

# Portfolio

Mert etinkaya

Strategic Design · Leadership Development · Learning Programmes · Facilitation



## About

I am a strategic design consultant, facilitator, learning experience designer, and thinking partner. I work with leaders and organisations on their most important work, designing the strategies, programmes, experiences, and gatherings it calls for, and supporting the trust and shared ownership it depends on.

Over fifteen years, 50+ engagements, and more than 5,000 hours of facilitation across Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East, I have designed and directed strategies and flagship

programmes including Design Gov for Dubai Future Foundation, dawn fellowship for BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Teachers Network, and imece, Turkey's first social innovation platform.

This body of work found its home at ATÖLYE, a strategic design studio within the kyu collective (alongside IDEO and Sid Lee), where I founded and scaled ATÖLYE Academy into a seven-figure learning practice, leading teams of learning designers, facilitators, programme directors, and coaches across multiple geographies.

I partner with foundations, consultancies, and the in-house leadership teams of organisations with a genuine appetite for doing things differently. As an external consultant or embedded into a team, I lead projects or contribute as a senior practitioner. I work best on long-term engagements with room to go deep, and on short, sharp provocations that shift a team's thinking.

*Based in Amsterdam, working in English and Turkish, open to travel and global partnerships.*

Key Engagements & Impact

5,000+

hours of facilitation delivered

500+

leaders across Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East engaged

10+

years building and scaling a seven-figure learning practice

20+

intensive multi-month programmes designed and directed

300+

workshops, trainings, retreats, and immersive gatherings

50+

high-impact strategic design projects led

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**Selected clients and partners**

Dubai Future Foundation · BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt · UNDP · UNFPA · Expo City Dubai · Al Ghurair Foundation · Abu Dhabi Media Office · Mercedes · BNP Paribas · TOGG · Turkcell · Akbank · Zorlu · Abdi Ibrahim · Koç Foundation

**Adjunct faculty**

ELISAVA · Koç University · Istanbul Bilgi University

## What I do

My practice brings together adaptive strategy, transformative learning, facilitation depth, design rigour, and a feel for the relational dynamics that determine whether the work actually moves. Engagements produce outcomes the organisation can act on, and leave the team better equipped to carry the work forward.

### Strategy, Vision & Participatory Process

Co-designing strategy and vision through participatory processes that build the shared ownership needed to implement them.

### Learning Programmes & Leadership Development

Designing and directing fellowships, cohorts, executive programmes, and multi-month leadership intensives, with full responsibility for architecture, faculty, facilitation, and integration.

### Platforms & Community

Building multi-stakeholder initiatives and learning communities where diverse actors create what none of them could build alone.

### Gatherings, Immersions & Workshops

Designing and facilitating retreats, learning expeditions, innovation sprints, trainings, and high-stakes gatherings.



## Index | Selected Works

Strategy, Vision &  
Participatory Process

Across BMW Foundation Connect, Design Gov, imece, and Teachers Network. Participatory strategy and vision processes with leaders, founding teams, multi-stakeholder coalitions, and in-house strategy teams.

Learning Programmes &  
Leadership Development

[Design Gov](#)

12-week intensive · 3 cohorts · 120+ alumni · 83 NPS · Dubai Future Foundation

[Dawn](#)

16-week responsible leadership fellowship · 25 senior leaders · BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt

[Turkcell CX Lab](#)

2-year engagement · 40 CXM professionals · 10 project concepts · Core77 Notable Mention

[Akbank Design Thinking Lab](#)

14-week cohorts over 24 months · 100 changemakers · 12 certified internal facilitators

[LITE](#)

Graduate programme in systems entrepreneurship · Istanbul Bilgi University

[Koç University](#)

Global leadership programmes, international field immersions in Zimbabwe, Indonesia, and India

Platforms & Community

[Imece](#)

Turkey's first social innovation platform · 30+ impact startups · 8,000+ young people

[Teachers Network](#)

50 founding teachers · 45,000+ teachers reached · 7 foundation partners

[ATÖLYE Academy Learning Community](#)

500 members · 2 years · virtual

Gatherings, Immersions & Workshops

Cross-programme. 5,000+ hours of facilitation across 300+ workshops, trainings, sprints, retreats, and international immersions.

