

Ankara 2019 – Insider Knowledge

Reflections on the Fifth International Conference for Design Education Researchers

Naz A.G.Z. Börekçi, Fatma Korkut and Dalsu Özgen Koçyıldırım
https://doi.org/10.21606/drs_lxd2021.19.327

The fifth conference of the Learn X Design series, DRSLXD2019, was held in Ankara between 9-12 July 2019, hosted by Middle East Technical University (METU). It all started in London, at the Learn X Design 2017 conference, with the encouragement of the DRS Special Interest Group in Design Pedagogy (PedSIG) convenor of the time for our application to bid for hosting the next conference of the series, and continued with the support of Derek Jones, the next DRS PedSIG convenor, and Peter Lloyd, Chair of the DRS Council at the time. We were thrilled to learn that we were given the opportunity to be the next hosting institution. The year 2019 had a special meaning for us; it marked the 50th anniversary of the first course on industrial design offered in Turkey at METU Faculty of Architecture by the American industrial designer David K. Munro. 2019 also was the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Industrial Design as a separate undergraduate programme at METU.

While planning for the conference, we aimed for a fulfilling conference experience for all involved, from the conference academic scope to the social events, with a strong visual identity that would support in making the conference unforgettable for the delegates. We found our inspirations among the local values of the region. The name Ankara, as in the capital city of Turkey, comes from the word anchor, representing the strategic location of this ancient city that has hosted many civilizations and acted as the intersection of routes between Asia, Africa and Europe. The METU campus, with its built environment including the iconic Faculty of Architecture building, as well as the natural environment it embraces resulting from generations-long forestation effort, was also a rich resource. Finally, we based our visual identity on the Anatolian carpet motifs, and highlighted the eight-point star as the “X” of the conference series name, and the interwoven colours to represent “the crossing of paths” and “coming together” (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The conference title and graphics.

We determined our main theme as “Insider Knowledge”, referring to the knowledge, know-how, skill sets and mindsets developed, implemented and internalised throughout time by the design education research community at large. We were in consensus that this was what we wanted to achieve with this conference: providing a milieu where we could open up our *insider knowledge* to the use of others, in order to share, generate, interact and learn.

As we wanted to make sure the conference call was widely disseminated, we started our preparations early, in October 2017. We initially worked out the main conference theme, developed the visual identity, and finally prepared our website, to make our call for tracks in May 2018. We had a wide range of responses, and as a result, we were able to make the call for papers in July 2018. The deadline for paper submission was 30 December 2018. Forty-two track chairs were involved in this process of building the conference scope. For the new year of 2019, we had 111 paper submissions and 11 workshop proposals submitted to 17 conference



tracks. We also had 28 PhD Pit-Stop applications to review. There were 119 reviewers involved in the two rounds of double-blind review, ensuring a high quality in the submission selections and revisions. As a result, 87 papers and five workshops were accepted for the conference.

The conference programme was set up to accommodate a full-day PhD Pit-Stop on the first day, with three workshops running in parallel. Twenty-four PhD researchers joined the PhD Pit-Stop. The PhD Pit-Stop was supported with four short plenary lectures by Gülay Hasdoğan, Owain Pedgley, Peter Lloyd, and Gülşen Töre Yargın, open to the participation of all delegates, besides the PhD researchers. PhD researchers made their presentations and received feedback provided by the mentors in the morning, and they joined a workshop in the afternoon (Figure 2, left), where they were able to discuss their research interactively with all mentors involved. On that evening, the conference welcome reception was held at the front garden of the Faculty of Architecture (Figure 2, right). We believe this first day, and the social event concluding it at a karaoke bar, were among the events characterising the conference.



Figure 2. Left: PhD Pit-Stop workshop in the afternoon. Right: Conference welcome reception at the Faculty of Architecture front garden in the evening, 9 July 2019.

The following three days of the conference accommodated two more workshop sessions running parallel to 27 paper presentation sessions. We had either two or three parallel sessions for paper presentations (Figure 3, left). In total, we had 150 delegates from 88 institutions spread across 27 countries.



Figure 3. Left: Paper presentation session. Right: Concluding panel on the final day, 12 July 2019.

Each day, the first session in the afternoon was a plenary keynote address (Figure 4). The conference brought together an enormously powerful group of keynotes, three women academics, located in different parts of the world. The keynote of the first day was Gabriela Goldschmidt, with her keynote address titled “Disciplinary Knowledge and the Design Space”. The keynote of the second day was Zeynep Çelik Alexander, with her keynote address titled “Drawing Circles”. The keynote of the concluding third day was Halime Demirkan, with her keynote address titled “Learning and Knowledge Building Skills in Design Education”.



Figure 4. Keynotes from left to right: Gabriela Goldschmidt, Zeynep Çelik Alexander, Halime Demirkan.

