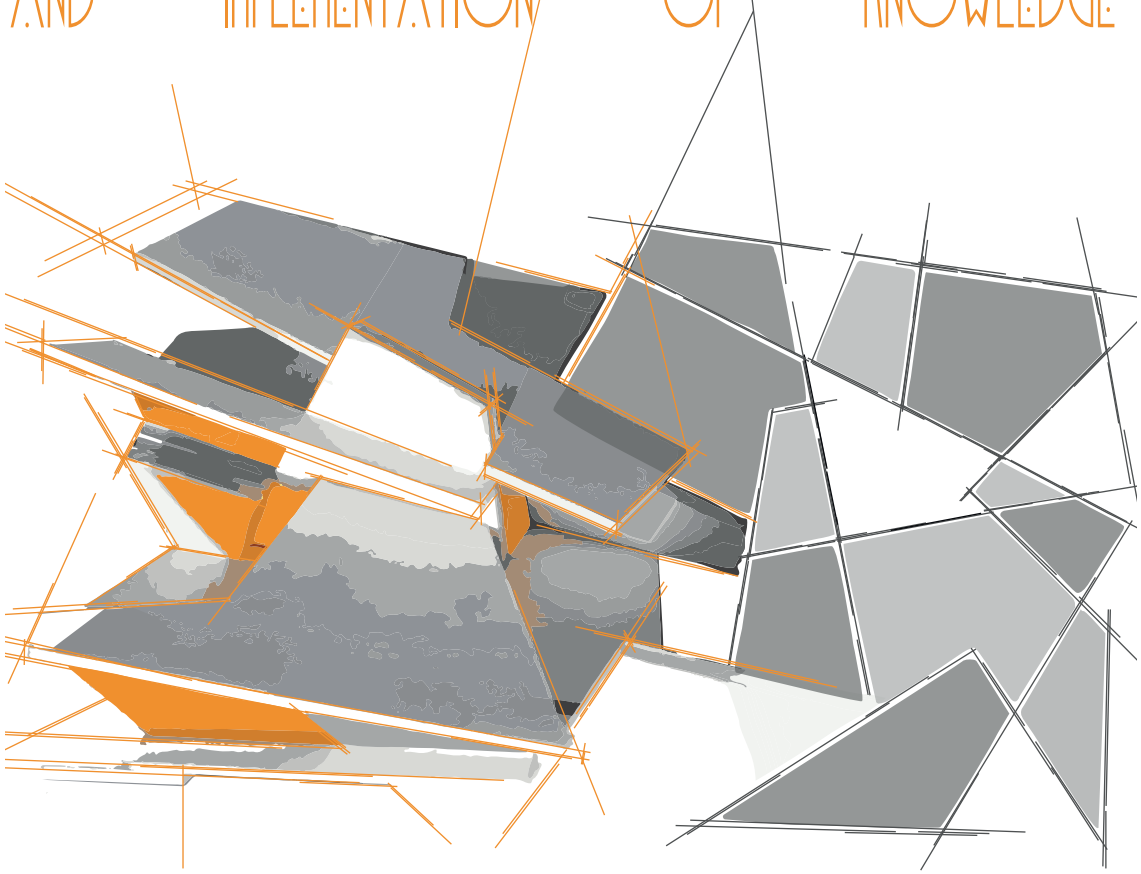
HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF FINE ARTS DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

2ND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE SYMPOSIUM

"THE PRODUCTION, TRANSFORMATION, TRANSITION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE"



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WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE FOCUSED ON USER AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE CASE OF SOCIAL SERVICE PRACTICES COURSE

Res. Asst. Ceren Koç Sağlam[1]
Res. Asst. Aslı Taş[1]
Res. Asst.. Timuçin Erkan[1]
Res. Asst. Dr. Seden Odabaşıoğlu [1]

ABSTRACT

There are constant changes in the social structure depending on the time and the developing technology, but there are still various difficulties in fulfilling the basic needs of the society. In this context, it is inevitable for contemporary architectural discourses, design approaches and processes to focus on understanding social layers and differences and meeting the needs of the society. In order to find answers to the basic needs of the society, Social Service Practices included in the curriculum of universities, is a volunteer-based course enabling students to use the knowledge and competences they have learned during their education to produce solutions to real problems. This study taken in the scope of Social Service Practices course in 2018-2019 Fall Semester, was a social responsibility project aiming to make the 4th grade students of Interior Architecture Department at Marmara University Faculty of Fine Arts to identify and define user profiles of different layers of society. Within the scope of the project, 'participatory design approaches' related to the practice of interior architecture profession were covered. Thus, the contributions of the Social Service Practices course to professional practice were discussed in this study in the intersection of user, society and environment. In this context, the contributions of the project to the students and the society were evaluated in the context of interior architecture education.

