice as an example of ‘doing otherhow’. In 2010, *La Biennale di Venezia International Architecture Exhibition* had the title ‘People Meet in Architecture’ and muf was commissioned to curate the UK pavilion. They designed the pavilion space as a 1:10 model of the London Olympic Stadium, and organized the space as a drawing studio and a forum for Venetian people. Hence, they ‘reproduced’ a controversial urban development project responsible for numerous displacements, transforming into a place for discussion and negotiation. The pavilion served as a meeting and sharing place during the six-month exhibition process, which was, in their words, “a preparation for the final day, the only day when people could ‘meet in architecture’ without paying €20” (Fior and Clarke, 2011, pp. 334-336).¹³

The latter collective, *taking place* from the UK again, is a younger one that emerged out of the *Alterities* gathering. Their work is seen as “a practice about recasting the terms that define architectural space in terms of formal structures into ways of practicing” (Dwyer, 2012, pp. 35-36). They work through text-, process- and performance-based communications technologies to create “new fluid strategies” of feminine writing to “both express and address the relational and temporal nature of the experience of space” (Dwyer, 2012, pp. 52-53). They call themselves as “a loose collective” of female artists, architects, and academicians, and this loose structure, for them, is “a way of understanding a project differently and another way of sharing with others” (Dwyer, 2012, p. 53). This can be interpreted as a tool for alterity. For instance, for their ongoing project ‘the Other Side of Waiting’, they use the concept of waiting as an

¹² Their print-on-demand publication with a non-linear *do-it-yourself* narrative *more than one (fragile) thing at a time* can be considered as another inspiring experiment of alterity.

¹³ They refer to the visitors’ ticket price for the exhibition venue.

“interconnected concept” to not only make people share a discourse around the “emotions, politics, and spaces of waiting”, but also explore other “virtual, ephemeral and visible ways” in forms of performance and text (Dwyer, 2012, p. 42). As a collective, they “take place”, in their words, “for the discussion of feminist theory and practice in architecture schools and other institutions by re-inventing, re-arranging, and performing space” (Hoskyns and Thomas, 2017, p. 120). A series of their works entitled ‘Interstitial Breakfast’ is remarkable as a way of sharing knowledge. When members of the group are invited to an event, they transform coffee breaks into informal forums to discuss feminism, by writing questions on the tablecloths, for instance, ‘What is the relationship between authorship and feminism in art and architecture?’, ‘What is particular about feminism in the context of other kinds of socially engaged political and critical practices?’ (Hoskyns and Thomas, 2017, pp. 115-120). They leave markers on the tables and invite people to write their answers. Afterwards, they discuss the findings.

We may trace the feminist ethos of alterity in Sara Ahmed’s interpretation of feminist theory as ‘diversity work’ against norms. Ahmed (2017, p. 91) elaborates diversity work to address the techniques of power and to transform institutional norms in order to “be in a world that does not accommodate our being”. Thus, she claims, institutions could be opened up to those who have “historically been excluded from them”, to generate new knowledge (Ibid., pp. 93-94). We may interpret Ahmed’s conceptualization of diversity work also as a call to transcend the boundaries of disciplines and to blur distinctions through alterities.

2.1 Feminist Sensitivities of Alterity in Turkey

2.1.1 *The Purple Studio*

To unveil feminist modalities of alterity in spatial practices in Turkey, we may elaborate *The Purple Studio*, an exceptional architecture studio for embracing the feminist critique as a major pedagogy. Instructed by Özlem Erdoğan Erkarıslan, Nilüfer Talu, Fatma Şenol, and Koray Korkmaz in the Department of Architecture of Izmir Institute of Technology between 2006 and 2011, the studio was conducted as an experiment which was, in Erkarıslan’s (2009, p. 101) words, “based on the feminist critique and the

concepts of sharing and communication”. The pedagogy of *The Purple Studio* sought to generate critical perspectives against supremacist norms in architecture, which celebrate particular figures while overlooking the underprivileged. Erkarlan emphasizes the role of feminist critique to resist to the dominant conceptions of architecture which are form-obsessed and serve privileged groups in capitalist systems (Ibid., p. 101). These dominant conceptions, for her, watch over not only masculine subjects but also hegemonic aspects of masculinity that generate complex inequalities. She argues that a critique for these structures would engender a more equitable profession in a world of wars and economic fluctuations, where capitalist systems are no longer sustainable and people have begun to search for new ways of existence (Ibid., p. 100).

The Purple Studio pursued this search through the rejection of the heroic ‘star architect’ figure along with the masculine and hierarchical mechanisms of architecture, in a period where the concept of the ‘design studio’ was widely debated:

“Through an alternative pedagogic method, our main intention was to question the myths of creativity and the negative impacts of the designer’s ego on the profession and the practitioner. In the modernist architectural education, ‘The Architect’ is introduced as ‘The Leader’ of the design team, who has super powers. We aimed to question this ‘superiority’ as a pathetic existence and intended to transform leadership into mechanisms of teamwork, shared decision making, and negotiation. We wanted them [the students] to experience not the competition but an environment of collaboration and the synergy by co-producing. In order to minimize the conflicts in group work, we intended to enhance their dialogue skills. Last but not the least, we focused on the process instead of the result.” (Erkarlan, 2019)

We may interpret these orientations - questioning myths and norms, celebrating collaboration and processes rather than competition and products - as proactive tools of alterity to challenge the dominant structures both in architectural education and the profession. *The Purple Studio* was a 14-week design studio for the first year students, which makes its positioning more crucial as an ‘introducer’ of primary design concepts for the students. The studio operated in two phases: during ‘Purple 1’, the students were expected to design a pavilion for the fair *Expo*, and, during ‘Purple 2’, a student center

in the university campus (Erkarslan, 2009, pp. 103-104).¹⁴ For the final work, the students were encouraged to experiment with issues of representation on a variety of mediums, ranging from films to stories and comics (Erkarslan, 2019).

Erkarslan emphasizes the potential of education to foster change in the profession, and explains the working model of the studio with reference to three main principles: “Creating a ground for negotiation, creating environments of communication for sharing and open dialogue, offering diverse ways of thinking in architecture profession in opposition to the ‘star architect’ figure” (2009, p. 101). For her, “one cannot make a hole in the metal surface of the creativity-based ‘caste system’ of architecture in one move, but still can scratch the surface”, and this is what *The Purple Studio* aspires for (Erkarslan, 2009, p. 103). During my interview with her, Erkarslan told me that *The Purple Studio* was an experience that taught her a lot. She emphasized, in particular, that it created a different kind of dynamism by “breaking the unpleasant hierarchies in the studio”, and a lively milieu of co-production. She also indicated that *The Purple Studio* experience led to a “purple department” attempt at the university afterwards, which embraced principles of co-production and equality among the staff and the students of the Department of Architecture (Erkarslan, 2019). In the chart of feminist spatial practices in Turkey, *The Purple Studio* appears as a remarkable pedagogy of practicing ‘otherwise’ against the norms of the profession and education, calling to mind what bell hooks calls “the joy of pedagogy” in resituating the margin as a space of radical openness (1989, cited in Frichot, 2016, p. 52).

¹⁴ Expo had been the ‘hot topic’ in those days: the city of Izmir, where the Institute of Technology is located, was one of the two candidates for Expo 2015 – it lost to city of Milan during the voting in 2008.

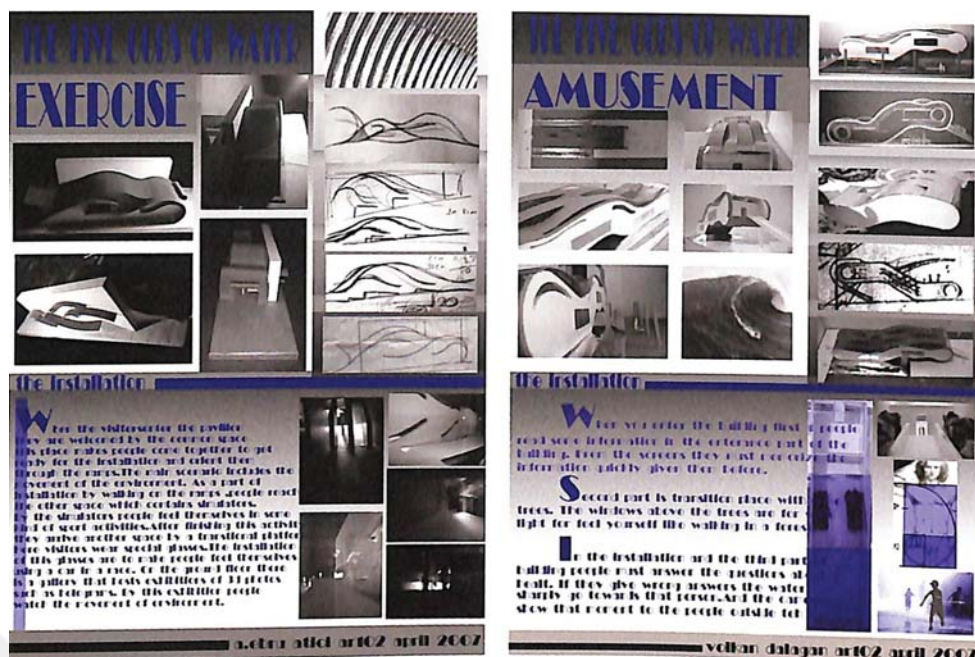


Image 2.1 student works from *The Purple Studio*, 2007 (Erkarlan, 2009, p. 102)

2.1.2 *The Curious Steps*

Cins Adımlar / The Curious Steps, is a contemporary initiative of feminist alterity that performs walking as a critical pedagogic tool.¹⁵ Initiated by Sabancı University Gender and Women’s Studies Center (SU Gender) in 2014, *The Curious Steps* organizes ‘gender and memory walks’ in Istanbul, with an aim to ‘re-discover the city’ by sharing ‘hidden’ stories of women, LGBTQI+, ethnic minorities, violence, and dominance (Ova and Semih, 2019). The name of the group, *The Curious Steps*, comes from their state of curiosity for the layers of the city: “As Istanbulites experiencing their city, we seek for the ones that lived earlier than our times, their stories, their traces on the fabric, the smell, the color, and the sound of the city we live in” (Ibid).

Through their walks, the group aspires to explore the historical, social, economic, and political dynamics that have an impact on urban life. Yet ‘some’ stories are ‘not that easy to be found’:

“The stories of women, LGBTQI+ people... These are not the kind of stories that you find in school books. On the other hand, even the road that we use in our everyday life is swarming with hidden stories – one has to be careful in order to notice them. We go into

¹⁵ The English name *The Curious Steps* is used due to the group’s preference.

these stories with that kind of care, and share them with people through our gender and memory walks.” (Ibid.)

They have performed more than 45 walks in the districts of Balat, Beyoğlu, and Kadıköy, with the participation of students, NGOs, activists, academicians, and many more as voluntary story tellers. Ayşe Gül Altınay and Sema Semih from SU Gender explain that they have realized the initiative with an inspiration from the feminist memory walks in Europe and South America – in particular, the ones in Budapest by the feminist historian Andrea Peto, in Bochum by *ausZeiten Feminist Archive Collective*, in Chile by Soledad Falabella from *Women Mobilizing Memory* initiative (Altınay, 2019; Ova and Semih, 2019).

I attended The Curious Steps’ Kadıköy walk on March 9th 2019, which was, by a joyful coincidence, accompanied by some of these women of inspiration: Andrea Peto, Linda Unger from *ausZeiten Feminist Archive Collective*, and Alexandra Alves Luis from *Lisbon Feminist Walking Tours*. In that morning, Sema was waiting for us in front of the state conservatory in the Kadıköy pier, with a portable speaker in hand – it was ‘Mermaid’ Eftelya who was singing the canto *Kadıköylü* (the Beauty from Kadıköy) to the morning passers-by. When we gathered along with a small crowd of curious locals, Sema began to tell the story of ambitious Mermaid Eftelya, who was the first and only non-Muslim woman artist to record music for *Dârülelhan*, the state conservatory, nearly a century ago. While Mermaid Eftelya continued to sing with a voice as melancholic as her life story, we went to the nearby Istanbul city theater to hear about Kınar Hanım, the forgotten star of *Dârülbedayi*, Istanbul Theater. Afterwards, we listened to the story of the journalist and writer Nahid Sırrı Örik, who was acclaimed as a ‘weird stranger’ and encountered hardship due to his ‘feminine attitude’ and assumed sexual orientation. While our storyteller İlayda Ece was reading a piece from one of his articles which calls out to respect and sustain the cultural artifacts of the past (Örik, 1947, p. 4), we discussed that his words were still influential after 70 years, as we stood in the pier facing Haydarpaşa Train Station that has been closed to public since 2012. The closure and the future privatization projects have triggered upheavals and demonstrations to save the terminal, and it is not the only social movement that the station building has witnessed: İlayda Ece told the story of The *Militourism Festival* held in the station in

2004, by conscientious objectors and anti-war activists as a response to compulsory military service and soldiers' farewell ceremonies in terminals. Furthermore, from 2010 onwards, an Armenian memorial gathering takes place in front of the station as İlayda Ece explained, in order to commemorate the stories of Armenian people that were sent to exile in those trains. Our walk continued with further stops: *Şehremaneti Daire*, the former municipality building, to hear about Halide Edip Adıvar addressing a crowd of twenty thousand people from the balcony of the building a century ago to call out for national struggle, the street *Bestekar Dilhayat (Composer Dilhayat)* to learn that it was named after Dilhayat Kalfa, the second Muslim woman composer known, the bakery *Baylan* to read pieces by the writer Sevim Burak, who was among the regular visitors of the place. We stopped by *Süreyya Opera House* to greet the performer Şevkiye May, and the cinema *Rexx*, the former *Apollon Theater*, to hear about the talented actresses Eliza Binemacıyan and Afife Jale's struggle against the ban on Muslim women's appearance on stage. The street of the opera house hosted Turkey's first LGBTQI+ association *LambdaIstanbul*, where our storyteller Sema told a brief history of the institutionalization of the LGBTQI+ movement in Turkey. Both the storytellers and the learners were exhausted after three hours of walking and discussion, therefore, we were not able to visit the remaining two stops – *Dr. Rasim Pasha Street* for the story of the painter and educator Mihri Müşfik, and *Yoğurtçu Park* that hosted various feminist demonstrations from the pioneering ones in the late 1980s to the present.¹⁶ However, long discussions about women artists and Turkey's history of feminist movement continued while we were eating at a nearby place and listening to audio recordings from women's demonstrations from the 1980s and the 1990s, thanks to the personal archives that *The Curious Steps* reached.¹⁷ Andrea Peto, who was sitting next to me during the lunch, spoke about urban space as a 'repository of the past', which is designated as symbols of national and popular narratives in her opinion. As Peto elaborates, our experience was weaved with histories of opposition, dominance, and violence, and one got a sense of 'uncovering' those layers as we walked and explored urban spaces.

¹⁶ A brief history of the feminist initiatives in public spaces in Turkey will be discussed further in the chapter 'Collectivity'.

¹⁷ For instance, personal archives of the feminist writer Şirin Tekeli, the feminist Member of Parliament Filiz Kerestecioğlu, and many more who participated these demonstrations.

When I asked about their decisions of the routes, Sema Semih indicated that they walk in neighborhoods that have multiple histories and cultural diversity, and the routes are open-endedly formed through the contributions by voluntary storytellers (Ova and Semih, 2019). Afterwards, these stories are enriched through a process of research (Ibid). In order to reach their stories, the people of *The Curious Steps* delve into ‘other’ sources such as diaries, biographies, street signs, trees rather than ‘conventional’ sources of information (Ibid). İlayda Ece Ova told about their intention to cover both historical stories and contemporary ones, such as the feminist cinema collective *Filmmor*’s place and the formerly homeless Ayşe Tükrükçü’s restaurant *Hayata Sarıl* (*Embrace Life*) that serves to underprivileged people such as homeless people and sex workers, and aims to empower them by employment (Ibid). Thus, they intend to include narrations from their own voices, which would be considered as a major tool of feminist sensitivity. My experience taught me that through their gender and memory walks, *The Curious Steps* not only makes us experience our city ‘otherhow’, but creates a common ground of sharing and exchange. Through their collective walks they disseminate knowledge for wider debates, which we may interpret as a feminist de Certeauan tactic against strategies of power in urban spaces.



