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Festivalising Difference:
Privatisation of Culture and Symbolic
Exclusion in Istanbul

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Abstract

Material equality is necessary but not sufficient for social integration within the city. Cultural recognition is equally important in assuring comprehensive participation of marginal groups. The issue is complicated in larger conurbations due to the variety of cultural producers/consumers. Especially in spatially segregated areas cultural exchange becomes crucial in preventing disconnection between social segments. Otherwise, different subject positions/identities/cultures do not condense into a participative urban culture, but their *multiplicity* divides the city into *multiple cities* that are juxtaposed but disconnected. Some groups/histories/memories are then allowed in the official culture more often than others; and institutions with legitimacy within the cultural sphere may obtain the privilege to decide who would be allowed, whether their intervention turns out to be deliberate or not.

This paper aims to discuss these issues through the study of selected recent developments in the post-1980 cultural scene in Istanbul. Among these are: the expansion of events organised by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, the mushrooming of art galleries and publishers supported by banks, successive openings of universities and museums owned by large capital groups and the multiplication of smaller scale artistic initiatives.

All these institutions/events provide room for international cultural exchange, link the city to global artistic networks, and ascribe a cultural capital/world city status to Istanbul. The interaction between the field of culture and the city deserves nevertheless a more critical approach, which goes behind the common-sense celebration and sheds light on the social implications involved in the recent transformation of the cultural sphere.

Keywords

I. Introduction[*]

As part of the 2002 Istanbul International Film Festival, a documentary on hunger strikers was screened. The documentary presented interviews with people, impaired bodily and mentally to various degrees as a result of extended malnutrition during periods of strike where they had eaten/drunk nothing but water (some agreed to take vitamins to decrease cerebral damage). These groups protested against humiliating conditions of prisons, and the launching of a new type of imprisonment; and with different political positions they held (from extreme left, to Kurdish identity politics) they formed a 'threat' against the official ideology. Nevertheless, the Foundation screened the documentary, and while 'fictional' films were censored,[1] the 'real' documentary reached the public.

The festival audience saw, if not touched, hunger strikers, at various (mostly late) stages of their starvations, when they had already lost a high proportion of their total weight, and part of their physical capacities and mental abilities. Yet the question remained: Spectators were watching, but did they realise that this story was part of their city, or were they watching it as they did other films? Did they know that a group of hunger strikers was sheltered in Küçük Armutlu, within a few kilometres of Levent, the business district of multinational companies, and skyscrapers? And, indeed, that this business district was closer (in terms of the physical space to be overcome) to Küçük Armutlu, than most of the white-collar residential districts - the predominantly scattered 'gated' homes of managerial classes which resided these business offices?

Festivals and hunger strikers are two different faces of Istanbul, which see each other very little. While private lives of top models and famous footballers cover all media broadcasting and publishing, hunger strikers remain unbelievably invisible and unheard. Istanbul is increasingly marked by the socio-spatial polarisation that Castells (1996) sees as emblematic of the information age. According to Castells, technological developments that bring about this era do allow an increase of wealth at global level, but socio-economic expansion is so uneven that polarisation emerges no longer only between the North and the South but also between 'dynamic segments and territories of societies everywhere' (Castells, 1996:2). The encounter between these dynamic segments occurs increasingly as a confrontation (in cases of conflicting interests), or a comparison of economic/cultural/social capitals that each party possesses—this comparison, in turn, enhances and legitimises social hierarchies. Poverty and misery grow substantially both in developed and developing countries leading to different processes of social exclusion, the 'black holes of capitalism' as Castells puts it (1998: 161).

Istanbul is increasingly suffering from similar processes of fragmentation and polarisation. The economic liberalisation of Turkey in the post-1980 period is in many aspects a case of what Banerjee and Linstead call the 'double-jeopardy scenario': pressure from powerful international institutions to open markets and raise exports resulting in higher levels of external debts, which forces the country to export natural resources and commodities at lower prices, while importing manufactured goods at higher ones (2001: 687). Especially the last two decades were marked by the fragility of economic structures. This fragility encouraged investors to deposit their capital in financial instruments and in foreign exchange (which gained value against the local currency) to reap the fruits of speculation. The globalisation of the market created a widening gap between managerial employees/white-collars working in multinational corporations or large companies (in finance, insurance, real-estate,

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[*] A previous version of this paper was presented in Workshop 9 'Mapping the Cultural Economy in the Euro-Mediterranean Region' at the Eighth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Florence & Montecatini Terme, 21–25 March 2007, organised by the Mediterranean Programme of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute. Workshop 9 was jointly organized with the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

[1] The screening of three Turkish films was endangered in 2003 for mostly political reasons: '9', 'In Nowhereland' and 'Hejar'; after long debates only the last one was banned by the Turkish High Council for Broadcasting (RTÜK).

communication, cultural industries and the media) and blue collars/working people mostly employed in manufacturing, construction and lower jobs in different services. The structural adjustment programs planned (and imposed) by the IMF and the World Bank involved the controlling of public deficit through severe cuts in public spending—in subsidies, wage increases, health, education and culture, which widened the disparity between the rich and the poor.

Thanks to the traces of the earlier neighbourhood structure (based on ethnic affiliation -rather than class- and personal relationships among inhabitants) and infrastructural weaknesses that limit escape from the city, socio-spatial fragmentation is not as deep in Istanbul as it comes to be in other metropolitan areas such as in Mexico City or in Sao Paolo. Nevertheless, developments are worrying, and especially relevant in any analysis concerning the relationship between the city and its culture. It has been widely demonstrated that material equality is necessary but not sufficient for social integration within the city; and that access to cultural capital may indeed create new distinctions among different groups (Bourdieu, 1984; Zukin, 1995). In the case of Istanbul, Keyder argued that in the post-1980 period, restaurants, clubs, concert halls and exhibition areas have contributed to a process whereby social classes have been redefined through the consumption of culture (2000: 35).

It is also worth noting that a rich cultural context provokes more inequality (indirectly) by enhancing global flows, which pass through the city. More lively is urban culture, more inviting is the city for global wealth. But also, the more powerful are market forces, and globalised and unregulated is incoming wealth, the less equally it is distributed and consumed across society. While the conditions of wealthy people improve, the ones of the poor worsen. Besides, the development of transportation and communication enhances the visibility of affluent living. The pains of the poor are sharpened because an 'inaccessible wealth' and a conspicuous consumption become increasingly visible (Sennett, 1994: 278) either in streets, private residences and shopping malls, or on television screens.

Re-integrating marginalised groups within the city is as much a cultural process as economic one, and cultural recognition is as important as material equality. The issue is complicated in larger conurbations due to the variety of cultural producers and consumers. Especially in spatially segregated areas, cultural recognition and exchange becomes crucial in preventing disconnection between different social segments. Otherwise, different subject positions/identities/cultures do not condense into a participative urban culture, but their *multiplicity* divides the city into *multiple cities* that are juxtaposed but disconnected. Some groups/histories/memories are then allowed in the official culture more often than others; and institutions that maintain distinction in terms of legitimacy within the cultural sphere may obtain the privilege to decide who would be allowed, whether their intervention turns out to be deliberate or not.

