

OLBIA SOCIAL CENTRE

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ANTALYA, TURKEY

The project has been given an Award for its intimate human scale, its function as a bridge between several architectural styles and geographic areas of an existing university campus, and its innovative fusion of contemporary architectural elements with local materials. The complex has created an attractive place where students and teachers can meet and exchange ideas. Using symbolic, historical and cultural elements, the centre creates new connections to the past, showing how today's architects can look deep into their own cultures.

In 1997 the architect Cengiz Bektaş was invited to give a presentation and a lecture at the Akdeniz Universitesi in Antalya about the town's old city. The lecture helped to raise awareness among the university's staff that their campus lacked identity in its buildings and spaces, and that this resulted in poor communication between teachers and students. A year later the university commissioned the architect to design a new social centre to act as a binding element for the disparate parts of the campus.

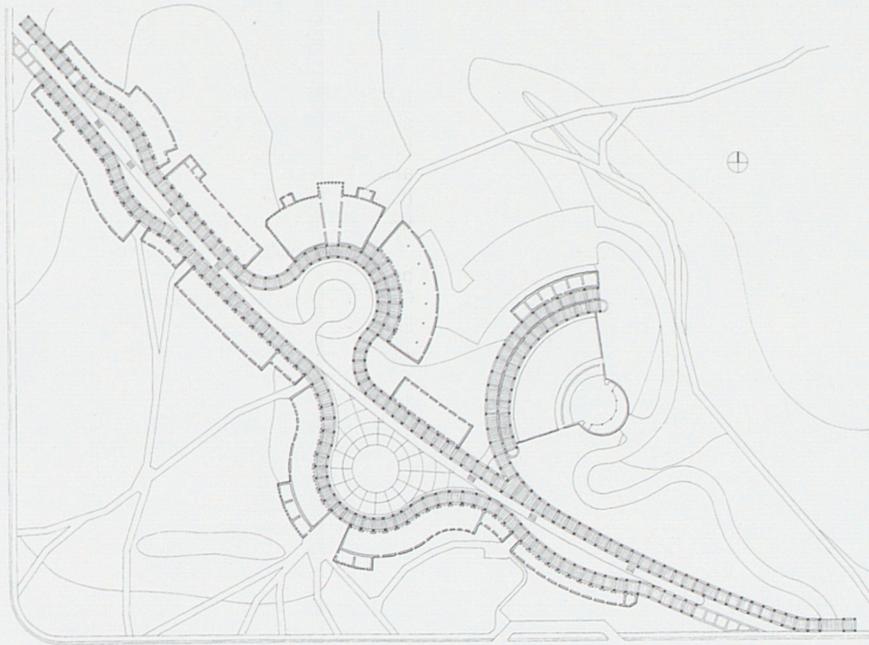
Lying on the western fringes of Antalya, the main city on Turkey's central Mediterranean coast, the university has a modern campus, with different faculties scattered around a large plot, connected by wide roads and boulevards. Its buildings, standing between six and thirteen storeys high, are in a variety of modern styles, bearing little relation to their context and providing no sense of individual character. The campus stands in marked contrast to the old city, founded by Attalus II of Pergamon in the first century BC, which bears many physical reminders of its various historical rulers, including a Roman harbour and fortress, the Yivli minaret and gracious old Ottoman

hayat houses. This dense urban fabric is based around cobble-stone streets, which curve to adapt to the extreme slopes of the city, with houses irregularly shaped to follow the streets. Construction techniques have changed little over the centuries, and most buildings are made of local stone, giving a sense of unity to structures from various historical periods. Empty water channels along some streets are part of an old system that irrigated private gardens with water from the northern mountains.

The concept of the new centre was based on the architect's belief that, in order for a sense of community to flourish, it is imperative that people from different disciplines should meet and exchange ideas in a relaxed atmosphere – much in the way that past civilizations used a common space, such as the Greek agora, the Roman forum or the Oriental bazaar. He also stressed the importance of 'incidental' and informal learning, noting that students learn more from each other than from the classroom. Accordingly, the main objective was to create adequate places for students to interact both with each other and with teaching staff in a comfortable and informal way.



View of the Olbia Social Centre, commissioned to create a social hub to tie together the discordant buildings of the university campus seen in the background.



The complex is designed according to the layout of a traditional bazaar, with a series of buildings arranged around a central axis formed by a pathway. This is divided centrally by a water channel, which flows over gentle waterfalls from the highest point of the site, humidifying and cooling the surrounding spaces. In two places, the pathway widens to create outdoor focal points for the various functions. The space to the north contains a large pool of still water, surrounded by an auditorium complex and restaurant. To the south, a small pit of stepped seats, with a water fountain at its centre, can be used for individual reflection or for interaction within small groups, overlooked by a clock tower. Around this space are arranged cafés, and book, stationery and various other shops. At other stages along the central walkway are rooms for student clubs, an exhibition area and a sports club. Covering both sides of the path, curving, linear pergolas balance and integrate indoor and outdoor space. To the east, an open-air amphitheatre with seating for 1,200 people is used for performances and a wide range of social and cultural activities, not just by the students but also by

the residents of Antalya, helping to integrate the university campus into the surrounding community. A series of paths connects the main axis with the bus station, the student hostel, the rector's office and neighbouring university buildings, making the complex the hub and visual focus of the campus.

