A|Z

The role of the architect in the formulation of urban design

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Abstract

Urban design can be defined simply as "shaping spaces for people", in other words, "the embodiment of physical and social environment, consciously or intuitively". This article aims to read and discuss the active role of the architect in shaping the cities through different geographic and political applications and how this role is affected by the political, social and temporal conditions of the cities. Cities emerge "as a result of the decisions chain." Even though modern cities are mostly created intuitively, this intuitiveness is not coincidental, the decisions made play a role in this formation. In order to understand the role of the architect in this formulation and its relations with other active roles, three different specific examples are examined and discussed as three different scenarios. As we can read through these examples, the architect has taken part in different activities in urban planning in different periods of time, and political authority and sociological conditions affected the architect's position. In certain periods, the architect took place between the investor and the municipality as in the case of New York City, in some periods had the opportunity to shape the urban environment individually and sometimes as it is in the socialist periods, shaped the cities by relatively becoming a part of the political authority.
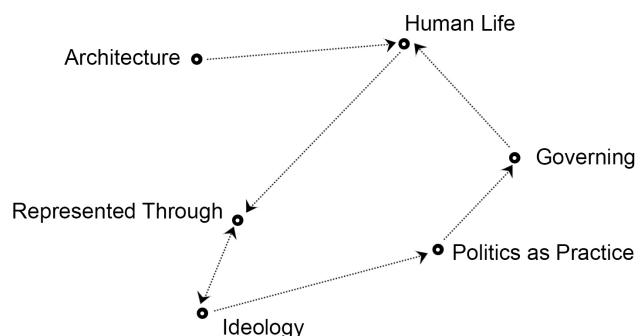
1. Introduction

Considering that today more than half of the world population live in the cities and %70 of the energy of the world is consumed in the cities, it can be easily understood that the urban design is a subject which needs to be dwelled on among many different disciplines. Although the cities have existed from the ancient times throughout history, in literature the term "urban design" (which, according to some sources, in 1943 this term falls on earlier periods by Farshow and Abercrombie) had been used as a critic of modernist urbanization in 1956 in a conference held at Harvard University. According to Barett (1974), the cities emerge "as a result of the decisions chain." Even though our modern-day cities are mostly created intuitively, this intuitiveness is not coincidental, the decisions made (right or wrong) plays a role in this formation.

While there are many different definitions, Carmona (2014) defines urban design simply as "shaping spaces for people", in other words, as the embodiment of physical and social environment, consciously or intuitively. As the cities take shape, who are the effective group-profession-person-administrator and what are the effects of all these factors on the city? In ancient times, agora, stoa and monumental buildings were used to define the urban life. In the ancient cities of Africa and Egypt, it was believed that the buildings had a controlling power on people. These traditions and symbolic expressions had an influence on shaping the Western cities; the Renaissance cities, and the Baroque cities which were connected to each other with radial axis were accepted in order to show the power of sometimes the administration and sometimes the church. In Italy, the towers of San Gimignano - a Medieval city - built in 12. and 13. Centuries represented the power by shaping the city form in a way similar to today's metropolises. Until today, the form of the city had been explored in each period upon the characteristics and "the rights" of that period. Although various forms such as lineer form, dispersed, central, multicentered or different types of gridal cities were defined in different periods, none was proved to contribute the metabolism of the city or be superior on its own (Moughtin and Shirley, 1996). In addition to all these, besides studies which explore the formal characteristics and orgaizations of the cities, it is necessary to examine the effect of the political, economical and social dynamics and their roles in the formation. Especially in the cities of the era in which we live in, it is neccessary to examine the related decision makers about the shape, function and organization of the city and to explore their activities on urban design. The activities of political factors on today's city planning are indisputable. Administrative institutions play an effective role on the employment forms and decision making mechanisms. Carmona (2014) defines the effects of the political factors on the city and the current environment as "power." Buddalab (2009) notes that in urban design, the production of space is a conflicting by nature and it is built on "unfairness". This discourse can be interpreted in two ways. First of all; since political factors are effective in the design of the cities, the city might transform into a product of discourse and ideology. Secondly; since there is alienation from the structural scale, and upper scale decisions are made in urban design, there might be an insufficiency in fulfilling the user demands. In the context of all the underlined isues, this article aims to read and discuss the active role of the architect in shaping the cities through different geographic and political applications and how this role is affected by the political, social and temporal conditions of the cities.