This paper aims to discuss these issues through the study of selected recent developments in the post-1980 cultural scene in Istanbul. Among these are: the expansion of events organised by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, the mushrooming of art galleries and publishers supported by banking companies, successive openings of universities and museums owned by large capital groups and the multiplication of other smaller scale private/semi-private artistic initiatives. All these institutions/events provide room for international cultural exchange, link the city to global artistic networks, and ascribe a cultural capital/world city status to Istanbul. The interaction between the field of culture and the city deserves nevertheless a more critical approach, which goes behind the common-sense celebration and sheds light on the social implications involved in the recent transformation of the cultural sphere.

The next section focuses on the establishment of the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts and the transformation of festivals,[2] followed by a more detailed account of how access to festivals is

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2 This account of the transformation draws upon intensive field work conducted between the years 2000-2005 and is only an overview of a complex process that I analysed in detail elsewhere (see Yardımcı, 2004). For the sake of brevity, here I only present parts of my concluding remarks.

bound both in economic and cultural/social terms. Next, the openings and implications involved in the multiplication of both cultural institutions with corporate backing and private/semi-private artistic initiatives are considered. Finally, the necessity to develop a critical/reflexive approach to institutions working in the production, dissemination and consumption of culture is emphasised.

II. The Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts and the Transformation of Festivals

The first attempt to organise an international art festival in Istanbul was made in 1968. A daily newspaper announced on the 25th of April that one of the well-known industrialists, Nejat Eczacıbaşı, 'an industrialist who planned an urban festival of arts, similar to those held annually in several European cities'[3] applied to the Federation of Music Festivals to accomplish this objective. The Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Art (hereafter referred also as the IFCA, or simply the Foundation) could be established only five years later, in 1973, under the leadership of this 'entrepreneurial' man, and the first International Istanbul Festival took place from 15 June to 15 July 1973, on the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. 'The 20th of June, a Wednesday night,' stated a newspaper, 'our sweetest dream, the eagerly awaited Istanbul Festival, has been presented to the world, with its whole grandeur and as an ever-improving reality, following Adnan Saygun's Yunus Emre Oratorio and the opening speech of the State Minister İsmail Hakkı Tekinel, as an outcome of Nejat Eczacıbaşı's unforgettable courage, help and work'.[4]

Although the 1970s were a period of setting up for the Istanbul Festival, the 1980s brought greater change and professionalisation: In less than a decade, this first festival, an almost unattainable dream, has developed into five different events, diversifying its audiences and sponsors. These were the Film, Theatre, Music and Jazz festivals and a Biennale of contemporary arts. Nevertheless, the conception and organisation of both the original Istanbul festival, and of its offspring, have remained to be based on Istanbul itself - its history, culture, cosmopolitanism, and longing for globalisation. At the beginning, the relationship between the festival and the city was a more 'modest' one, if the term is correct: the festival was for the city, for its people, even if the official objectives of the IFCA targeted the world for the promotion of Turkey. Attempts were made to stage more traditional forms of art— shadow theatres, minstrels, and folk dances were coupled with orchestras, chamber music and ballets associated with a Western-oriented elite.

The relationship between the festivals and *their* city has extended to new dimensions following the recent restructuring of global capitalism. Though the latter has always been shaping both the geographical and the social space of the world, the emerging spatial hierarchy of the last few decades started to emphasise localities able to project lively and sophisticated urban images. As a result most contemporary cities have undertaken different initiatives to create such images on a global scale: art exhibitions, galleries and museums, fairs, festivals and sporting events are now designed to attract not only tourists and visitors, but also capital itself, executive classes and skilled workers.

For the last two decades, the organisation of festivals has become part of a similar project, supported more and more by intellectuals, politicians and corporate patrons in Turkey: the project of promoting Istanbul as a global capital of culture. For example Keyder, a prominent urban theorist in Turkey, argued that 'henceforth the whole question [of refashioning the country's future development] can be formulated as a better integration with the world economy', with Istanbul as the primary connective node of this integrated economy (1992:85). Since then, Turkey's integration with global economic and political systems achieved new dimensions, both in terms of regulatory adjustments allowing the compatibility of Turkish administrative and economic bodies and rules with trans-

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3 'History' provided by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts.

4 Selma Berk, 'Haftanın Sanat Olayları', *Ekonomi-Politika*, 28.06.1973.

national institutions and laws; and of the expansion of commodity flows that this new legal-institutional infrastructure allowed. Istanbul soon developed into an international node, even if not a fully global financial capital, where information flows, circulating (and mostly speculative) capital, and the international division of labour have been reconfiguring the cityspace in economic, spatial, social and cultural terms.

This transformation started in a period when Turkey was caught, culturally, in a moment of tension between the severe physical and intellectual suppression of the military rule (following the coup in 1980), and the new discourse of freedom and choice promised by economic liberalisation, consumerism and global integration. As the latter has gradually replaced the former (though the influence of the military on politics remained common), many social and cultural forms that were suppressed in the making of the modern Turkish nationality returned (to name a few: religious affiliations, cultures of officially acknowledged minorities -Armenians, Jews and Anatolian Greeks; and the Kurdish identity politics). Nonetheless, these forms returned in a new mode: as 'cultural accessories' of a city, which, after almost a century of decay, was now longing for its historical international (if not global) prominence.[5]

Istanbul discovered not only various cultural artefacts and practices appropriated from other geographies (hitherto, cultural, as well as economic, exchange with the rest of the world was very limited), but those that it retrieved from its own history (Sephardic music, Armenian churches, the Orthodox Easter). To this fusion, were added all the forms that Anatolian migrants brought to Istanbul, adapted to urban conditions and deployed, at times, to communicate political causes (mostly, in the case of Kurdish people). As the discourse of the Welfare Party (and its successors, all forwarding a pro-religious political position) went through a process of normalisation (the first and powerful reaction against their political victory at 1990 by secular sections of the society faded away), Istanbul finally uncovered the public face of political Islam, in dinners organised for the collective breaking of Ramadan fasting. All these elements came together to create a unique mixture that drew from different, and not always compatible, sources. And yet, contestation was relatively avoided, because the re-circulation of these forms, as commodities, was made possible by the extension of the market logic into other spheres, which robbed them, at the same time, from their social-political connotations.

It is in this cultural context that the first (and pretty modest) International Istanbul Festival has developed into a stream of artistic activities, events, performances and other co-productions spreading throughout the year, pulling together economic and strategic resources from different economic and administrative bodies, and diversifying its audiences. How was this possible? I have already suggested that (see Yardımcı, 2004) the achievement of festivals, in the sense that they have outlived the post-1980 period of drastic change, and developed into an institution influential in the production and consumption of urban culture, stems from their ability to develop an ethos that has *fit the emerging order* (festivals are part of a period where urban living is itself 'festivalised', from film, theatre, music and visual art, through shopping -the Istanbul Shopping Festival-, to promotional activities of large companies) without, it is important to note, *challenging the existing one*.

