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Jean Monnet Chair Student Workshop I
27 May 2013, Dolapdere, Istanbul

Interculturalism and Multiculturalism

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Museums and Intercultural Dialogue: Comparative Cases from Turkey and Italy

Introduction and Framework

'Multiculturalism is a fact of life, but interculturalism is still utopia' delineates the Handbook of the so-called 'Map for ID'¹ project, which is supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union in the years 2007-2009, aiming to develop the potential and practice of museums as places of intercultural dialogue and to promote a more active engagement with the communities they serve.

'Map For ID' project which has been realized with the partnership of different institutions and individuals from Italy, Hungary, Ireland, Spain, Netherlands and United Kingdom (Pereira, Salvi, Sani, & Villa, 2010, p. 34) had its vision based on 'How do we go beyond from being multicultural societies to being 'intercultural societies where a plurality of cultures cooperates in dialogue and in shared responsibility.'² (Bodo, Gibbs, & Sani, 2009, p. 4)

'Intercultural dialogue is an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other's global perception.'³ Increasing the cultural diversity especially in developed countries have given intercultural dialogue a more prominent place in European political agendas (i.e. "European Commission's Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World"; "Culture Programme" 2007-2013; "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008; Council of Europe's "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue"; "UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions", 2005; ICOM (International Council of Museums) "Museums and Cultural Diversity: Policy Statement", 1997 and "Faro Declaration").

The issue is not on the priority list of Turkey yet, however our cultural environment is changing quickly, becoming more diversified, either ephemeral or perennial. Additionally, Turkey, rooting already a culturally-mixed historical background, discusses more publicly its differences via expansion policies. Possibly these developments may lead to uncover the existing cultural potential of Turkey and lead more participative cultural and social policies in the near future.

The following paper will try to compare two cases; one from Emilia-Romagna region of Italy, other from Princes' Islands of Turkey, where in both cases the aim is to understand the *other* cultures and promote intercultural dialogue. Since a healthy comparison cannot be made without considering in

¹ http://www.mapforid.it/Handbook_MAPforID_EN.pdf pg. 4 foreword

² From European Commissioner Ján Figel's address during the launch of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 in Slovenia.

³ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/concept_EN.asp#P30_3374

what conjuncture the projects had flourished, a gist on the cultural policy backgrounds of the countries will be briefly introduced.

Turkey: Where does it stand within the museum policy framework?

The cultural policy of the newly established secular Turkish Republic in 1923 was based on the principle of ‘creating a nation state from a civilized society’. (Şahin Güçhan & Kurul, 2009/2, p. 24) The museums were the devices to integrate and disseminate this vision upon the general public. However, when we look at the last fifty years of the museum history of Turkey, we can argue that the public museums in Turkey generally remained distanced from the public. Main reason of this was not the centralized structure of the museums, rather it was due to their failure to see ‘publicness’; they were seen as specialized institutions headed to excavate and protect the objects. (Ünsal, Museums and Belonging: Visitors, Citizens, Audiences and Others , 2008, p. 71) Today, still there is not a cultural policy which prevails the advancement of the research and modernization in the museums. (Keleş, 2010, p. 12) Even though, especially in the last decade, private sector increases its attention and invests in the sector, new buildings are being constructed constantly as museum spaces, and the number of private museums which were numbered 93 in 2002⁴ increase to 175, the ones that are under the control of the Ministry⁵ are still hanged out to the ‘policy’ problem which pulls down shackles. For example, a state museum is even not allowed to choose its own staff; thereto it is a normal situation in Turkey where a museum which is identified to serve the public does not have specific experts to ameliorate the communication with its community. While some museums can recruit outsource contracted consultancy groups who are tended to fill this gap, all these initiatives depend solely on the museum director’s traits.

The situation is a bit (!) different in Europe. The museology past having different historical development pattern in an earlier time –almost hundred fifty years ago than Turkey’s experience- (Keleş, 2010, p. 4), also paved the way for the re-definition of the museums according to the demands of the modern times. With the establishment of European Union (EU), the concepts of multiculturalism became at the center of the discussions as a basis of anti-racist approaches. (Gültekin, Dündar, Kırsaçlıoğlu, & Aksoy, 2007, p. 4). Cultural diversity, being an economic, social and political plus, was also needed to be developed and adequately managed; because increasing cultural diversity had brought new social and political challenges due to the double-sided medallion impact of cultural diversity as triggering fear and rejection. Within this conjuncture, various studies have been carried out with the involvement of many institutions and governments and the policies have been reconstructed. To the UNESCO, public policies, especially cultural policies, should reflect and

⁴ <http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR,43253/bakanligimiz-bagli-muzeler.html>

⁵ <http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR,43980/ozel-muzeler.html>

contribute to the construction of an enabling environment where rights to access and participation in cultural life are covered. [Laaksonen, 2010] (UNESCO, 2012, p. 7) The social dimension of culture is defined as “related to its symbolic value and to its role in giving a sense of identity, shared value and belonging, in preventing exclusion and for building social cohesion and stability” (UNESCO-UIS, 2009). Instead, “without the right to participate in cultural life, individuals fail to develop the social and cultural connections that are important to maintaining satisfactory conditions of equality” [Laaksonen, 2010](UNESCO, 2012, p. 32). It can be argued that the future of democracy and prosperity depends heavily on the existence of the public spheres and spaces which will allow discussing the cultural policies and programmes. (Ertürk, 2011, p. 34). The museums, being identified as the public spaces, as Sandell suggests, can contribute toward social inclusion *at individual, community and societal* levels. At *personal* level, they can enhance self-esteem, confidence and creativity; at *community* level, they can act as a social regeneration, empowering communities to increase the self-determination and develop confidence and skills to take greater control over their lives; and at *societal* level, with their collections and displays have the potential to increase the tolerance and inter-community respect. (Black, 2009, p. 50)

