



A competition story: Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center

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Abstract

Similar to other disciplines, architectural activities; gaining qualifications related to functional, technical and aesthetic parameters; is sprouting on the competition floor. In architecture competitions organized by many participants by allocating high-level workforce, time and budget, despite the mentioned size of the entries, the outputs may be incompatible with expectations and have problematic content. There are many studies in literature that illustrate the input – output discrepancy in architecture competitions; law, cost, ideology, sub-stage operation, etc. It points out the sources of problems related to the string of factors. This research focuses on the spatial/formal problems encountered in competition result products through the actions carried out in sub-stages. The research, which has gained experimental content through Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center, is based on concept project, implementation project, observations about current usage and the architect's determinations about the organization. With the method followed in the research, it is tried to identify the sources of problems in the sub-stages of the competition. It is thought that repeated results of similar researches are needed in order to make the competition mission sustainable. According to the research results; i) In a significant portion of the competition sub-processes, the dominance of the employer is prevalent. ii) Employer interventions have caused spatial problems and capacity problems in the usage stage. iii) The revisions carried out independently of the architect in the architectural project did not increase the spatial or formal quality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Architectural design competitions have an important mission in terms of including a competitive environment, having a collective production scheme, offering recognition opportunities for young architects, producing projects in a more egalitarian environment and being more transparent in terms of being open to the public compared to other methods of obtaining projects. The competition method can provide a platform where new ideas, proposals, and expressions can be freely expressed. The potential contained in competitions can facilitate the achievement of positive results such as the emergence of more qualified environments, the formation of an architectural culture at the societal level and an increase in the prestige of architects. Therefore, what is expected from architectural design competitions is to obtain spatial and formal qualities, as well as a disciplinary and socio-cultural communication network [1-4].

The emergence of competition products can be realized through a series of interdependent consecutive actions. These are [5]:

- Stating the competition request,
- Selection of land and calculation of costs,
- Determination of jury members,
- Structuring of the briefs,
- Production of design proposals,
- Completion of the evaluation stage by the jury members,
- Organization of exhibition and symposium,
- Production of implementation projects,
- Construction of the artificial environment,
- Evaluation of the artificial environment during the usage stage.

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For the theoretical and practical positivities expected from the competition method to be realized, each of these steps must be meticulously carried out. Otherwise, difficulties that are often impossible to reverse can be encountered. These generally include; the inconsistency of the dynamics and budget of the land with the target theme, the briefs not containing sufficient and correct parameters for the employer and user, competency and evaluation problems regarding the jury members, the architect's inability to participate in the implementation stage and the impact of arbitrary interventions [6].

The purpose of this research is to evaluate an artificial environment that has been constructed and put into service through the competition method, while also benefiting from the conditions during the usage stage. In this way, the competition sub-stages are attempted to be read and future solution proposals are presented. Within the scope of the research, Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center in Ankara was taken into account, architectural projects were studied, discussions were held with the architect and observation-examination studies were conducted in the area. These methods facilitated focusing on the target criterias-result product range.

2. NAZIM HIKMET CULTURAL CENTER

Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center was acquired through a competition organized by Ankara Yenimahalle Municipality in 2007 and the implementation projects were prepared by Architect Erdal Sorgucu, who won the competition in the same year [7]. The implementation stage, which began in 2008, lasted until 2012 due to the change of local government caused by the elections in 2009.

Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center is located in Demetevler, at a point where the old residential settlement and industrial site intersect with new settlement areas (Figure 1). Sorgucu wanted to incorporate this feature of the region where the land is located into the design and started the design with the idea that *"The lack of an existing structure on which the designed building would primarily lean and relate to, where the urban fabric loosens and dissolves at this intermediate section of the city, would enable the building to exist on its own, contribute to the city with its own words and power."* [8]. On the other hand, the size of the land was evaluated as a limiting factor for such a project, and it was deemed appropriate to solve the program on a compact form (Figure 2) [7, 8].



Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the location of Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center

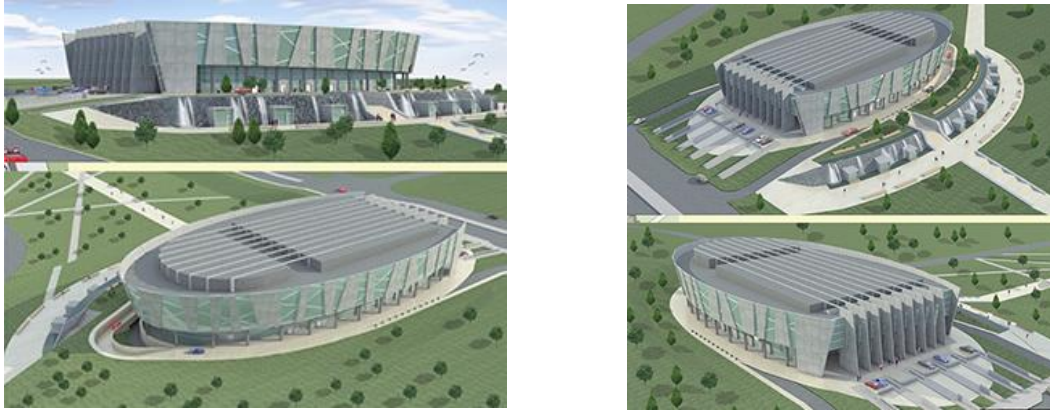


Figure 2. The compact formation of Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center [8]

2.1. Site Plan

In the immediate vicinity of Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center site, there is a large-scale neighborhood park and a multi-story residential complex that is currently under construction (Figure 3). The entrance points of the building can be accessed via Bağdat Street, one of the main arteries of the region (Figure 4).

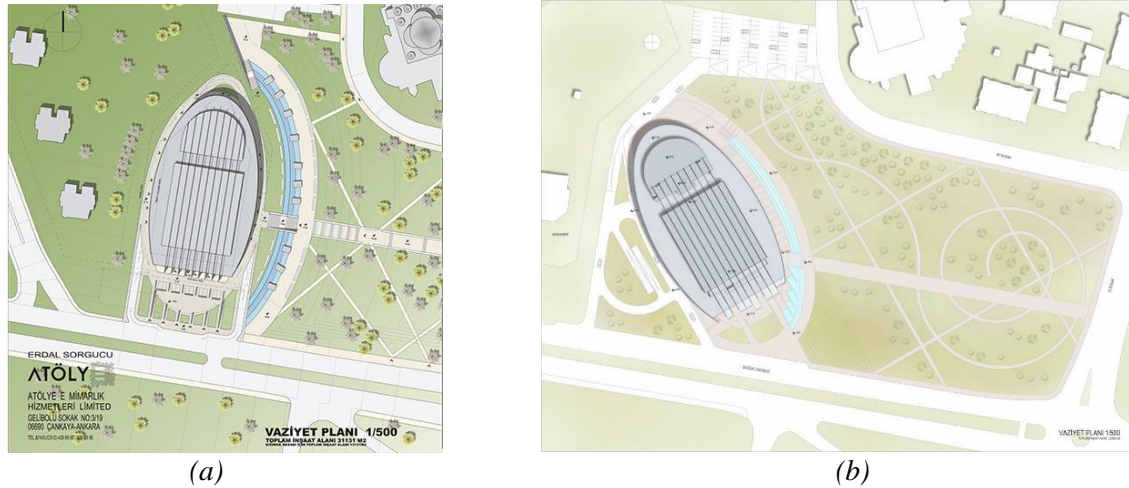


Figure 3. Relationship between Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center and the neighborhood park



Figure 4. Entrances to the enclosed spaces that can be reached via Bağdat Street

It can be determined that land use differs between the concept and implementation projects (Figure 5). In the concept project, the enclosed space is positioned along the north-south axis. However, in the implementation project, this orientation has evolved towards the northwest-southeast axis. It should be noted that the enclosed space entry points and pedestrian paths within the site are also affected by this change. Furthermore, the implementation project includes a parking area within the site. The architect notes that these differences arose due to ownership issues with the land. This problem prevented the implementation of the water wall and retail units designed to strengthen the relationship between the neighborhood park and the enclosed space in the concept project. In the implementation project, the relationship between the neighborhood park and enclosed space is attempted to be established by creating multiple entry points on the east facade.