From their very beginning, festivals had an educational objective articulated as part of the modernisation project of the nation-state, which conceived of cultural transformation in terms of the appropriation and deployment of Western cultural forms to create a national culture. The role of educating the 'populace' to facilitate this transformation was thus assigned to elites equipped with cultural capital adequate to appropriate and pass on these forms. As the limitations of the nationalist project have been realised, and cultural integration started to be seen as a prerequisite of full economic

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5 It might be worth remembering that Istanbul entered the 20th century as a truly cosmopolitan imperial capital, with different populations from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. Nevertheless, after a decade of war and destruction, and the founding of the new Turkish Republic (1923), the city lost its official capital status to Ankara. It also lost most of its cosmopolitanism as a result of the decrease in national physical and cultural investment, and the nationalist project that promoted a unitary image of the 'Turkish citizen', repressing ethnic and religious differences.

globalisation, the progressive motive behind festivals has gradually been replaced by an instrumental one, or rather by a combination of both: the organisation of festivals turned from a project of national modernisation into a strategy of globalisation, but these two did not conflict to the extent that both was taking 'West' as their reference point for further development, and excluded the Islamic ethos. Without losing sight of Atatürk's (founder of the Turkish Republic) legacy, festivals thus developed an international-multicultural orientation, and went partly beyond the unitary identity that the nationalist project imposed—this was, however, again, a rather depoliticised celebration of multiple cultural forms ('accessories of the global city').

As such, Istanbul festivals soon turned into a prominent cultural 'institution' of the city (as many of my interviewees at IFCA proudly stated), and the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts itself developed into an authority that any group attempting to organise a concert, an exhibition, or even better a 'festival' would consult. This is partly related to the fact that the festival organisation is now 'professionalised' amidst a web of international art agencies, festivals networks and curatorial structures, marked not only by the domination of capital, but also an abundance of promotional exercises and marketing arrangements. Accordingly, festivals are also 'standardised' so far as they base themselves on the aesthetic taste and the criteria of legitimate art that these institutions define in the cultural capitals of Europe or the United States, then only, to influence art markets globally. Most of the times, Istanbul festivals fail to develop their own language instead of using these canons, overlooking their own specificity, and relying on international curators in the hope that their names or practices would bring recognition and acclaim (one of the questions frequently asked is, for example, what may the difference be, if any, between the Istanbul Biennale and the ones in Venice, and Kasel).

The prominence of festivals as part of urban culture is also related to the recent reorganisation of urban life on a non-governmental basis, increasingly institutionalised through the connections between economic and cultural spheres. In a way, the recent reliance on a non-governmental basis of urban administration seems to stem from the loss of confidence in the working of the Turkish state, associated increasingly with inefficiency and misuse of authority. It is also certainly related to the fact that public contribution to the cultural sector has been severely cut over time (depending more or less on political programs of successive governments) creating a need for private sponsorship. Yet, this development has been equally fuelled, if not more, by the willingness of corporations to be influential on urban culture and to shape public agenda/opinion/space. The Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts is such a non-governmental organisation, supported by private corporate structures or wealthy individuals, and thus has a strong dependence on the private sector (festivals finance up to 80% of their budget through sponsorship).

Companies willingness to support festivals is certainly related to culture's increasing instrumentalisation in city promotion. Festivals act as an interface between public policies (the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture) and private development, which, most often than not, conceive of urban space and culture in different ways (despite their recent convergence, asserts Tonkiss (2000: 116), the city is, for the former, 'an object of government'; whereas for the latter, it is 'an object of speculative desire'). In this case, however, their motive is similar: supporting the integration of Istanbul with the globe, although what is meant from the 'globe' is quite debatable—it refers indeed quite often to Europe and the United States. Festivals perfectly fit this project, and are therefore increasingly 'instrumentalised' by different interest groups that have a stake in their organisation, which believed that a more vibrant culture would enhance the flow of capital, attract tourists and professional workers, and as such boost economic processes in Istanbul.

Accordingly, festivals are also increasingly 'touristified', and yet, their failure to create difference in their contents pushes them to emphasise, instead, the difference of the city—in a monumental image of 'oriental' Istanbul (in almost all festival posters where there is a reference to the city, this takes the form of the silhouette of the old city, of the mosques and palaces) that merges its socio-historical heritage with a western techno-economic level of material development, familiarity with culture, and adherence to secularism. In this picture, already devoid of the connotations that palaces and mosques

may have in terms of the Ottoman / Islamic legacy, festivals enter as a symbol of 'western', 'high' culture (especially exemplified in opera, ballet and recently jazz) that is bridged to local space and tradition. This bridge, however, enables in practice only a one-way flow, from the former to the latter, and most of the time, positions the 'west' as a reference point against which Turkey's success in cultural development could be assessed.

Moreover, dependence on sponsorship increases the vulnerability of non-governmental organisations, including festivals, to private intervention (though the festival administration constantly emphasises that sponsors do not have any influence on them)—it forces festivals, for example, to abstain from politically marginal projects, turning them into a 'safe' parade of international cultural forms ranging from entertainment to soft-core politics. It also creates a motive to stage art that would address sponsors' target markets, not only pointing to the overlapping of 'audiences' and 'markets' in scale and scope, but also implying that the public space created as such will only be available to 'target audiences' with a certain level of economic and cultural capital. These are, most of the time, the emerging highly mobile global elite of Istanbul, conversant in a range of 'cultural vocabularies' and knowledgeable in consuming them. Festivals are, thus, not only 'commercialised', but also to some extent 'sanitised' and quite 'gentrified'.

This has important social implications to the extent that, in the socially and spatially fragmented urban space of contemporary Istanbul, familiarity with 'cultural vocabularies' becomes a determinant of the degree one can participate in the conventional domains of urban life/culture ('our leisure and entertainment are no longer communal' lamented Tanpınar, in his famous account of Istanbul that he wrote in as early as 1945). From the ability to decipher a *sushi* menu, to that of making a choice among the films of a festival programme, differential access to art consumption and ease in conducting elaborate lifestyle practices (both depending on a combination of economic and cultural resources one holds) turn into the main axis of articulating social difference. This is even more so, to the extent that Istanbul did not inherit an aristocracy from its imperial days (a marker of distinction inscribed on the blood); and, in the post-1980 period of economic liberalisation and speculation, monetary wealth changed hand so unpredictably that 'cultural capital' provided a more definitive basis of social difference.

III. The 'Gated-community' of Istanbul Festivals

The day following the opening ceremony of the first International Istanbul Festival, Oya Baydar wrote one of the most severe critiques of the festival. While an overwhelming majority of the media was still celebrating this new event, she told that the festival was exclusive, not because activities were closed to public access -'certainly nothing [interdictory] was written on tickets or invitations', but because our age built invisible walls to separate social classes. 'Who in that mass of working people could allocate 1000 [Turkish] lira, or even 200 lira for a ticket months in advance?' she asked, and even if the sum was available, who in the population would be familiar with the Bolshoi Ballet, an orchestra directed by Lessing, or violin concertos by Menuhin? Thus, asked Baydar, who could celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic? (The first festival is deliberately organised at the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Republic. In 1973, Istanbul witnesses the opening of the Bosphorus Bridge, stages its first international art festival, and fights cholera in many districts). And she answered, those who adopted Western values, capitalists (preferably in partnership with the international capital), and high earners able to pay 100 lira for a ticket (the minimum wage is 1200 lira in 1974).

Baydar's analysis has a narrow approach in that it easily superimposes affiliation with western values with high levels of income and disregards the opportunities that festivals might open. Still, her critique presents one of the first examples of a line of thought that would attack festivals for creating distinctions based of economic, social and cultural capital. Nowadays, festivals still remain out of reach for the majority of citizens who do not have material, temporal, spatial and social access.