Image 2.2 *The Curious Steps*’ Kadıköy walk on March 9th 2019, İlayda Ece Ova telling the story of Haydarpaşa Train Station at Kadıköy Pier (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2.3 *The Curious Steps*' Kadıköy walk on March 9th 2019, Sema Semih telling the story of 'Mermaid' Eftelya at the state conservatory (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2.4 *The Curious Steps*' Kadıköy walk on March 9th 2019, İlayda Ece Ova telling the story of Sevim Burak at *Baylan Bakery* (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2.5 *The Curious Steps*' Kadıköy walk on March 9th 2019, İrem Efe telling the story of Afife Jale next the her bust at the cinema *Rexx*, the former *Apollon Theater* (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2.6 Selen Çatalyürekli, İlayda Ece Ova, and Sema Semih from *The Curious Steps* during an interview by Yağmur Yıldırım for the radio program 'Açık Mimarlık' in *Açık Radyo*, March 28th, 2019 (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)

2.1.3 *Istanbul Walkabouts*

Istanbul Walkabouts is another contemporary initiative that performs walking as a critical pedagogic tool. Nazlı Tümerdem (2019b) initiated the project in 2016 as part of her PhD research carried in the Department of Architecture in Istanbul Technical University, with an aim to explore and map the northern part of Istanbul. That sparsely settled area which hosts the forestlands and water reserves of Istanbul has become a much debated issue, due to the process of urbanization triggered by the recent opening of the new Istanbul airport and the third bridge on the Bosphorus (İnce, 2013). As part of her research, Tümerdem (2019b) started walking the area in order to understand and experience the place, in search for another viewpoint rather than aerial views and maps which she finds ‘dominating’. Afterwards, she began to organize regular walks open to participation – more than 40 walks were performed in various routes in northern Istanbul (Ibid.). Tümerdem (2019a) defines *Istanbul Walkabouts* as ‘critical walks’, a tool to reject the heroic conqueror figure of the male individual -the myth of modernity- and to claim walking as an everyday activity of women, children, and animals.

I had the opportunity to participate one of the walks of *Istanbul Walkabouts* together with my 130 first year students from Kadir Has University Faculty of Art and Design on October 23th, 2019.¹⁸ During the four-hour route between the Bosphorus villages of *Garipçe* and *Rumelifeneri*, we discussed about urban political ecology with the students, as we walked by huge infrastructures that were recently constructed in the forestland to provide high speed transformation. It was their first time in that area of the city for a majority of the students, and they were amazed to encounter such a lively ecology.¹⁹ We walked village roads, traces in the forestland, hillside trails with Bosphorus views, by the highways for the new bridge and airport, through the ruins of watchtowers and castles. We were occasionally accompanied by dogs and cows, the everyday walkers of the place. As such, *Istanbul Walkabouts* performs walking in order to look ‘otherwise’. As Rebecca Solnit argues, the act of walking as a response to technologies that

¹⁸ The walk took place within the scope of the class ‘Introduction to Design’ in Kadir Has University Faculty of Art and Design, instructed by Ayşe Erek, Efe Gözen, Ufuk Soyöz, Zeynep Günsür, Güler Akduman, and Yağmur Yıldırım.

¹⁹ When we asked for their opinions about the course in the end of the semester, a majority of the students mentioned our walk as ‘their favorite class’ and an experience that taught them a lot.

disintegrate everyday life, is “one way of maintaining a bulwark against [the] erosion of the mind, the body, the landscape, and the city” (2001, p. 11).



Image 2.7 *Istanbul Walkabouts* Garipçe-Rumelifeneri walk with students from Kadir Has University Faculty of Art and Design, October 23th 2019, at *Garipçe* with the third Bosphorus bridge view (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2.8 *Istanbul Walkabouts* Garipçe-Rumelifeneri walk with students from Kadir Has University Faculty of Art and Design, October 23th 2019, at *Garipçe* (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2.9 *Istanbul Walkabouts* Garipçe-Rumelifeneri walk with students from Kadir Has University Faculty of Art and Design, October 23th 2019, at the *Rumelifeneri* Fortress by the Blacksea (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2.10 *Istanbul Walkabouts* Garipçe-Rumelifeneri walk with students from Kadir Has University Faculty of Art and Design, October 23th 2019, at *Rumelifeneri* with a view of the third Bosphorus bridge (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)

2.1.4 Another Kind of Workshop

Among the contemporary practices, *Başka Bir Atölye / Another Kind of Workshop*, takes its name from their search for alterities in architectural profession and education.²⁰ In their words, *Another Kind of Workshop* “dreams of an *other* modality of architecture. We ask: *how*, and *for whom*? Through these questions and more, we seek to make room in the current architecture environment” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). Rooted in the co-productive practices of architects T. Gül Köksal and Pelin Kaydan since 2011, the collective was formed in 2015 in an apartment building in the Kadıköy district of Istanbul, which they call *Sofa* (Köksal, 2017). The place is named after the central common hall in traditional Turkish houses where the rooms meet, which might be considered as a clue about their approach: “In a masculine and competitive environment, we intend to multiply the ground we have created, without hierarchies and control of knowledge.” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a)

The main issues that the group problematizes are the ways of production and relations in the academia and the architecture industry which is dominated by “an ever-accelerating speed, decreasing autonomy, exploitation of labour, increasing routine and precariousness” (Başka Bir Atölye, 2018). Their critique is also directed to the broader systems in which architecture operates: “We object to those ‘grand’ architectures and mega projects around us. Climate change, for instance, is a major issue; however, architecture acts to make profit from climate change. We should criticize the mechanisms behind those things and demand change, starting from ourselves” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a).

We might interpret this imperative to change with reference to what Kim Trogal and Doina Petrescu (2017) defines as ‘the crisis of reproduction’ today. *Another Kind of Workshop* seeks to stimulate change by alterities. Through a rethinking of place and space, they question concepts of “borders, class, ownership, justice, equality, ecology, gender, species, nature, education, and other social contexts”.²¹ Pelin Kaydan

²⁰ The English name *Another Kind of Workshop* is used due to their preference.

²¹ Başka Bir Atölye. <https://www.baskabiratolye.com/> (Accessed: December 2019)

emphasizes that in each process, they requestion their statement of ‘other’ modalities and redefine their territories:

“Our approach and production are formed through positions of alterity, thus, we experiment, question, and manifest difference. To address ‘how’ and ‘for whom’ to alter, our discussions cover the topics of everyday life, action, capital, power relations, architect’s position, education system, being an individual, knowledge production, and experience. With the help of our everyday life experiences we work through the issues that we are curious and care about.” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a)

Everyday life and ‘ordinary things’ are the two main interests of *Another Kind of Workshop* since “we are part of everyday life” and these two notions are “as political as women’s bodies – everyday life is life in itself” (Ibid.). For them, everyday life provides a learning and sharing ground to question the politics of built environment, architecture profession, and academia: “Although education today is considered about having a diploma and reserving a seat, we know that learning is a mutual and perpetual process. We learn from not only books but also from everyday relations, nature around us, lots of things in our everyday lives.” (Ibid.) It can be said that their approach is rooted in de Certeau’s (1984) conceptualization of everyday life where tactics are generated by the precarious to resist strategies of power. In a similar manner, Köksal draws attention to the dominant conceptions of architecture that differ from everyday life for “acting by rote” and being “sterile, masculine, and systematically hegemonic”: “Architecture is not only about drawings and construction process. And life is not as sterile as they are – you encounter lots of difficulties when you are young, a woman, an LGBTQI+ person. There are lots of people who lack self-fulfillment and rebel against to reproduce the current systems.” (Ibid.) Köksal suggests an array of features to resist the capitalist structures we are living in, which we may interpret as her toolkit for tactics against strategies: ‘collaboration’, ‘common good’, ‘a playful spirit’, ‘honesty’, and ‘openness’ (Ibid.).

To enhance the so-called learning ground that everyday life provides, *Another Kind of Workshop* has generated an open-ended and collective ‘Dictionary of Everyday Experiences’ where each contributor creates a dictionary entry about everyday life situations and facts regarding space and place. An arbitrary amount of entries in the

dictionary would be mentioned as ‘architecture student’, ‘overtime working’, ‘reconstruction’, ‘heteronormativity’, ‘justice’, ‘urban transformation’, ‘neighborhood marketplace’, ‘jury’, ‘solidarity’, ‘masculinity’, ‘the right to the city’, ‘architecture competition’ (Başka Bir Atölye, 2018). These entries reflect not only diverse perspectives of the authors but also the shifting meanings of ‘ordinary things’ in current systems (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). As such, places in the process of urban transformation occasionally appear in the dictionary, such as Moda Coastline and the cinema *Emek*. In order to illuminate the standpoint of *Another Kind of Workshop* further, it would be meaningful to refer to the entry ‘feminist’, as explained by the author Simten Coşar. For her, ‘feminist’ “[I]s lifeblood. Being a women’s rights advocate. Struggling for equality in the society. Being a feminist is acting in solidarity for a drink of water, a piece of bread, and a breath of fresh air in a world of ever-increasing difficulties” (Başka Bir Atölye, 2018).

In addition to the ‘Dictionary of Everyday Experiences’, the productions of *Another Kind of Workshop* range from organizing reading meetings in Büyükkada, Istanbul, to the design and construction of children’s playgrounds with waste materials in idle spaces in the villages of *Saraylı* and *Örcün* in the city of Kocaeli (Köksal, 2017, pp. 24-25). Thanks to T. Gül Köksal’s expertise in industrial heritage, issues of preservation and heritage are among their major fields of interest. They organize research workshops for repurposing the former paper factory *SEKA* in Kocaeli, make publications on architecture heritage and preservation proposals for Gölcük, Kocaeli, organize drawing and documentation workshops with students in Diyarbakır’s city center which is going through a process of urban transformation.²² ²³ They emphasize the importance of production as a ‘critique’, as, for them, “if you object to something, you have to produce something against it. You should not sit down and complain – this would bring nothing” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). Indeed, their current projects include a “counter program about ‘other kinds of’ architectures” against a popular TV program about architecture which they criticize for being “masculine and sterile” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019b).

²² Başka Bir Atölye. <https://www.baskabiratolye.com/uretimler> (Accessed: December 2019)

²³ In collaboration with Ahmet Doğu İpek, Emre Özyetiş, Eray Çaylı, Loading, and The Chamber of Architects Diyarbakır Branch (Amed Kent Atölyesi. <https://amedkentatolyesi.org/>, accessed: December 2019)

Another Kind of Workshop consists mostly of architects. It started off with ‘organic bonds’ with the Department of Architecture in Kocaeli University due to Köksal’s former academic position there. Nevertheless, the group emphasizes their aspiration to include people with diverse backgrounds, because, their own terms, “borders are human-made and the production of space is not just the issue of architects”.²⁴ As a reflection of this statement, the workshop embraces a loose structure that is not fixed; it is open to intersections, that is, collaborations with people from other fields and disciplines (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). For Köksal and Kaydan (2019a) this loose structure provides them with a kind of freedom and with a possibility to experience different perceptions for a different world as “various modalities of alterity”.



Image 2.11 *Another Kind of Workshop* working at *Sofa* (photograph: Gül Köksal)

²⁴ Başka Bir Atölye. <https://www.baskabiratolye.com/hakkinda> (Accessed: December 2019)



Image 2.12 Gül Köksal and Pelin Kaydan from *Another Kind of Workshop* during an interview by Yağmur Yıldırım for the radio program 'Açık Mimarlık' in *Açık Radyo*, November 7th, 2019 (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)



Image 2. 13 *Başka Bir Oyun (Another Kind of Play)*: Children's playgrounds constructed with waste materials in idle spaces in the village of *Saraylı* in Kocaeli, 2016, available at: <https://xxi.com.tr/cache/image/cgallery/2016/06/4d408a76225937b2b7d7962cc0a40c1e.jpg> (accessed: December 2019)

2.1.5 Aslıhan Demirtaş

As another practice that “prefer[s] to remain within this troubled field and continue to practice architecture” in our ‘crisis-riddled’ times, Aslıhan Demirtaş (2019) pursues a sensitivity of alterity by “dissenting within the practice and education of architecture”. By “threading along the periphery or borders of making”, she seeks to challenge not only dominant conceptions of architecture but also their offset. She explains that the current state of architectural practice is a system which encourages constant growth and development by extracting wealth from Earth:

“Conventionally, architects build. We are trained to create artifacts — even when we are designing voids, we are dependent on the solids to bring it about. Architecture as a practice operates by putting together materials and reassembling matter. The physical product of architecture is processed, reconfigured and reassembled Earth: extract stone, cut, polish and compile. We displace earth in order to re-place it with architecture.” (Demirtaş, 2019)

In a similar manner to *The Purple Studio*’s opposition to supremacist norms that serve privileged groups in the world, Demirtaş explains her so-called dissention against “mainstream (global) architecture” which she finds deeply unsustainable in the current climate crisis. As a tool to resist the hegemonic paradigms of mainstream architecture, she suggests to start with ‘unlearning’ its definitions, giving an example from her former experience of working with a ‘star architect’:

“I was trained in the conventional sense of architecture especially at a time when the concept of star architect was emerging at the end of the 80’s and beginning of the 90’s. I also worked with one, IM Pei, on the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar as his lead designer. Therefore my own practice involves a significant amount of unlearning that is informed by my former experience of mainstream (global) architecture and motivated by the current climate crisis. Unlearning what we call ‘material’ which is in effect the product of the process of damaging the planet, of extraction. Unlearning what we consider ‘site’, which is displaced earth, a removed and discarded piece of the ecosystem. Unlearning the definition of ‘designer’ or ‘architect’. The list can be populated but concisely it translates into an acute awareness of what my actions, thought processes and decisions amount to vis-a-vis everything and everyone that exists on this planet.” (Ibid.)

Unlearning the conventional understandings of material, site, the ‘designer’ or ‘architect’ as an “awareness process” for her constitutes her choice for ‘dissenting within’ architecture: “this unlearning (...) does not preclude that I do not necessarily migrate or jump ship to another field such as art or education while condemning architecture to a categorically damaging practice” (Ibid). This, she explains, enables her to explore the “blindspots” that specializations bear, including her own position as an architect (Ibid.).

Demirtaş’s works range from creating public winter gardens and performance spaces to organizing workshops in public spaces. In her own terms, she aims to “[cross] territories and boundaries of disciplines in the forms of buildings, landscapes, installation projects, exhibitions, art projects, as well as research (Demirtaş, 2017; 2019; Demirtaş and Öner, 2018).²⁵ As such, her works can be interpreted as explorations of alterities in the conceptions, productions, and pedagogies of architecture. As Petrescu states, alterities are ways of transcending boundaries “between theories and practices, academia and activism” (2007, pp. 5-6).

In addition to ‘unlearning’, Demirtaş draws attention to practices that do not belong to the mainstream terminology of architectural production, such as ‘repair’, ‘preservation’, and ‘reuse’ (2019). For her, these tools of alterity are rooted in her childhood, where she was lucky to be introduced with such practices through the work of her mother at home:

“My mother was a tailor who worked from home – during the day our apartment was both a domestic and professional space. My first apprenticeship included tracing sewing patterns, stitching, cutting fabric, knitting and similar. I learnt to love to make use of discarded small pieces of fabric, patching things up, remodel old clothes with minor touches, avoiding waste and reusing.” (Ibid.)

Referring to her interest in the practice of Anni Albers, the textile artist from Bauhaus known for blurring the distinctions between traditional crafts and arts (Lutyens, 2018), Demirtaş (2019) interprets that her affinity to weaving comes from this familiarity from her childhood as well as “the spatial complexity of the domestic production space”. As

²⁵ *Winter Garden*, SALT Beyoğlu, Istanbul, 2018 and *It is Always Spring* for 13th Sharjah Biennial, Istanbul, 2017, *MALDOROR*, Istanbul, 2019, KHORA workshops *Critical Urban Practice* in Istanbul and *Bademlik Design Festival* in Eskişehir, 2016.

diverse materialized works of her approach to repair, preserve, and reuse, she mentions her *Knit Wall* which is woven with ropes to create a temporary public space in the culture platform *SALT Beyoğlu*, Istanbul, and the ‘adaptive reuse project’ of the former *Lumbardhi Cinema* in Prizren, Kosovo, which seeks to alter the notion of publicity with the motto ‘make Lumbardhi Public Again’, through a collective design and production process open to interventions by the locals and design students (Demirtaş 2019).^{26 27}

I had the opportunity to work closely with Aslihan Demirtaş during the summer of 2019, on a proposal for the open call for the curatorial project of *La Biennale di Venezia 17th International Architecture Exhibition Pavilion of Turkey*.²⁸ The title of the *Biennale* was put forward as ‘How Will We Live Together?’ (Sarkis, 2019). As a response to this question, we proposed to concentrate on the notion of ‘care’, which is rooted in the feminist tradition as “a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world” (Tronto and Fisher, 1990, p. 40). Our proposal suggested the concepts of caring, maintaining, and repairing to claim a transformative ethos of spatial practice. Drawing on my experience of working with her, I can state that the question of the *Biennale*, “how will we live together” is deeply embodied in Demirtaş’s practice. In response to Doina Petrescu’s call for alterities as “multiple possibilities of praxis” and “new coalitions between different intellectual, aesthetic, and political positions” (2007, pp. vii, 5-6), it would be illuminating to give voice to a number of questions that Demirtaş brought forward during my interview with her:

“Can we do architecture which performs like a garden? Or woven instead of being built? Can architecture ‘maintain, repair and continue our world’?²⁹ Can what do make-with the rain, plants, animals? Can a building repair a site? Can we work like archeologists, slowly subtracting to reveal or make space?” (Demirtaş, 2019)

²⁶ Lumbardhi. <http://lumbardhi.org/> (Accessed: December 2019)

²⁷ *Knit Wall*, SALT Beyoğlu, Istanbul, 2014, *Lumbardhi Cinema and Outdoor Garden Cinema Adaptive Reuse*, Prizren, Kosovo, 2018.