The final day of the conference concluded with a panel titled “Design Pedagogy for Future Generations”, moderated by Derek Jones, and with the participation of İpek Akpınar, Aykut Coşkun, Emre Çağlar, Stanley Ruecker and Yasuko Takayama. This panel addressed the changes expected in design pedagogy in the forming of the new generations of designers, and how design education research can contribute to the skill sets and mindsets that they are expected to acquire for their professional careers (Figure 3, right).

We believed it was important to be able to support the conference community in an inviting environment. We wanted the conference venue to reflect the conference visual identity, and accommodate the technical and social needs of the delegates. The venue was furnished by one of our sponsors to host the social gatherings during coffee and lunch breaks (Figure 5, left), as well as to provide quiet areas for the delegates. There were also two sponsored exhibitions in the venue: a photography exhibition on the work of contemporary Turkish architects, and an exhibition of glassware products by Turkish and international designers. We did our best to prepare a joyful conference pack that included the book of abstracts and pins for social events (Figure 5, centre and right).



Figure 5. Left: Conference venue during lunch break. Centre: Conference pack. Right: Book of abstracts.

Our social programme aimed to reflect various aspects of celebrating, including a glimpse into the rituals of bathing in the traditional Turkish bath (Figure 6, left), and dining in a traditional restaurant. The conference dinner was a true celebration of coming together, hearing each other out and understanding different points of view, and the hearty participation of 300 people singing and (belly) dancing together was a wonderful experience (Figure 6, right). We said our final goodbye to the delegates on the last day in a local neighbourhood pub, following the closure of the conference.



Figure 6. Left: The Turkish bath visit, 10 July 2019. Right: The conference dinner, 11 July 2019.

We believe we have learnt a lot from this 21-month experience. Before the conference, during the preparations, we learned the value of developing and agreeing on a shared goal, and how this can bring parties, located in different parts of the world, closer. Our belief in hard work, team effort, collaboration, compromise and friendly communication has been strengthened. Having to work early morning hours and late evening hours, and running against deadlines reminded us of effective time planning, efficient coordination and prompt responses to enquiry. During the conference, we remembered the value of cultural, institutional and personal diversity, and of having young and senior researchers together. We were inspired by new knowledge, and its power in building a global design education research community. We also discovered the strength of social media, supported by branding and visual identity, which we made use of before, during and after the conference, in effectively communicating to reach out and keep in touch.

The website for the DRS Learn X Design 2019 Fifth International Conference for Design Education Researchers may be accessed from: http://drslxd19.https://doi.org/10.21606/drs_lxd2021.metu.edu.tr/ From this webpage it is also possible to download the conference proceedings book.

With this experience, we once again were able to see that it is people that bring an event to life, give it meaning, and pass its legacy onto future generations. We thank the organisers of the DRSLXD2019 conference, DRS PedSIG and METU. We also thank the Programme Committee, International Board of Reviewers, track chairs, keynotes, short lecturers, PhD Pit-Stop mentors, workshop organisers and panellists. We thank our sponsors, Ankara Embassy of Israel, BSH, Nude, Nurus, MPV Mustafa Parlar Foundation, and METU. We also thank the local administrative team, editorial support team, visual communication support team, and the conference team who were out on the field, showing an amazing effort in the realisation of the event (Figure 7).



Figure 7. The conference team, during preparations.

Naz A.G.Z. Börekçi

Middle East Technical University, Department of Industrial Design, Turkey
nborekci@metu.edu.tr

Naz A.G.Z. Börekçi received her BID from METU Department of Industrial Design (1995), MFA from Bilkent University Interior Architecture and Environmental Design (1997) and PhD from University of Kent at Canterbury / KIAD (2003). She is currently associate professor at METU Department of Industrial Design. Her research interests include design education, design methodology, and university-industry collaboration.

Fatma Korkut

Middle East Technical University, Department of Industrial Design, Turkey
korkut@metu.edu.tr

Fatma Korkut is an associate professor at METU Department of Industrial Design. She holds a bachelor's degree in industrial design from METU (Ankara), an MSc from IIT Institute of Design (Chicago), and a PhD from Mimar Sinan University (Istanbul). Her research has ranged over design history, design education, and design protection. Her recent research supervision has focused on design pedagogy, design thinking and value transfer through generative practices.

Dalsu Özgen Koçyıldırım

Middle East Technical University, Department of Industrial Design, Turkey
dozgen@metu.edu.tr

Dalsu Özgen Koçyıldırım received her BFA in Graphic Design from Bilkent University (2002), her MFA in Design and Technology from Parsons School of Design (2005) and her DFA from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (2012). She was a visiting professor in IIT Institute of Design for a year. She's currently a lecturer at METU Department of Industrial Design. Her main research interests are foundation design, visual storytelling and design communication.