Keywords: social responsibility, social service, interior architecture, user, production

[1] Marmara University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Interior Architecture, **Turkey**

INTRODUCTION

The need for interior architecture profession constantly reoccurs in the relationship between the user, society and the environment and is also updated in this relationship. In this context, one of the tasks of interior architecture education is 'to produce creative ideas' in the context of user and environment relationship. The process of idea formation in interior architecture begins with recognizing and identifying the identity of the user and, in connection with this, identifying the needs of the user regarding the physical and social environment in which he/she lives. However, the ideas and solutions offered for the needs identified in the issues and problems addressed during the education are not always reflected on the social life. In this context, in order to realize and experience the creative ideas gained in the profession of interior architecture, Social Service Practices course was taken into consideration. Within the scope of the course, it was aimed to make students reproduce, transform, apply and transfer the professional knowledge that they acquire during their undergraduate education within the framework of social responsibility.

Considering the contributions of Social Service Practices course to professional practice, this study was examined in three main sections. In the first section, the place of social service and social responsibility in interior architecture, and the need for social responsibility in the personal development of the individual were discussed. The subject, place and user selection of the students and the process they experienced in this context were mentioned within the framework of the social responsibility concept in the second part of the study. This section discussed the outcomes of the processes experienced by the students, self-assessments of the students and the feedback they got from the social environment. In the final section, the contributions of the Social Service Practices course to the education of interior architecture profession and the development of candidates of this profession were discussed.

SOCIAL SERVICE PRACTICES AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social Service Practices object to the objective evaluation of information and evaluate the process of acquiring information as an active response to the situation and increase the problem-solving capacity (Dewey,1996; Uğurlu & Kıral, 2012 p.62). The concept of 'Social Service Practices' is defined as a method which aims for young people to learn and evolve by taking part in conscious, planned projects for the society they are in (Sliwka,2004, p.1). Therefore, in addition to acquiring a profession, young people studying in universities have the opportunity to develop their skills in social service practices course to serve the society during and after graduation (Saran, Coşkun, İnalzorel & Aksoy, 2011, p.3737). This course, as a learning method, also aims to guide students in search of meaning of life (Saran, Coşkun, İnalzorel & Aksoy, 2011, p.3737).

In 1988, the Bologna University Constitution (Magna Charta Universitatum), approved by the rectors of 388 European universities, emphasized the followings:

- Cultural, scientific and technological developments will determine the future
- It should be aimed to raise environmentally sensitive generations and
- Social Service is also a function of universities.

In this context, four basic principles are adopted: 'autonomy', 'unity of teaching and research', 'autonomy in teaching and research' and 'humanistic understanding'.

In order to ensure the integration of the universities with the society in the context of adaptation to the Bologna process, Council of Higher Education (CoHE) in Turkey considers that it is appropriate to provide the Social Service Practices course in all universities. In this context, it is expected that students will understand the expectations of today's social structure and take an active role in social issues related to their profession within the scope Social Service Practices course, which is included in the curriculum of Interior Architecture education.

The concept of social responsibility, which is the most important determinant of the Social Service Practices course, can be defined as 'the act of regulating the behavior of individuals by considering the social consequences' (Saran, Coşkun, İnalzorel & Aksoy, 2011, p.3734). In other words, 'caring the well-being and welfare of other individuals who make up the society, the sense of duty that includes helping others, civic participation and responsible attitudes towards others' are considered (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000, p.332-358). The profession of Interior Architecture meets in the relationship between the concept of social responsibility and the individual, society and environment.

While user, existing in the relationship between society and environment, is producing space, he/she also evolves in a cycle where it is affected by the reality it produces. In this circular relationship, Maslow (1943), who has studies on human behaviors, formed the hierarchy of needs consisting of 5 basic steps considering the stages of individuals' personal development. The first step of this order includes the most basic physical needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping, housing and the last step includes the need for self-fulfillment. Maslow (1970) discussed the individual's relationship with society and environment by extending the last step of hierarchy of needs 'self-realization' to 'self-transcendence - understanding others and the environment' and pointed out that being an individual causes some responsibilities (Figure 1).