Every strategy I've worked on has been built through participatory processes.

Strategy developed together with the people who will implement it, where the process itself builds the shared ownership needed to carry it forward. Across BMW Foundation Connect, Design Gov, Imece, and Teachers Network, the approach has been the same, adapted to context.

## **BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, Connect team**

Designed and facilitated a three-month adaptive strategy process with a 15-person team: making sense of their shifting context, envisioning a future way of working, and prototyping what it takes to get there.

## **Design Gov, Dubai Future Foundation**

Co-designed the programme strategy and curriculum with the Foundation across three cohorts over six years. Each iteration built on the last, informed by what we learned in the room.

## **Imece, Turkey's first social innovation platform**

Part of the founding design team. Designed the platform's strategy, operating model, and stakeholder architecture, convening academia, NGOs, government, and the private sector around a shared purpose.

## **Teachers Network**

Designed and facilitated the multi-stakeholder process that brought seven leading foundations together to co-create a shared platform strategy for teacher empowerment in Turkey.



**Design Gov**  
Dubai Future Foundation  
[www.design.gov.ae](http://www.design.gov.ae)

## Dubai's flagship design-driven leadership programme for government

Six years · 3 cohorts · 120+ alumni · 83 NPS

An intensive 12-week programme developing government leaders as design thinkers and systems innovators. Participants worked on real strategic challenges defined by the city leadership, moving through field research, human-centred design, experimentation, and an international design leadership immersion in Europe.

I directed the programme end-to-end across all three cohorts: co-designing the curriculum with Dubai Future Foundation, leading facilitation in the room, managing the international faculty team, designing and facilitating the immersion weeks, and coaching participants through their projects.

The programme has produced stronger leaders, real strategic outputs their entities could act on, and cross-entity relationships that continue to shape how Dubai's government works across cohorts. Participants regularly describe it as the best programme they've ever attended.



**Design Gov**  
Dubai Future Foundation  
[www.design.gov.ae](http://www.design.gov.ae)

The programme's impact spans immediate strategic interventions and a long-term cultural transformation across the Dubai Government ecosystem. Each cohort generated 8-10 strategic projects validated with real stakeholders and tested in the field. The deeper outcome is a network of 120+ alumni across Dubai's government, carrying a shared design language, a design-driven mindset, and collaborative relationships that continue to shape how the city works.

**Experiential learning architecture.**  
A 12-week journey with 22 in-person days, structured across intensive modules, field weeks, and integration sessions.

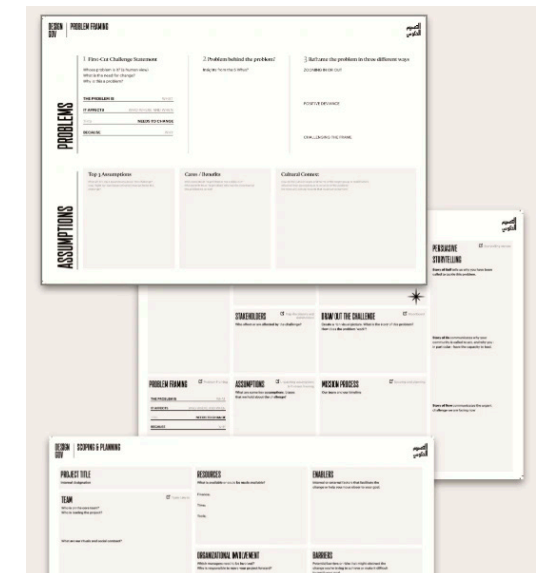
**International design leadership immersion.** 8-day programming in European cities, delivered three times across cohorts.

**Learning assets.** A full suite of workbooks, leadership journals, welcome packs, canvases, toolkits, and playbooks designed to extend the learning beyond the room.

