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THE FOUNDER OF SCIENCE OF URBAN PLANNING IN TURKEY: OUR DEAR TEACHER PROF.DR. KEMAL AHMET ARU

Born in 1912 in Istanbul, decedent architect and urban planner Professor Kemal Ahmet ARU; is selected to be internationally commemorated on his 100th birthday in 2012 by the unanimously taken resolution at the 36th general conference of UNESCO whereas laying emphasis on that “Kemal Ahmet Aru is a reference for all the architects and urban planners of the world”. This fact that became a source of pride for the Department of Urban and Regional Planning of ITU, has been an opportunity to commemorate our teacher this year nation- and world-wide.

Our teacher, originally graduated from Department of Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts has taken office at Istanbul Technical University in year 1940 and continued to serve for 42 years until 1982 when he has retired. During this period, he has held the office of Dean for approximately 6 years at different times, office of the chairman of the Urban Planning Department and Director of Institute of Urban Planning for many years, has carried out researches and practices, has lectured, has written books and articles, presented communiqués, educated many students. Our teachers who have worked with him tell and write on many occasions that the number of works he has achieved during his life of 92 years and during his period of office of 42 years at the Istanbul Technical University is too numerous to be counted and that he achieved all of these works together with his colleagues around him.

Those who worked with our teacher describe him with such great memories that even those who don't even know him form very positive opinions about him. In the memoir written about him due to his retirement, decedent Prof. Gündüz Özdeş describes him as “Tolerant, civilized, social, loyal to his institution, hardworking and irreplaceable”, Prof. Hande Suher as “Approaching all issues comprehensively and with love and enthusiasm”, decedent Prof. Dr. Ahmet Keskin as “his irreplaceable teacher, fellow and friend, whose life and mentality he appreciates and whom he takes as a model”, Prof. Dr. Ayten Çetiner as “the first authority in the field of Urban Planning, a shoulder to cry on, with his artwork studies, slides from all over the world and his model behavior model teacher of everyone”, decedent Prof. Dr. Orhan Göçer as “the founder of the Urban Planning Department, esteemed scientist, model professor, brother, model of hard work and transparency”, Prof. Dr. Yücel Ünal as “a manager leading group works with his practical intelligence, mastering the communication and coordination”, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Cengiz Yıldızcı as “Next to being a teacher, also a fellow and a friend”, Prof. Dr. Nuran Zeren Gülersoy as “ allowing the persons he works with to be free and thereby ensuring them to use their creativities, on the other hand supervising to prevent the mistakes, supportive, promoting and fair”, decedent Prof. Dr. Aret Gülmez as “ an unforgettable icon distinguishing with his mentoring, cooperativeness as well as his successful works”.

I have got to know him in 1979, when I have arrived to Taşkışla right after having graduated from Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture of ITU to work in the studies carried out at the Faculty and to get MMLS (Master degree in Engineering and Architecture). While having MMLS education, I have also taken part in the Florya Coastal Arrangement and Iskenderun Development Plan studies carried out under his leadership and thereby had the opportunity to be in the group of people working with him. On the other hand, I have completed my thesis study on Bursa Green Mosque and Surrounding Conservation Study under the consultancy of him and in August 1981 I have started working as an assistant at Urban Design and Restoration Department and until 1982 when he has retired I have been his assistant

for one academic year. In other words, I have had the distinct honor of being an assistant to him during his last year at the university.

Having worked with him both during the academic year of 1979-1981 when I was a MMLS student and during the academic year of 1981-1982 when I was an assistant, and having started my academic life with him is certainly a privilege for me.

As also expressed by our teachers who have worked with him for many years, one of his most important characteristics is that he had a model personality. We, those who are privileged and had got the opportunity to work with him, have learned many things from him on matters regarding both urban planning and the life. I think that the education he has received, the environment he has grown up in (can be viewed in the book of "80 Years of the Life of A University Lecturer, Kemal Ahmet Aru") as well as his positive and highly humanistic character, practical intelligence and superior abilities have had affect on this.

We all agree that while we are acquiring a profession at the universities, our vision of world takes shape as well and our teachers have a big role in this process. I believe that our teacher as well has had quite great influence on the formation of my character.

Our teacher who is a pioneer in the field of urban planning and design, placed emphasis on the founding of a multi disciplinary teaching staff in this field and has strived for the staff of the departments to consist of academicians from different disciplines.

First of all, he was one of our teachers who thanks to the three foreign languages he was fluently speaking had strong international relations. He was putting special emphasis on international relations. During the period I have been his assistant, he had advised me to put emphasis on international relations.

Another important characteristic of our teacher was the importance he attached to the life. He would bring us together with the entertainments and meeting he would organize and ensure that we were gathering nice memories. I always remember the advice "Don't save money, save memories" amongst the advices he had given to me in my first year at the university.

Among the characteristics of our teacher, the communication he has established with the youth is important as well. I should state that during the years of my assistantship, he has given credence to the opinions of us as the persons representing the youngest generation of the department. I also remember that when he had retired in the age of 70 he was listening to the music the youth was listening to and was having enjoyable conversations and making jokes with people of all ages. In this way, there would be no conflict of generations experienced in our environment and we would even have a nice time all together.

Another important characteristic of our teacher was his enthusiastic approach the subjects he was working on. The academic year of 1981-1982, i.e. the last year of office of our teacher prior to his retirement, has coincidentally fallen under a period when the students of three classes, i.e. students enrolled in 1977, 1978 and 1979, had taken urban planning atelier program. During that semester we have worked for couple of months together and created study fields for students under approximately 8 different scenarios. He had told me that he was very pleased with this work and we should improve this for the next year. While I was thinking, based on these words, that he would continue lecturing as a retired academician as I knew that he was going to retire in July, he retired in July 1982 and didn't attend the courses next year.

Our teacher had an honest and straight-forward character as well. He was a master of communications, expressing what he thinks in a way that is clear to everyone, appreciating the

work he liked, in the case of a situation he didn't like, telling this clearly and in a gentle way but without offending the other party. I would like to express that this characteristics of him caused me to feel myself safe when I was with him.

Another characteristic of Prof. Aru is his proficiency in archiving. He was very successful in filing the documents and projects as per the subject under the influence of partly the way he was raised and partly his personality. When he brought me the labels he had bought abroad and asked to sort all the course and student files, I have done it with great pleasure. However, since the sustainability of this sorting needed the support of the users as well, it hasn't been possible to provide the archiving system in our department and faculty in the way we wanted.

It is not possible to tell about our dear teacher Prof. Kemal Ahmet ARU whose 100th birthday we shall celebrate on July 10th, 2012, in such a short article. Our department shall always remember him with his academician and designer qualities, his honesty, superior humanitarian personality and with his friendship.