Social Service Practices course conducted at Marmara University Faculty of Fine Arts Department of Interior Architecture, aims to increase the awareness of the students for social responsibility by using the knowledge and competencies they have learned during their education to offer solutions for real problems. According to this aim, students are expected to assume the responsibilities arising from their tendency to realize themselves and thus contribute to their professional and personal development.

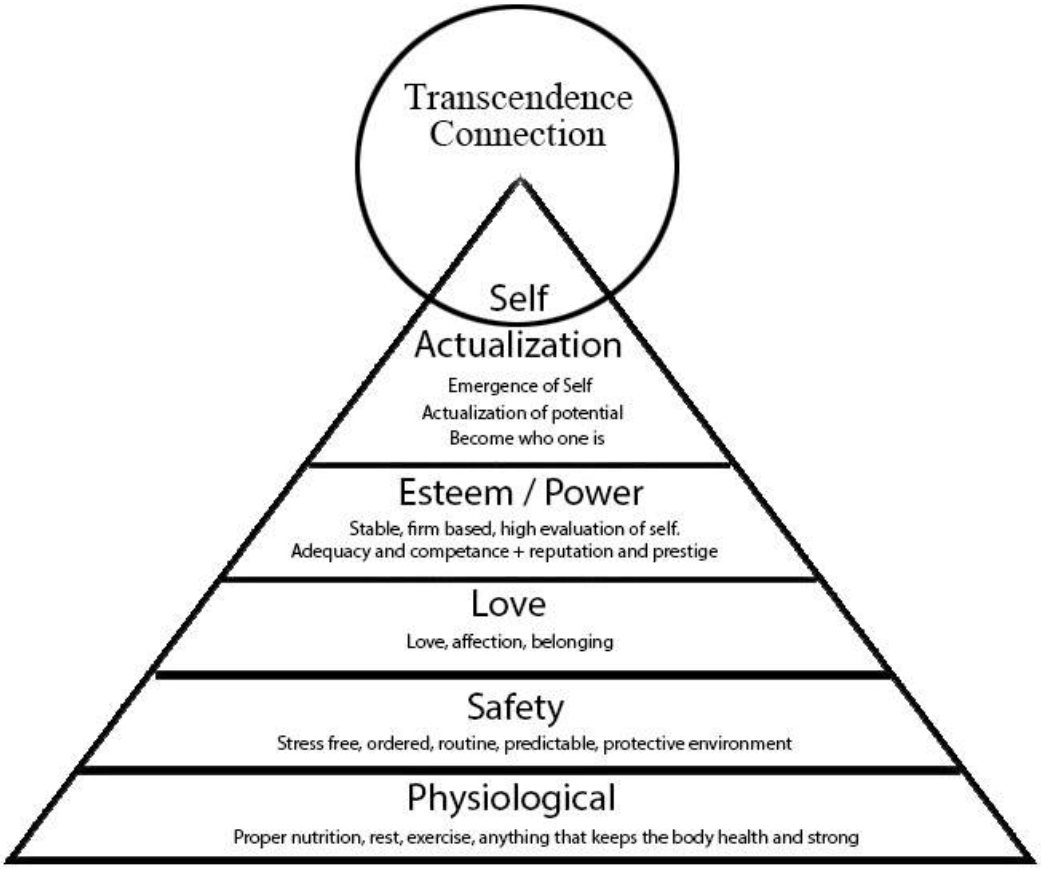

Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs diagram (Maslow, 1970)
https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Hierarchy_of_Basic_Needs

WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE FOCUSED ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

When describing the city in which the society lives, it is not enough to mention only the users. What defines the city is its vital character that occurs as a result of the relationships established between the users. The vital character of the city gives clues about the society it belongs. Cities are the common living spaces, formed by the union of lived and designed spaces as a result of social communication, experience and production. In addition to individuals with social status, these living spaces also accommodate different layers of the society such as the homeless, street people, street animals and the elderly.

In this study, in order to improve the skills of solidarity, communication and self-evaluation among the individuals who make up the society, it was planned to do a project that would be pragmatic to meet the

social problems in the city we are living. These problems included the basic needs stated in Maslow's hierarchical order such as eating-drinking, sheltering, security and belonging. Besides, this project would be conducted with the motivation of the last step of Maslow's hierarchical order, which is 'self-transcendence - understanding others and the environment'.