Festivals impose first and foremost a distinction through economic capital—though this clearly depends on the festival, as, for example, the Film Festival is much cheaper than the Jazz Festival. In 2006, ticket prices ranged between 7.5 new Turkish lira (in the Film Festival, approximately 5 USD) and 300 (in the Music Festivals, approximately 200 USD). Even if at times these prices seem relatively low compared to their foreign equivalents (providing a certain justification for the organisers who set the 'world' as their target[6]) when the minimum wage (a net amount of 403 new Turkish lira, approximately 270 USD) and mean income levels are considered, ticket prices remain exclusive.

Similarly, foreign tourists targeted by the festival marketing possess presumably high levels of economic capital—these are not tourists 'who come here on a 200 dollar-budget-tour' but the ones who stay at 'Four Seasons'.[7] 'When I refer to tourists', says the director of the public relations department, 'this is 'A class' tourism. These are not people who just look for the cheapest combination of sea-sun-sandwich-fish and bed. On the contrary, we are talking about a group [of A class tourists] who is aware of the importance of the world cultural heritage, has economic resources and is willing to spend them for cultural-artistic activities, and whose lifestyles are characterised by high levels of cultural consumption'.[8]

As also this quote suggests, availability of economic resources is not the only criterion involved in festival participation. Festivals equally call for an awareness of and connoisseurship in certain cultural forms, and the willingness to participate to an exchange of cultural and symbolic capital in a cultural / symbolic economy. Bourdieu (1984) notes that because different types of consumption require different sorts and amounts of capital, consumption patterns hint at the social class of the consumer and the capitals s/he possesses. Since the consumption of culture is dependent not only on economic means, but also and especially on competence in terms of knowledge, this knowledge would yield a profit in distinction, legitimacy and domination. It would thus be essential in the reproduction of social classes.

Cultural and educational institutions play an important role in this process, since they are supposed to have the necessary competence to assess what is a good piece of art, an example of high culture and so on. This condition is enforced by an 'informal yet cohesive fraternity' that connects artistic directors of gate-keeping institutions, who 'continuously engaged in a game of 'musical chairs', exchange positions among each others' (Waterman, 1998:65). Thus, Fulya Erdemci, a former Biennale curator becomes the director of a new contemporary arts museum (Proje 4L), following the appointment of the former director, Vasıf Kortun by another art gallery (Garanti Platform, sponsored by the Garanti Bank—which also sponsors the Jazz Festival of the IFCA). Another former director of the IFCA, Melih Fereli, is also appointed to the advisory board of Proje 4L.[9] This sort of interlocking directorate among cultural institutions does not only help some groups accumulate more capital, but they also create a basis for these groups to impose their own systems of classification.

Although it is emphasised that festivals target not a 'social class' but a 'mass', 'people that would share an enthusiasm',[10] cultural accessibility presents almost always class distinctions. One of the assistant directors of the IFCA lets it slip:

> I do not mean that only affluent people could participate. Contrary, our tickets are very cheap, but the spectator needs to have some sort of elite taste. […] Art could not be created in line with spectators. Should we stage the play so that the person in Alibeyköy [a peripheral district] enjoys? […] Theatre calls for making efforts. One needs to go there. […] For that, he needs to enjoy theatre, and to enjoy he must have received a certain level of education starting from his

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childhood. I, for example, take my children to the Biennale, so that they familiarise themselves with it early during childhood.[11]

This prior education is necessary, because 'if the spectator is deficient in faculties of appreciating an artwork, this latter does not open itself to the former'.[12]

Note how economic wealth is clearly separated from cultural capital, but, also note that although the distinction created by the former is referred, the latter appears to be ignored because it seems 'natural', and is justified by the special character of the 'artwork'—the fact that it does not speak if its addressee is not knowledgeable enough. A subtle reproduction of class differences becomes apparent in the assumption that, 'naturally', the lower-class child does not inherit the cultural capital transmitted within the bourgeois family. Thus, when another assistant director says that festivals 'are not only for us, the people in Beyoğlu, but for the world', she disregards that the framework, which welcomes participation from all around the world, in reality, excludes a large percentage of Istanbulites - not only the increasing group of unemployed people, but also low to middle income families, and almost a whole class - the working class.

The modifications in festival programs over the years point also to a move towards elitism. It is known that in the second year of the festival service buses were provided for people coming from different parts of the city[13]—this practice is abandoned today, except for the first few days of the Biennale where buses serve foreign visitors.[14] It also seems that earlier festivals staged more traditional forms of performance (such as shadow theatre, Turkish minstrels, traditional Turkish popular music, whirling dervishes) and more popular spectacles (concerts of famous pop stars such as Ajda Pekkan, and groups such as Yeni Türkü, and MFÖ), which could attract larger audiences. Except traditional Turkish music, these practices are abandoned today. Determining the program to obtain large participation is seen as a concession made from the quality of high art. While festival organisers explain that there exist attempts to make festivals more popular, their concern becomes 'how to increase participation without lowering the quality level'.[15] In the preface of the International Istanbul Festival eleventh year catalogue, Aydın Gün, the general director of the time, complains about the spreading of the musical form *arabesk* (referred as 'the music of ghettos' for a long time; for a detailed discussion, see Stokes, 1994): 'cruelly marketed, our music is thrown in a poisoning, stinking marsh called *arabesk*', he says, adding that festivals form a point of resistance against the spreading of this kind of music. The statement implies a 'supposed' opposition between music and marketing (repeating the separation between culture and market); and a related opposition between this sort of music (much more widespread) and the high culture offered by festivals. After all, *arabesk* is the music of 'invaders'—of those Anatolians flowing to Istanbul in search of a job; it is thus both provincial and unsophisticated.

Following Raban (1974), Harvey (1989:5) tells that the city is like a theatre, 'a series of stages upon which individuals could work their own distinctive magic while performing a multiplicity of roles'. This also implies that there is room for 'villains and fools' to 'turn social life to tragi-comedy, even violent melodrama, particularly if we fail to *read the codes right*' (ibid: 6, italics added). The relatively free-flow of images necessitates an ability to read foreign codes, as well as the one of producing, disseminating, manipulating signs and making them understood. Anatolian immigrants and working classes can easily fail to 'read the semiotic constructions of social reality in different cultural forms' because they might lack the capital necessary to appreciate what counts as culture across a variety of forms available for 'cosmopolitan citizens' (Chaney, 2002:169). The festival posters in 2003

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11 Interview with TKG.

12 Eleventh festival catalogue, preface by Aydın Gün, general director.

13 *Devir*, 1-7 July 1974.

14 Interview with BEB, working at the biennale department.

15 Interview with MSK, assistant director at one of the festival departments, unrecorded.

raise the following questions: 'What is a good film?', 'What is good jazz?' Yet, it is not equally easy for everyone to answer these questions, because behind the codes 'lurke[s] a certain imperialism of taste that [...] recreate[s] in new ways the very hierarchy of values' (ibid). A new hierarchy based on tastes and lifestyle practices draws the lines between citizens and between classes.