**AI and human-centred design sprint.** Integrated from 2025, using AI as an amplifier of participant research and prototyping.

**Coaching and integration.** Weekly coaching sessions between intensive modules, plus stakeholder presentations and integration workshops.

**Faculty leadership.** Directing an international team of designers, researchers, facilitators, and subject-matter experts.



**Dawn**  
BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt  
[itsanewdawn.org](http://itsanewdawn.org)

## A responsible leadership fellowship for change-makers

25 senior leaders · 16 weeks

Commissioned by BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, one of Europe's leading foundations working on responsible leadership and just, sustainable futures. The fellowship brought together 25 senior leaders from across the foundation's global network for an intensive 16-week programme combining leadership development, systems thinking, collaborative design, and embodied practice.

I co-designed the fellowship with the foundation's team, directed the learning architecture, and led facilitation across all programme modules. The work required holding a room of accomplished, diverse leaders through vulnerability, creative exploration, collective sense-making, and the long arc of a cohort becoming real to each other. That is the kind of facilitation that lives in relational trust as much as methodology.

The foundation valued the depth of relational infrastructure the cohort built with each other. Fellows developed the kind of trust and shared understanding that enables long-term collaboration, and several have gone on to co-create initiatives together across the foundation's network.

**dawn**

## Spark the lights of a new dawn

Join us in setting a new dawn—set out on a transformational leadership journey while addressing the significant challenges of our times.

About

Focus

Journey

People

Participate



**Customer Experience Lab**  
Turkcell

**Core77 Design Awards**  
[Core77 Design Awards 2020](#)

## Training an entire CX team to become the pioneers of customer experience inside Turkey's largest telco

40 Customer Experience Management professionals · 2-year programme · 10 project concepts · Launched product with 5.5M monthly users

Turkcell, Turkey's largest telco and technology company, developed a long-term capability-building partnership with their Customer Experience Management team. Over two years, I designed and led an immersive four-month programme, run across multiple cohorts, that trained the 40-person CXM team as internal customer-experience champions.

The shift the programme produced was organisational as much as individual. The CXM team had often been brought into processes and features late in the cycle. After the programme, other departments started bringing them in early, as co-designers of products and services, as guides on new ways of working, and as partners in cross-functional change. They became the sought-after pioneers of customer experience inside Turkcell.

The work produced 10 high-impact project concepts, two of which were implemented. One, "Gift Box," reached 5.5 million monthly users.

*"These teams who went through this program will never be the same."*  
- Core77 Design Awards jury



## Design Thinking Lab Akbank

### Building internal capacity for customer-centric innovation at one of Turkey's largest banks

100 changemakers · 24 months · 12 internal facilitators certified

Akbank, one of Turkey's largest banks, was navigating a fundamental shift from a product economy to an experience economy. They needed internal capacity for customer-centric innovation that would outlast any single engagement.

I designed a 14-week transformative learning programme, run across multiple cohorts over two years, that trained 100 high-potential employees as champions of human-centred design.

Multidisciplinary teams worked on real strategic challenges sponsored by C-level, applying a design-driven approach to complex business problems through empathy-driven research, cross-departmental collaboration, prototyping, and stakeholder testing. Each cohort presented their outcomes directly back to senior leadership.

The programme culminated in a train-the-trainer model: 12 graduates became certified internal facilitators, equipping Akbank to run the programme independently. The relational and methodological infrastructure stayed with the organisation after I left.