In this context, in the scope of Social Service Practices course conducted at Marmara University Faculty of Fine Arts Department of Interior Architecture in 2018-2019 Fall Semester, in order to make 4th year students recognize, define and internalize the user profiles of different layers of the society, the following two projects were planned to be done in the course time of 3 weeks:

- Cat house construction
- Tea/Soup preparation and distribution to the needy

It was envisaged that the project would be carried out with a holistic process consisting of research, implementation and social communication which will cover all phases of the production, transmission, implementation and transformation of knowledge. These phases were:

- *Research* phase can be summarized as selecting and researching the given concept, examining the social structure, identifying the needy, determining the program and the requirements.
- *Implementation* phase would be conducted in two ways (1.cat house construction & 2.Tea/Soup preparation) related to the chosen project.
- *Social communication* phase would include the implementation of the project by establishing the relationship with the society within the city.

After the research, implementation and social communication phases, the students were expected to present the whole process (at least 1 minute - up to 2 minutes) in an accelerated video. In this way, it was aimed to observe the process that the students construct in the context of recognizing different user profiles and needs and questioning the relationship between user and society by going beyond the usual range of users.

Workshop And Field Study

In this study, it was aimed to get feedback on the gains of the 35 students, who took Social Service Practices course, after selection of the project topic, project development, process management and experience within 3 weeks. Accordingly, the following steps were carried out respectively:

1st Week: Research Phase

Following the brief information given to the students, they were asked to select the projects they wanted to do, to research on this topic, to determine the location and to examine the social structure of the environment they selected and to determine their needs. The students individually made a pin-up presentation with A3 format moodboards in which they presented the subject they would work on (Figure 2). At the end of the presentations, it was observed that 19 students would participate in the first project group (cat house construction) and 16 students would participate in the second project group (tea/soup preparation and distribution to the needy). It was noticed that the students who would build cat houses generally preferred the environments they live in. The students who would make tea/ soup distribution stated that they wanted to distribute tea/soup and foodstuffs such as donuts, cakes, and pies to peddlers, elderly, paper collectors and homeless people, in different regions of the city such as İstiklal Street, Kadıköy and Eminönü.



Figure 2. Examples of moodboard presentations including information about concept, user, target audience and location

2nd Week: Implementation Phase

Cat House Construction: The cat house was designed collectively in accordance with common decisions considering cost, material, environmental conditions, form, user requirements, easy applicability and environmental issues. It was designed to cost 30 TL per person, by using heat insulation boards secured with the help of screws and by using thermal insulation mortar not to be affected by the external conditions. After the plaster was dried, the students covered the interior of the cat house with a soft material such as felt or straw and designed the outside of the house (Figure 3).

