

## View to the Habitat from three Different Windows

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The dynamic shelter experience has been subject to fractions in certain periods and gone through sudden and rapid transformations. The history of humanity can also be considered as the history of the transformation in the sheltering culture. What is meant by sheltering here is not just physical sheltering, but also the attitude and lifestyle of the individual. The culture of the habitat is the conceptual discussion point of architecture as an area over which problems related to existence and life are discussed at all times. As the physical meaning of developing a sense of belonging to the habitat, architectural structure represents a life culture. One of the main components of this culture is the experiences gained through the relationships between the nature and humans. The focus within the scope of the article and specifically in respect of sheltering is the rural areas where nature can still be considered as a context. In order to discuss the relationships with the nature established both over structures and over windows as an architectural component, three examples are selected, one being traditional, one being modern and one being contemporary. The range of sensation of nature and human relationships are discussed on the basis of these examples. By this discussion, it is aimed to contribute to the manners of how today's living practices develop a sense of belonging.

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### 1. Introduction

In the Art of Loving, Erich Fromm describes men as a part of the nature. This description reveals itself in the adverse transformations in the structure of the earth caused by the impact of the humanity. Circumstances such as climate change, depletion of underground sources, melting of icebergs, air pollution, alteration in the structure of the soil, thus the rural areas, due to in-organic substances are now generating visible results. During these transformations in the nature, the distinctive nature of humans also goes through similar adverse transformations. The chaotic atmosphere created by globalization and the imbalances in production and consumption styles trigger this adversity. The biggest sign of these relationships is the built environment that surrounds us. This built environment is the result of an act of architecture. In our age, the general tendency of architecture is to design the need rather than exploring the needs of people.

Throughout the history, the act of architecture has always occurred as the product of a certain capital. The needs of the architect are being discussed as much as the needs which the product of architecture corresponds to. An atmosphere shaped by economic dynamics where local cultures and borders have started to vanish, where technology has been rapidly developing and where social life is mostly determined by cultural processes now reveals itself almost all over the world and shapes our lives. The practice of architecture, on the other hand, produces the physical environment as a part of the dynamics composing this new order. Despite contextual differences between continents, the popular tendency of the present time is the spaces demanded by the global capital, away from local or other contextual particulars in line with all these impacts. The resulting chaotic atmosphere leads to negative effects such as the sense of being trapped in cities, insecurity, lack of the sense of belonging, placelessness etc. However, parties who react against these negative changes in the earth have aimed to undertake certain responsibilities. Such aim may be finding an alternative way to gain popularity from other aspects. One of the most striking examples is the Elemental team and Alejandro Aravena, who created their own customer profile. They combined their experience with the

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World Bank and the user-participated design format, and produced Elemental houses. The project has made an influence in the world, also helping Aravena to be accepted as one of the famous architects. This project was designed as “social housing”.

It is not common that the leading architects of the world become famous with mass housing premises. However, a user-participated attitude is considered as a positive attitude in an atmosphere filled with negativity, and the aim of making the architectural designed to every layer of the society is affirmed. Aravena generates a new attitude here by creating his own customers. The statement made by “Elemental”, the architectural firm of Alejandro Aravena is as follows: “Out of the 3 million urban dwellers today, 1 million live under the line of poverty. Out of the more than five million people that will live in cities in the next decades, two million are going to be under the line of poverty. This means that we have to build a one million people city per week with ten thousand dollars per family. Given the magnitude of the housing shortage, we won’t solve this problem unless we add people’s own resources and building capacity to that of governments and market. That is why we thought of putting in place an open system able to channel all the available forces at play. In that way people will be part of the solution and not part of the problem.” (Seren, 2016)