## LITE Master's Program Bilgi University

### A graduate programme reimagining entrepreneurial education through systems, inquiry, and personal development

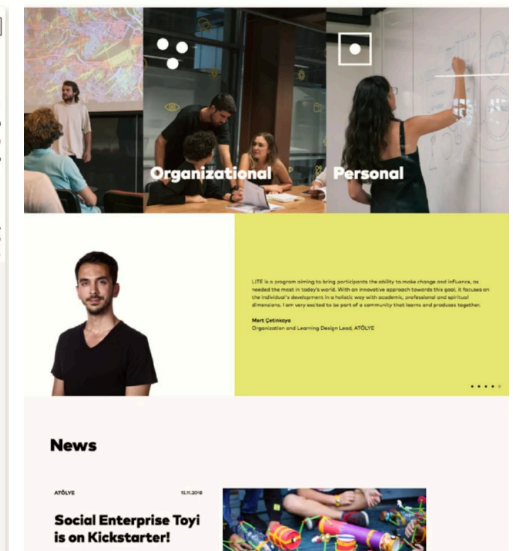
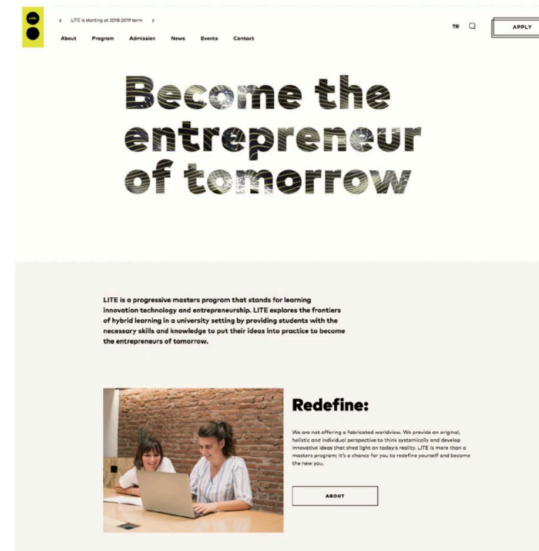
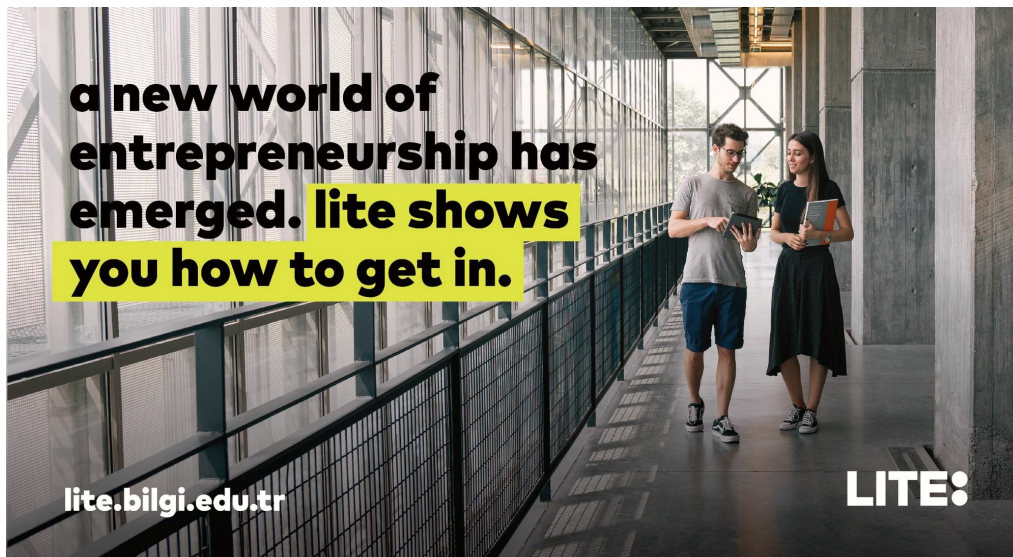
LITE programme I co-designed with Istanbul Bilgi University to reimagine what entrepreneurial education could look like: grounded in systems thinking, interdisciplinary inquiry, collaborative learning, and personal development.

Rather than treating entrepreneurship as a set of business skills, we designed a three-semester programme that moved across scales; from global trends and

societal challenges, to organisational transformation, to personal development. The curriculum was co-designed with university leadership through collaborative strategy workshops. The programme's brand and digital experience were developed to reflect its philosophy.

LITE attracted aspiring entrepreneurial leaders and equipped them to identify opportunities, build ventures, navigate complexity, and cultivate the peer relationships that continue beyond graduation.