(a) (b)
Figure 5. Site plan of the concept (a) and implementation project (b) [8]

When the conditions under which Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center was made available for use by the local government are examined, it can be seen that there is actually a third design stage after the concept and implementation projects. Accordingly, the enclosed spaces were constructed as a scheme similar to the settlement in the concept project but with weaker patterns of environmental relationships (such as significant loss of physical relationship with the neighborhood park due to changes in the location and size of the parking area etc.) (Figure 6). It should be noted that the size of parking area was insufficient in the usage stage. The utilization of the module intervals on the facade is a concrete indicator of this problem (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Current aerial photograph

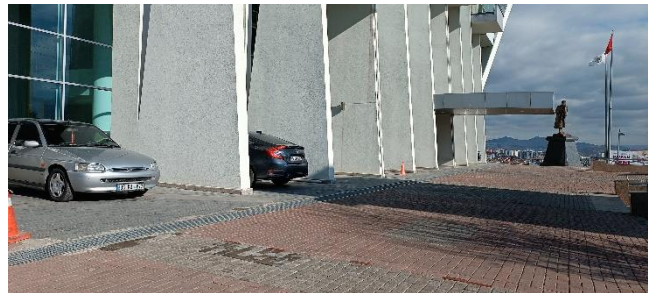


Figure 7. An image related to the use of the parking area

2.2. Underground Floor Plan

Significant differences can be observed among the concept and implementation plans of Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center's underground floor. The concept project's underground floor plan includes a parking area and a wedding hall. However, in the implementation project, these functions have been resized and they have been resolved together with a cafeteria, a prayer room, playgrounds, and technical units (Figure 8). During the usage stage, it can be seen that the cafeteria is converted into a wedding hall and the spaces belonging to the prayer room are allocated for cafeteria and office functions (Figure 9). The celebration terrace, which opens to the foyer of the wedding hall (Cafeteria in the implementation project), has been rendered undefined by separating it from both functions with a dividing wall (Figure 10).

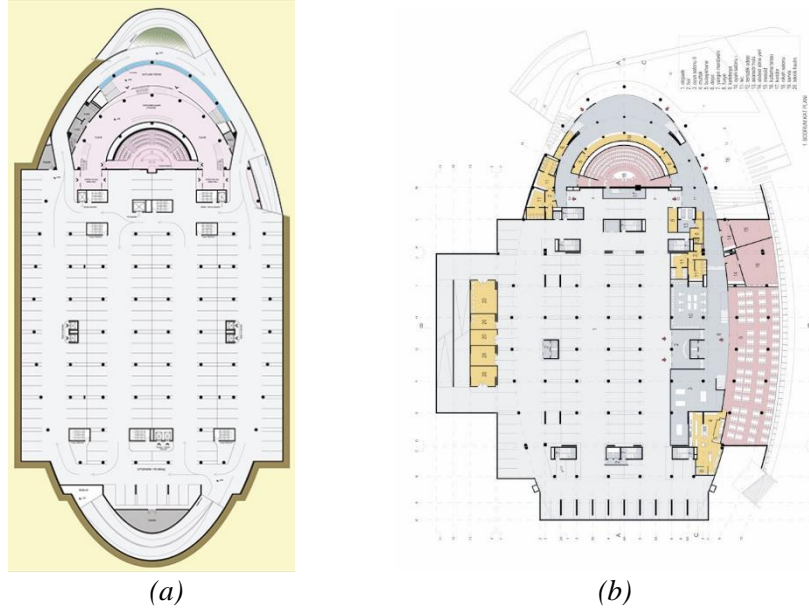


Figure 8. *Underground floor plan of the concept design (a) and implementation project (b) [8]*