At this point, the constructive, responsibility-bearing and subtle attitude of the architect and the team who manages the process comes into prominence. The architectural product and process of Aravena seems impressive in this respect. However, the critical point is the idea of “user participation”. What is considered as need by the architect is shaped by the effects of the psychology of producing classical spaces. Throughout the project, the following question is asked to the participants means of a questionnaire: “We have the half of the money which can produce each house! With this money, we aim to produce half of your houses. Such half will be designed for your needs that you deem essential. You will complete the other half with your own facilities. In this case, do you want a water heater or a bathtub for your bathroom?” The architectural reflex of the architect makes him think that they will want water heater. However, it is understood that house owners prefer bathtub over water heater. They think that, if they have a bathtub, water heater is an item which can be obtained later. Furthermore, for users, bathtub is the representative of a life of higher quality. This practice shows that, besides the known items which shapes the architectural product, there are also new contexts shaped by desired. Therefore, in this new environment, the meaning of need turns into a subject which should be discussed again. (Cook&Boyer, 2010)

The changing contexts where need is replaced by desire clearly brings the act of architecture to a new position. The discomfort caused by the empirical process created by such position in the architecture environment reveals itself especially in the efforts of some star architects to find alternatives ways of discussion and production. For example, Peter Zumthor prefers staying in a rural area and thinking on architecture in sort of reclusion. Thus, he finds a place to realize the practice of architecture away from globalization and shifts of meaning. The extent of the impact of this attitude can be understood from the designs. Spaces are designed only as a matter of place without being influenced by any trend, material, shift of needs et. which shape architectural design. Zumthor states the following regarding his own attitude:

Contemporary architecture should be just as radical as contemporary music. But there are limits. Although a work of architecture based on disharmony and fragmentation, on broken rhythms, clustering and structural disruptions may be able to convey a message, as soon as we understand its statement our curiosity dies, and all that is left is the question of the building’s practical usefulness. I do not think of it primarily as either a message or a symbol, but as an envelope and background for life which goes on in and around it, a sensitive container for the rhythm of footsteps on the floor, for the concentration of work, for the silence of sleep.” (Zumthor, 1999)

In his article about Zumthor titled “Thinking about Architecture (in the Minor), Levent Şentürk states that the question “Why don’t we trust in simple things that constitute architecture” makes Zumthor approach to surrealism and avant-garde, rather than rationalism and functionalism. He thinks that a building should be a being which do not lean on anything other than its own physical concentration and do not need the reinforcement of art. “Simple things that constitute architecture” are not “formative elements” related to historicity, but beyond time and beyond meaning (or before time and before meaning). It is the “deep-seated power” of physical resources: He says that “eighty million years old stones” brings a deep earthy intensity to the stones of the Therme Vals (Senturk, 2016)



**Figure 1. Therme Vals by Peter Zumthor**

The mentioned structure, Therme Vals, is an hotel and spa building constructed on hot water resources in Graubünden, Switzerland in 1996. This design has emerged with the collective efforts of the residents of this region. It is also a building, the expenses of which were covered from the financial pool of the local people, away from the demands and capital of the global market.