*"We aim for individuals to generate their own light, not merely consume it. We want everyone to discover their inner light." - Dr. Ahmet Ecmel Ayral, Vice Chairman, Istanbul Bilgi University*



## Global Leadership & Social Innovation Immersions Koç University

### Experiential programmes that moved students out of the classroom and into real contexts of complexity

At Koç University, one of Turkey's leading research universities, I designed and led a portfolio of experiential learning programmes that moved students out of the classroom and into real contexts of complexity.

**Global Social Venture Competition (GSVC).** I coached and mentored social entrepreneurs across the MENA region competing in the GSVC, a UC Berkeley initiative that challenges aspiring founders to develop viable social ventures. Teams consistently advanced through regional rounds, developing ventures that



addressed real social challenges and building the collaborative, entrepreneurial capabilities that traditional coursework rarely touches.

**Social innovation immersion programmes.** I designed and facilitated month-long international immersions in Zimbabwe, Indonesia, and India. Students worked alongside local communities on social innovation challenges: intensive, embodied learning experiences where they navigated complexity, cultural difference, ambiguity, and the discomfort of not having answers, building capabilities no classroom can develop.

The work shaped my approach: the most formative learning happens when people are placed in unfamiliar contexts and supported to make sense of what they encounter together.



**Imece**  
Zorlu Holding  
<https://imece.com/en>

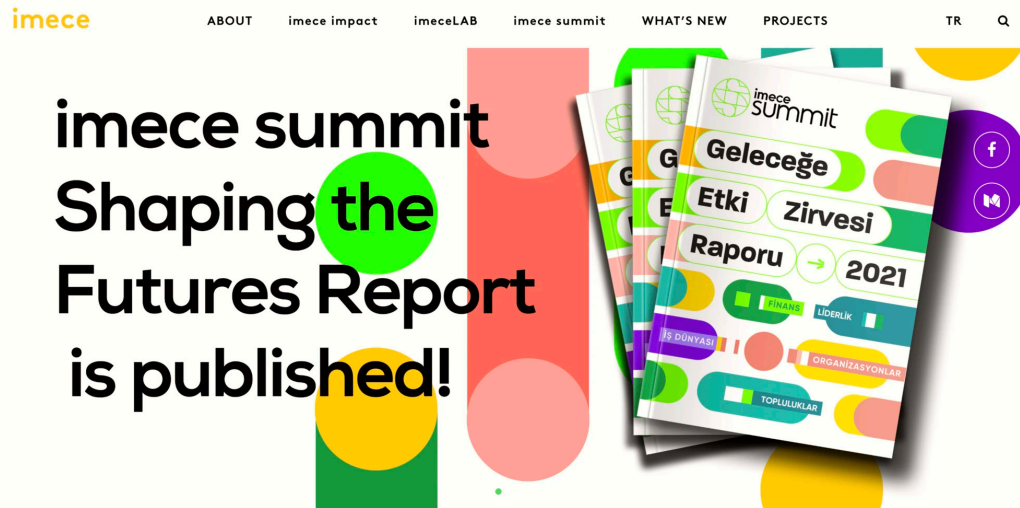
## Turkey's first social innovation platform, built to address systemic challenges across sectors

30+ impact startups · 8,000+ young people · 100+ partners · UNDP partnership

Turkey's first social innovation platform, co-created with Zorlu Holding and S360. I was part of the founding design team that convened academia, NGOs, public and private sectors, and international collaborators including OpenIDEO, Stanford Social Innovation Review, and B Lab, to build a platform where diverse actors could address systemic challenges together.

I designed and delivered imece's flagship early-stage social impact accelerator, a multi-month programme combining immersive workshops, innovation sprints, expert coaching, and peer learning for founders tackling systemic social challenges.

Across the engagement, my work spanned community design, strategy and facilitation. We designed the platform's operating model, convened its founding stakeholders, and built the relational infrastructure for a movement that has since supported 30+ social ventures, reached 8,000+ young people, and partnered with UNDP.