2. "Visionist architect" as the actor in urban design

According to Barnett (1974), urban design might be a success if only it receives the support of the decision makers; nevertheless, the importance of the architect's role in this cycle as an individual actor should not be dismissed. This situation can be explained by escapist fantasies which were revealed within the historical period and are effective approaches in order to criticize and understand the city. For instance, the architects, with "the modernist

Figure 1. The relation between architecture and ideology (adapted from Suvakovic, 2014).

movement" they led, suggested more hygienic and rational cities in a radical way by creating new cities which would be built on to the current city problems. Although "Plain Voisin" suggested by Corbusier for Paris was not realized, it influenced many cities-urban design understanding. The green city model of Wright, in the same way, defined a new social and urban living scenario that would affect the perspective of the city visionists.

In the "escapist" scenarios about the city, it can be seen that the architects generally plays an active role. The utopias which were imagined about the future metropoles such as "Walking City" by Ron Herron and "Babel II" by Paolo Soler are the clear examples for the intellectual interventions of the architect regarding the city. In order to make these Barnett (1974) mentions the necessity for the reformation of the social life rather than technology. In a dialectical framework Lefebvre (1991) is discussing the role of the architect on the production of the urban space production and says that the city defines a more complicated situation than the subjective perspective of the architect. He defines the city as a societal mecha-
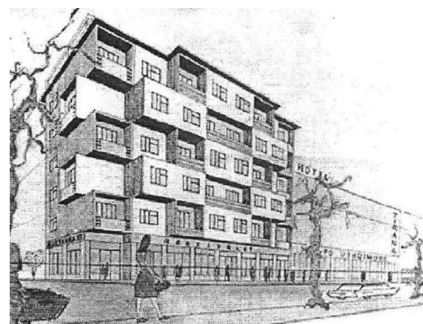
nism which represents the social structure of the city.

In the mechanism which is effective in the urban design regarding the actor discussions in the production of the urban space, what is the role of the architect/architectural product? According to Suvakovic (2014), the architecture cannot be dealt with independently from the politics and the ideology and this fact is closely related not just to the pragmatic function of the architect but to the product (material) which is produced. Thus, the architectural product itself should be discussed along with the production conditions (Figure 1), and this requires for the architectural product to be evaluated in relation to power, ideology, rules and administrations.
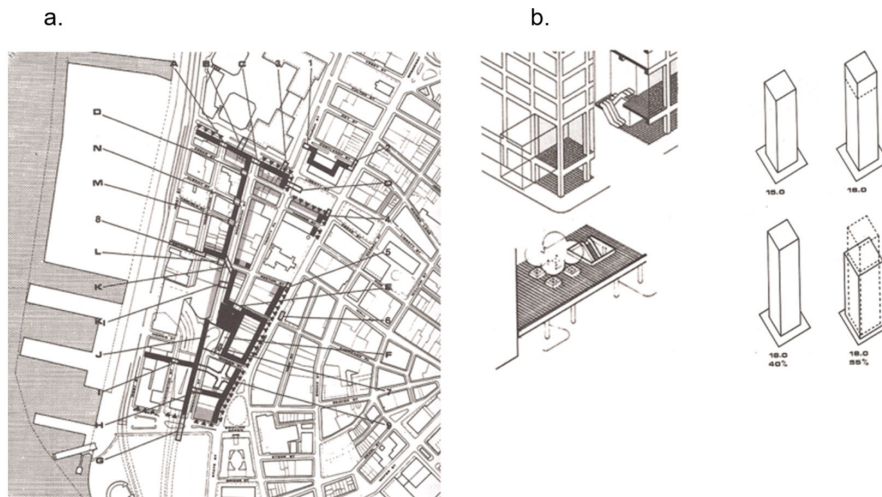
In history, the tension between ideology and architect goes to extreme from time to time. Maks Velo - an architect and sculptor from Albania - and Christian Enzamann from East Germany were sent to prison because of their "modernist architectural manners and actions" in the communism era (Zarecor, 2014). In Figure 2, architectural productions of Maks Velo who had been in prison for 8 years can be seen. Velo, on the grounds that he retrested from socialist realism norms and followed West Avant-Garde, was sent to the labor camp in Albania and after being forced here to work at the copper mines continued his carrier only after the Communist system was dissolved.