²⁸ The proposal among the 5 projects chosen for the second stage of the open call was created by Aslihan Demirtaş, Bilge Kalfa Doğan, Gözde Şarлак-Krämer, Evren Uzer, and Yağmur Yıldırım. After the second stage, the proposal by Neyran Turan was selected by the jury in September 2019.

²⁹ Demirtaş refers to Tronto and Fisher’s (1990) definitions of care.

These questions address, undoubtedly, the possibilities of doing ‘otherwise’ and ‘otherhow’ to build the foundations for more sustainable, more livable futures.



Image 2.14 H. Cenk Dereli, Yağmur Yıldırım, Evren Uzer, Aslıhan Demirtaş during an interview by Dereli, Uzer, and Yıldırım for the radio program ‘Açık Mimarlık’ in *Açık Radyo*, February 16th 2015 (photograph: H. Cenk Dereli)

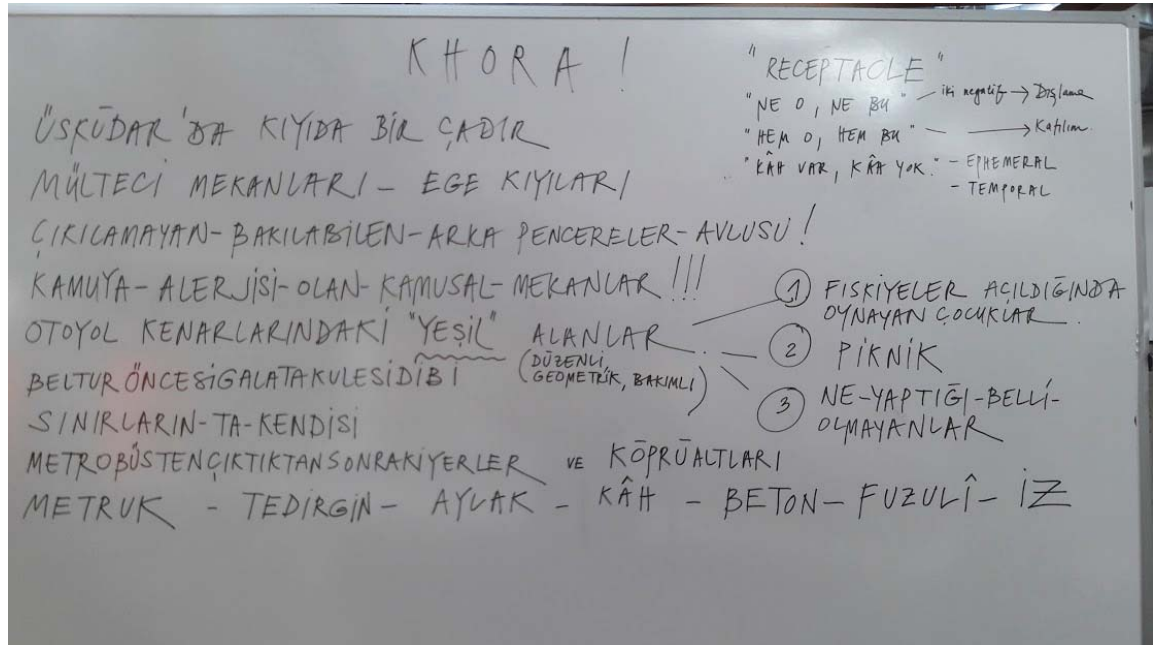


Image 2.15 scenes from the workshop *Critical Urban Practice* with architecture students, by Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Cindoruk, Yedikule, Istanbul, October 8-9th 2016 (photograph: Aslıhan Demirtaş)

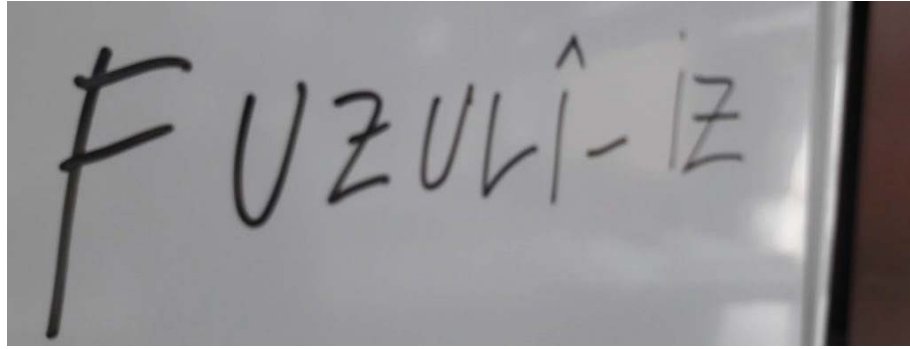


Image 2.16 scenes from the workshop *Critical Urban Practice* with architecture students, by Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Cindoruk, Yedikule, Istanbul, October 8-9th 2016, details from the whiteboard *Fuzulî-İz (Needless Trace)* (photograph: Aslıhan Demirtaş)

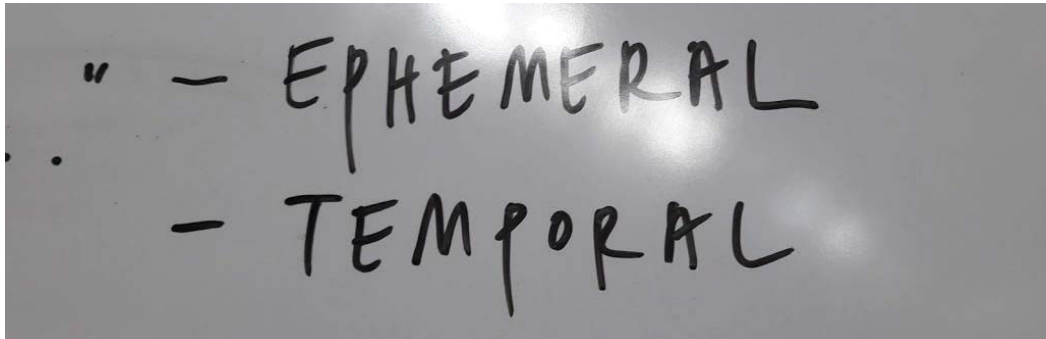


Image 2.17 scenes from the workshop *Critical Urban Practice* with architecture students, by Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Cindoruk, Yedikule, Istanbul, October 8-9th 2016, details from the whiteboard *Ephemeral and Temporal* (photograph: Aslıhan Demirtaş)



Image 2.18 scenes from the workshop *Critical Urban Practice* with architecture students, by Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Cindoruk, Yedikule, Istanbul, October 8-9th 2016 (photograph: Aslıhan Demirtaş)

3. COLLECTIVITY

As the title ‘How Will We Live Together?’ of the forthcoming *La Biennale di Venezia 17th Architecture Exhibition* reveals, the ‘collectivity’ has become another much-debated issue recently (Sarkis, 2019). As Vaughan puts forward, after the global financial crisis of the late 2000s, in a landscape of widening political divides and economic inequalities, people in localized communities have begun to seek for other ways of sustainable living – environmentally, culturally, and economically (2012). People who no longer trust either major corporations or governments, come together with shared concerns for new ways of producing, living, and expressing (Ibid.). No need to say, the development of new technologies and communication systems support the emergence of such new possibilities.

From a feminist perspective, practice is not an individual act, but an interactive and reflexive process that is generated through social relations of exchange. Furthermore, considering feminism’s bid to empower community against oppression and discrimination, we may interpret collectivity as a major sensitivity that a feminist approach entails. For Sara Ahmed, a collective is “what does not stand still but creates and is created by movement”, and ‘we’ is a ‘hopeful signifier’ of feminist collectivity (2017, pp. 2, 31). In this regard, as Elke Krasny and Meike Schalk (2017, p. 140) also maintain, Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s (2003) conceptualization of community provides a fruitful ground. Mohanty borrows Benedict Anderson’s (1983) concept of ‘imagined communities’ and broadens its denotations. While Anderson interprets community in terms of the nation-state, Mohanty draws on the notion to define feminism as an ‘imagined community’ of subjects with diverse histories and occupying different social locations, yet who are “united in a common political struggle of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but systemic” (Mohanty, 2003, cited in Krasny and Schalk, 2017, p. 140). She redefines the terms ‘imagined communities’ and

‘communities of resistance’ to imply “potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries”, attributing them a political, rather than a cultural, potential (Mohanty, Russo, and Torres, 1991, p. 4 cited in Krasny and Schalk, 2017, p. 140). For her, community is an entity that is not given and fixed, but has to be “produced and reproduced” (2003, cited in Krasny and Schalk, 2017, p. 140). Therefore, as Krasny and Schalk suggest, community building might be considered as a complex political process “by way of actively producing and reproducing the very politics of the community” (2017, p. 140).

We may trace such an understanding of collectivity as a political claim in diverse approaches to spatial practice. Jane Rendell (2007; 2011), for instance, refers to socialist design collectives of the 1970s and the rise of feminist research in architecture in the 1990s, arguing that the role of collectivity as a socially engaged critical practice marked a radical shift in architecture (pp. 16, 55). *Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative*, which began to practice in the early 1980s in the UK, could be considered as a pioneering collective of spatial practice that adopts a feminist discourse.³⁰ They were among the first ones who problematized issues like women and built environment, women in the architectural profession, feminist theory and women’s experiences in urban design. Embracing collectivity as a major principle, *Matrix* operated in two main areas: ‘public-funded social spatial productions’ and ‘technical advice’ to make design and construction more understandable for local communities. They experimented on participatory methods to empower user groups and laborers throughout the design and production process, which made them transcend the conventional roles in the architectural profession (Awan, Schneider, and Till, 2011, pp. 171-172).

The approach of *Matrix* to the issue of collectivity was later embraced by their successors. For instance, *muf* describes its way of working with reference to the concepts of ‘consultation’ and ‘collaboration’ (Dodd, 2012, p. 54). They leave the process open, spontaneous, and ambiguous to include “the voice of others” to generate “spaces that have an equivalence of experience for all who navigate them both physically and conceptually” (Dodd, 2012, pp. 54-56). They work collectively with

³⁰ Spatial Agency. <https://www.spatialagency.net/database/matrix.feminist.design.co-operative> (Accessed: December 2019)

local communities as a way of “an authorial uncertainty which are liberating”, and to shift the notion of authorship to question the neutrality of their role as architects (Dodd, 2012, p. 55). In a similar manner, *taking place* explains their working method by reference to the concepts of ‘collaboration’ and ‘exchange’ (Dwyer, 2012, p. 53). However, differently from *muf* who does not express an overtly feminist discourse, they claim “collective instincts in feminist practice”, and interpret collectivity as a tool to explore the possibilities of feminine writing for generating “more than a process alone” (Ibid.).

3.1 The Roots of Feminist Collectivity in Turkey

Although Turkey still lacks women’s (or feminist) organizations in spatial practice, it has accommodated a lively scene of feminist collectivity ever since the early 20th century.³¹ Yet it was the first half of the 1980s when an organized and independent feminist movement flourished from the meetings of women in consciousness raising groups in Ankara and Istanbul (Kandiyoti, 2015[1997]; Sancar, 2012; Kardam and Ecevit, 2002, p. 89). As the feminist anthropologist Aksu Bora explains, this movement was predominantly influenced by the so-called ‘second wave’ feminist discourses and actions in the West, along with left-wing dissenting organizations of the 1970s (2002, p. 112). Women who took part in the consciousness raising groups describe the years between 1980 and 1990 as a period of ‘empowerment’, where women in Turkey adopted the slogan ‘the personal is political’. They drew attention to the problems of women and the meanings of womanhood, along with expressing differences between the experiences of men and women, and, most importantly, claiming feminism as ‘a social project’ (Timisi and Gevrek, 2002, p. 14).

³¹ Although it is generally overlooked, the Ottoman period accommodated a vibrant scene of organized movements by women. Triggered by an atmosphere of emancipation during the second constitutional monarchy period (*II. Meşrutiyet*), women began to question the society and their social locations, challenged the inequalities and traditions which restricted them, and demanded freedom. They transformed their struggle into an organized movement, by establishing associations, publishing magazines, organizing conferences and meetings – which might be interpreted as the first feminist ‘consciousness raising’ activities. (Çakır, 2011[1994]; Yıldırım, 2019a)

Later on, the meetings of these groups were carried from domestic spaces to public spaces. It was 1985 when a meeting was announced in newspapers and held in public space for the first time, in the cinema *Metropol* in Ankara (Timisi and Gevrek, 2002, p. 20). Following this meeting, women went out to streets, organized campaigns and demonstrations, published newspapers and magazines. *Dayağa Karşı Dayanışma Kampanyası* (Campaign for Solidarity Against Beating), *Annenizi Seviyor Karınızı Dövüyor Musunuz* (Do You Love Your Mother but Beat Your Wife) *Perşembe Grubu* (The Thursdays Group), *Kadın Şenliği* (Women's Festival) were among the first initiatives which women collectively performed in public space with a particularly feminist discourse (Timisi and Gevrek, 2002, p. 23). Gülnur Savran (1998, cited in Koçali, 2002, p. 74), an author of the influential feminist magazine *Pazartesi*, explains these initiatives as a transition from a period of 'ideological knowledge creation' and 'fermentation' to a period of campaigns and dynamism. This dynamism, and the claim of public space by feminist women, needs to be interpreted with reference to the political climate of the times. Turkey, in these years, witnessed a revival of political movements that were suppressed by the military coup of the 1980 (Türkay, 2018). In Gümüş's terms, it was a period when "very different people were gathering and making lots of things. Everyone was trying to make 'the place' exist through their own means" although the sources were severely limited (2017).

As Savran also argues, the early 1990s marked the beginning of another, a third phase – a period of 'institutionalization and project feminism' (Savran, 1998, cited in Koçali, 2002, p. 74). Turkey, in these years, became a party in international agreements, and women's issues became part of the governmental policy-making (Kardam and Ecevit, 2002, p. 91). The country was in the process of transition towards a neoliberal integration with global trends (Keyder, 2010a, p. 177). As global meetings such as *The Fourth World Conference of Women* and *Habitat II The United Nations Conference* took place in the country, women were able to come together with other women from other countries and evaluate their own movement (Kardam and Ecevit, 2002, p. 91). Departments of gender studies were opened in universities also in these years, introducing feminist research into Turkey's academia. As such, feminism was no longer a movement of women from the three major cities of Turkey; it also flourished in various cities like Mersin, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, and Samsun (Kardam and Ecevit,

2002, p. 90). Women initiated various foundations, groups, and media that enabled fragmentation and differences of opinion. On the other hand, this fragmentation also triggered disassemblies. Filiz Koçali (2002, p. 74), Aksu Bora and Asena Günel (2002, p. 8) describe this so-called third phase as a time when each group was devoted to ‘their own projects’. This might also be related to the newly emerging landscape of ‘city entrepreneurs’ and autonomous new cultural actors of the time who ‘sought to exist in the early period of the informal neoliberal environment with an aim to reserve a place for themselves’ (Keyder, 2010a, pp. 177-178; Kortun, 2017). It should also be stated that this fragmentation took place in a new political atmosphere in the country when public opposition regressed and political conflicts “remained on the agenda” (Bora and Günel 2002, p. 8). As the streets became empty, feminism receded from the street (Ibid.)

3.2 Feminist Sensitivities of Collectivity in Turkey

It is possible to trace the stimulations of this ‘recede from the street’ in a flourishing scene of artistic production of the time. The 1990s witnessed a revival of the issues of identity and gender in art. In this atmosphere, women artists adopted feminism and questioned their gender identity (Antmen, 2015b, p. 17). Moreover, these artists embraced ‘unprecedented’ ways of art-making, some of which might be considered as spatial productions. The art critic Ahu Antmen explains this tendency with the fading ‘dominant artistic values’ of the painting tradition which enabled for women to adopt new languages in mediums such as installation and performance, as ‘alternative’ mediums that had not historically identified with men (2015b, p. 19-20). ‘Women-only’ exhibitions were organized for the first time, where women took initiative for their forms of visibility (Antmen, 2017, p. 93). It was when issues such as women identity and family in traditional and modern social norms, representations of female sexuality in the media, women’s labor in the capitalist order were problematized by women artists, who adopted the motto ‘the personal is political’ (Antmen, 2015b, p. 17). In this environment, Esra Ersen, *Kültür*, Hale Tenger, and Şükran Moral are among the names who performed these new expressions through spatial interventions as ‘unprecedented’

mediums of their time, and challenged the notions of ‘public’ and ‘private’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, ‘we’ and ‘the other’, power and oppression.