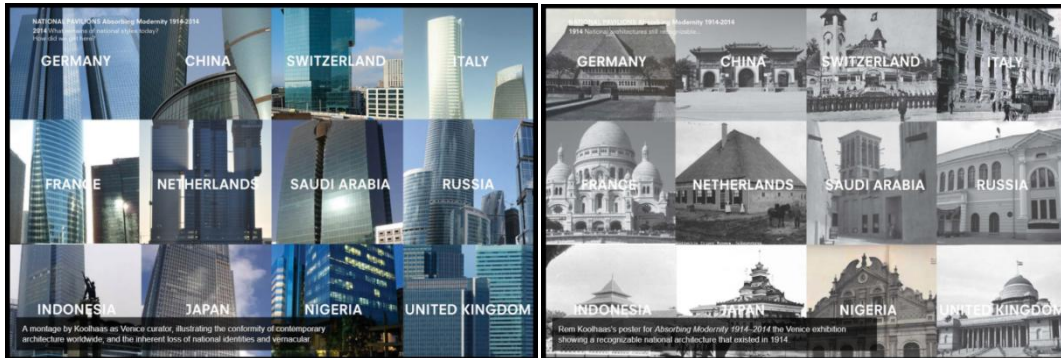
Besides its architecturally impressive characteristics; the design created by Zumthor by seeking an answer to the question ““Mountain, stone, water – building in the stone, building with the stone, into the mountain, building out of the mountain, being inside the mountain – how can the implications and the sensuality of the association of these words be interpreted, architecturally?” also has an aspect separating itself from the popular architecture world in this respect. The reason behind the emphasis on popularity is that Peter Zumthor, who do the act of architecture with such local works, is as famous as other star architects in the world of architecture. In this book named “Mimarn Solugu”, İhsan Bilgin describes the naive but as much strong attitude of Zumthor as follows: “... if [the designer] directs his attention to the situation itself, takes his inspiration from the uniqueness of the situation; if he knows how to pay attention every time the sun rises, to every section of the tree, to the state of people every night; if he is open to look, hear, smell, taste and touch, and has refused to automatize these processes, if he is aware that there is nothing or no moment repeating itself after once unraveling its specific conditions, then his claim is in producing within that openness.” (Bilgin, 2016)

Zumthor also approaches to the nature, senses and contacts of people with the same sensitivity in his works other than the thermal structure. He does not distinguish the places he designs from the context of the nature they are located in. This may be the main reason why designs are considered as the experience of senses. Unlike Fromm who thinks humans as a torn-away part of the nature, he considers humans as a complement within the nature.

The real question here is whether the elements created throughout the process of finding the consideration of the act of architecture within the space arise from the togetherness of and also the conflict between the nature and people. The classical architectural knowledge has been constructed over the experiences gained through these relationships as from the very beginning. However, the practices of the 21st century is adding completely different meanings to the space. For example, the impact of security, as a context, on the space design or the effort of generating independent fictitious values over the human scale, and the transformation of virtual spaces into a context as much as a physical space is a gift of this century. These meanings can be felt at every space under the influence of globalization. Architecture dissociated from factors such as information technologies, smart systems, sustainability trend etc. is only possible by adhering to the local values in the rural areas but also influencing the whole world, like Zumthor.

In the architecture platform, staying in a rural area and looking over the world from there is considered as a kind of “confession”. This expression was found after Rem Koolhaas, who was in close relationships with the global capital until recently, gave up designing cities and skyscrapers and started thinking on rural areas (Ertas, 2014). He says that this transformation was caused by a village trip in Sweden. He stated that the transformation of the village into a completely different place has left a lasting impression on him and that urban-focused lives disregard such changes. Cities are under the danger of losing local elements in the architectural sense. The last chance for developing a sense of belonging to local characteristics are urban areas and premises which have not been impaired yet. In this matter, Koolhaas says “The fact that more than 50 percent of the world’s population now lives in cities has become an excuse to ignore the countryside... I have long been fascinated by the transformation of the city, but since looking at the countryside more closely in recent years, I have been surprised by the intensity of change taking place there”.

The most obvious step he has taken to reveal the discomfort he feels due to this situation was the “FUNDEMENTALS” theme he designed after assuming the curatorship of 2014 Venice Biennial. Addressing the fundamentals of architecture with this theme, RK points out that the de-differentiation in the world destroys the locale. (Wachs, 2017).