3. Reading the role of the architect in formulation of urban design from three scenarios

In order to understand the role of the architect in the formulation of ur-

Figure 2. An apartment structure (1972-75) designed by Architect Maks Velo, Tiran-Albania, (Architectuul, 2019).

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a.

b.

Figure 3. *New York Greenwich area development alternatives (a) and additional housing conditions depending upon the choices and depending on the public usages on the ground floors (b), (Barnet, 1974).*

ban design and its relations with other active roles, three different specific examples are examined and discussed as three different scenarios. In these examples, the architect has a voice. However, in respect of his position and the periods, his role and activity differ and the products which are produced are influenced by this differentiation as well. A reading has been made through New York City, Copenhagen and Socialist Cities, which are considered as three different models in which the architect plays a role in different contexts.
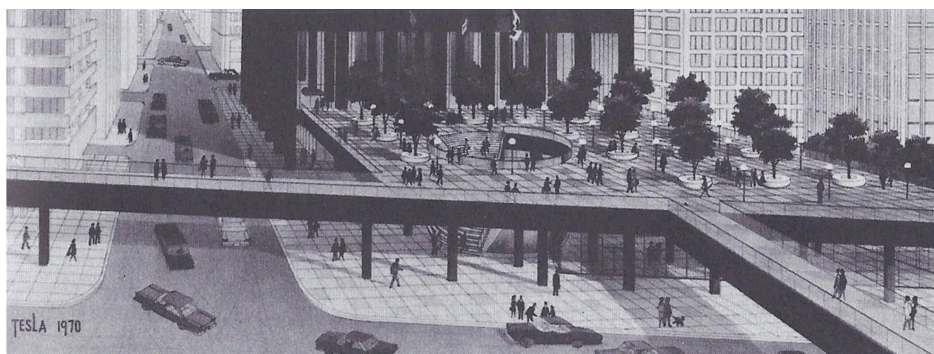
3.1. Scenario 1: Between the investor and the municipality

An urban design group in New York was assigned in order to bring the city a new vision, form the soul of the urban living and today's Times Square, Broadway. A new urban development model and work was conducted. In his book titled "Practical Methods for Improving Cities," Barnett (1974) shows clearly the influence of the group called "planning commission" on the formation development of the city, the position and stance of the architecture in this situation.

According to Barnet (1974), the strongest side of the urban planning commission organized by the mayor of the era (John V. Lindsay) is that it was being conducted flexibly with daily decisions rather than that the commission was conducted with the support of the decision makers. The urban design was seen as a singular "designed product". Barnet (1974) emphasizes that in the process of the urban development, the role of the "investor" is essential while on the other hand the "investor" has only one right based on earning money. At this point, the possibility for the city to be seen as a mechanism based on "the balance of interests and benefits" gains importance.

The urban planning commission in which Jonathan Barnet was also included led to the design of the New

Figure 4. *Ground levels of the buildings serve the public spaces (Barnet, 1974).*

York's Greenwich area with sustainable decisions and revelaed models that would support city urban life with the cooperation of designer-investor-planning commission. While especially a pedestrian-oriented approach was envisaged, underground transportation, arcades, galleries, public centers, avenues and footbridges and top elevation avenues which would direct easily the movements of the pedestrians were defined clearly and these multi-probability design cases were expressed with upper scale plans (Figure 3a). The architect and the investors who built their own buildings earn the right to build a higher construction in exchange for the public usages they formed on the ground and brought to the city (Figure 3b).

With this method, while the investor gains more square meters, the areas which will improve especially the ground and upper levels for the city-dwellers and urban usage were promoted (Figure 4).

In the New York example given, the role of the architect, on the one hand, is to be the person who designs and shapes the building as a designer and, on the other hand, to define the urban decisions in a larger scale and to be in the position of directing this development in terms of the richness of public

Figure 5. *The plan that was created in 1947 and named as "Finger Plan" (Brüel, 2012).*

life and pedestrian movement while facing the new development.

3.2. Scenario 2: Master plan hegemony

As a subjective approach, in order to understand the contributions of the urban design competitions for city development and the transformation of this organization into an organizational and administrative mechanism by going one step further from the individual actor, Copenhagen - a North European city - can be examined.