3.2.1 Esra Ersen

Esra Ersen’s practice could be interpreted as a precursor of a feminist sensitivity of collectivity in spatial artistic productions, even though she does not overtly name herself as feminist. Since the mid-1990s, Ersen performs interventions in public spaces to provide encounter and interaction. She problematizes the ‘public’ character of public spaces, and seeks to challenge its inclusions and exclusions through her interventions in various places such as parks, museums, warehouses, Ottoman palaces, prisons (Kosova, 2011).³² As an early work, for instance, she placed chairs from the houses of old women in Kadıköy, Istanbul on their street to appropriate the street as a place for interaction for both the women and the passers-by.³³ Ersen’s approach to public space calls to mind *muf*’s public interventions for “fleeting moments of generosity and hospitality” in the same years (Dodd, 2012, p. 54).

As a ‘newcomer’ in Weimar, Germany in 1998, Ersen asked people in the neighborhood to bring a chair from their houses, which she used to create a temporary kitchen on the street. There she cooked the Turkish dessert *aşure* with the help of people, and delivered it to provide a place to meet and share. As explained by the art critic Erden Kosova, this performance as a practice “embraces human life and plurality provided by the diverse chairs from diverse people, in opposition to current practices of social exclusion” (2011, pp. 46-47). Ersen’s *aşure* could be interpreted as a feminist response to the performance ‘Rice and Discussion Place’ by Sarkis in 1995, where he delivered the dish Ottoman rice for the visitors of the Istanbul Biennial in the exhibition venue. We may argue that Ersen’s performance problematized both Sarkis’s and the biennial’s conceptions of ‘publicity’ and ‘traditions’, suggesting heterogeneous definitions of a community. Her understanding of community unfolds when we consider her choice of *aşure*:

³² For instance, *Dialogues* for 15th Contemporary Artists Exhibition, Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum, 1994, *Encounter* for 4th Istanbul Biennial, Antrepo, Istanbul, 1995, *Testimony*, Karlau Prison, Graz, 2003, *There is No Demonstration in Disneyland*, Luxembourg, 2004.

³³ *Ayrılıkçeşme Street*, Kadıköy, Istanbul, 1993.

traditionally, the dish is a heterogeneous mixture of diverse grains, fruits, nuts, and spices that a household has at the moment, without any fixed recipes or origin.

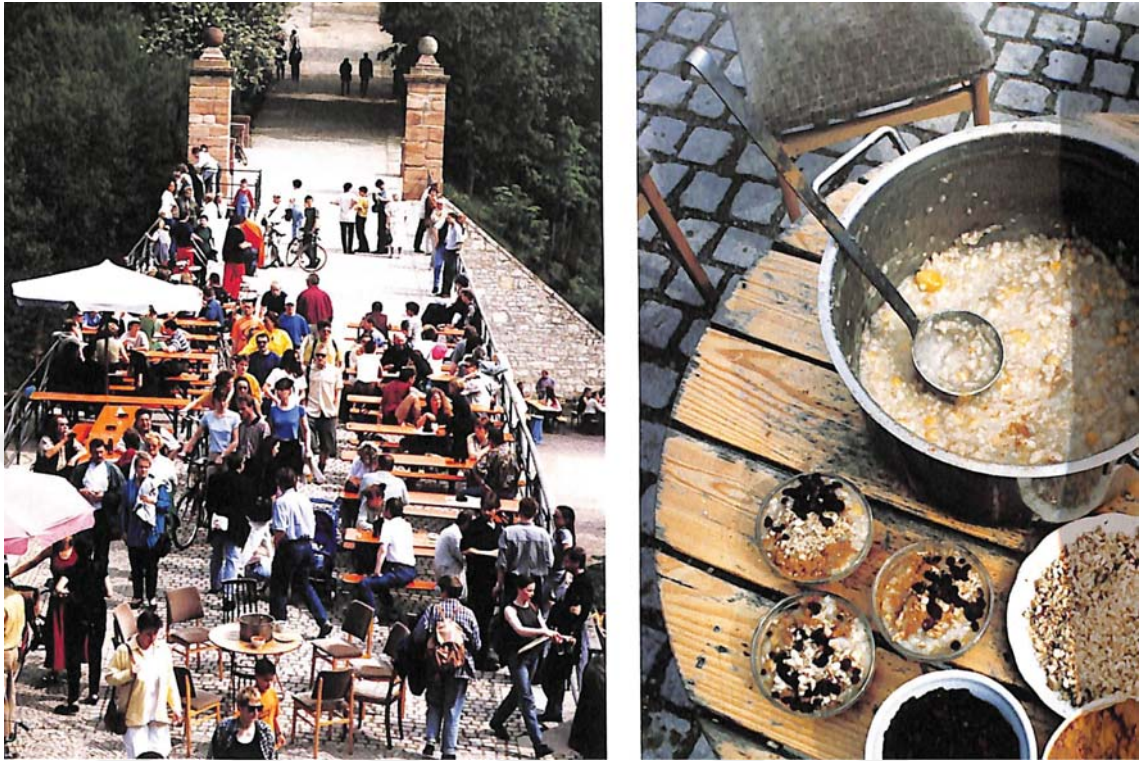


Image 3.1 scenes from Esra Ersen's aşure, Weimar, Germany, 1998 (Kosova, 2011, p. 46)



Image 3.2 scenes from Esra Ersen's aşure, Weimar, Germany, 1998 (Kosova, 2011, p. 46)

3.2.2 *Kültür*

To contrast different perspectives on collectivity in in that period, we may take a closer look to the women artists collective *Kültür*.³⁴ For ‘Karanfildköy: A Gender Project’, they concentrated on migrant women from the *gecekondu* neighborhood *Karanfildköy* in Istanbul, who were working illegally in the textile industry that was emerged in the 1990s (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 1998, p. 130). When the collective was invited to participate to the 5th Istanbul Biennial in 1997 which had the title ‘On Life, Beauty, Translations and Other Difficulties’, they decided to apply the title to their work in *Karanfildköy* in collaboration with the local associations (Çalıkoğlu, 2007, pp. 131-132). Instead of settling into biennial venues, they carried the biennial to *Karanfildköy*, in the form of public forums attended by local community, artists, academicians, NGOs, and activists, where issues of identity, labor, quality of urban life, and the production of space were discussed (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 1998, pp. 130-131). In a similar manner to Esra Ersen, *Kültür* problematized the definitions of publicity, in search for activating temporal spaces of exchange. *Kültür*’s attempt to apply the biennial to empower the community in *Karanfildköy* may well be interpreted as a feminist tactic of appropriation of fixed structures.



Image 3.3 *Kültür* during a meeting, Istanbul, 1997 (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 1998, p. 130)

³⁴ Started off by Yasemin Baydar Demir (who later founded the collective *:mentalkLINIK*), Ayşe Durakbaşı, Gülsün Karamustafa, Tül Akbal Sualp, Nihan Tuna, and Ayla Yüce, later on, Şeyma Reisoğlu Nalça and Meral Özbek.

3.2.3 *The Room Project*

Another women artists collective from the next generation, *Oda Projesi* or *The 'Room Project'*, embraced these tactics of empowerment and appropriation for community building in the environment of the 2000s.³⁵ It was when Istanbul's globalization resulted in a haphazard pattern, as an irregular topology of urban exclusion and dissolution which the urban sociologist Çağlar Keyder defines as "a divided city" (2010a, pp. 179-184; 2010b, pp. 27-28). These years are explained through the emergence of a complex layer of urban issues, such as the urbanization of the rural, ad-hoc creations and the intransigence of traditional cultures, the new conditions of everyday life, the tension between home and street, and their appropriations of urban space (Kurtuluş, 2005; Keyder, 2008; 2009; 2010a). On the other hand, in this period a new creative middle-class was emerged, triggering gentrification processes in Istanbul's old neighborhoods. Due to the shift of Istanbul's middle-class towards new districts with modern housing and infrastructure since the 1950s, the old neighborhoods in the city center were settled by the urban poor (Kurtuluş, 2005, p. 149; Şen, 2005, pp. 130, 141). When Istanbul was on the verge the new millennium, these areas became targets of capital on Istanbul's route to global marketing. Thus, gentrification projects had started (Ibid.).

In this atmosphere, *The Room Project* had focused on the *Galata* district of Istanbul along with a number of activist groups that were organized against the process of gentrification (Gümüş, 2017). *The Room Project* takes its name from an apartment room which they rented in the neighborhood in 2000 (Açıkkol, Savaş, and Yersel, 2018). They transformed the apartment room into a public space, as a place for workshops, picnics, plays, meetings, and other needs and gatherings. The place was used by neighbors, children, musicians, artists, sociologists, architects, and many more (Açıkkol, Savaş, and Yersel, 2005). The 'room' hosted regular public forums to discuss the struggles and legal rights of the local community (Ibid.). *The Room Project* appropriated not only the room but also the streets in Galata: in collaboration with other artists and children from the neighborhood, they organized carnivalesque 'Galata

³⁵ The collective is formed by the artists Özge Açıkkol, Güneş Savaş, and Seçil Yersel in 2000. The English name 'The Room Project' is used by them.

parade's and painting events (Açikkol, Savaş, and Yersel, 2005, pp. 253). Accordingly, they activated another temporal 'room' in the slum areas of the neighborhood *Gültepe*: when they were asked to participate to the exhibition 'Becoming a Place' in Elgiz Museum in 2001, they preferred to settle into an apartment room in the museum's neighborhood rather than the museum, in a similar manner to *Kültür* (Kosova et al., 2001).

When their place in Galata was evicted in 2005 due to the process of gentrification, *The Room Project* applied a 'mobile status' to continue "raising questions on space and place, production of relationships, changes and potentials" by using mediums such as radio stations, books, and newspapers (Oda Projesi, 2008). In 2009 they settled into a 'shop' in *Gülsuyu-Gülensu*, one of Istanbul's first gecekondu neighborhoods, which was in the process of urban transformation (Sarıyüz, Oda Projesi, Elveren, and Yıldız, 2019). They conducted an oral history project to document the 'complex histories' of illegal urbanization in the neighborhood since the 1950s, made interviews with the locals about the issues of migration, the past and future of their neighborhood (Sarıyüz, Oda Projesi, Elveren, and Yıldız, 2019, p. 6).³⁶ They rented a former shop in the neighborhood for two years and transformed the space into a place for events, meetings and other 'ambiguous functions' like an extension of the street market on wednesdays (Sarıyüz, Oda Projesi, Elveren, and Yıldız, 2019, pp. 21, 23). They searched for engaging other collectivities, for instance, organized workshops for a 'guide for a Gülsuyu-Gülensu-specific architectural design' with students from the architecture department in Bilgi University, and spontaneous street festivals with artists (Sarıyüz, Oda Projesi, Elveren, and Yıldız, 2019, p. 44). *The Room Project* explains their 'shop' experience as a product of 'multiple collectivities' which is "an agency between the boundaries of hospitality and the ethics of being a guest" (Sarıyüz, Oda Projesi, Elveren, and Yıldız, 2019, p. 23). This sensitivity of collectivity calls to mind *muf*'s approach to public space, which is defined as practicing generosity within the hospitality of collective space (Dodd, 2012, p. 54). Moreover, we may argue that in a similar manner to Esra Ersen and *Kültür*, *The Room Project* performs these multiple collectivities as a

³⁶ In collaboration with Ece Sarıyüz, Nikolaus Hirsch, and Philipp Misselwit.

socially engaged political and critical practice, to challenge and appropriate the strategies in public space.



Image 3.4 everyday life in *The Room Project*, hoola hoop with Naz Erayda, Istanbul, 2001, (Açikkol, Ö., Savaş, G., and Yersel, S., 2005, p. 253)



Image 3.5 everyday life in *The Room Project*, picnic and cinema with Erik Göngrich, Istanbul, 2001, available at: <https://werkleitz.de/en/persons/oda-projesi> (accessed: January 2020)



Image 3.6 Announcement for *The Room Project's* 'audio' room in *Açık Radyo*, Istanbul, 2008 available at: <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com/2008/01/radyo-mu-dedin.html> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 3.7 The 'shop' in *Gülsuyu-Gülensu*, while Selma Hanım from the neighborhood was preparing the entrance as her 'temporal shop' at the street market on wednesdays, Istanbul, 2009 (Sarıyüz, Oda Projesi, Elveren, and Yıldız, 2019, p. 21)

3.2.4 *Mutfak / Matbakh* and *düşhane*

Two collectives following the traces of *The Room Project* in the 2010s, *Mutfak / Matbakh*, and *düşhane* perform collectivity to resist the global migration crisis of the current times. As initiatives of women in border towns Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, they aim to provide dialogue and empowerment, especially for immigrant and refugee women and children. Through their works that range from creating gardens and kitchens to organizing festivals, they transform spaces into places of meeting and discussion, and embrace the influence of diverse cultures in everyday life (*düşhane*, 2016; Tarlan, 2017). Initiated by “whom don’t look at architecture in an archi-manner” in 2011, *düşhane* is a “dream-design platform” in Istanbul and Şanlıurfa (*düşhane*, 2016). They describe *düşhane* as a collective workshop that connects architecture to other disciplines, in order to experience new ways and creative methods for expressing feelings and realizing dreams through curiosity (Ibid.). Along with publications and proposals such as such as *Düşkent Urfa Mobile City Guide*, their works mainly focus on creating temporal spaces and events, such as *Urfa Dreams Panel and April Festival*, *Children from Halfeti Design Their Future*, and *Barutçu Han Cultural Center* (Ibid.). They also organized a number of public forums in collaboration with artists, academicians, and NGOs to discuss the issues of public space, the right to the city, the production of space, urban transformation, and sustainability with local people (Sabah, 2013).

Started off in the same year with *düşhane*, *Mutfak / Matbakh* is an initiative by the non-profit organization *Kırkayak Kültür* and women in Gaziantep, where migrant and refugee women have created and run a kitchen and a garden as a place to eat. For them, the place serves not only as a meeting and discussion place, but also to explore the influence of migration on food culture (Tarlan, 2017). Both *düşhane* and *Mutfak / Matbakh* make people share a discourse around the feelings, actions, and spaces of women and children, as a way of community building. Moreover, through their collective modalities both of these groups perform empowerment as a feminist tactic. Through the spaces and temporal events they create, *düşhane* nourishes agency of women and children in urban spaces, and *Mutfak / Matbakh* generates employment for migrant and refugee women.



Image 3.8 *Mutfak / Matbakh* during ‘women’s workshop’ and ‘cricao hummus workshop’, Gaziantep, 2017, available at: <http://www.kirkayak.org/genel/matbakh-mutfak-kadin-atolyesi-ve-cricaoonun-humus-workshopu-yapildi/> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 3.9 *düşhane* during *Urfa Dreams Panel and April Festival*, Şanlıurfa, 2013. Available at: <https://dushanesi.wordpress.com/> (accessed: December 2019)

3.2.5 *Another Kind of Workshop, The Curious Steps, Istanbul Walkabouts, The Purple Studio, and Aslıhan Demirtaş*

The practices of *Another Kind of Workshop*, *The Curious Steps*, *Istanbul Walkabouts*, *The Purple Studio*, and Aslıhan Demirtaş can also be discussed in terms of a feminist collective approach to spatial practice. *Another Kind of Workshop*, to start with, embraces a collective sensitivity to nourish agency in urban spaces. Collectivity, for them, is “sharing possibilities” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). To pursue ‘other modalities’ in architecture and life, they exhibit their collective approach to generate “a kind of solidarity” as “one cannot change the world alone”: *Haliç Dayanışması (Solidarity for Golden Horn)*, *Haydarpaşa Dayanışması (Solidarity for Haydarpaşa)*, *Birarada Foundation*, *Kampüssüzler (The Campusless)*, *Kocaeli Dayanışma Akademisi (Kocaeli Academy for Solidarity)*, *Mimar Meclisi (Architects’ Assembly)*, *Mimarlıkta Dayanışmacı Taban Hareketi (Architects’ Grassroots Movement of Solidarity)*, *Müşterekler Çalışma Grubu (Commons Working Group)*, *UNESCO Karşı Forum (UNESCO Counter Forum)* are among the groups what they call as their “intersections” (Ibid.). Their current works include the documentation and proposals for repurposing the former shipyards in collaboration with *Solidarity for Golden Horn*, preservation proposals for the Haydarpaşa Train Station building in collaboration with *Solidarity for Haydarpaşa*, rethinking the spaces of the academia and learning in collaboration with *Birarada Foundation* (Ibid.) They emphasize, in particular, their effort to preserve this network as a loose and flexible structure of these ‘intersections’ rather than a fixed structure. This collectivity of intersections, for them, not only provides freedom to “explore the world together” but also creates a ground to walk in others’ shoes (Ibid.).