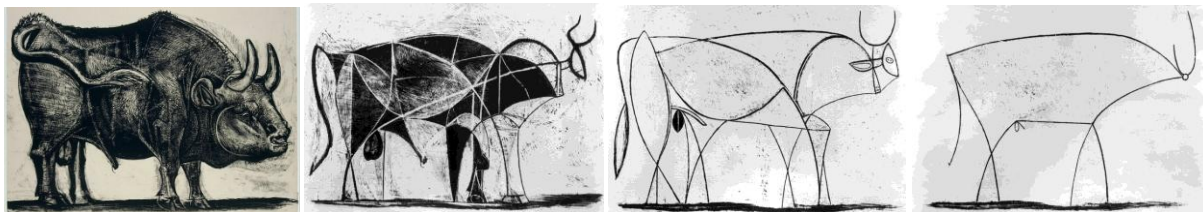


**Figure 2. Rem Koolhaas: National identity in architecture (Mackenzie,2014)**

The relationships having been established with the space starting from the archaic periods have never changed so much as they changed in the last 100 years. The means of understanding this transforming world are not transforming at the same pace with the age. Is questioning the principles of architecture an attempt to understand the new practices that have emerged with the impacts of globalization? Or is it a reflex of looking back to the past as a getaway from the dead ends generated by these practices, which is also an attitude of the fashion? The source of these two significant questions may be associated with the empiricity of the process in the 21st century, as mentioned in the beginning.

Nevertheless, Picasso may be given as an example if approaching to the trend of searching for the principles from another point of view is necessary. Picasso held an exhibition in 1945, with the following words: In my case a picture is a sum of destructions. I do a picture and then I destroy it. In the end though, nothing is lost”.

There were 11 lithographs in this exhibition. In those works, Picasso pictures the bull figure with different styles and every time by minimizing a little more. The first figure is a realistic representation of the bull. In the next pictures, the bull gradually changes, first getting a rich and gorgeous state and then anatomically breaking into parts. Thereafter, the bull figure surrenders to cubist forms and, in the last picture, excesses are eliminated with an aesthetic approach which is close to surrealism. The last bull is a representation consisting of a body, horns, a tail and a sexual organ.



**Figure 3 . Bull images by Art Resource, NY; 2014 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York (Chen,2014)**

The basic approach of this work is about abstraction. However, the value of the representation style is in Picasso’s search for authenticity. Everyone can picture a bull and, in the end, this turns into a repetition. Yet, the representation abstracted as a result of the effort of understanding by confronting the real condition of the bull shows the originality of the person’s attitude. By his attitude in the exhibition of “Bull (a series of eleven lithographs)”, Picasso emphasizes that one should start with an exact reality in order to reach an exact abstraction. He states that then one can destroy all traces of reality and the abstracted object will not lose its essence.



**Figure 4 . Apple Mouses (Chen,2014)**

Today, this approach is also taken by Apple. What triggers this attitude in the product designs of Apple, which has a worldwide reputation, is the principle of simplicity. In this context, the reason why the technology produced by this company attracts people lays behind its attitude towards simplicity. (Chen,2014). In the principles of Koolhaas, a search similar to the abstraction stage of Picasso may be found. The overlooked point here is that, in the global practices of the 21st century, the abstracted representation of the bull seems like the real appearance of the bull. This illusion goes away as soon as the reality of human's being a part of the nature is remembered. Therefore, while one looks into the change of main principles between human beings and architectural spaces, he faces the fact that those principles have never changed.

## **2. Methods**

In this article, all these situations are explained on the basis of three examples. The relational contexts of the examples will be addressed on the basis of the relationship they establish with the environment through the window. The first example is from the daily life in a traditional house in the Black Sea region. This house is where the specifics over which the movie "Sonbahar" (the Fall) dramatizes the life are processed. The second example is the "Villa Le Luc" building of Le Corbusier, one of the iconic names of modernism. Besides being a representation of modernism, the building is designed by the architect for his own family. The third example is the "House on the Rigi / AFGH" which is presented in the "World's Most Extraordinary Homes" on Netflix, an international broadcasting platform. This building, the designer and the user of which are the same, is located in Germany. The common point of these three houses is that they are located on similar topographies in the countryside. The reason behind choosing the examples from rural areas is the effort to seek for the basic relationships and contexts, as explained before, through the nature. This attitude can be explained with the following words of Kemal Ara: "Rural is associated with people's desire to establish a world on the earth, passion to construct and ability to create "ethos and mythos" with their own creative essence, which either comes from the stipulation of their imagination or from their willingness to use it or from their intention to dream, and with the interpretation of their lives on the basis of such essence. People of countryside construct for their world that they establish in association with the place, not just for the purpose of constructing. Even though there is a building to be entered in, the structure built by the people of countryside is their shelter on the earth within their world. Therefore, it is more than a refuge." (Aran, 2015)