Within the city of Copenhagen whose center-focused "master plan" (finger plan) was formed in 1947 (figure5), a new development area and living space in which 20.000 people would live and 80.000 people would work was determined with an "urban design competition" held in 1994. In this area to be completed by 2025, despite some failures and counter-views, a planned urban life with high life quality is being sustained. The urban areas which are contemplated upon and planned, form a modern sustainable life that adds economical value to the city itself. The buildings and the houses within the area are also determined with "competition." These competitions present a modern life quality, suggest a model, try this model and take a step for a more qualified and sustainable life with the right and sometimes wrong decisions. At the end of each competition, professional platforms, local administrations and the local community get information and share this information. It is possible to multiply these examples in many places all around the world.

"Finger Plan" (Figure 5) and than "The Copenhagen Region Green Spaces Plan" developed in 1936, consisted of principal decisions defines the alter developments of the city and the green spaces which are left in between railway routes, the living spaces that will be developed around them and the green spaces that will grow spreading out from the city center (Brüel, 2012). According to Brüel, the major aim of the plan is to decrease the dependency to invidiual vehicles, increase the job opportunities in the lineer development areas, locate the business spaces
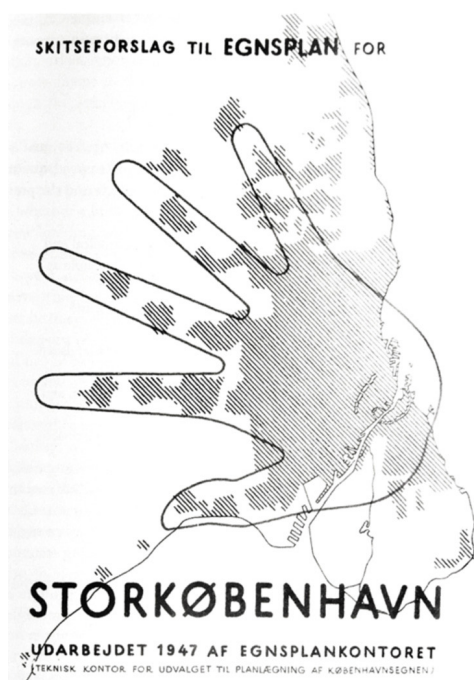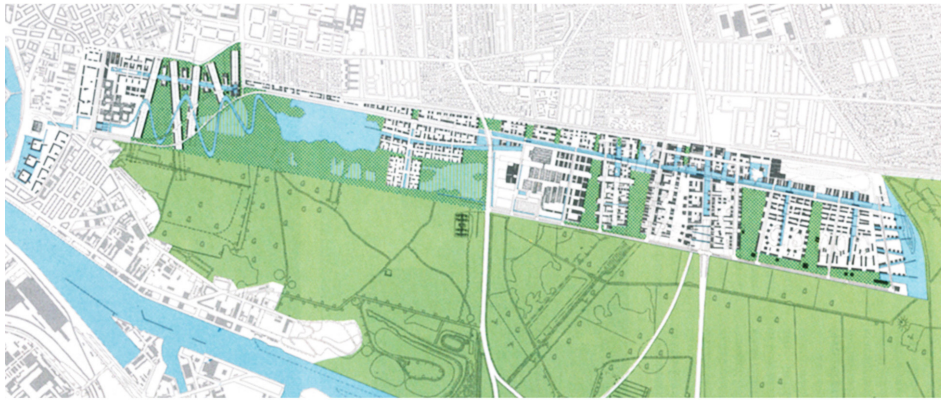
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Figure 6. Orestad master plan (Torri, 2015).

close to the public transportation alternatives and form high-density mixed living areas. All these main goals are the continuations of "green city" policy which has been being pursued since the 20th century.

The linking of the city with the Malmö region with a bridge, the region of Orestad which started the economic and geopolitical developments in Copenhagen (the area between the airport and the city center) is envisaged to be an international center in a cultural and economic context (Majoor, 2015). Orestad project (Figure 6), by offering a new development model by selling the areas in the hands of the municipality, has been foreseen to create the metro networks which forms the main backbone of the project with the income obtained (Majoor, 2015). The relationship established between the municipality and the investors and based on mutual interest has been a new model that makes both sides interdependent (Majoor, 2015).

For the field opened to the competition in 1994, the master plan of the Finlander APRT (Denmark-Finland) was selected and realized with the co-operation of Danish KHR Architecture office. The most important reason for selecting the project was shown as the high density focal points it suggests and the green textures that these focal points allow (By & Havn, 2012). The project is defined as "green space dominated by water and nature". The proposed channel is defined as a common landscape element that combines different regions and differs in each region.