In a similar manner to *Another Kind of Workshop*’s ‘intersections’, *The Curious Steps* approaches collectivity as a way to explore the city: their walking routes are open-endedly formed by the suggestions of more than 40 voluntary storytellers (Ova and Semih, 2019). Through an open call on their website, they ask people’s contributions for either a walking route or a story at a place.³⁷ They explain that their first walk in the Beyoğlu district was formed during the collective workshop *Mobilizing Memory for*

³⁷ Cins Adımlar. <http://cinsadimlar.org/> (Accessed: December 2019)

Action in collaboration with *Karakutu Foundation* (Ova and Semih, 2019). Following the same approach, the walks of *Istanbul Walkabouts* are formed through the reactions of the both human and non-human participants during the walks (Tümerdem, 2019b). Tümerdem (2019a) interprets collective agency as a tool to reject the heroic figure of the individual ‘walking man’.

As another practice focusing on collective agency to reject this masculine figure of the modernity, *The Purple Studio* experimented on its exposures on pedagogy. Özlem Erdoğan Erkarıslan interprets their collective approach due to a need for an educational model “to raise architects who would get rid of their ‘one and only artist syndrome’ and work collectively with people from other professions that have diverse roles in the creation of built environment” (2009, p. 101). We may trace their approach to collectivity when we consider Erkarıslan’s conceptualization of *The Purple Studio* in three principles: creating a ground for negotiation, creating environments of communication for sharing and open dialogue, offering diverse ways of thinking in architecture profession in opposition to the ‘star architect’ figure (Ibid.). For Erkarıslan (2019), the negotiation operated through two steps in the studio: ‘persuasion’ as a conventional pedagogic method, and ‘discussion and critique’ as an egalitarian process that differs from the conventional hierarchical models. She explains that they focused on not only producing but also discussing collectively, to transcend the conventional dialogues between students and instructors (Ibid.). In this regard, a collective ‘quantitative studio diary’ was created in a blog format, for nourishing open dialogue and breaking the hierarchies (Erkarıslan, 2009, p. 102). With the same purposes, they encouraged the students to work in groups with changing roles and organized open panels, which resulted in “a positive impact on students’ perspective about teamwork” and “made them observe that each labor is equally valuable” (Erkarıslan, 2019).

Correspondingly, ‘negotiation’ and ‘collaboration’ are among the central concepts in Aslıhan Demirtaş’s (2015) practice, as a way to ‘dissent within’ architecture and to ‘unlearn’ her former experience of ‘mainstream (global) architecture’. Demirtaş is involved in *The Initiative for the Preservation of Historic Yedikule Gardens* which was initiated in 2013 against the urban transformation projects in the urban farms in Yedikule, Istanbul (Ibid.). Within the scope of the initiative, she contributes various

works that range from organizing ‘Istanbul’s Lettuce Festival’s to creating temporary playgrounds with students for the children of Yedikule (Demirtaş and Ozar, 2018; Demirtaş and Sarı, 2019). Demirtaş (2019) considers her activism as a design practice which enables to activate design as a tool for negotiation:

“I see my activism as a member of a multidisciplinary initiative to protect and revive the 1600 years old Historic Yedikule Urban Gardens as a creative act towards re-imagining and re-designing the urban. Using design as a tool for negotiation with the local authorities and, collaborating with the gardeners, archeologists, historians, preservationists, artists amongst many and advocating the rightful and hopeful existence of agriculture in a 15 million population city is a design practice.”

We may argue that these understandings of collectivity as a design practice to ‘re-imagine’ and ‘re-design’ spaces is a key instrument in her practice. In a similar manner to *muf*, Demirtaş (2017; 2019) keeps the processes open and ambiguous to include multiple voices, which is manifested through her works created collectively with sound designers, performers, gardeners, digital fabricators, students, curators, passers-by, residents, future users and caretakers of those places. In this regard, she performs a similar sensitivity of collectivity with *Another Kind of Workshop* and *The Curious Steps*, who form their productions through collective processes. Furthermore, we may observe that these collaborations constitute complex and intersectional ‘networks’ of agency in Aslihan Demirtaş’s practice: for instance, we encounter with the sound designer and composer Tolga Tüzün in the networks of *The Plinth* (2017), *It is Always Spring* (2017) and *MALDOROR* (2019); the earth-rammer Nazım Can Cihan in Demirtaş’s earthworks such as *Nâkil* (2016) and *The Plinth* (2017). Not only individuals but also groups and organizations as various forms of collectivities appear in these networks: for instance, the *Association of Archaeologists Istanbul Branch* has collaborated with Demirtaş in the production process of the rammed earth installation *Nâkil* and the proposal for *La Biennale di Venezia 17th International Architecture Exhibition* (2019), while *SALT* has hosted *Knit Wall* (2014) and *Winter Garden* (2018). These networks of collective agency might be regarded as an interpretation of Mohanty’s (2003) feminist conceptualization of community, as a reflexive and interactive process “by way of actively producing and reproducing the very politics of the community” (Krasny and Schalk, 2017, p. 140). Moreover, from a feminist

perspective we may expose the collectivities formed in these fluid networks as embodiments of practicing subjectivity.



Image 3.10 the workshop *Critical Urban Practice* with architecture students, instructed by Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Cindoruk, in Yedikule, Istanbul, October 8-9th 2016 (photograph: Aslıhan Demirtaş)



Image 3.11 Aslıhan Demirtaş and Yiğit Ozar (director of the Association of Archaeologists Istanbul Branch) from *The Initiative for the Preservation of Historic Yedikule Gardens* during an interview by Yağmur Yıldırım for the radio program 'Açık Mimarlık' in *Açık Radyo*, October 18th, 2018 (photograph: Yağmur Yıldırım)

4. SUBJECTIVITY

Tracing over the idiom ‘feminisms’ in the title of this study, we may say that feminist thinking today stands up for ‘difference’ and ‘subjectivity’, rather than a singular and unifying ideology. As Luce Irigaray (2008) states, if democracy would be understood as an opportunity for each one to live one’s own singularity and sharing a common undifferentiated coexistence, then a more democratic and sustainable living might be pursued through considering and preserving difference, not through uniformity and equality. This is the only way, to her, to withstand falling into “an anonymous community of people in which we lose our subjectivity, our desire, our happiness” (Irigaray, 2008, p. 70). From a feminist perspective, the way of liberation is only possible through the awareness of the existence of ‘the other’ and these multiple worlds of differences, as all subjects construct separate physical, psychological, biological, sexual, spiritual, historical, and cultural qualities within their own separate worlds. For this to be possible, Irigaray (1985; 2008) claims, developing a ‘new’ language is needed – a language that enables gendered multiple cultures and new lives. Criticism, according to her, is a key tool for this new language: it is “the first step on the path to go out of the prison of a tradition in which [one] has to conform to which are not suitable [for them]” (Irigaray, 2008, p. 57).

Hélène Cixous (1976), in a similar manner, puts forward the concept of ‘*écriture féminine*’, feminine writing, as a major tool for these new languages. This, according to her, is the way to pursue what Irigaray defines as “living together in a lasting way” (2004, pp. 123-133). Both Cixous’s and Irigaray’s ideas on difference and feminine textuality had a pivotal impact on feminist research in the 1990s, which formed the debates in *Alterities* on spatial understandings of these ideas.

4.1 Feminist Sensitivites of Subjectivity in Turkey

4.1.1 *Another Kind of Workshop, Istanbul Walkabouts, and The Curious Steps*

Drawing on *Another Kind of Workshop*'s statement to requestion 'how' and 'for whom' to alter in each process, we may observe their pursuance of alterities in spatial practice through differences and subjectivities (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). As their open-ended collective 'Dictionary of Everyday Experiences' demonstrates, their practice aspires to reflect multiple subjectivities and standpoints to "generate multiple 'other' modalities" and "manifest difference" (Ibid.). We may illuminate a similar sensitivity of multiple subjectivities in the walks by *Istanbul Walkabouts* and *The Curious Steps*, which are formed through the contributions of the participants (Ova and Semih, 2019; Tümerdem, 2019b). For *The Curious Steps*, their walking routes unveil not only 'hidden' stories of the city but also the subjective viewpoints of the voluntary storytellers who make people discover "the stories they know, like, and care for" (Ova and Semih, 2019).

In this regard, we may argue for the significance of feminist subjectivity as a political claim to conceive one's own position, to question the construction of one's own subjectivity, or else how far one is subjected by a discipline, situation, and socio-political milieu (Frichot, 2016, p. 27). Donna Haraway suggests the concepts 'situated knowledges', 'critical reflexivity', and 'diffraction' as tools for feminist subjectivity and critical interpretation to challenge transcendent cultures (1988; 1997, p. 37). As a response to the conceptions of universality and objectivity, she calls out for 'situating knowledges' from positions of partiality, which is "in a sense of being for some worlds and not others" (Haraway 1991; 1997, p. 37). For her, knowledge making inherently embodies "crafting subject positions" and "ways of inhabiting such positions" since we live in a world of "historically specific, marked bodies of race, sex, and class" where constituted and constitutive practices generate and reproduce systems of stratified inequalities (Haraway, 1997, p. 36).

4.1.2 *The Purple Studio and The Room Project*

For Özlem Erdoğan Erkarlan (2019), *The Purple Studio* served to question not only the myths and norms in architecture profession and education, but also their own position:

“In my opinion, this was the biggest challenge. A conventional architecture studio always responds the question ‘how did I make?’ with an architectural production, however, we considered not only the production but also the process, the roles, and the dialogues. Thus, we aimed to respond the questions ‘who are we?’ and ‘how did we work?’ – these were unprecedented issues in an architecture studio ten years ago. I believe that this studio had an important mission in its time.”

As such, we may interpret *The Purple Studio*’s pedagogy to “break the unpleasant hierarchies in the studio” and reject the superior star-architect figure through mechanisms of shared decision making and negotiation as an experiment on what Haraway conceptualizes as situated knowledges, critical reflexivity, and diffraction (Erkarlan, 2019). The practice of *Another Kind of Workshop* might be interpreted as another pursuance of Haraway’s call when we consider their statement to request ‘how’ and ‘for whom’ to alter in each process (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). They emphasize their flexible structure of ‘intersections’ not only to “resist the dominant conceptions that have a history of two centuries”, but also as a tool to question their own position:

“We always try to open our minds through discussions. The best part of collaborating with others is to generate the ground for those discussions. Sometimes we make mistakes, however, with the help of that ground we realize and evaluate these mistakes through others’ eyes. As Eylem from *Commons Working Group* says, you should always have an available chair in your table. In other words, it is important to preserve that possibility of making one join you, without falling into a ghetto or a fixed community. That person would not conquer the world when s/he joins, however, we explore the world together by walking in each other’s shoes.” (Ibid.)

In a similar manner, *The Room Project* questions their own subjectivity as a critical perspective on their sphere of working and existing (Sarıyüz, Oda Projesi, Elveren, and Yıldız, 2019, p. 102). They explain that, differently from their other settlements, in *Gülsuyu-Gülensu*, they were “not from the neighborhood, but newcomers among a

group of researchers” (Ibid.). They interpret their ‘shop’ in Gülsuyu-Gülensu as a process to question their own position and agency:

“How do we differentiate ourselves once we are ‘from the neighborhood’ and then we leave, for instance, to participate an exhibition as artists? How do we make our self-criticism as the ones who have the potential to take part in the ongoing process of urban transformation? Which ethical positions should you consider when you are intervening in everyday life in a place where you are not invited to? Where, how, and with which purposes are the documents you created from that everyday life shared?” (Ibid.)

We might portray these questions of *The Room Project* in what Haraway (1997) defines as “built-in critical reflexivity”, where inhabiting subject positions should be “relentlessly visible and open to critical interventions” (p. 36).

4.1.3 Hale Tenger and Gülçin Aksoy

We may trace diverse spatial approaches to critical reflexivity in Turkey since the mid-1990s, when the country faced a high political tension. In the second half of the 1990s, Turkey had an economy in crisis, political turbulences, and social unrest as an everyday issue (Keyder, 2009; 2018). In the meantime, what Keyder (2009, pp. 24-28; 2010b, pp. 27-28; 2018) calls as ‘the informal globalization’ had triggered not only new markets, flows, and informal production strategies to emerge but also migrations from the “war-torn areas” of eastern and south-eastern Anatolia (Keyder, 2008, p. 518). For Keyder the migrants benefited from none of the “built-in mechanisms for alleviating the problems of integration” that had been the characteristics of the migrations in the previous periods (Ibid.). Such an environment caused a process of polarizations, dissolutions, and exclusions between the local administrations and the citizens, the middle-class and the urban poor, the ‘newcomers’ and the ‘locals’. The progressively privatized adjustments of the public sphere engendered new conflicts regarding ‘home’ and ‘street’ and ‘we’ and ‘the other’, as the social segregation had gained emergent dimensions rather than the conventional citizen-villager dichotomy (Ibid.).

Gülçin Aksoy and Hale Tenger are among the ones who had problematized the political and social climate of the time through their positions. Hale Tenger’s spatial works, to

start with, include ‘reconstructions’ of spaces that have impacts on either her or Turkey’s past, such as her studio, rooms from her childhood home, former warehouses, administration offices, or libraries. Through these reconstructions as creations of fictional spaces in real places, it can be said that Tenger interweaved her subjectivity with social and political ideologies embodied in urban spaces, questioning the issues of identity, the political shifts in Turkey, and the problems of her generation.

The curator René Block explains Tenger’s works within the political contexts where they were created – it was a time marked by political crises and social disturbances, when Turkey was at the threshold between the past and the present, and the West and the East (Tenger, Antmen and Block, 2007, p. 120). For Block, these issues were problematized in art for the first time in the works by Hale Tenger, who explored the effects of Turkey’s ‘modernization project’ on both the society and herself (Ibid.) For instance, Tenger ‘reconstructed’ her house where she grew up, in Ahu Antmen’s words, “to be there again – where the game started” (Tenger, Antmen, and Block, 2007, p. 120).³⁸ It was created when the political tension was high in Turkey in the mid-1990s, and Tenger’s childhood witnessed another period of tension after the military coup in 1980. Thus, Antmen interprets this reconstruction as a spatialized ‘self-portrait’ which externalizes her ‘inner’ worlds through spaces from her past and present (Ibid.).

For the 4th Istanbul Biennial *ORIENT/ATION* in 1995, Tenger created the work ‘We Didn’t Go Outside, We Were Always Inside’, an enclosed space with a sign ‘do not enter’ and a small guard booth (Tenger, Antmen, and Block, 2007, pp. 68-72). The interior of the space was decorated with kitsch images from rural places as well as national and cultural symbols (Ibid.). This space might be interpreted as an experiment to ‘orient’ either Istanbul or Turkey through her critical reflexivity, problematizing the notions of the imagined and the truth, inclusion and exclusion, ‘ours’ and the ‘others’ (Ibid.).

When Tenger was asked to make a work inside Atatürk Library, she created a ‘fictional space’ with the objects she found at the storage of the library.³⁹ Although it looked like a typical museum or an institutional space, this fictional space was full of

³⁸ *The Closet*, Istanbul, 1997.

³⁹ *The Necessity of Air*, Atatürk Library, Istanbul, 1992.

contradictions: for instance, the velvet curtains were not hiding a window, and the exhibition furniture was exhibiting things that would not wanted to be exhibited. This space could be interpreted as Tenger's questioning of the notions of the institution and the visitor, the actual and the virtual. She problematized the notions of 'the stranger' and 'the local', by using typical images of Istanbul – those were the days when the municipality officials were discussing to apply a visa for Istanbul for the ones who want to enter (Tenger, Antmen, and Block, 2007, pp. 35-41).