Accordingly, rural area gives the chance to re-comprehend the main reflexes in creating spaces. One of the examples selected is an anonymous building created with the impact of the rural area; the second one is the indicator of an attitude rather than a house produced by the strongest representative of a period and trend; and the third one is a contemporary project the designer and user of which is the same, being used in the 21st century. The relationship of all examples with the nature generates discussion ranges within themselves. Spatial contexts will be discussed on the basis of these three examples, which represent the bond attempted to be established with the place on the earth.

### **2.1 The house in the movie Sonbahar (the Fall) - anonymous**

The movie Sonbahar is the story of a part of the life struggle of a young man, Yusuf, who was released from the prison. Yusuf, a revolutionist young man, is released from the prison, where he stayed for 12 months, as he has a couple of months to live. He returns to his village in Camlihemsin-Firtina valley to live with her old mother. In the village where only the old people are living due to the bad economy, Yusuf spends his time with his friend, Mikhail, by thinking of their youth that they could not live, and by repairing his broken bagpipe. He mostly locks himself in the house with the habits of his life in prison, and looks into his inner conflict. (Alper, 2008)



**Figure 5 . The movie “Sonbahar”, by director Özcan Alper**

Another feature of the movie is the use of languages such as Hemsin language and Laz language, which are the richness of Turkish geography and fading into oblivion. The movie brings out the physical and cultural interactions of a place. A “house” produced on the basis of traditional contexts cannot be separated from geography and the cultural pattern. The movie also focuses on the relations of Yusuf with the house both in terms of the sense of belonging and the space. The mother constantly observes her dying son. This observation is made through a window which frames the valley in most scenes of the movie.



**Figure 6 . The movie “Sonbahar”, changing whether**

Through that window, the changes both of Yusuf and of the nature are observed. When the nature turns from fall to winter, Yusuf dies. The mother watches the leaving of the funeral from the same window. The dramatic story here is explained on the basis of the climate, geography, body and space relationships. The relation of the house with the valley, its physical location and the vastness of the landscape it surrounds despite its small size are quite impressive. In respect of the building which seems to be constructed with traditional knowledge, the focus is on the atmosphere it creates rather than its physical characteristics. This rural structure associates the motion between birth-life-death with the nature. Accordingly, it takes part in the nature as a part of the nature. At this point, the death occurs in winter when the nature goes to sleep and the climate gets harsh.

In architecture, shelter is considered as a reflex. Exploring the human sensations which create this reflex will facilitate understanding such structures and lives. Thanks to the frames of this movie, we understand that this traditional house types, which serve as architectural spaces even though they are not constructed by an architect, bear the traces of the people who live in them. It is known that an anonymous structure style has a long history which cannot coincide with a specific date range. However, again by means of the building, it is possible to understand the process that the user who live in a part of this long phase coincide with, and its impacts. This is because both the building and the user are shaped with circumstances specific to the nature.