Since it was designed on rail transportation and lacked of a pedestri-

an-weighted circulation scenario (Figure 7), the area which brought fame to the young architects such as 3xNielsen (Orestad Gymnasium), BIG (8 house, VM building), Libeskind (Orestad down town), Julien de Smedt and Bjarke, mostly displays an outdoor environment lack of people (Figure 7, 8).

The area planned for 20 000 people living, 20 000 people studying and 80 000 people working is unable to provide half the density today (Majoor, 2015).

Figure 7. Desolate public spaces within the urban design area of the Orestad region (Strange, 2016).

Figure 8. IG design "8 House" that recommends a closed site by separating its area from the environment.

As the cost of the metro was more than expected and the opportunity to make a shopping center was given to the investor, the discussions were exacerbated and the negative opinions about the project surfaced (Olsson and Loerakker, 2013). In particular, the damage given by the shopping center to the use of open public area and the problems such as open space quality made the project controversial. In contrast to the dense public space use of the traditional city core, the Orestad region offers areas with subway links, but which do not in itself encourage the integrated use of pedestrian and public spaces.

3.3. Scenario 3: Architect as a part of the political authority
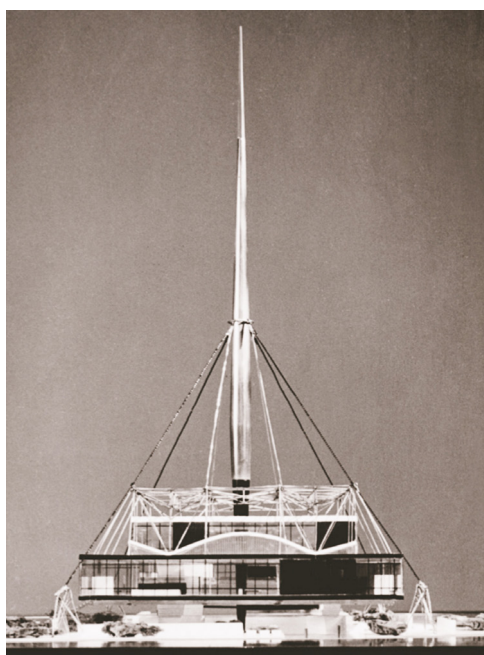
Another radical example which might question the architect's influence on urban design and the city is the communist-era cities and urban design visions. Especially in the cities of countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, which have been examples for few researchs, it is possible to examine the architectural attitude and approach which are effective in urban design even today. Examples of the functional distribution in the city, the urban spine of the large urban parks, the public outdoor experience hosted

Figure 9. *The Pavilion of Yugoslavia, designed by Vjenceslav Richer and Pavel Weber for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair (Springer, 2008).*

by the pedestrianized urban corridors, as well as the approach-attitude of the architect for the urban situation in the scale of the building to the urban situation as well as his role in the in urban policy conducted by the government are worth an examination.

The former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries (including Eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, after the 1960s) cover one-sixth of the world's territory and all or part of the total of 30 countries. This architectural discourse and practices of the communist era in architectural and urban planning cover a period of 50 years, from the transition of countries to communism after the Second World War, until the collapse of communism in the 1990s.

In the 1920s, Russian architects pioneered the Russian-avant-garde movement. In this period, architectural attitudes and discourse exhibit a libertarian and innovative attitude. The Russian avant-gardes working for the future of socialist architecture in these periods will be named as "bourgeoisist formalism "and the common comunist architectural attitude will be defined as socialist realism (Zarecor, 2014). In this period, the role of the architect in urban planning is as a civil engineer and a manager rather than as an architect. According to Zarecor (2014), this period can be defined as a period when authority was established to strengthen the regime, while on the other hand, professional freedoms were at a minimum. In this period, the political authorities have developed plans called as "five-year-plan" and envisages a systematic-measurable development and as a professional man an architect confronts us as an "individual" who can work as affiliated to the government only or an institution of the government. In this period, the largest part of the production is residential blocks consisting of prefabricated concrete blocks and large urban areas, for example %90 of the population in Bratislava lives in the houses built after war.