Image 4.1 *We Didn't Go Outside, We Were Always Inside*, Antrepo, Istanbul, 1995 (Tenger, Antmen, and Block, 2007, p. 69)

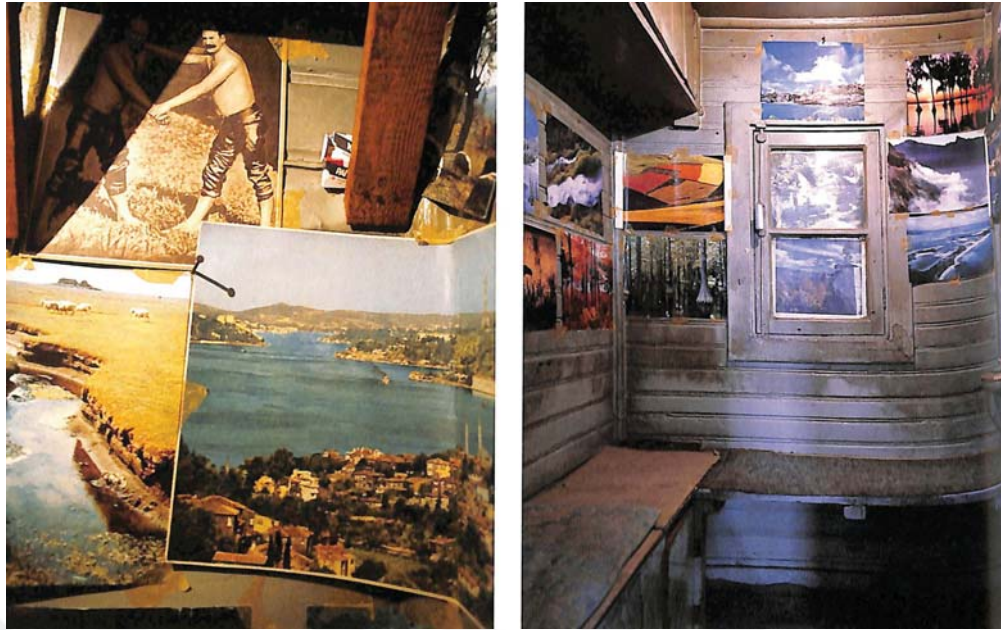


Image 4.2 details from *We Didn't Go Outside, We Were Always Inside*, Antrepo, Istanbul, 1995 (Tenger, Antmen, and Block, 2007, p. 70)



Image 4.3 *The Necessity of Air*, Atatürk Library, Istanbul, 1992 (Tenger, Antmen, and Block, 2007, pp. 32-33)



Image 4.4 *The Closet*, Istanbul, 1997 (Tenger, Antmen, and Block, 2007, p. 83)

An artist belonging to the same generation that had witnessed the “normalization process” after the military coup in 1980, Gülçin Aksoy, questioned social norms in search for “another language” (Antmen, 2014, pp. 8-9). We may interpret this search for another language with reference to Irigaray’s (2008, p. 57) call for criticism as the first step out of an environment that one doesn’t fit into. Through their critical reflexivity, both Tenger and Aksoy have addressed discourses of modernization and power, in relation to subjectivities of not only women but also others that power mechanisms suppress. They have challenged fixities such as the margin, the inside, the outside, and the everyday through their ‘situated knowledges’ – which Aksoy (2014) explains as “I can do my best to understand the place I stand”.

4.1.4 Ashhan Demirtaş

To resist the systems of stratified inequalities, subjectivity constitutes a nomadic modality in Rosi Braidotti’s contemporary conceptualization, as an affirmative approach for “unexpected possibilities” and “ethical forms of belonging” (2011; 2013, p. 103). Braidotti exhibits feminist subjectivity in a critical posthuman condition as a reaction to the essentialist subject of the Enlightenment and advanced capitalism. She explains this transcendental subject of the Enlightenment through the Vitruvian model of *Universal Man* and his partiality, which is assumed to be “masculine, white, urbanized, speaking a standard language, heterosexually inscribed in a reproductive unit and a full citizen of a recognized polity” (Irigaray, 1985, cited in Braidotti, 2013, p. 65). For Braidotti, this subject identifies himself as much by what he excludes from as by what he includes in, with a violent relationship to “the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized ‘others’ that occupied the slot of devalued difference” (2013, pp. 143-144). In response to this figure, she suggests a feminist subjectivity of “non-unitary identities and multiple allegiances” as a site for political and ethical accountability, for “collective imaginaries”, and “shared aspirations” (2013, pp. 102, 144). She brings forward the concepts ‘nomadic subjectivity’ and its ‘radical relationality’ as an “interconnection between female identity, feminist subjectivity, and the radical epistemology of nomadic transitions” (2013, p. 141). She interprets posthuman nomadic subjectivity as an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others including non-human and earth-others, in

opposition to the humanistic emphasis on Man as “a measure of all things” and “the domination and exploitation of nature”, which condemns the abuses of science and technology (2013, pp. 47-48). For her, this practice of “relating to others” requires the rejection of self-centered individualism, thus, enables an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings as a relational subject that is “constituted in and by multiplicity” and internally differentiated by working across differences (2013, pp. 48-49).

Both Haraway (2016; 1997, p. 95) and Braidotti (2013, p. 102) emphasize the urgency of claiming new ethics for a new “techno-scientific democracy” to resist the biopolitic, biocultural, biotechnic oppressions of today, sharing the planetary threats of climate change, environmental crisis, and extinction. For Haraway this might be enabled by the arrival of the age of *Chthulucene*, which she proposes as a response to the extremism of the Anthropocene or Capitalocene, the concepts to define our times through human actions or capitalist order (2016, p. 57). Taking its name from the spider *Pimosa Cthulhu*, Haraway’s concept of *Chthulucene* suggests perceiving our interdependencies in a way similar to tentacles of a spider. Haraway interprets *Chthulucene* as a practice of possible pasts, presents, and futures where all existences are interdependent to each other and the distinctions between nature, culture, organism, technology, language, and machine disappear (2016, p. 31). For this to be possible, similar to Braidotti’s radical relationality, Haraway suggests the concepts of *kin practices* and *sym-poiesis*, or *making-with*, for livable futures on a damaged planet (Ibid.).

To interpret Haraway’s and Braidotti’s call for sym-poiesis and radical relationality for ‘unexpected possibilities’ in our local context, we may turn back to Aslihan Demirtaş who grounds her practice on ways of coexistence. As Haraway draws attention to sym-poiesis as an understanding and practice of complex, dynamic, responsive, and interdependent systems (2016, p. 57), ‘thinking-with’, ‘making-with’, and ‘dissenting-within’ are major tools to pursue livable futures in Demirtaş’s (2019) practice. These tools for her operate through ‘unlearning’ the conventional definitions such as material, site, designer and architect, translating into “an acute awareness of what [her] actions, thought processes and decisions amount to vis-a-vis everything and everyone that exists on this planet”, which might be interpreted as a pursuit of radical relationality (Ibid.). Problematizing the modernist distinctions of human and non-human, nature and culture,

nature and urban, she embraces the notion of ‘earth-others’, which might be exhibited in a critical posthuman condition. This critical posthuman condition of ‘ethical forms of belonging’ is proposed by Braidotti (2013) against the configurations of the Enlightenment and advanced capitalism (p. 103).

For instance, for the public *Winter Garden* in one of the densest districts of Istanbul, Demirtaş applied a design to create a ‘comfort that is set for the plants’ rather than human visitors (2018; Demirtaş and Öner, 2018).⁴⁰ In search for altering the notion of ‘publicity’ to include earth-others, Demirtaş considers this public space as a “physical contemplation of the possibility of an unprivileged status for our spaces by asking the question ‘how can we coexist’” (2018). Some of the plants as ‘the residents’ of this public space are on loan from Istanbul’s botanical gardens and medical gardens, “in hopes to establish a sisterhood of plant centered institutions” (Ibid.). Another work of her, *It is Always Spring* is a ‘speculative’ indoor greenhouse space which problematizes the cycles and conditions applied in agriculture to keep the soil and the seeds ‘always awake’, as a ‘perpetual state of insomnia’ (Demirtaş, 2017).⁴¹ The *Winter Garden and It is Always Spring* might be interpreted as experiments of Braidotti’s conceptualization of nomadic subjectivity, as an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and earth-others. Braidotti argues for the significance of this interconnection as an opposition to the humanistic emphasis, “the domination and exploitation of nature” (2013, pp. 47-48). With the same approach, in her research and exhibition *Graft*, Demirtaş delves into the rivers and dams in Turkey, questioning the dominance of water as a privatized resource by political and economic systems of modernism (Yıldırım, 2017).⁴² With her rammed earth installations *Nâkil* and *The Plinth*, she questions the dominant conceptions of the ‘natural’ and the ‘(hu)man-made’, property, heritage, and commons (Ibid.).⁴³

In our interview, I asked Demirtaş to articulate a ‘to-do-list’ she made during our work for the proposal for the *Biennale* (2019). For me, these entries quickly written in a shared program of a group work could be interpreted as her tools for practicing subjectivity. Instead, she made small changes in the draft list, and sent me back as an

⁴⁰ *Winter Garden*, SALT Beyoğlu, Istanbul, 2018.

⁴¹ *It is Always Spring*, 13th Sharjah Biennial, Abud Efendi Mansion, Istanbul, 2017.

⁴² *Modern Essays 5: Graft*, SALT Galata, Istanbul, 2012, SALT Ulus, Ankara, 2013.

⁴³ *Nâkil*, TUYAP Artist Fair, Istanbul, 2016, *The Plinth*, collectorspace, Istanbul, 2017.

altered version, which might be considered as a ‘toolkit’ of her radical relationality (Demirtaş, 2019):

1. Try not to give packaged projects but initiate processes and empower your collaborators (they can also be your clients)
2. Think of an expanded architectural conceptualization and design to include next of kin practices such as gardening, farming, foresting, weaving, sawing, carpentry.
3. Humor, please let’s have humor, generate fun & joy.
4. Play, not work.
5. Reveal and/or activate the neglected, erased, undervalued.
6. Oppose generalizations.
7. Can we go a bit LeGuin somewhere?⁴⁴
8. Slow.
9. Speculate “what?” & “who is we”?
10. Remember that “the city gives the illusion earth does not exist.” (Robert Smithson)⁴⁵
11. Collaborate and also work alone sometimes.

These tools might be central instruments for her activism in *The Initiative for the Preservation of Historic Yedikule Gardens*, which Demirtaş considers as a “creative act towards re-imagining and re-designing the urban” (2019). Her definition of her experience in the Yedikule Gardens might be considered as a response to Braidotti’s conceptualization of feminist subjectivity of non-unitary identities and multiple allegiances, as a site for political and ethical accountability of “collective imaginaries” (2013, pp. 102, 144):

“Our commons is our earth. We share the planet with all the plants, animals, fungi, minerals, water. This is my definition of commons. Yedikule urban gardeners have taught me what collectivity and commons is: It is to sow seeds by dispersing them on top of the soil by saying ‘for the worms, for the birds, for the food’. It is to do whatever you do to sustain yourselves or to do what you do as

⁴⁴ Demirtaş refers to the fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin, whose work had a deeply influence on feminist and posthuman communities.

⁴⁵ Demirtaş refers to the artist Robert Smithson, whose spatial works questioned the binaries of nature and culture, natural and artificial, found and produced.

your practice by sharing the seeds and the produce that blossoms from those seeds with all who cohabits the earth.”



Image 4.5 *Winter Garden*, SALT Beyoğlu, Istanbul, 2018, photograph: Ali Taptık, ONAGORE, available at: <http://aslihan-demirtas.com/archives/portfolio/wintergarden-2018> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 4.6 models of dams from *Modern Essays 5: Graft* in SALT Ulus, Ankara, 2013, photograph: Cemil Batur Gökçeer, available at: <http://aslihan-demirtas.com/archives/portfolio/modern-essays-5-graft-salt-ulus-ankara> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 4.7 rammed earth platform from *Nâkil*, TUYAP Artist Fair ‘Terra Incognito’, Istanbul, 2016, photograph: Ali Taptık, ONAGORE, available at: <http://aslihan-demirtas.com/archives/portfolio/nakil> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 4.8 *It is Always Spring*, 13th Sharjah Biennial, *Abud Efendi* Mansion, Istanbul, 2017, photograph: Ali Taptık, ONAGORE, available at: <http://aslihan-demirtas.com/archives/portfolio/it-is-always-spring-hep-bahar-2017> (accessed: December 2019)

5. PERFORMATIVITY

The protesters in *The Women's March* and #MeToo expressed their solidarity with Black Lives Matter movement, LGBTQI+ people, immigrants, refugees, Muslims, disabled people, disaster victims, and other species – all subjects vulnerable in the current political and economic systems. For Judith Butler, these recent surging concerted actions are interactive sites of collectivity and integrated political practice, which she defines as ‘plural performative actions’ (2018). Thus, Butler broadens her theory of performativity which she conceptualizes as the ‘stylized repetition of acts’ constituted by political systems (2007[1990], p. 140). She explains performativity of these assemblies through the notion of precarity, as ‘a ground of alliance’ where neoliberal economics and social conditions determine certain populations as ‘ungrievable’ or ‘disposable’ (Butler, 2018, pp. 29-31, 65). Precarity, for her, designates a politically induced condition in which “certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death” (Ibid., p. 33). As a rejection of these mechanisms of oppression, performative actions for Butler constitute that ground of alliance through how subjects take a certain and physical action through their bodily existence – when a body arrives with other bodies in space, generates an ‘indexical force’ in a visible zone (Ibid., p. 14). Thus, they claim a plural and performative ‘right to appear’ which posits the body in the center of political sphere and signifies a bodily demand for more ‘livable’ economic, social, and political lives (Ibid., pp. 15, 27).

As such, performativity may be interpreted as a feminist sensitivity to bodily resist norms and oppression. With a similar approach to Butler’s notion of precarity, Sara Ahmed interprets ‘norms’ as a dual existence, which are both produced by institutions as a set of formal arrangements, and in everyday situations “into which bodies are thrown” (2017, p. 115). Most importantly, Ahmed also exposes the spatiality of norms:

for her, a norm is “something that can be inhabited”, rather “like a room or a dwelling, as giving residence to bodies” (Ibid.). The spatial possibilities in everyday life created, in her words, by “the work we do when we do not quite inhabit the norms of an institution”, may also be interpreted with reference to the concept of performativity (Ibid.). Moreover, as an expression that “serves to effect a transaction or that constitutes the performance of the specified act by virtue of its utterance”, performativity might be considered as a feminist tool for radical relationality, to expose one’s subjectivity to other worlds and subjectivities.⁴⁶ Jane Rendell draws attention to performativity as an exploration of one’s relation to another concerning the relationships between subjects, objects, and spaces, and defines that as “what is new in the feminist work in this area” (2011, p. 33). For Rendell, although there have been conceptualizations of the relations between criticism, history, and theory, there has been “very little explicit discussion of the situated-ness of the critic herself, and therefore the relation between criticism and practice” (2011, p. 33-34).

5.1 Feminist Sensitivities of Performativity in Turkey

5.1.1 *The Curious Steps, Istanbul Walkabouts, and The Purple Studio*

With reference to this background, we may discuss *The Curious Steps, Istanbul Walkabouts, and The Purple Studio* as performative practices that explore their position in relation to not only objects and spaces but also “the site of writing itself” (Rendell, 2011, p. 35). For *The Curious Steps*, participating their walks not only makes one listen to stories, but also experience spaces through these stories, which might be interpreted as these sites of writing itself (Ova and Semih, 2019). In Sema Semih’s view, when people participate in *The Curious Steps* walks, they experience the space where the story takes place through their own memories, thus, “re-experience the space and contribute with new stories” (Ova and Semih, 2019). Semih’s interpretation may well be argued as an exploration of relations between situated knowledges through not only objects and spaces but also other subjectivities, in response to Rendell’s critique for the lack of these conceptions. İlayda Ece Ova considers their walks as a “feminist

⁴⁶ Merriam Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/performative> (Accessed: December 2019)

performative pedagogy”, and explains subjectivities that perform this pedagogy through Virginia Woolf’s (2004 [1929]) feminist notion of ‘a room of one’s own’:

“For someone who does not ‘have a room of one’s own’, walking is a practice which ensures to be alone and find inspiration through oneself. On the other hand, for those who ‘have a room of [their] own’, it presents the possibility of performing the desire to flow beyond that room without the necessity of knowing where to go. Anyone can walk, in any place, in any moment – it is true to some extent that walking is capable of being a practice where everyone is equal. In other respects, *The Curious Steps* makes us question how to speak of walking in such a way of attributing so many things without overlooking the experiences of disabled bodies. (...) While walking and observing others and oneself as a subject among those walking others, one hovers between performing to others and to oneself. This is my subjective interpretation of walking as a feminist performative pedagogy.” (Ova, 2019)

5.1.2 Aslıhan Demirtaş, *düşhane, Mutfak / Matbakh, Kültür, and The Room Project*

As Haraway explains, the act of ‘making-with’ as practicing complex, dynamic, responsive, and interdependent systems, the practices of Aslıhan Demirtaş, *Kültür, düşhane, Mutfak / Matbakh* and *The Room Project* might be exhibited as performative practices that adopt ‘making-with’ as a tool for radical relationality (Haraway, 2016, p. 57). ‘Making-with’, for Aslıhan Demirtaş, “allows dissidence to unfold and in turn transform [her] thinking and making” (2019). She explains that performance “is a process not a product” which embodies a collective production as the appeal of performativity: “A building or a landscape for example is not the sole production of the designer, it is the culmination of the collective craft, labor, knowledge and experience of all involved. From another perspective for me performativity is a process of active and physical contemplation” (Ibid.).