Figure 9. *Transformation of the cafeteria into spaces for the wedding hall*



Figure 10. *The celebration terrace detached from its context due to functional transformations*

2.3. Ground Floor Plan

In the ground floor functions of Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center, it has been determined that the temporary exhibition area, the permanent exhibition area, the wedding hall, entrance halls, foyer, cafeteria, presidential hall, cloakroom, restrooms, technical units, etc., remain consistent between the concept and implementation projects. However, there are significant differences in spatial size and organization. During the transition from the concept to the implementation project:

- The cafeteria, which defined a significant portion of the presidential entrance facade in the concept project, has been significantly reduced in size.
- The dimensions and positions of the cloakroom, permanent exhibition area, kitchen, restrooms, storage, etc., have been changed.
- The oriental corner has been removed.

The permeable spaces commonly found in the concept project have been replaced by defined enclosed volumes in the implementation stage. This evolution continues in the usage stage as well:

- The function of the permanent exhibition area has been terminated, and it has been transformed into an indoor space for folk dance training.
- The cloakroom area has been allocated as a VIP lounge, also as an enclosed space (Figure 11).

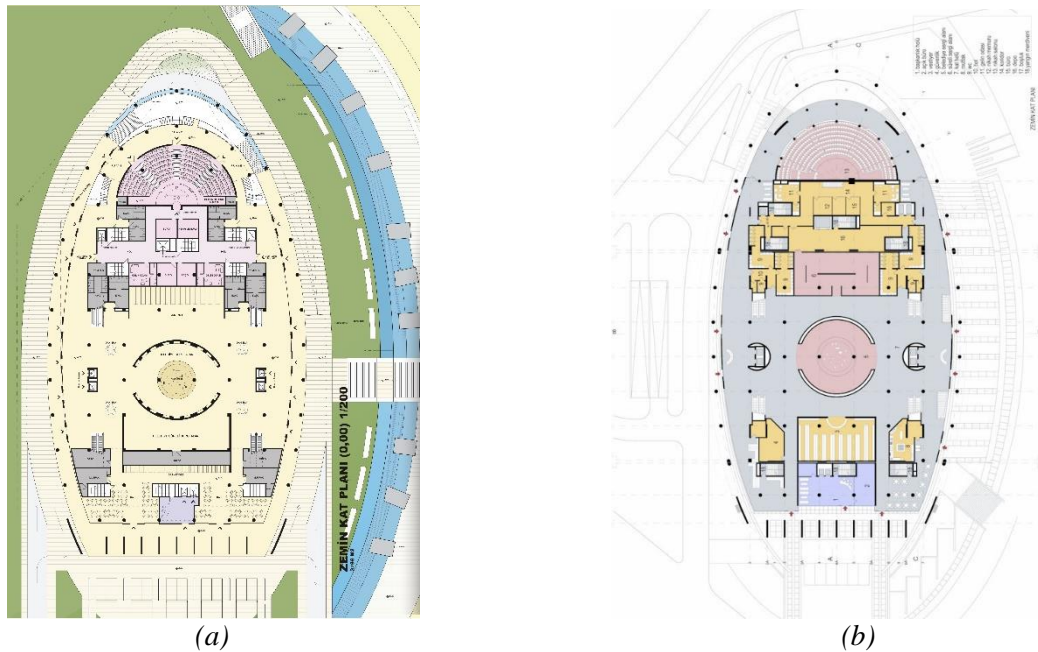


Figure 11. Ground floor plan of the concept design (a) and implementation project (b) [8]

2.4. Upper Floor Plan

In the upper floor plan of the enclosed volume, there are main functions of a cultural center typology, including a theater hall, multipurpose hall, foyer (along the entire perimeter), and cafeteria (Figure 12). There is not significant transformation between the concept and implementation projects. However, a change in local government that occurred before the completion of the implementation stage has led to the emergence of an agenda related to the multipurpose hall. The newly appointed local government did not find the structure of the multipurpose hall, which allows for various uses (Figure 13), to be satisfactory. Therefore, a complex problem arose between the employer and the architect that was difficult to resolve. Sorgucu explains this phase with the following words [7, 8]:

"The new local government, particularly with a biased approach towards the multipurpose hall, has failed to understand how the project stage should be carried out and has seemed to make an effort to demonstrate how lacking in knowledge and experience they are, unfortunately. They only realized or had to remember that the project/structure has an architect and that copyright is protected by law after an official notification. Following this intervention, a new study was conducted regarding the multipurpose hall, and a project was delivered to the local government that enables hundreds of different uses, ranging from conferences/congresses and balls to theater performances, sports events, fashion shows, and small-scale fair organizations, incorporating the use of telescopic tribunes. However, we have received rumors indicating that a different implementation than the project was carried out."

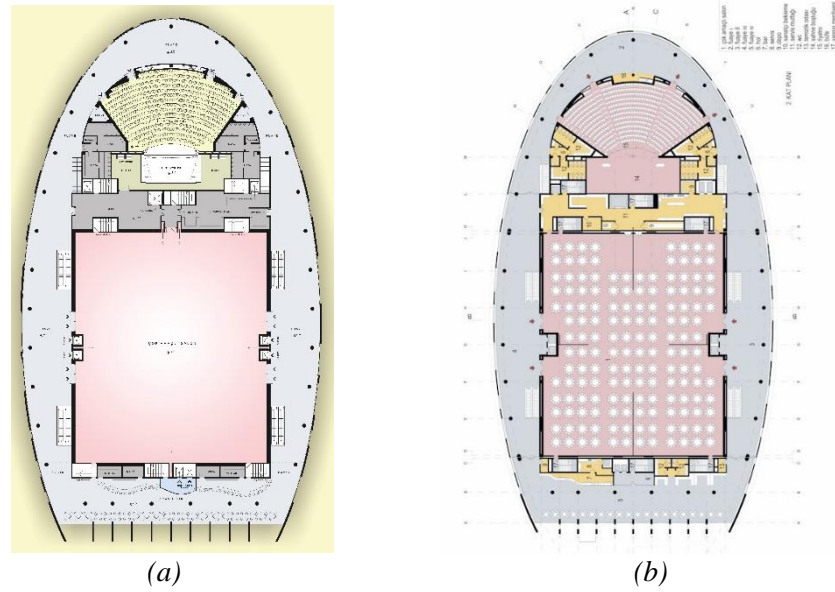


Figure 12. Upper floor plan of the concept design (a) and implementation project (b) [8]

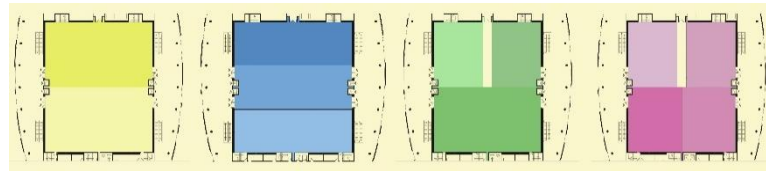


Figure 13. Usage options for a multipurpose hall [8]

The multipurpose hall, which covers an area of approximately 2000 m², is one of the key design components of Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center. In order to maintain the design composition, the architect had to present different scenarios of usage plans to the new local government to resolve disagreements [8] (Figure 14). However, the flexible design of the hall, which allows for simultaneous multiple activities/organizations, was transformed by the new local government into a traditional amphitheater layout suitable for single use (Figure 15). Additionally, it can be observed that the height of the hall is not sufficient for the amphitheater arrangement and it poses technical challenges.