There are two points worth noting about this 'hierarchy of tastes'. First, it is partially shaped by some symbolic capital associated with being a 'Westerner' in the field of culture (a trait certainly inherited from the West-oriented project of modernisation of the nation-state, itself partially rooted in the modernisation of the Ottoman Empire). Turkish art and artists are considered separately (and usually in comparison with foreign artists) although some interviewees emphasise that the same criteria are applied to both.[16] Others explain that in some cases Turkish participation is limited to a certain percentage, such as in the Biennale, where the percentage of Turkish artworks are kept at a limit of the 10-15% of all works exhibited.[17] Turkish and foreign (and in the majority of cases where interviewees referred to 'foreign', what they meant was 'Western') art worlds, their objectives, perceptions and critiques are perceived as different. Similarity to Western festivals, in terms of selection, system and display implies professionalism and perfection. My interviewee working in the Biennale Department of the Foundation explains that the Biennale is severely criticised in Turkey for inviting foreign curators to mount the exhibition, and for keeping the percentage of Turkish artists low. However, foreign critiques are in another direction, he says, implying that this latter set of critique is more significant and should be taken more seriously.[18]

Secondly, groups of spectators with presumably similar tastes and lifestyles constitute a certain kind of temporary community with others in the same space. This kind of co-presence, in which people do rarely communicate personally (in terms of face-to-face talking), but share the knowledge that each of them has similar individual resources (lifestyles, tastes, mobilities) creates a network sociality—focused, fast public ties practiced in public and semi-public spaces, where 'co-presence' as a means of 'availability to the eye', becomes a way of sociality.[19] Symbolic communities are formed around similar forms of cultural consumption, and among the co-present spectators, who are able to be there because they know the 'correct ways' of consuming a cultural product—the correct ways of seeing and being seen. It is this knowledge that creates distinction in terms of cultural capital, and this presence, which transforms this cultural capital into symbolic capital, 'prestige'.

Festivals impose themselves as part of 'desired' lifestyles—stylised life-projects characterised by familiarity with different cultures, and ease in consuming different cultural forms (a new interest in Chinese cuisine, and in yoga programmes is certainly part of such development). These lifestyles are socially produced and promoted, through advertisements, television programs, magazines, and films. As the anticipation of intense pleasures is constructed and sustained through advertising, participants are induced to see their lives as an alternative to the lifestyle available to the majority: they have the opportunity to enjoy a choice made by a 'self-defined cultural elite' (Waterman, 1998:65). As such, participation to festivals becomes a communication of individual lifestyle practices for each spectator, who, at the same time, appears to be part of a community—an elective one though, with quite apolitical identifications.

The 'ID' project introduced in 2002—and acronym for 'Istanbul Dostları' (Friends of Istanbul) is a step further in community-formation. The project involves the sale of 'tulip cards' -tulip is the symbol of the Foundation - of different colours and different face values, in order to collect additional funds for festivals. There are three types of cards: the black, the white and the red, each one sold respectively

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16 Interview with TKG, assistant director at one of the festival departments.

17 Interview with BEB, working at the biennale department.

18 Interview with BEB.

19 Here I draw on a discussion in the Mobilities Group, Lancaster University, Department of Sociology. The paper titled 'Mobility and Proximity' was presented by John Urry at this meeting of the mobilities group.

for 4000, 2000 and 300 new Turkish lira (respectively 2600, 1300 and 200 USD approximately). There is also a special category for students. Card owners receive various benefits, such as a limited number of cheaper/free tickets, or priority in specific performances. But they are also part of a community (contacted mostly through e-mails, but also personally), which benefits from extra-festival activities. They receive discounts in specific restaurants and stores, and might travel to other cities and countries with the (exclusive) guided tours that the Foundation organises in collaboration with Fest Tourism.

The director of the public relations department of the Foundation for Culture and Arts explains that the program has two objectives. The first and most important one is to 'create a sense of belonging and a certain awareness [of the importance of arts and culture]'. Only after this comes the financial contribution of the project. She goes on:

> When we were planning the ID project, we paid very much attention not to develop it into an activity for a privileged class. […] The [most expensive] black tulip cards […] have been sold out immediately. Our real target is to spread the red tulip, and it costs 200 million a year.[20] For elderly citizens and students it is 100 million, and provides up to 20 % discount in more than a hundred places that we call 'meeting points' - libraries, CD shops, cafes. Moreover, this amount can be paid in four instalments. When you pay it in instalments, it is equal to the price of a cinema ticket and a hamburger. By paying for a ticket and a hamburger four times, one has the opportunity to become a 'member of a cultural community.'[21]

And yet again, it is not only economic capital that defines the boundaries of these communities. Certainly festivals call for friends, but what kind of friends? Questions about the exclusivity of the event arise, as affordable or not, the introduction of a membership system, in itself, establishes a certain geography of insiders / outsiders. Hetherington points to the symbolic role of community in drawing boundaries and policing a space (2000: 20). Festivals 'make' a certain kind of space, shaped by the activity itself and its time, the choice of venue, ticket prices, present spectators, and so on. In addition, the above discussion shows that the 'symbolic' communities of festivals draw 'symbolic' boundaries around their 'symbolic space'—a closed social space, gated by tickets and membership cards, and controlled by capital owners: economic and/or cultural.

IV. Increasing Privatisation in the Field of Culture

The nature of the 'space' created through cultural events is important, since the cultural sphere is a major provider of urban public spaces. Concert halls, exhibition areas, theatres, television channels and shopping malls form a connection with the society, a place of gathering and negotiating identities, and thus a way of overcoming the alienation created by the metropolis, especially for people lacking other public spaces (Zukin, 1995: 187). Nevertheless, this possibility might be jeopardised if cultural production is used to perpetuate distinctions through elitism and cultural hegemony. In these cases, culture becomes a subtle means of exclusion. The increasing privatisation of culture has therefore important implications as the more private institutions shape the public space created through culture, the greater is their ability to control it, including or excluding individuals and groups that might occupy that space.

In the case of festivals, this possibility is heightened by the fact that, financially, festivals are very much dependent on private funding. Almost 70-80% of the total festivals budget is funded by sponsors

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20 Prices referred in this quote are initial prices set when the project was launched – they are not only lower than the ones stated above but also in a different currency, the Turkish Lira which was replaced by the new Turkish Lira on 1 January 2006 (a new Turkish Lira=1.000.000 Turkish Lira).

21 Interview with Esra Nilgün Mirze.

from a wide array of sectors.[22] Thus the 'public space [created] this way...owes so much to private sector elites' (ibid: 32). Although the IFCA personnel that I formally interviewed (seven persons across different departments) consistently emphasised that sponsors are not entitled to determine the festival program, or to choose the venue (they can only choose from a list performance-venue couples proposed to them), the Foundation and festivals keep an ambivalent position *vis a vis* the pressure to meet sponsors' needs and desires. 'We wouldn't be a festival [if] we were to listen to what sponsors wanted us to do', explains the director of the Sponsorship Department, 'festivals have another educational objective. To show a variety of artistic forms and familiarise people with them. […] Therefore, to respond to sponsors' popular demands cannot be our sole objective.'[23]

Nevertheless, because festivals are financially dependent on sponsors, there is a certain concern to match the festival contents with their target markets.[24] The Music Festival, for example, chooses to invite renowned artists, such as the New York or London Philharmonic Orchestras, to meet sponsors' demands in terms of publicity.[25] It is more difficult to obtain funding for venues with lower seat-capacities, because the audience exposed to sponsor's name and logos is smaller. Therefore, larger settings such as the Cemil Topuzlu Open Air Theatre, and the Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall are preferred by the festival organisation. Moreover, it is commonly agreed that a 'refined image' associated with the performance and the place facilitates the provision of funding.[26]

Examples show that even if sponsors do not intervene directly, their preferences are known by festival organisers; and the influence of corporate capital is felt in selectivity and agenda setting, raising questions about the legitimacy of festival spaces as public spaces. The issue is complicated by the fact that an increasing number of art galleries and publishers are now supported by banking companies, and large capital groups have successively founded universities and museums. Especially Koç and Sabancı holding companies (the two wealthiest families in Turkey) have heavily invested in universities which they named after their families; Koç added a new museum (the Pera Museum) to its previous two undertakings (the Sadberk Hanım Museum and the Koç Museum) while Sabancı transformed the family mansion into a museum (the Sabancı Museum). The Sabancı Museum received a conspicuous public interest (especially in the media) with the big exhibitions ('Picasso', 'Rodin', 'Genghis Khan and His Heirs') that it commissioned in the last couple of years; while the Pera Museum got even more attention when Osman Hamdi's 'The Tortoise Trainer' was bought in an auction for 5 trillion Turkish lira (3.5 million USD), setting a record for the highest price paid for a Turkish painting.