## Teachers Network

Koç Foundation

<https://www.ogretmenagi.org/en>

## A teacher-led movement for educational change across Turkey

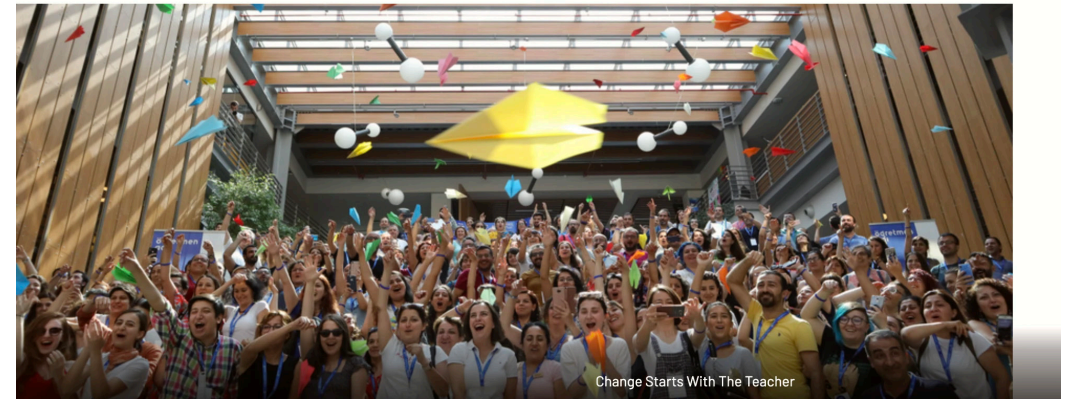
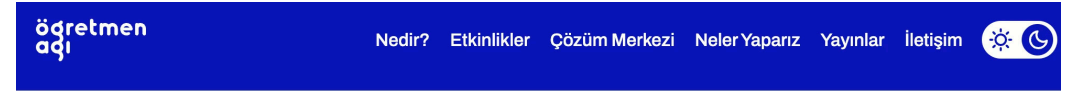
50 founding teachers · 45,000+ teachers reached · 63 cities · 1,900+ events · 7 foundation partners

A 2014 study by the Vehbi Koç Foundation revealed that Turkish teachers experienced exclusion and insecurity, and had few meaningful professional development opportunities. The response needed to be systemic: a platform designed with and for teachers, not another top-down training programme.

I was part of the team that designed and facilitated the multi-stakeholder process bringing together seven leading foundations to co-create the platform. I designed and delivered the six-month pilot programme, along with the participatory training modules, community-building rituals, peer feedback systems, and local facilitation practices that enabled teachers to become educational changemakers in their own contexts.

The network scaled to 63 cities across Turkey, hosting nearly 2,000 events. Teachers prototyped solutions, including inclusive learning environments and anti-bullying initiatives, that gained widespread adoption.

*"The Teacher Network opens up space for us. This place is completely ours." - Change Ambassador Teacher*