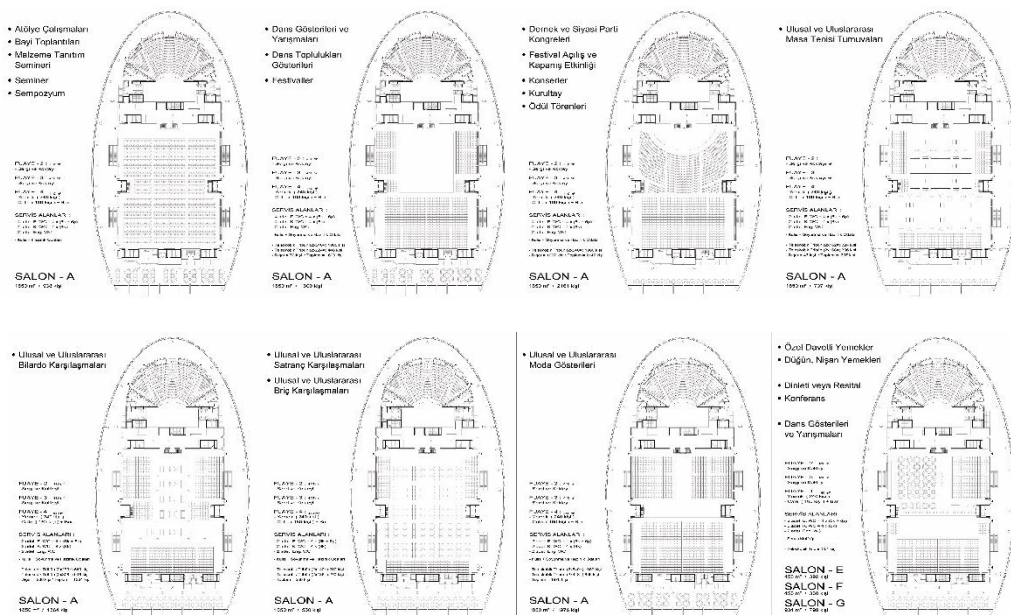


Figure 14. Multiple use schemes for the multipurpose hall [8]



Figure 15. The multi-purpose hall configured in amphitheater layout [8]

3. CONCLUSION

This research is based on the evaluation of Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center, one of the recent architectural products with a high rate of use located in the center of the capital city, Ankara. The production of the relevant environment through a quality-oriented organization is significant in terms of increasing positive feedback expectations. However, architectural design competitions, which are known to have great potential in producing spatially and formally high-quality environments, can become challenging to provide expectations due to operational problems related to sub-stages. Indeed, the findings of this research demonstrate the negative results of a decision-making mechanism based on employer dominance and limited participation, even if the competition method is utilized.

The proposal of an unresolved project site by the employer (previous local government) requesting the organization of the National Architectural Project Competition for Nazım Hikmet Cultural Center indicates a weak organization. This can be seen from the addition/removal of new functions and dimensional changes during the implementation stage (such as prayer room, cafeteria, water wall, retail units), which indicate that the dynamics of the site were not properly addressed and brief parameters were not fully and accurately encoded. The conversion of the multipurpose hall into an amphitheater layout by the employer despite the efforts of the architect should be noted as another intervention that suppresses the design action and deforms the spatial integrity. The impact of the local government change is known in the mentioned action. However, this situation does not change the fact that the network of spatial relationships, carefully structured through professional formation, is made dependent on the orbit of a single will.

The majority of employer-related errors in sub-stage management have resulted in a chain of problems related to spatial relationships and capacity. These include discontinued functions, components that are currently not effectively utilized, weak connection with the bazaar, inadequate size of parking area and so on.

The necessity of the following actions should be expressed for the competition to be completed independent of usage process problems and in accordance with architectural knowledge:

- A site compatible with the intended building type and program size should be selected. Otherwise, revising the program size or using a different site should be planned.
- Employer and user requirements should be accurately and completely incorporated into the program. For this purpose, a healthy communication network should be established between the employer and jury members during the brief design stage.
- Arbitrary interventions should be prevented during the implementation stage, even in the event of a change in the employer. Involving the architect and jury members who rewarded the project in the entire implementation stage is believed to contribute to the solution of this problem.

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