The flow of spaces and masses along the gently curving pathway, with water elements as a regulating concept, gives an ever-changing aspect from both inside and outside the complex, enhancing the functional and experiential qualities of pedestrian circulation in the campus. The fragmentation of the accommodation into independent components of varying proportions serves to humanize the scale and means that each building is adapted to the spatial requirements of its function. All of the buildings are designed on a basic repetitive module of 3.6 metres, allowing for flexibility in the future division of the spaces according to changing needs and functions, and forming an organizational element for the various architectural spaces.

The project responds to the surrounding environment, adapting the simple traditional



techniques and materials of the old city. Allowing workers and craftsmen to put their own knowledge and methods to use during construction, the architect also taught them some of the old techniques, reviving building traditions in the area. The predominantly one-storey buildings were constructed mainly from granite stone, quarried from the site during excavation of the foundations and then rough-cut *in situ* and combined with reinforced-concrete beams to form load-bearing walls. Resting on the load-bearing walls, the convex timber ceiling structure borrows its materials and technique from Antalya's ancient shipbuilding industry, fostering pride in the region's history and achievements. Resting on this structure, the roofs slope towards the water channel at the centre of the pathways, and are clad with traditional red ceramic tiles. The wooden ceiling beams of the latticed pergolas are supported on one side by the walls of the buildings and on the other by prefabricated concrete columns, which carry light and sound fixtures. The columns also bear copper plaques that give information about important Turkish cultural figures, enabling

Top left: Plan of the complex. The facilities line a central spine divided by a water channel to form two walkways.

Top and centre right: At two points the walkways diverge to enclose circular outdoor areas which act as focal points for student clubs and cafés.



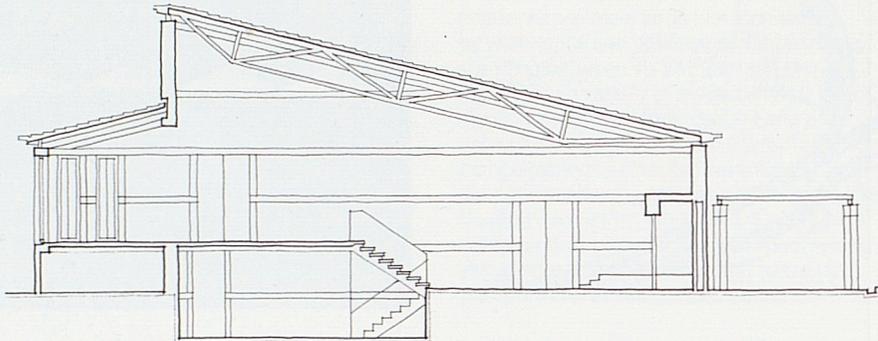
Client
Akdeniz Üniversitesi.

Architect
Cengiz Bektaş.

Consultant
Eral Soner, Civil Engineer.

Contractor
Baki Yapı Malzemeleri İnşaat Sanayii
ve Ticaret Ltd Sti – Attila Türkoğlu,
Site Engineer.

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| Commission | 1998 |
| Design | 1998 |
| Construction | 1998 |
| Occupation | September 1999 |
| Site area | 12,000m ² |
| Built area | 3,641m ² |
| Cost | USD 728,000 |



students to learn about different aspects of contemporary Turkey in an informal manner. Unity in building materials, construction techniques and details helps to bring harmony to the various volumes and functions. What counts, as in traditional arrangements, is the whole experience, the movement through spaces, and perceptions from different angles.

A number of trees existed on the site prior to building, and the design for the most part has worked around and preserved them. When construction commenced, the architect added more indigenous trees, shrubs and flowers, which create an ever-changing environment due to the plants' growth cycle and the different seasons. Areas of grass have also been introduced, as well as climbing plants around the pergolas, which, when mature, will provide shading for the hot summer months.

The name 'Olbia' – an old word for city – was chosen by public vote, encapsulating the project's traditional and social qualities. The centre is almost always full of

students and teachers, who show an unmistakable sense of enjoyment and relaxation and appreciate the intimate quality of the complex. Teaching staff and administration alike are proud to have the centre, which is unique among Turkish universities, and rectors of other universities who have visited the Olbia Social Centre have been inspired to plan similar projects on their own campuses.

The project has achieved – and surpassed – the university's objectives by connecting the scattered buildings of the campus, bringing together teachers and students from different disciplines in a relaxed environment, and metaphorically linking contemporary life with Turkey's historical past. In so doing, it forms a catalyst for activities that promote the social, educational and intellectual development of students. The project provides a role model for an architecture that revives traditional design principles, building techniques and symbols, while learning and adopting appropriate ideas from modern life.

Top and centre: Cross-section through the southern outdoor area and a typical building: all accommodation is based on a module that unifies the various spaces.