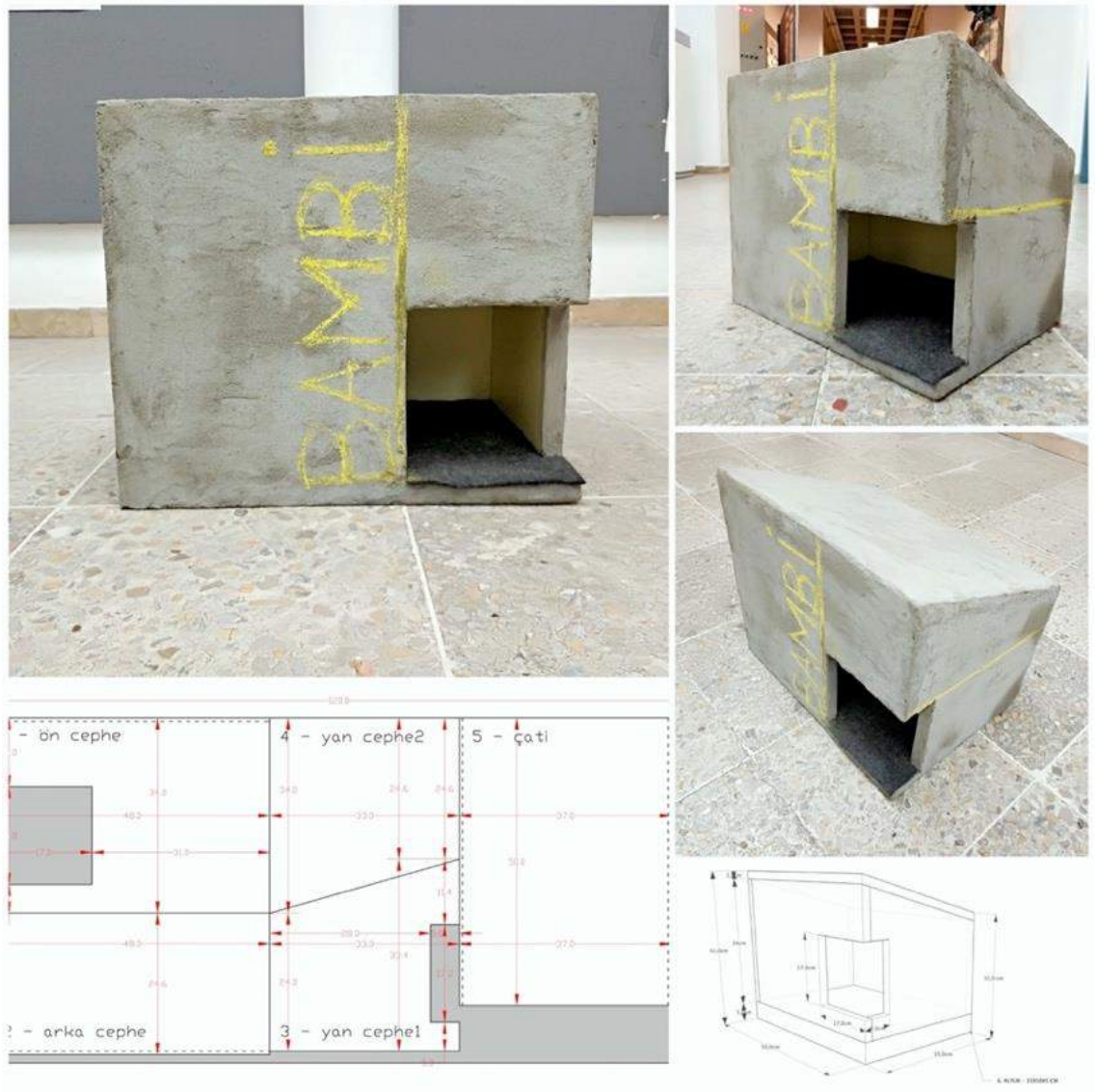

Figure 3. Technical drawing, perspective and prototype of cat house design

Within the scope of the workshop, all the students, who built the cat house, helped each other during the production process and take part in the process collectively. Thus, they also gained experience in working together, cooperating and solidarity (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Images from the workshop

Tea/Soup Preparation and Distribution to the needy: Since this project didn't require a long preparation, they carried out the implementation phase on the same day as the social communication phase.

3rd Week: Social Communication Phase

The students, who produced cat houses, put the houses to their designated locations within a week and fed them and observed the cats using the houses (Figure 5).

The second project group (Tea/Soup Preparation and Distribution), prepared the food and drinks on their own and distributed them to the user profile they chose in the location they determined. It was left to their own wishes to make preparation and distribution individually or as groups. It was observed that they mostly worked cooperatively (Figure 5).