Again both families kept supporting art galleries: Koç via the gallery space owned by the Yapı Kredi Bank which it newly acquired; and Sabancı via the Aksanat Gallery, named after Akbank, the banking division of its corporate group. Shortly before the Pera Museum, Eczacıbaşı, the main capital group behind the IFCA opened Istanbul Modern, an old warehouse transformed into a modern art museum. In the meantime, Akbank started to sponsor both the Film Festival and the Arthouse in Istanbul Modern. Garanti, another bank, assumed the sponsorship of the Jazz Festival while keeping its two art galleries, Garanti Galeri and Garanti Platform. The Yapı Kredi Bank (now owned by the

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22 Sponsors contributing since the first festival include telecommunication and information technology companies (IBM, Aria, Turkcell); hotels (Marmara Hotels); banks (Akbank, İş Bankası, Garanti Bankası); insurance firms (Axa Oyak, Başak); and other companies working in several sectors such as automotive (Mercedes-Benz Turkey, Renault); food production (Pringles, Ülker); alcoholic beverages (Efes Pilsen); and, electronic and electrical appliances (Beko, Siemens). Media sponsors include major newspapers (Cumhuriyet, Hürriyet. Milliyet, Radikal. Sabah), major television channels (ATV, CNBC-e, CNN TURK, KANAL D, NTV, SHOW TV, TRT), several radios (Açık Radyo, NTV Radyo, Radio Mydonose, Radio Oxi-gen, Radyo Ekden, Radyo Foreks and TRT), and a web designer (tool).

23 Interview with Ömür Bozkurt, director of the sponsorship department.

24 Interview with MSK, assistant director at one of the festival departments.

25 Interview with MSK.

26 Interview with TKG, assistant director at one of the festival departments.

Koç family) kept running both exhibition galleries and a major publishing company, just as İş Bank whose publishing company has become increasingly prominent. Siemens undertook several sponsorship programs under its project titled 'Social Responsibility', opened an art gallery and started to distribute several academic and arts awards in cooperation with private universities (such as Koç University). Another private university, Bilgi, is launching Santralİstanbul, a beautiful industrial heritage site (an old power plant) converted into a complex of research centres and museums.

All these developments show businesses' increasing willingness to 'emphasise their prominence in the city's symbolic economy' (Zukin, 1995: 23). This is partly due to the capacity of cultural production to build an image for the host city. As referred above, this image enhances the working environment by attracting skilled people and capital. Yet, this is not the only factor. Equally important is the fact that corporations and non-corporate institutions find the prestige and visibility they seek in culture, which becomes an indirect (as opposed to direct advertisement) and powerful means of building an image for them. Contrary to the advertisement that triggers 'spontaneous' and 'striking' responses in a 'general public', sponsorship provides the sponsor with 'long-term' recognition.[27] In addition, sponsorship offers other advantages (e.g. 'publicity of the city or the country', and 'other employment opportunities'), whereas advertisement benefits only the brand/company promoted.[28] In the case of festivals, 'sponsorship shows that the sponsor is ready to protect cultural heritage and support cultural development'—as such, 'you become subject to news cover, rather than commercial publicity'.[29] As the general manager of one of the long-standing sponsors of festivals puts it more plainly:

> If you decide to support the Foundation [IFCA], [you decide to do so only] if you would attract media's interest, after all, you do not do it for charity. In fact, you do it, for recognition. To be honest, the media side of it is very important. Media, advertisement, promotion, sponsorship, all kinds of promotional activities […] and if we believe that we would get enough return for the money that we have invested, we can use any means for PR.[30]

In the promotional basket, sponsorship becomes another means of building an 'image' for the company; especially when 'continuous', sponsorship is successful in creating an image associated with 'prestige'.[31] By juxtaposing symbols of sponsors' institutional identities (their name and logo) with the artwork, sponsorship creates an association between the sponsor and the (global, cosmopolitan, elite) urban culture—the name of the sponsor 'goes with a very prestigious festival'.[32] Sponsorship is divorced from its marketing aspect, and becomes a contribution to the cultural life of the city.

Nevertheless, as any intervention in the sphere of culture, this intervention is not without social implications—it may easily turn into a means of controlling the content of the art project supported. Especially big companies may abstain from funding 'risky' undertakings: projects which may attract little visitors, works which may question sponsors' own workings, or daring attempts which may cause controversy between sponsors and political/administrative bodies.[33] In this case, more private funding

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27 Interview with SSE, working for one of the big sponsors of the IFCA (unrecorded, from the notes taken during the interview).

28 Interview with SSE.

29 Interview with SSE.

30 Interview with SEA, the general manager of one of the long-standing sponsors.

31 Interview with SEA. Also, CPO, assistant director in one of the festival departments, says that companies are aware of the 'prestige' associated with supporting festivals.

32 Interview with SEA.

33 A striking incident occured when Fazıl Say, a renowned Turkish pianist and composer, staged his Metin Altıok Oratorio as the last concert of the Music Festival in 2003. Metin Altıok, himself a known Turkish poet, was one of the 38 people, mostly left-wing and *Alevi* intellectuals (Alevism is a Shia strand of Islam with pre-Islamic influences practiced mainly in Turkey), killed by religious conservatives in Sivas (a central Anatolian town) in 1993, during a gathering aimed at the

may mean that this source of funding exerts a direct influence on what will be displayed-heard-acknowledged-problematised-criticised (and how they will do so), while others will remain hidden and ignored. But not only the content of the work exhibited may be checked and restrained: at the same time, the potential but unwanted audience may be marked off by the architecture and design of the space. It should be no coincidence that all the new private museums and most of the art galleries backed by banks are 'protected' by private security guards and electronic security gates. Trapped between cultural and architectural barriers how can an 'ordinary' person feel confident enough to approach such a place?