Demirtaş (2019) mentions her work *The Plinth* as an example of these understandings of performativity: it was created in 2017 when she was invited to create a work for *collectorspace*, an arts platform which aims to raise critical discussions on collecting and collections (Demirtaş, 2017). *The Plinth*’s formation as a prismatic rammed earth piece comes from the traditional earth modules used for growing in the historical

Yedikule Gardens of Istanbul, drawing attention to issues of heritage, ownership, and the domination of nature (Yıldırım, 2017). For Demirtaş (2017) *The Plinth* was processed ‘honestly’ as a creation of bodily performance: in collaboration with the earth-rammers Nazım Can Cihan and Sadık Atar, a pile of 1.5 tons of soil had been transformed into the piece in the venue which is visible from the street (collectorspace, 2017). After *The Plinth* was created collectively, Demirtaş (2017) altered its performativity as an appeal of collective production: during 3 months she invited artists, musicians, art collectors, designers, and farmers to contribute with their diverse practices of collecting (Yıldırım, 2017).⁴⁷ These contributions ranged from wild herbs and poems to sound pieces and books (Ibid.). Therefore, *The Plinth* generated its own ‘collection’ through dialogues and experiences (Demirtaş, 2017), as a “performative sculpture which invites all experiencing it – including the earth rammer, collectively contemplate labor, physical compatibility, technology, tools, slowness, value, earth, more-than-human amongst many” (Demirtaş, 2019).

On her practice as an embracement of performativity, Demirtaş states that she aims to “create spaces which initiate processes, trigger activities and encounters, go beyond their intended functions, invent undefined and unforeseen typologies and uses” (Ibid.). This approach to space to initiate processes, activities, and encounters might be used to contrast Rendell’s configurations of performativity as an exploration of one’s relation to subjects, objects, and spaces (2011, p. 33). Demirtaş (2019) mentions their *KHORA* workshops with Ali Cindoruk as grounds of these explorations to create “temporary and performative spaces” ranging from temporary playgrounds for children of *Yedikule* to interventions in idle spaces, “in the spirit of the Greek word *khora*” which means indeterminate, amorphous, and undefined (Demirtaş and Cindoruk, 2017). As an example of *KHORA*’s approach, we may bring forward the *kilims* they had produced within the scope of the project ‘Instructors/Interpretations’, which problematized the impositions of completed and predetermined design products (Dhoku, 2014). To alter the conventional design relationships and processes,

⁴⁷ The contributors are Ali Taptık, Nardane Kuşçu, Ayşe Umur, Banu Cennetoğlu, Leyla Pekin, Tolga Tüzün, Saruhan Doğan, Emrah Altınok, and Ali Cindoruk (Yıldırım, 2017).

they had produced kilims through a performative process interwoven by ‘co-authors’, *KHORA* and the weavers as the ‘interpreters’ (Ibid).⁴⁸

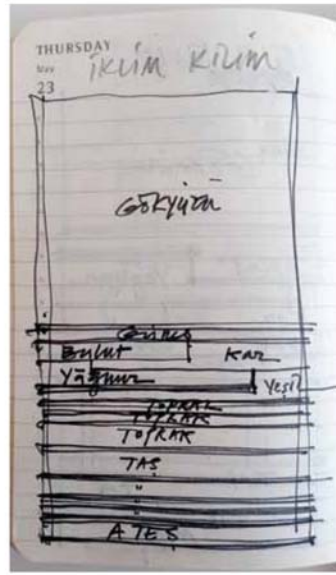


Image 5.1 making of *The Plinth* by Aslıhan Demirtaş in collaboration with the earth-rammers Nazım Can Cihan and Sadık Atar, *collectorspace*, Istanbul, 2017, photograph: Ali Taptık, ONAGORE, available at: <http://aslihan-demirtas.com/archives/portfolio/kaide-plinth-2017> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 5.2 making of *The Plinth* by Aslıhan Demirtaş in collaboration with the earth-rammers Nazım Can Cihan and Sadık Atar, *collectorspace*, Istanbul, 2017, photograph: Ali Taptık, ONAGORE, available at: <http://aslihan-demirtas.com/archives/portfolio/kaide-plinth-2017> (accessed: December 2019)

⁴⁸ The weavers as the ‘interpreters’ are Gülfan Atabey, Cemile Bakay, Hülya Bakay, Ayşe Bayram, Fadime Bayram, Ümmü Erbay, Dudu Gencer, Nergis Hörlek, Bingül Kaya, Emine Sarı, Alime Taşkın, Meral Tıkroğlu, Eşe Uğur, Fatma Yıldız, Aslı Zontur (Dhoku, 2014)



Sky
 Sun
 Cloud
 Snow
 Rain
 Green
 Earth
 Earth
 Earth
 Rock
 Rock
 Rock
 Rock
 Fire

Image 5.3 Kilim processes by Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Cindoruk, in collaboration with the weavers Gülfan Atabey, Cemile Bakay, Hülya Bakay, Ayşe Bayram, Fadime Bayram, Ümmü Erbay, Dudu Gencer, Nergis Hörlek, Bingül Kaya, Emine Sarı, Alime Taşkın, Meral Tıkıroğlu, Eşe Uğur, Fatma Yıldız, and Aslı Zontur, İstanbul, 2014. (Dhoku, 2014)

5.1.3 *Atilkunst*, Canan, Şükran Moral, and Gülçin Aksoy

To compare different perspectives on performativity in feminist spatial practices, it would be useful to take a closer look to the collective *Atilkunst*, who adopted performativity as a tool for appropriation in the 2000s.⁴⁹ The name ‘*Atilkunst*’ comes from ‘*atıl kurt*’, the popular quote of the character from the widely known movie series *Tarkan* in the 1970s, which has a historical theme based on the heroic masculinity of a Turkish warrior. ‘*Atilkunst*’ consists of ‘*atıl*’, action, and ‘*kunst*’, art. In this manner, the collective aimed to “look around it with irony through action” (*Atilkunst*, 2013). For them, their performative works “intervene in dominant discourses in everyday life and political agenda, by using the communication tools of the streets and media”, and came

⁴⁹ Started off by the artists Gülçin Aksoy, Yasemin Nur, and Güzde İlkin.

out as stencils and posters as visual productions in public spaces, or spatial interventions. Their performative spatial interventions range from temporary rearrangements of public spaces to organizing collective 'walking tours' for exploring the works by women in museums (Ibid.). Their practice may well be interpreted as a way of appropriating public spaces to question and broaden the notion of 'publicity' similar to *muf*'s approach, as a feminist tactic against strategies in public space.

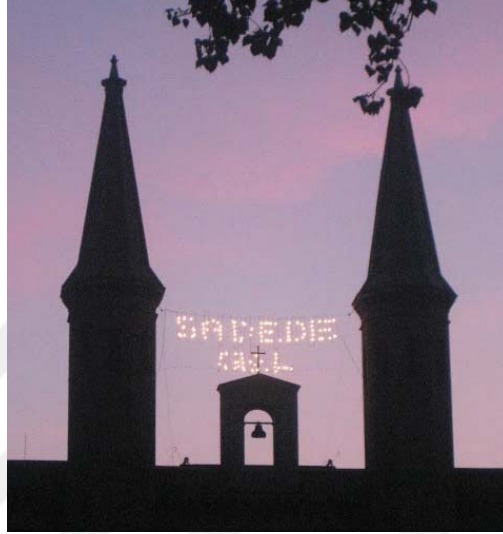


Image 5.4 *Komm zur Sache! (Sadede Gel!)*, Berlin, Germany, 2009. For the project 'Istanbul-Off-Space', Atilkunst created a 'mahya' on Bethanien building, a former hospital. Mahyas are illuminated texts hung between the minarets of mosques, a tradition in Istanbul which 'express religious and political ideologies' according to Atilkunst – they had written *Sadede Gel* (Get to the Point), as "an answer to political and institutional powers", available at: <http://atilkunst.blogspot.com/2009/06/istanbul-off-space.html> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 5.5 scenes from Atilkunst 'vocalization workshops' before the walking tours, Istanbul 2011, available at: <http://atilkunst.blogspot.com/2011/12/atilkunst-seslendirme-atolyesi.html> (accessed: December 2019)

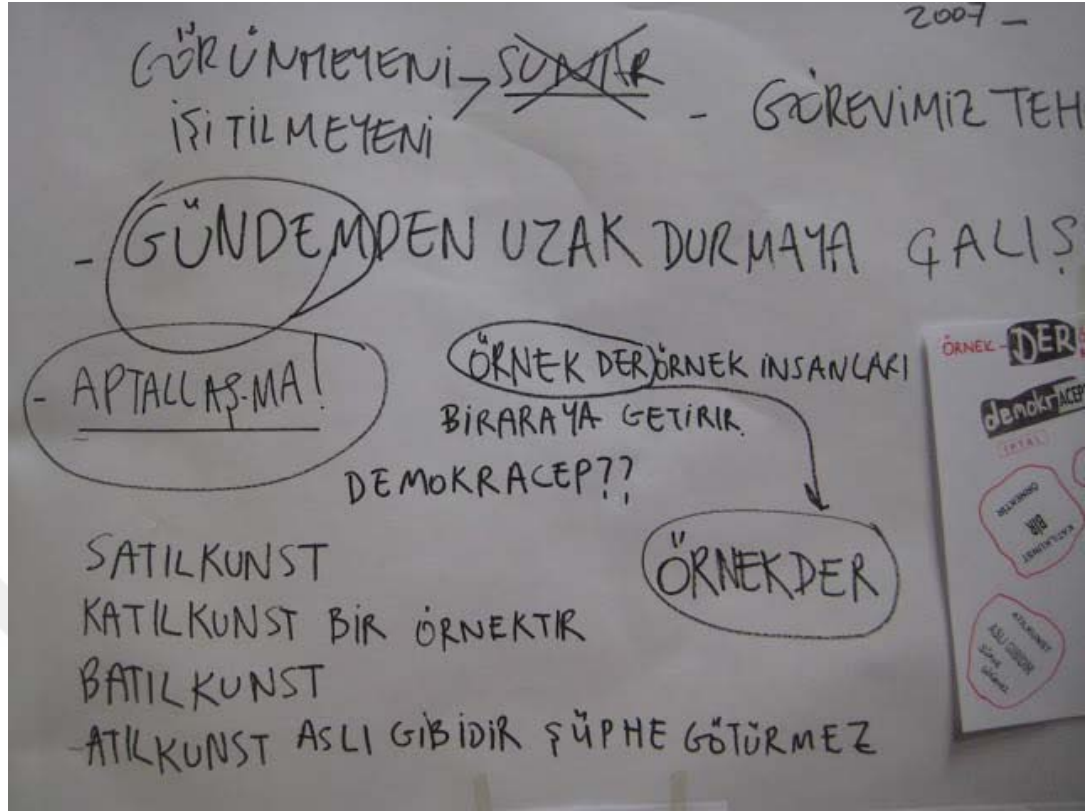


Image 5.6 scenes from Atilkunst 'vocalization workshops' before the walking tours, Istanbul 2011, available at: <http://atilkunst.blogspot.com/2011/12/atilkunst-seslendirme-atolyesi.html> (accessed: December 2019)

The performative spatial artistic practices of Gülçin Aksoy, Canan, and Şükran Moral are practices that concentrate on the body as a political subject and explore its relations with strategies of power mechanisms embodied in spaces. Through her body, Canan problematizes the issues of violence, biopolitics, and the lack of transparency and justice in the political conflicts of the late 1990s (Baykal and Baliç, 2013, p. 70). Drawing on her later performative interventions in urban spaces that range from streets of her neighborhood Kurtuluş to seashores of the island Burgazada which is in the process of urban transformation, it can be stated that she challenges the issues of public opinion, constructed notions of gender, inside and outside, home and street (Yıldırım, 2016, p. 18).⁵⁰ For instance, to subvert the public gaze on everyday life and the notions of home and street, she projected 'ordinary' scenes from everyday life of 'ordinary'

⁵⁰ *Distant Forest, Close City*, Istanbul, 2015, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Istanbul, 2015.

people on the windows of an apartment building in her neighborhood (Antmen, 2015b).⁵¹



Image 5.7 *Behind the Curtains*, Kurtuluş, Istanbul, 2005, available at: <http://www.cananxcanan.com/> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 5.8 *faraway forest near city*, Kurtuluş, Istanbul, 2015, available at: <http://www.cananxcanan.com/> (accessed: December 2019)

⁵¹ *Behind the Curtains*, Istanbul, 2005.

In the landscapes of urban exclusion and dissolution in Istanbul as a ‘divided city’ in the 1990s (Keyder, 2010a), Şükran Moral questioned the issues of gender, traditions, social norms, and the constructed identity of women (Moral, Uğurlu, and Haydaroglu, 2009, p. 51). Moral focused on the spaces of ‘the abnormal/other’ such as brothels and mental hospitals, and subverted their ‘normal’ functioning by suspending them with ‘shock’: for instance, as an early work, she performed an intervention to a brothel on *Zürafa* Street in Beyoğlu (Ibid.).⁵² She stood on the threshold of the building dressed up to reflect the image of a sex worker, hanging the sign ‘contemporary art museum’ on the building, and the sign ‘for sale’ on herself. Since it is performed within the scope of the 4th Istanbul Biennial *ORIENT/ATION*, Moral’s intervention might be interpreted as an attempt to ‘orient’ both Istanbul and her subjectivity through her body and public gaze in the political, cultural, and urban climate of its time. In a manner similar to this subversion of spaces of ‘the male gaze’ as a feminist tactic, Moral also tackled a hammam in Istanbul (Moral, Uğurlu, and Haydaroglu, 2009, p. 58).⁵³ By using the man’s section of the space surrounded by naked men, in a performative way she subverted the ‘normal’ functioning of the hammam, the space of the orientalist male gaze.



Image 5.9 sketches for *Il Bordello*, Istanbul, 1997 (Moral, 2014, p. 65)

⁵² *Bordello* (‘brothel’ in Italian), Istanbul, 1997.

⁵³ *The Hammam*, Istanbul, 1997.



Image 5.10 *Hammam*, Istanbul, 1997 (Moral, 2014, p. 58)

In a similar manner to Moral's, Gülçin Aksoy, one of the members of the collective *Atilkunst*, interrogated public spaces in the city of Samsun, where she grew up, dressed up as *Cumhur Kadın / Women of the Republic* to reflect the configurations of the 'ideal woman' of the republican ideology (Sancar, 2012).⁵⁴ Similar to Hale Tenger's approach, Aksoy problematized the strategies in spaces from both her and Turkey's past, in a performative way to interrogate and subvert the norms through her subjectivity. For instance, for *Cumhur Mefruşat (Public Furnishing)*, Aksoy (2014) focused on an apartment building from her childhood in Samsun – the building was where leftist activists had used for gatherings before the military coup in the 1980.⁵⁵ The building was about to be demolished for urban transformation when she visited, thus, Aksoy (2014) proposed to wrap the building with a cloth with a floral pattern which reminds the textiles used by women in domestic places in the 1980s and 1990s, and put a sign of *Cumhur Mefruşat (Public Furnishing)* on the building. Aksoy's work may well be interpreted as a performative and subjective intervention to contemplate on the memory and the strategies of urban spaces.

⁵⁴ *Women of the Republic*, Samsun, 2013. Gülçin Aksoy, <https://gulcinaksoy.info/woman-of-the-republic-II> (Accessed: December 2019)

⁵⁵ *Public Furnishing*, Samsun, 2014.



Image 5.11 *Woman of the Republic*, 2013, Samsun, available at: <https://gulcinaksoy.info/> (accessed: December 2019)



Image 5.12 *Public Furnishing*, 2014, Samsun, available at: <https://gulcinaksoy.info/> (Accessed: December 2019)

Gülçin Aksoy’s other performative interventions in public spaces range from temporary occupations of vacant buildings in urban transformation areas to organizing public forums with art students.⁵⁶ To contrast her diverse approaches to performativity, we may take a closer look to her project *Seyir-name* in the 2000s in the Galata district in Istanbul, in the same period where *The Room Project* worked in the neighborhood against the process of gentrification. Similar to *The Room Project*’s appropriation tactics to transform private spaces into public places, Aksoy transformed a private vehicle into a ‘public transport’ which ‘anybody could get on’.⁵⁷ The vehicle as a mobile public space plied between Galata and Karaköy on a regular basis as an “available, digital, temporary sightseeing service for the passer-by and hitchhikers”. Aksoy explains the experience of *Seyir-name* as a “feeling of a balcony, the state of being both inside and outside, and sharing of an appropriated small space”, as an exploration of the word ‘seyir’ which means both looking with pleasure and the state of being in motion.⁵⁸ These practices with diverse spatio-temporal contexts might be interpreted as various modalities of performative explorations, in response to what Rendell argues for the lack of discussion on the situated-ness of the critic herself, and the relation between criticism and practice (2011, pp. 33-34).