## **2.2. Villa “Le Lac”- Le Corbusier**

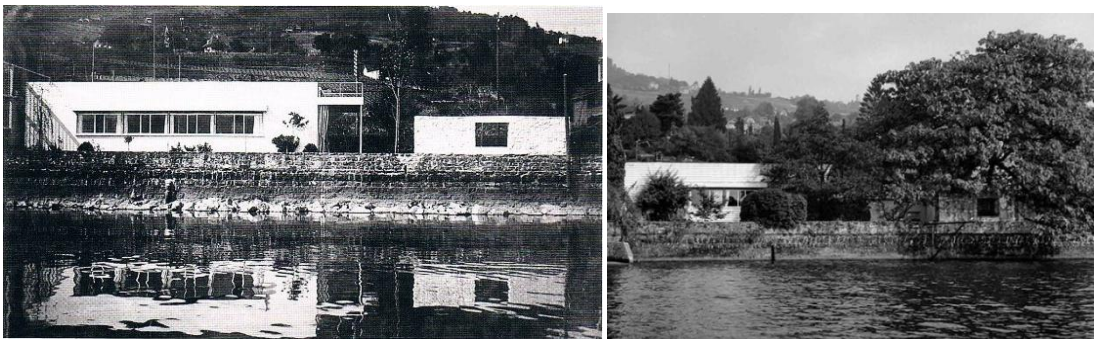
Until modernism, the management of the construction process by the user and the builder together was usual; builders spend time with the user, try to understand the user’s needs, and build the house, sometimes with the user. Upon architecture’s becoming widespread with the emergence of modernism, it is also important to spend a certain amount of time with the user for the design of the house.

However, the architect does not abstain from expressing his own desires. Villa le lac is a building designed by Le Corbusier for his family. It is an example of how much the architect's closely knowing the user can influence a design. (Mairs, 2016)



**Figure 7 . Villa “Le Lac”- Le Corbusier**

The house belonging to the family of Le Corbusier (Petite Maison Corseaux) was constructed on the basis of the plans of Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret between 1923-24. The building design and plans were made before choosing the location and then Le Corbusier chose the location which fits to the plans. This building is the first example of the modern architecture of Le Corbusier in Switzerland.



**Figure 7. Villa “Le Lac” process, changing nature**

Among “five points of a new architecture” defined by Corbusier for modern architecture, three were first seen in this house: The garden terrace, free floor plan, large and running windows. The interior is fitted with movable partitions and fold-out furniture, and sections of the walls are coated with bright paintwork. It has a sun deck on its flat roof. Additionally, a panoramic window, running through the main living space, frames views of the lake and Alps. There is also a window framing the landscape in the walled garden of the house.



**Figure 8 . Villa Le Lac - room of vegetation inside**

It may be suggested that the goal of framing the landscape may basically be an architectural design idea. The same attitude also reveals people's passion to control the nature. For the house designed as “a machine to live”, this walled garden is defined as a “room of vegetation inside”. This window allows you to see the Alps from the edge of the lake. The building situated in the edge of the lake overlooks the same landscape without any barrier.

While the main body of the house have windows designed for the landscape overlooking to the wide yards, there is this window on a wall surrounding the garden, situated over a space wide enough for allowing two persons sit face to face. This is another point which reveals the controlling attitude of modernism. The transformation of the composition of the landscape and view, which is desired to be overlooked with a certain geometry, in time is like a presentation of the conflict between the nature and the human beings, and another element of this presentation is trees. Trees grow without observing the boundaries determined on the ground and impairs the geometry on the ground with their own dispersion area. The wall ends up with being integrated with the vegetation around throughout the process.

The main impact in the production of the act of architecture starts over a need. The type and size of the need depends on the lifestyle and social relationships. Even though this is the general discourse, the result obtained after the emergence and finalization of the need may find different ranges sometimes for the designer and sometimes for the user. The presence of a window here may not be functional. Even though it is understood that almost each emphasis on the structure is made in order to shape the modern architecture, it is also clear that there is a goal of establishing an epic relationship with the environment. This structure can be considered as an indicator of how the effort of humans to give a meaning to being in the nature, despite being a part of the nature, can be shaped with the impacts of the age they live in.

