

Research for an architect as a specialized citizen

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If he was not dead already, the pandemic has definitely killed Howard Roark. The time of this heroic character of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* is over. Today architectural community has departed from an understanding of the architect as a godly figure who singularly blesses the world with his prophetic vision. Instead, now is the time of the architect as a specialized citizen—one who is an integral part of the social and natural ecosystem of the world. While the architectural establishment is very slow in truly reflecting this departure, the alternative currents that challenge the establishment are gaining visibility and credibility slowly but surely. Motivated by this current and the vision we believe that architectural research can also be geared towards supporting the maturing of an architect as a specialized citizen. At MEF University's Alternative Architectural Practices Master's Program (AAP) we are set out to do that.

First of its kind in Turkey, AAP is a four-semester graduate program in architecture, where the students work collaboratively on researching, prototyping and producing a singular project on a specific theme. This paper concentrates on the outcomes of AAP since its establishment in 2019 through interviews with the students, the reviews of the projects and the tracking of the life of the projects post-AAP. It aims to analyze and discuss what worked and what needs more work in an attempt to establish research strongly in the realm of the citizen architect.

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