Image 5.13 *Seyir-name*, Istanbul, 2005, available at: <https://gulcinaksoy.info/> (accessed: December 2019)

⁵⁶ *S, M, L, X, XL, XX*, Istanbul, 2006. Gülçin Aksoy runs the weaving studio in Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in Istanbul, where she considers as ‘a studio to weave the social fabric’ – thus, the studio is open for everyone, and hosts various meetings, discussions, and public forums (Antmen, 2014, p. 13)

⁵⁷ Gülçin Aksoy <https://gulcinaksoy.info/seyir-name> (Accessed: December 2019)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

6. MATERIALITY

Which material and textual possibilities might be there, in Rendell’s terms, for an “architecture” of conceptions, productions, and pedagogies of practicing feminisms to take on new forms (2018, p. 22)? To illuminate some of these possibilities, I find it meaningful to begin with one of our starting points in our work for the *Biennale*, which was brought forward by Aslıhan Demirtaş while we were discussing about what to focus on. These were the words of Halet Çambel’s, the renowned archaeologist, after she found a sarcophagus in which a household had planted tomatoes.⁵⁹

“A tomato planted in a sarcophagus is a family’s livelihood. How will you save this sarcophagus? You can’t solve the tomato problem easily because you are facing a reality. In order to solve this problem, it is necessary to know the social problems of the country. Therefore, it is necessary to live in Anatolia and maybe more importantly to love Anatolia.” (Ateşoğulları, 2002, p. 136)

When I asked Aslıhan Demirtaş in our interview to articulate this approach to ‘the sarcophagus-heritage, mankind’s artifact as a garden of sustenance’ through her practice, she pointed out the material and textual possibilities by subliming boundaries:

“Halet Çambel’s sarcophagus [and] tomatoes question is a beautiful articulation of an intricate problem. I can further this problem as an entanglement where history, archeology, agriculture, economy, geography, sociology and possibly more disciplines’ field of practice and research are intertwined. This description is created due to specialization and separation of disciplines – a fragmented or compartmentalized way of looking at the world through sciences. Otherwise, what is so complicated about growing tomatoes in a sarcophagus which has no use and holds soil in its current life? Tomato growing family’s life has an integrity which can be only be explained with an army of

⁵⁹ Skype call with Aslıhan Demirtaş, Bilge Kalfa Doğan, and Gözde Şarлак-Krämer, June 8th, 2019.

disciplines coming together. I locate my own motivation for a practice which is extra-disciplinary or undisciplined in trying to overcome the blindspots caused by specializations. I refuse templates in the types of projects I take on and keep a diverse range (a garden, a kilim, a mosque, a museum, a book, a performance etc.) and revamp the conventional design process.” (Demirtaş, 2019)

Demirtaş’s articulation of specialization and separation of disciplines might be exhibited in a feminist sensitivity of materiality, as contemporary feminist thinking challenges fixed binary structures such as male and female, nature and technology, public and private, local and global, past and present, demanding new understandings of these structures as multiplying and fluid notions rather than dichotomies. Donna Haraway (1991) calls out to rethink the conventional assumptions, and points out the material possibilities of more fluid and tentative becomings. In a similar manner, Rosi Braidotti draws attention to a critical expression of subjectivities as a “dynamic non-unitary entity”, and “the dramatization of processes of becoming” (2013, p. 164). These understandings of ‘becoming’ as a feminist appropriation of the Deleuzian notion for ‘active, dynamic processes of thinking and transformation’ indicates spatio-temporal variables characterized by ‘mobility, changeability, and transitory nature’ of affirmative difference (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; Braidotti, 1994, p. 111, cited in Petrescu, 2007, p. 3). For Braidotti, these processes of becomings generate in-between situations and materialisms, in spaces that “flow and connect” those binaries by defying the ‘established’ modes of representation (2013, p. 164).

As Haraway and Braidotti address, a feminist approach to becomings would activate radical materialisms that are “zigzagging, not linear and process-oriented, not concept-driven”, where the discourse and the medium, the theory and the practice are interconnected (Ibid.). In other words, becomings might be understood as feminist materializations of doing ‘otherwise’ and ‘otherhow’ based on Cixous and Irigaray’s ideas on difference and feminine writing, altering the notion of ‘objective reality’ through a series of concepts such as chaos, complexity, fluidity, emergence, lightness, connectionism, multiplicity, networks, self-organization (Burns, 2013, p. 32; Petrescu, 2007, p. 4). The materiality might indicate the structure, the material space, processes, methods, codes of conduct, and materials of the medium employed (Rendell, 2018, p. 14).

6.1 Feminist Sensitivities of Materiality in Turkey

The embracement of the notion ‘making-with’, the loose structure of collectivities, and the process-oriented approach of the practices of Aslihan Demirtaş, *Another Kind of Workshop*, and *The Purple Studio* might be considered as becomings of a feminist ethos against the outcome-oriented conventional architectural methodologies and its limits for producing the built environment. Each of these practices performs a critique of the myths and norms of architecture in advanced capitalism, and produces material possibilities of alterities “in this troubled field” (Demirtaş, 2019).

Another Kind of Workshop pursues these possibilities of ‘other’ modalities in architecture through materialities of processes, networks, and codes of conduct. They emphasize these materialities to set out a critique of norms in architecture profession and education: “If you are object to something, you have to produce something against it. You should not sit down and complain – this would bring nothing” (Köksal and Kaydan, 2019a). ‘Collaboration’, ‘common good’, ‘a playful spirit’, ‘honesty’, and ‘openness’ are the tools they suggest for producing ‘other’ modalities in architecture to resist the capitalist structures we are living in (Ibid.).

In a similar manner, Aslihan Demirtaş ‘dissents within’ the practice and education of ‘mainstream global architecture’, and suggests ‘unlearning’ as a tool to generate new possibilities against the dominant conceptions of architecture (2019). In addition to unlearning, she brings forward the tools ‘repair’, ‘preservation’, and ‘reuse’ to enable materialities of a transformative ethos in a time marked by climate crisis (Ibid.). These tools might be interpreted as becomings of radical relationality, practicing complex, dynamic, responsive, and interdependent systems in Haraway’s terms (2016, p. 57). Petrescu points out the ethical and political aspects of a feminist understanding of relationality to generate new socio-spatial contexts, which “stimulate desire and pleasure” but also prompts new collectivities, agencies, and possibilities (2013, p. 264). In this manner, Demirtaş (2019) explains her pursuit of material possibilities by “threading along the periphery or borders of making”, manifesting itself as “if what [she] practice[s] is not architecture – closer to landscape, agriculture, weaving,

performance, art”. As Halet Çambel’s ‘the sarcophagus problem’ demonstrates, this blurring of boundaries for Demirtaş (2019) enables to explore “the blindspots all specializations and disciplines bear, including [her] own position as an architect by training”, which might be interpreted as materializations of Braidotti’s call for nomadic subjectivity to defy the ‘established’ modes of representation (2013, p. 164).

In *The Purple Studio*, these possibilities are activated through the three principles of its pedagogy: creating a ground for negotiation, creating environments of communication for sharing and open dialogue, offering diverse ways of thinking in architecture profession in opposition to the ‘star architect’ figure (Erkarıslan, 2009, p. 101). These material variables by the pedagogy of *The Purple Studio* draw attention to a more equitable profession in a world of wars and economic fluctuations, where capitalist systems are no longer sustainable and people have begun to seek for new ways (Erkarıslan, 2009, p. 100). Similarly, *Istanbul Walkabouts* and *The Curious Steps* adopt feminist pedagogies to reject the myths and norms embodied in strategies, however, differently from *The Purple Studio*, their materializations appear as a form of walking as a critical pedagogic tool (Tümerdem, 2019b). In search for ‘other’ sources of information and viewpoints rather than established representations, these walks disseminate knowledge for wider debates, which may well be interpreted as a feminist de Certeauan tactic for ‘affirmative difference’ against strategies of power in urban spaces.

Similar approaches to the notion of ‘making-with’ as a tool for materializing radical relationality might be traced in the practices of *Kültür*, *The Room Project*, *Mutfak / Matbakh*, *düşhane*, Esra Ersen, and *Atilkunst*. These practices enable multiplying and fluid materialities to be manifested against strategies in urban spaces, with the feminist tactics of appropriation and empowerment for community building. Through temporal spaces and events, *düşhane*, *Mutfak / Matbakh*, and Esra Ersen generate moments of exchange and materialize networks. In the practices of *Kültür* and *The Room Project* these materialized networks empower the precarious through appropriating strategies, such as biennials or museums. We may well argue that these appropriations emerge new material possibilities, transcend fixed conceptions such as institutions, public spaces, and domestic spaces. For instance, *Atilkunst*’s appropriation of public spaces to

question and alter the notion of ‘publicity’, and the transformations of private spaces into public spaces by *The Room Project* and Gülçin Aksoy might be interpreted as feminist materialities in Rosi Braidotti’s terms, as becomings in spaces that “flow and connect” the established binaries (2013, p. 164). Şükran Moral and Canan challenge these established binaries by subverting the strategies of power as a feminist tactic, providing material possibilities to emerge by suspending the ‘normal’ functioning of strategies by shock. In a similar manner, Hale Tenger intervenes in spaces to subvert and ‘reconstruct’ the strategies of power and the history “to be there again – where the game started” (Tenger, Antmen and Block, 2007 p. 120). As Petrescu states, becomings as materializations of mobility, changeability, and transitory nature are always located and fostered by their particular situation – historically, materially, and critically (2007, p. 3). In this regard, these practices constitute a located and materialized ‘non-unitary entity’ of feminism in spatial practice (Braidotti, 2013, p. 164).

An attention to material, as H el ene Frichot draws attention, is ‘what is new’ as a feminist project around the idea of new or neo-materialism, as “it is time to return to the most fundamental questions about the nature of matter and the place of embodied humans within a material world” (Coole and Frost, 2010 p. 3, cited in Frichot, 2016 p. 128). As a performance practice “between embodied processes of subjectification and a local, situated environment-world”, feminist approaches to materialisms, for her, provide new orientations by conceptualizing our positions and relations in material flows and blockages (Frichot, 2016, pp. 129, 133). These re-orientations provoke the thinker-practitioner to re-position herself and to re-value the material things and relations that have been overlooked. Thus, they materialize a feminist ethos performed in diverse ways considering different beings, desires, and places (Ibid., pp. 127, 133). When we situate feminist tools amidst an ecology of practices, Frichot states, we open the way towards differences as a demeanor of criticality, with respect to our habits and concerns (2016, pp. 136-137). Hence, this study should be framed as a feminist materialization of situated knowledges by charting an ecology of feminisms in spatial practice, which is located and reflexive as ‘one’s own map of local environment’.

7. CONCLUSION

Why has there been no agenda for feminist – or women’s – organizations in architecture and the built environment in Turkey, especially in these times when we deeply need to seize feminism’s insights into realizing livable futures? This was a question that I contemplated every day as an architect in Turkey while refining the focus of my graduate thesis. Having grown increasingly fascinated with flourishing scene of feminist interrogations of space by women around the world in recent years, I wanted to at least “stir the pot” in terms of the necessary discussion as to why such organizations remain non-existent in Turkey and, more importantly, what we should do about it.

Yet while considering how to achieve this goal, it occurred to me that exploring and thus trying to empower the ‘subtle’ feminisms in spatial practice in Turkey might be a more affirmative and constructive project – and a positive first step toward the creation of new feminist organizations – than lamenting their absence. A number of names appeared in my mind in the blink of an eye, and as I considered commonalities and differences in their practices, my excitement grew. Moreover, these differences were enriched immensely when I took spatial practitioners from diverse fields into account, rather than merely employing an anthology of architects. I decided to include practices that range from pedagogic experiments and urban activism to event making and artistic productions, in order to cover diverse modes of interrogating and intervening in space. I thus aimed to blur the boundaries of dominant, supremacist, and singularizing understandings of architecture, which celebrate particular figures who are, for the most part, men who practice architecture in particular – and exceedingly unsustainable – ways.

In this study, I have tried to include practices with diverse contexts, materialities, and relationalities, which also perform mutually constitutive approaches, tools, and tactics. In all of these practices, a feminist ethos for mutuality and interdependency can be explored. In a world that is ‘becoming increasingly unstable and contested’, these

practices resist central, organizing, and transcendent conceptions in spatial practice (Frichot, Gabrielsson, and Runting, 2017). Embracing the sensitivities of alterity, collectivity, subjectivity, performativity, and materiality, they unveil the feminist modalities of critical spatial practice to enable new ways in which space is perceived, conceived, and lived. Aslihan Demirtaş and *Another Kind of Workshop*, to start with, ‘dissent within’ the architectural practice that they criticize for being an exploitative system which encourages constant growth and development. Motivated by ecological and political emergencies, they pursue other ways of ‘doing’ in the profession and education. *The Purple Studio*, *The Curious Steps*, and *Istanbul Walkabouts* unfold these alterities in forms of performative pedagogies in spatial practice, in search of, I believe, what Irigaray imagines as another language as a way of liberation (2008). As earlier approaches to feminist sensitivities, Hale Tenger, Şükran Moral, Canan, *Kültür*, and Gülçin Aksoy challenge structures of power during a period of political, social, and urban shifts in the 1990s. A younger generation of collectives, *The Room Project*, *Atilkunst*, *Mutfak / Matbakh* and *düşhane* tackle these issues in the landscapes of urban transformation and exclusions in the 2000s. Some of these women are friends and colleagues. Some guided me when I was a student in her first years of university a decade ago. With some, I have shared conversations, walks, lectures, radio programs, Facebook comments, giggles, debates, lunches, dinners, protests, marches. I got to know some personally during this study and became friends with others later on. This study has helped to establish new feminist kinships.

I care about empowering further feminist kinships and hope to continue achieving this goal through this study. By charting the practices of these women, a majority of whom do not overtly identify themselves as ‘feminist’, in a commonality of feminisms, I have aspired to sow the seeds of further collectivities and actions. My aim in this study is, primarily, to empower women and non-cisgender people in the extremely masculine environments of both academia and architecture in Turkey, where feminist and queer organizations in spatial practice are still non-existent. Moreover, I hope to initiate a new discussion in Turkey while contributing to the emergent global dialogue on spatial practices of feminisms.

For further exploration, other practices might be involved and articulated, particularly in cities other than Istanbul. Moreover, the relationalities of the studied practices might be discovered further. How did the women of *Kültür*, for instance, continue to practice later on? Which other groups or individuals did they collaborate with? How do they interpret their approach in the 1990s in comparison to their current position? How did their forums in *Karanfilköy* impact the community afterwards, or *The Room Project*'s 'rooms' in *Galata*, *Gültepe*, and *Gülsuyu-Gülensu*? What do local people think about *düşhane*'s events in Şanlıurfa, and *Mutfak / Matbak*'s kitchen in Gaziantep? How have these spaces been transformed over the last decade, and what has changed since they began collaborating with migrant women? These questions merit further exploration, with a focus on the people whom these practices are aimed at empowering. On the other hand, concerning what a number of scholars have drawn attention to as 'what is new in the feminist work in this area' (Rendell, 2011, pp. 33, 35; Frichot, 2016, p. 128), a closer look at performativities and materialities of spatial practices might initiate new and fruitful discussions that suggest further possibilities in a contemporary feminist ontology's conceptions of space.

"What do you hear when you hear the word *feminism*?" Sara Ahmed asks in the beginning of her 'Living a Feminist Life' (2017). Hearing this word, for her, fills one with energy and hope, evokes acts of refusal and rebellion, brings to mind women who have stood and spoken up, and struggled for 'more bearable worlds', arming us with the words and the strength to go on (2017, p. 1). I would only add to her stimulating response that hearing the word 'feminism' also calls forth the voices of the women who courageously perceive, conceive, and live the world, our home, otherwise and otherhow. These women keep pushing the boundaries to make room for those who / which are excluded; generate and weave relationships to make dwellings to resist the violence and vulgarity of today, and make hope sprouts to 'maintain, repair, and continue our world' (Tronto and Fisher, 1990, p. 40). In this study, I have aspired to accommodate a number of these inspirational voices who have carved out their unique feminist tools and tactics to tackle our political, social, ecological crises, and to build new futures. And I hope that this study encourages other voices to join this discussion and share what they hear when they hear the word *feminism*.

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