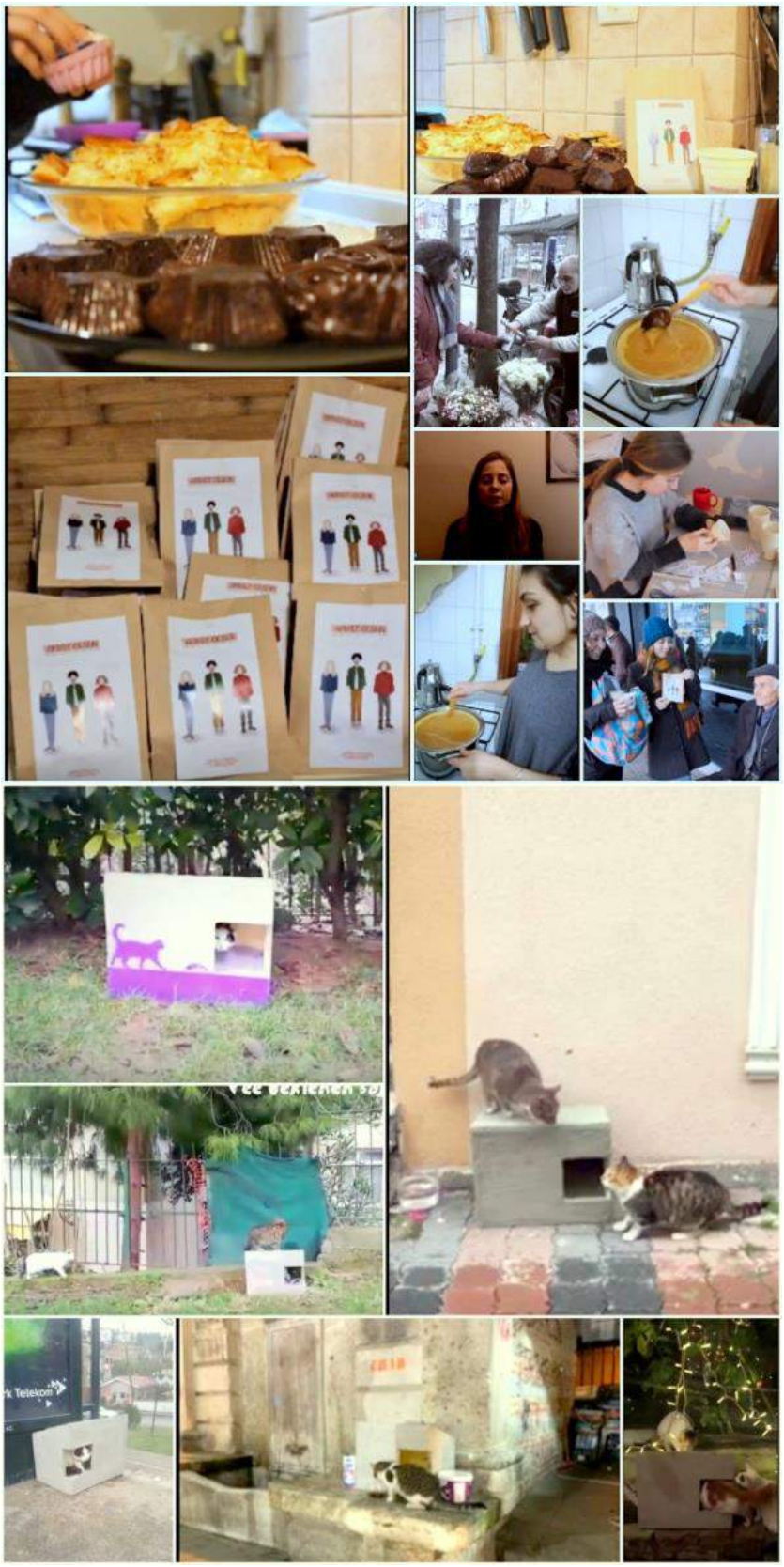

Figure 5. Images of the social communication stage (preparation, communication, observation)

At the end of 3 weeks, they created short videos including their interviews with the people, their explanations on the whole process they experienced, their achievements and the awareness they gained in the Social Service Practices course (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Images from the videos in which the students explained their experiences

CONCLUSION

The Social Service Practices course enables interior design candidates to use the knowledge and competencies they have learned during their training to produce solutions to real problems. In this study, a participatory design model was discussed in order to recognize, define and understand the target audience in interior architecture. This model is a communication-oriented model and tries to give the students the ability to gather and organize the stages such as researching, analyzing, designing and applying knowledge without separating theoretical and practical discourse. In this model:

- Students had the opportunity to touch different layers of the society by using their professional knowledge they obtained during their undergraduate education. They developed new ideas by transforming their professional knowledge to find solutions to the identified problems through the processes they construct according to the expectations and needs of the society.

- In the scope of cat house construction workshop, they evaluated the contribution of the existing materials and application methods – by using them creatively for different purposes – to the product and the process.
- During the tea and soup delivery process, they discussed communication patterns and the relationship between the forms of delivery service and design and user.
- In both studies, as well as the final product of design, they understood the determinism of the context and reality in which the final product exists in design practice.

Today, educational institutions' efforts focusing on personal development to make students to be cooperative, caring and responsible people and on service awareness are gaining importance. Through these studies, gains in professional practice can easily be included in the educational life. Students have the opportunity to experience the problems they may encounter in their professional lives. Within the framework of professional education, creating opportunities to bring the knowledge produced in workshops and courses into the reality of life strengthens students' perceptions and contributes to their designer identity. For this reason, it is important to have similar studies in interior architecture education..

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