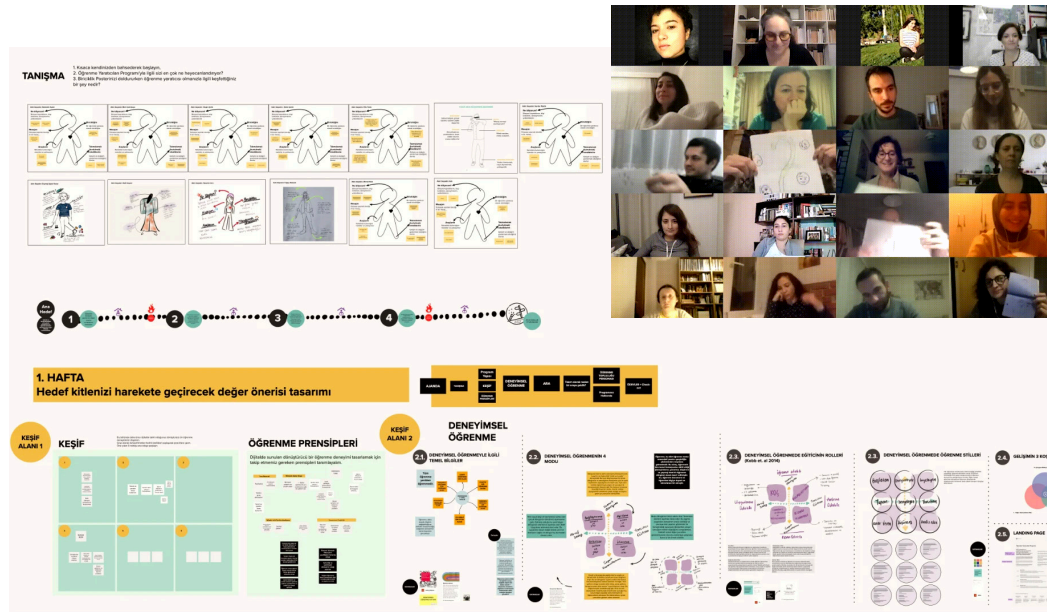
**Learning Community**  
ATÖLYE Academy

**A practitioner community, built as a living lab for the craft of learning**

500 members · 2 years · Virtual

Launched during the pandemic, the Learning Community extended ATÖLYE Academy's practice beyond organisational clients. Over two years, the Learning Community grew into a 500-member network of designers, facilitators, coaches, leaders, and independent practitioners convening around the craft of learning, facilitation, and collaborative design.

Members engaged through cohort-based programmes, peer learning circles, and open events. The community also functioned as a living lab for the Academy: a space where ideas were tested, new methodologies refined, and programme formats iterated before reaching client engagements. Senior members went on to design their own offerings for the community and to collaborate with ATÖLYE on client projects.



Across every programme in this portfolio, where the work happens is part of the design.

Rooms, retreats in nature, city immersions, and the communities where the challenges actually live. Over 5,000 hours of facilitation across 300+ workshops, trainings, bootcamps, retreats, and immersive gatherings. This is the cross-cutting thread through fifteen years of practice.

**Design Gov international immersions**

8-day design leadership intensives in European cities (Amsterdam, Copenhagen), delivered three times across cohorts. Designed to take participants out of their institutional context and into unfamiliar creative environments.

**Koç University field immersions**

Month-long programmes in Zimbabwe, Indonesia, and India. Students embedded in communities working on real challenges, navigating complexity and cultural difference as the learning itself.

**Turkcell & Akbank bootcamps**

Multi-day experiential workshops combining design methodology with real organisational challenges. Facilitation that shifts how teams relate to each other as much as how they think.

**ATÖLYE internal retreats.**

Annual team retreats designed for strategic alignment, creative renewal, and organisational sense-making.

**Dawn virtual workshops**

Distributed facilitation holding the quality of in-person work across digital formats.



Writing and Speaking

**“Relationships for Impact.”**

Community dialogue with BMW Foundation and ATÖLYE (2025)

**“A Future-Proof Capability: Facilitation.”**

Co-authored essay (ATÖLYE / Medium, 2023)

**“On Relational Design.”**

Presentation at a Harvard Business Review event (ATÖLYE × HBR, 2023)

**“Designing in a Wicked World.”**

Authored essay (ATÖLYE / Medium, 2018)

Teaching (2016-2026)

**Adjunct faculty:**

ELISAVA, Koç University, and Istanbul Bilgi University

**Courses:**

Changemaking in Action, Design Thinking, and Complex Problem Solving

**Currently developing:**

A body of work on designing programmes, strategies, and organisations with the quality of relationships at the centre. Writing about what I keep noticing in the work, what we tend to overlook in how people and organisations actually grow, and what relational design might mean as a concept and a craft.

I'm always interested in conversations with people working on something that matters to them.

Whether you're designing a programme, rethinking how your organisation learns, building a multi-stakeholder platform, or wanting to think something through together.

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