V. New Artist-Run-Spaces, Collectivities and Initiatives

The newly emerging art initiatives are important in this sense—they promise a new variety of media, spaces, intentions and commitments; a new sense of 'modesty' -it seems to me- and a much more welcoming attitude than mainstream cultural institutions. Just to name a few, Altı Aylık (Six Months Long), Apartman Projesi (the Apartment Project), BAS, GalataPerform, Hafriyat (Excavation), K2, Nomad, Oda Projesi (the Room Project), PİST, VideA, Toz (Dust) are among these initiatives which try to reconsider the role that cultural production may play in the city. GalataPerform has been open to artists and audiences from different disciplines (from contemporary theatre and performance art, through dance, video and internet art to new music) since 2003, in a second floor apartment of the historical Galata district.[34] PİST is 'an interdisciplinary project space' at Pangaltı,[35] whose aim was to provide the opportunity to exhibit works for the young artists 'who would not be able to do so in Aksanat'[36] by creating an alternative 'physical and discursive space beyond the main cultural axis of the city'.[37] BAS is an artist-run space which collects and reproduces artists' books and printed matters since 2006. It aims to explore the possibility to use printed matter as an alternative space.[38]

But not all initiatives own a physical space. Altı Aylık (meaning 'Six Months Long'—a name given after its planned timespan) which lost its physical gallery space a couple of months ago, is now trying to develop a more flexible structure 'that uses any kind of space except a settled one'.[39] Similarly, Oda Projesi (the Room Project) on the scene since 2000, was evicted from its venue due to a recent wave of gentrification that hit the surrounding neighbourhood and that was partly triggered by art initiatives themselves. Since then, Oda Projesi assumed a 'mobile' status, experimenting with a variety of media, like a radio station, a book, postcards and newspapers that artists used to produce alternative conceptions of space.[40]

Other initiatives are created as virtual spaces from the beginning. Toz (Dust), such an initiative, 'appeared due to the necessity of dusting in art'. It is a web-based medium. 'Dust is an exhibition hall,

(Contd.)

commemoration of Pir Sultan Abdal, a Sufi poet. Say's Oratorio aimed at the commemoration of this incident, and of the people who lost their lives. It thus included, at the end of the concert, a 3.20-minute screening of recordings made at that time. Yet, one more time the influence of administrative bodies was felt, when the visual material was taken out following Erkan Mumcu's (the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the time) request from Şakir Eczacıbaşı, the president of the IFCA. The composer blamed the IFCA for not taking the necessary action: 'Erkan Mumcu and Şakir Eczacıbaşı want to keep their relationship smooth for future projects. The IFCA did not react in a principled way. You would be either by the ones who killed, or by those who were killed. There is no middle way', said the composer afterwards ('Sivas yangını kültür dünyasını da sardı', *Radikal*, 6 July 2003).

34 http://www.galataperform.com/eng/mekan-ing/Mekan.htm

35 http://www.pist.org.tr/

36 'Biz 'kurum' olmak istemiyoruz', *İstanbul*, Kasım 2006, p. 54.

37 'PİST', art-ist, October 2006, p. 63.

38 http://www.b-a-s.info/page8.html

39 http://altiaylik.blogspot.com/2006/08/alti-aylik-art-review-dergisinde.html

40 http://www.odaprojesi.org/

a magazine, an alternative area. Its doors are wide open'.[41] VideA (video/idea) intends to use visual technology as a medium to 'think through'—to look again, form an image, searching for connections among images.[42] Nomad consists of designers, engineers, architects, curators and writers; and tries to experiment with new patterns in the digital art sphere.[43]

Beyond the variety of the media/space they choose to deploy, all these undertakings share common points: (1) initiatives are collectivities—in some cases, several artists work under one name, in others one of them may work under different names (2) artists work in cooperation—sometimes initiatives cooperate to form larger groups (3) initiatives are independent—not only in the sense that they are not economically dependent on any institution or are politically restricted; but also in the sense of being free from mainstream influences and traditions in their workings (4) initiatives are concerned with how they use space, especially in a period where urban and public spaces are increasingly instrumentalised in city promotion (İnce, 2006; see also Tan, 2006). As exemplified above they use a variety of media/spaces; and most artists working in initiatives emphasise that they will not work with 'traditional' sponsors, as they will not be producing projects that would satisfy the latter. Artists also note that they are not in favour of institutionalisation, which would eventually mean situating oneself at one side of the orthodox divisions marking the cultural sphere.[44] Before a meeting that PIST organised on 14 June 2006, artists raised a list of questions that reveal both these traits and concerns—these are the questions:

1. What is an independent/alternative space? Can we talk of a complete independence?

2. Will the increase in the number of independent spaces promote artistic production and improve its quality? And how will these spaces survive, continue their projects?

3. How can art initiatives develop relations with municipalities and state institutions? Which one is more preferable; support from municipalities, fundings from public or private institutions?

4. Is Turkey only made of Istanbul? Are there other artists' initiatives in different parts or at the periphery of Istanbul? Is there anyone among us who is in contact with such initiatives? Is it easier to develop international cooperation than local collectivities? To what extent have we developed local cooperations? What is happening here, there, on the north, south, west, or east?

5. Are we the only audience of our projects? Who is our audience? Who is following our projects? How can we develop our audience in quantity and quality? Would more people follow initiatives if they worked in physical [as opposed to virtual] places?

6. Can alternative art practices and spaces be maintained only by artists? Producing arts or maintaining a space?

7. Is institutionalisation inevitable? Can't we just continue as alternative spaces?

8. Do the laws for EU integration include us? Is this important for us? What can we do?

9. How may 'Independent Artist-run Space' be translated in Turkish?

10. What kind of cooperation/togetherness can we formulate? Can we form an artists' community where everyone supports each other?

11. What about Istanbul 2010? [referring to Istanbul's designation as the European Capital of Culture in 2010].[45]

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41 http://tozanlar.blogspot.com/

42 http://www.videa.org.tr/html/videa_html.html

43 http://www.nomad-tv.net/

44 'Biz 'kurum' olmak istemiyoruz', İstanbul, October 2006, p. 55.

45 http://www.pist-org.blogspot.com/

Questions are telling in the sense that they make explicit specific concerns about the (internal) working of the art world and changing (external) conditions (such as the integration process to the EU); the implications of different strategies to manage art spaces, especially funding strategies; and the possibilities of creating new ways to reach audiences. As such they create a new sense of reflexivity, to which we still need to grant some time to see what way it will develop (One inspiring example was Oda Projesi's attempt to open to discussion the role that artists play in the gentrification of inner-city areas—the initiative, itself a victim of it, invited artists and scholars to discuss both gentrification and their role in its development).

Another departure that art initiatives instigated was the increasing use of urban spaces as a background to exhibit artworks. Whereas the hygienic, almost timeless space of the 'white cube' is recreated anew almost after each exhibition, public art is deliberately superimposed on several, intermingled layers of urban living. The superimposition/juxtaposition of artworks on a background loaded with memory-images interrupts the chronological sequence, reawakens dormant memories that acquire new connotations shaped by contemporary circumstances. One recent example is the Pedestrians Exhibitions, although I personally think that these opportunities are not fully exploited in this case.[46] In fact, the Pedestrian Exhibitions does not count among the artist-run-spaces stated above—rather, it is an annual exhibition scattered throughout the city, which hitherto has been organised twice, each being at a different neighbourhood. The exhibition aims at 'not only using the spaces designated for art but also [at] encompassing the streets and public spaces and interpreting urban, social and cultural structures'. It takes 'the pedestrian motion and speed' and 'the pedestrian him/herself' as a 'reference point', meaning that the reference would be 'human' in scale.[47] As such Pedestrian Exhibitions does not only facilitate the participation of the public in being spatially available, and monetarily affordable (indeed free), but also it attracts unexpected audiences: by-passers, usually uninformed of what is happening. Artworks may then be experienced in a more participative way, with the possibility of inpire many more people, contrary to other projects where aesthetic principles are used to delineate space and create invisible barriers.