In the system, architectural production is based on predictable targets. The system asks the architect to see buildings as the amount of materials, iron and steel, and the quantity of

workforce; the architect is expected to see the architecture as a mass production industry rather than a creative and individual production. While architects were the pioneers of avant-garde approaches, they worked as civil engineers and managers rather than an architect in this period. The structures in this period are produced according to measurable targets rather than their architectural - aesthetic and functional values and they emerge as objects in which production performance gains importance. According to Zarecor (2014), the architectural production in this period is transformed into a mass production industry. There is such a strong interaction between the political regime and architecture and urban design that in 1949, at the "National Conference of the Party Architects" conference, "Socialist Realism" was accepted as a single and correct artistic approach (Swiątek, 2015).

With the death of Stalin, the change of authority began to affect the architectural production rapidly. Brussels Expo, the pavilions of the Soviet, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia in 1958 (Figure 9), are indicatives of "the new communist style" with their glass-concrete-steel architectures. Although the architecture production, which lost its grandiose stance in the 1920s during the 1940s and 50s, was not as powerful as in the post-1960 period, architects began to be more actively involved in the system as a supporter of the communist system. At the meeting of architects' union in Poland, in 1956, it was decided to reject the "Socialist Realism" (Swiątek, 2015).

Molnar (2014) says that in the 1960s, Hungarian architects accepted this professional compliance and the most important reason was that socialism was seen as an "alternative way of modernism". More importantly, it can be said that most of the principles of the Le Corbusier and CIAM conference are accepted and implemented by communist planners.

For instance, in the period of the restrictive and repressive Realist Socialism architecture (in the war and in the early years), Bulgaria exhibited a moderate architectural attitude and in the following years (on the coasts) a modernist aesthetic attitude is put forward. These attitudes of the Bulgarian Architects towards the West and the Modernism were considered as the "Model" by the Union of Soviets in the same years. According to Popescu (2015), in these times, the coastal architecture, especially in Bulgaria, provides a perfect "trial environment" in terms of forming a relation with nature, engaging nature in urban plans, and providing architectural experiments. In

Figure 10. *In Velenje, a socialist city in Slovenia, the large square structured next to the coal mines, the administrative structures in the square and the singular high block structures located in the green area, Architects: Trenz, Franc Šmid, Ciril Pogačnik, 1953- 1961 (Ifko, 2015).*

both architectural and urban planning, modernism has been accepted as a subground. In connection with this, Bulgarian architecture includes innovative approaches that are seen less even in the West within the framework of the integration of architecture with urban green and relations with the land.

In Bulgaria, which is one of the iron curtain countries, especially in the post-war period, the architect dedicates his role to the monopoly state which has an ideological structure. The decision-making authority in the city is the "institution", which is established within the state instead of the architect. In this context, planning decisions about the city have a common language and character. This character is also a reflection of the ideological structure. The squares are surrounded by monumental buildings, and these monumental structures are usually theater structures, cinema structures or sculptures usually where ideology will be shared. The attitude and forms of the development of Bulgarian cities in this period show a serious parallelism with the Socialist countries such as Slovenia and Hungary (Figure 10).

In many cities, even the mosques of the Ottoman period take their place as important monumental elements of these squares. Commercial activities do not take place in these enclosed squares. The squares open up to wide linear streets, which are the most important part of the urban backbone. Large park areas are one of the important design lenses of this period. The parks created within the framework of the right to healthy living and equal access are the life and meeting areas of the city. The communist order, which is based on common ideals and ideas, uses these green spaces as gathering and meeting places, and is usually dominated with ideological sculptures. From the broader perspective, it is possible to read the basic urban design principles of CIAM and see its modernist approach in many big cities of communist era.

4. Conclusions

As it has been reflected through the examples, the role and effectiveness of the architect in urban design vary according to social and political factors. At this point, it is possible to say that cities transformed into a collage city within the framework of overlapping periods, superposed ideals and perspectives. In different scenarios that has been experienced, the architect has taken part in different activities in urban planning in different periods of time, and political authority and sociological conditions affected the architect's position. In certain periods, the architect took place between the investor and the municipality as in the case of New York City, in some periods had the opportunity to shape the urban design individually and sometimes as it is in the socialist periods shaped the cities by relatively becoming a part of the political authority. The 3 different contexts mentioned in which the architect played a role influenced the city's form in different ways.

Today, with the emergence of Big Data, many different components and topics are included in urban design. This necessitates interdisciplinary design and application processes. The importance of the design model is becoming more important rather than shape of the cities. All disciplines concerning urban life should collectively construct models of the future cities.

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