### 2.3. Holiday House on the Rigi / AFGH

Netflix, an international broadcasting platform, explains a house located on the Alps in the episode of mountain houses in its production named “The World’s Most Extraordinary Homes”. The phenomenon of being extraordinary may stand as a debated topic, considering the examples in the whole world. However, the reason behind the choice of this house as an example in this article arises in the context of its relations with humans and the nature, as a contemporary interpretation. (Fuhrmann,2004)



**Figure 9 . Inside of Holiday House on the Rigi**

This house is the building Holiday House on the Rigi constructed by AFGH Office. The building Holiday House on the Rigi is designed as a holiday house at Rigi Scheidegg with the joint attempt of four people, two of whom are architects. Located on the slope of the mountain, the house is set as a place of reclusion on the weekends. The houses is accessed by means of a cable car. The documentary explains that this type of access gives rise to the sense of being away, being isolated or being in the nature. It is expressed that these characteristics grow with unusual and unattainable means of access such as cable car. “The weekend house program” standards as a type of production exactly in this sense. Reclusion or weekend houses, which may be considered as a need of this age, are mostly designed for escaping from intense and chaotic environment in the cities. Most of the alternatives for escaping are in rural areas. Especially a relationship with rural areas with an untouched nature can provide a break from the daily life.



**Figure 10 . Outside of Holiday House on the Rigi**



In the interview made in the documentary with the architects, who are both the designer and two of the users of the house; it is stated that this house is a contemporary interpretation of the houses around. However, differently from the traditional methods of construction, the parts constituting the building are produced as prefabricated and brought by means of helicopter. Besides the difficulty of transportation, another reason for constructing the building through this technique is the type of the tree with which the place is wainscoted. This is a honey-coloured type of tree raising a sense of brightness, and the entire interior area of the house is constructed so. The concern of the architects of the building about the design is both protection from the nature itself and creation of an atmosphere mingled with the nature. Accordingly, the idea of condensing the light generated through natural means inside in the interior area is one of the remarkable elements of the design.



**Figure 11 . Windows of Holiday House on the Rigi**

The reason behind this approach is actually the way how the building is located on the mountain. In the documentary, the Rigi Mountain is described as an island and the surrounding fog is described as a lake. They express that the fog can remain for weeks. At such times, while the atmosphere outside is grey, the interior of the house can be bright. This skill of moving an effect of the nature to the inside of the house enriches the act of reclusion. The windows positioned in a way to observe this process address to the subject of discussion of the article. The view from the windows takes on a dimension for watching the transformation processes of the nature, and the interior area elements such as sitting and watching are position with the very same concern. It is possible both to stay in a guarded area under harsh climatic conditions and to having an inner experience by observing the nature. “

### 3. Discussion

“Things” that shape the daily life are objectified with the intense pressure of the capitalist life strategies. This attitude which consider humans as a rational meta becomes more distinguishable with modernism. Its impact on the life can also be seen through the daily practices. However, having transformed with the the 21st century, the world does not provide more than an empirical observation apart from the changes based on modernism. The speed of technological change and production-consumption styles introduced by globalization are the biggest reasons behind this. It is this pressure what transforms the act of architecture into an industry. The relationships having been established with the space starting from the most archaic periods have never changed so much as they changed in the last 100 years. The means of understanding this transforming world are not transforming at the same pace with the age.

Styles of creating spaces which have been generated with the impact of globalisation may an indicator of this situation. These styles intensely felt in the cities are actually affecting the rural areas. It is a known fact that the rural areas have supported the urban areas, particularly by means of food production, throughout the history. As a place generally offering a lifestyle in the context of being in the nature, rural areas have never been associated with industrialism. However, most of the rural areas are now places where industrial agriculture and production are performed in order to feed the large cities shaped with the impact of globalization. The remaining non-industrialized urban areas are exposed to the impact of both the cities and the industrial rural areas. This leads us to experience that anything made with the action of human beings have a meaning in the nature, either positive or negative. The critical point here is the types of people’s acting on the earth separately from their nature-specific presence. In the context of the mentioned examples, it is observed that the basic relationship between humans and spaces develop in the sense of emotions, and the main concern of the space is to create an environment. The article attempts to develop an approach towards how being together with the nature can, as a context, direct the design. The impact of the nature is always felt in the efforts of being traditional, modern or contemporary. Reconsidering today’s practices on the basis of this impact may bring a solution to the empiricity of the 21st century.

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