VI. Concluding Remarks: Arts and Reflexivity

Certainly large festivals and big museums have a dynamic impact on urban life: the Film Festival attracts now more than a hundred thousand spectators, while each one of the Music and Jazz Festivals, and the Biennale approaches this number.[48] More than a hundred thousand people visited the 'Picasso Exhibition' at the Sabancı Museum last year. Social, cultural and political issues are brought to public attention from time to time (for example, there is a special section on human rights in the Film Festival). Many Turkish artists, like the DJ Mercan Dede who performed at the Montreal Festival, and the film director Nuri Bilge Ceylan, who was invited to Cannes, find an international audience through the connections that Istanbul festivals or other prominent cultural institutions secure for them. It is again through these connections that many renowned foreign artists are invited to stage, play, act, talk, paint and compose in Istanbul. It seems that despite historical reasons for the unfamiliarity of the

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46 Pedestrian Exhibitons is certainly a pioneer of open-air, public display of arts in Istanbul. Nevertheless, what I find missing is a direct conversation between artworks and the background where they are placed, which would break up the temporal and spatial sequence, and invite a critical gaze, thus triggering news ways of remembering, understanding, sharing, producing this specific space (the exhibition may be followed from the web site: www.yayasergileri.org)

47 http://www.yayasergileri.org/

48 By 2001, the total numbers of spectators and events per festival are as follows: The Music Festival, in 29 years (1973-2001), 1850 concerts/shows, 3.250.000 spectators; The Film Festival, in 20 years (1982-2001), 2510 films, 2.250.000 spectators; The Theatre Festival, in 12 years (1989-2000), 260 plays, 300.000 spectators; The Jazz Festival, in 8 years (1994-2001), 2500 performances, 600.000 spectators;The Biennale, in 7 biennales, 265.000 spectators.

society in general with western artistic canons[49] and, the deficiency of the city in terms of artistic infrastructure (especially in terms of venues with special technical qualifications), these big events partly succeed in changing the intellectual and cultural climate of the city, and help different sections of the population (especially of students) familiarise with different cultural forms.

Nevertheless, in a period where both the material base of Istanbul and its culture are increasingly recycled, reproduced, displayed and sold to create a coherent and colourful visual representation of the city; and cultural institutions are themselves gradually professionalised, commercialised, standardised, sanitised, touristified, and gentrified (and artists themselves worked, mostly nondeliberately as gentrifiers) it becomes increasingly necessary to question what culture comes to offer this city and its citizens. Festivals, artworks, exhibitions are especially important as sites to deconstruct and reconstruct the world, and express and enact alternative visions of it. Their assimilation into a marketing and consumption logic, and furthermore, their deployment for the promotion of the latter have thus socially and politically important implications. I had previously concluded (see Yardımcı, 2004; 2005) that festivals' main weakness was their reluctance to consider these implications, and to re-assess their accomplishments from different viewpoints. Their shortcoming, therefore, does not lie in their symbolic output per se, but rather, in their incapacity to develop such a *reflexive moment*, directed not only at society in general, but also at *themselves*, these symbolic outputs and the implications of these outputs (see Lash, 1994 for 'aesthetic' dimension of reflexivity).

The aim of this paper was to generate such a reflexive moment now that Istanbul's cultural sphere has increasingly been diversified, not only with large-scale, spectacular events but also with new initiatives, themselves willing to develop such a moment. It is important to keep in mind that the 'world of culture' is itself embedded in a specific social/spatial/historical context; to realise that as much as they work at a symbolic level, festivals and other cultural institutions also involve many forms of materiality (they strongly depend on local capital, infrastructure and regulation); and finally, to remember that, so far as these events respond to global aspirations, they also have local implications.

These caveats aim not only at challenging the 'naturalness' of the 'world of culture', and at opening up a possibility of change (the fact that this world is constructed means that it can be deconstructed and reconstructed), but also, at pointing to the need to develop critical studies of institutions working in the production, dissemination and consumption of culture. Istanbul is now learning to capitalise on its historical and cultural wealth to boost economy and globalisation; and most of the time projects of 'cultural globalisation' are almost blindly supported, in the hope of overcoming the limitations imposed by political and economic systems on the integration of Istanbul with the globe (the application to the European Capitals of Culture scheme is a case in point). Museums, art galleries, and concert halls are multiplying, so are film days, festivals, and orchestras (almost all are private enterprises). And yet, the organisations, workings and outputs of these cultural institutions are seldom questioned—if they are at times mentioned, the discussion takes place among a handful of individuals working in art criticism, but most of the times, also as stage directors, curators or organisers. It is therefore hoped that this study will inspire future research among Turkish scholars, who would develop a social critique of cultural institutions and events, freed not only from the 'aura' of arts, and from the western canon imposed upon them, but also from this 'personal bias', which stems from the fact that artistic directors and art critiques are either the same persons, or acquaintances who quite often exchange positions among each other.

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49 Classical music, opera and ballet formed a rather unfamiliar field for the Turkish population accustomed to different forms of traditional Turkish music. Even less common was an acquaintance of the arts of sculpture and painting, the production and public display of which were discouraged in the Ottoman rule. This dislike for the representation of living creatures was mainly based on religious beliefs. As a secular nation-state, the Republic of Turkey opposed itself to this tradition.

Such studies can also inspire the practitioners of the cultural field by showing that this field is itself a social construction, and its operational guidelines and legitimate values are socially determined. It is important to grasp that these guidelines and values are thus open to negotiation, that they can vary across space and time, and also allow for some criss-crossing, because their settling into strict categories creates misleading oppositions. One can encounter such a dualism quite often between the 'quality' of art and the scale of its public: if high (quality) art can only be enjoyed by a minority, than to address the rest of the population, one needs to concede from such quality ('We should consider how we can address larger publics without decreasing the quality of our projects' says one interviewee at IFCA). Nevertheless, these categories are never so clear-cut, and high, elitist, avant-garde, futuristic, in cases activist art is not opposed in a straightforward way to more popular forms, in cases reproached for commercial orientation. The new interest in traditional folk singers, minstrels, and *arabesk* stars among the upscale urban youth of Istanbul and some intellectuals does not only point to the revival of provincial cultural forms excluded by the elitism of the Kemalist project (after the name of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic), but also challenges the latter's definition of 'high culture'. While the music of the periphery comes to the attention of the mainstream intelligentsia for being 'good music', intellectuals who might have denied their taste in *arabesk* some decades ago, can now confidently enjoy multiple cultural forms that the metropolis offers for their consumption (certainly, a working class child's interest in *arabesk* stars would still be quite different than that of someone who attends at least a couple of jazz concerts at the festival).

There are certainly many openings involved in the cultural transformation of Istanbul, the proliferation of institutions working in this field, and the expansion of the range of cultural artefacts and practices that become part of the metropolitan canon. It is important to point to these openings, while encouraging a reflexive questioning of their working and implications. It is through such approach that Istanbul can make the best use of these opportunities, as each new undertaking might be a step of inducing dialogue in an increasingly fragmented metropolis, as much as it may turn into a 'prestige' project manipulated by corporate and administrative structures involved in its organisation, or it may simply lose track of its prospects in the practicalities of providing funding, complying with regulations, or attracting spectators.

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