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which is the only international organization representing museums and museum professionals since its creation in 1946, updates the definition of the ‘museum’ regularly. The recent definition is given as follows;

*A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution **in the service of society and its development**, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, **researches, communicates** and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the **purposes of education, study and enjoyment**.*⁶

The 21 century society has been diversified via massive migration and modernization processes and has been surrounded by globalization and rapidly changing technological environment. (Ünsal, 21-23 May 2008, p. 20) As urban populations increasingly became consisting of the minority groups, who delineate that visiting the museums are not among their first choices, the museums are compelled to reconsider their missions. (Ünsal, Museums and Belonging: Visitors, Citizens, Audiences and Others , 2008, pp. 72-73) Within this circumstance, how the roles of the museums are changing? Today, the museums turn their face from collection oriented towards more visitor oriented strategies. Communities are not waiting out there in the public just passively, they are needed to be identified and ‘included’. So, how it will be managed? Is there a role model? Can museums learn from each other?

1. ⁶ <http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>

(Smith & Waterton, 2009, p. 108) Hence the question arises how a museum can be more attractive, charming even for a person who never entered a museum?

Community and museum relations are already complex and fraught, and they do not exist just to tick a box for the museum for the social policy implementation. The memories and experiences can help bind the communities through the experience of creating this collective memory, and cement and recreate the social networks and ties. (Smith & Waterton, 2009, p. 44) The museums, which are once so-called *treasury storages*, have a plethora of the objects in which keep back the specific meanings for different visitors. (Spalding, 2006, p. 322) Exhibitions, where the objects or other assets of collections are showed up, are the basic mediums for the museum to communicate with its community. (Sanivar & Akmehmet, 2011, p. 110) However, it should be kept in mind, especially in Turkey where the museums already distanced from its visitors, that the cultural activities have to be knitted into the fabric of daily life; of the ways different cultural tastes, and of the ways in which these connect with other relevant social characteristics. (Bennett, 2001, p. 60)

A Case from Turkey: Princes' Islands

In the second half of 18th century, whilst Istanbul was transforming into a modern metropolis, the Islands' withdrawn trait also began to be opened outwards especially due to its perception as vacation place by non-Muslim communities; the increasing rate of construction and schools mainly oriented to the needs and culture of non-Muslim rich and elite community today reflects the embellished cultural heritage of the past. (visit to Museum of Princes' Islands, 2013) However, the Islands' demographic structure had to change due to jittery political environment: already diminishing rate of non-Muslim population accelerated especially with the acceptance of 'Varlık Vergisi' (*Wealth Tax*) accepted in 1942; consecutively more severe conjuncture such as; 6-7 September 1955 intrusion events and lastly 1964 'Cyprus Peace Operation' resulted a highly considerably decrease in the rate of the non-Muslim community (Bozis, 2011, pp. 96-101) and a replacement occurred which resulted an increase in Turkish population.

Most people look back upon their cross-cultural experiences as an enriching, challenging part of their lives. (Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986, p. 13) According to the research on social structure and Internal Migration in Princes' Islands, leaded by the museum of Princes' Islands ('MoPI') and Maltepe University, reflects the results based on the survey realized with 540 people, excluding the tourists and daily visitors, also underpin this argument.

The primary event that has mostly affected the participants is the migration of the Greeks in the events of 6-7 September 1955. The comments accrue succinctly:

“It is a life that will never come back. It is the most effective for me. The entertainments of the Greeks, existence of that culture, those entertainments, those civilized relations and those years that you could sleep while your key is on the door till morning. ” (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, pp. 25-26)

It is observed also; especially people born and grown in the Islands are much more interested in sport and social activities. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 31)

Today, according to the Address-Based Population Registration, the total population of Princes' Islands district is 13.880, who are resident in 4.500 domiciles. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 49). And *Büyükada*, the biggest among the Princes' Islands, has a profile of migration as follows: (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 53)

	Büyükada	
Natives or persons to immigrate before 1940	Nr	33
	%	13,7%
Immigrants btw. 1941-1960	Nr	29
	%	12%
Immigrants btw. 1961-1980	Nr	44
	%	18,3%
Immigrants btw. 1981-2000	Nr	81
	%	33,6%
Immigrants btw. 2001-2012	Nr	54
	%	22,4%
Total	Nr	241
	%	100%

- The table is retrieved from the MoPI and Maltepe University survey results.

On the other hand, 39,7% of *Büyükada* participants stated that they were born in Istanbul, whereas second place is hold by Van with a ratio of 7,5% which is followed by 5,2% Erzincan. The analysis of answer to the “Where do you feel from?” shared with 45,7% as “Islander” identity. If it has been added *Istanbulite* identity, the ratio rises to 72,7%. Islander identity undergoes a sharp fall for the newcomers between 1941 and 1960. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, pp. 56-60)

When the participants have been asked about their reason of the internal migration, a majority as 33,7% indicate “unemployment and other economic motives” (this rate increases to 50% when it comes to the rural immigrants.) And this ration is even higher when the analysis is made solely for Büyükada: 42,3%. The second most common reason is declared as the “attraction of the Islands and urban noise” with 31,2% of total participants. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 62)

It can be clearly seen that in the Islands, which were declared a Protected Site area as of 1984, the social and cultural life has also been waved during the following internal migration. Several quotations from the survey explicit the following gist: (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 31)

“Therefore, our friends coming from... have had difficulty in adapting, as bringing their own cultures. As this adaptation is not achieved, the island has started to degenerate. ”

Today, Islands, thanks to its enchanting architecture, its natural ambience and its characterized culture keep attracting the local and foreign tourists.

	Foreign tourist (2009)		Local tourist (2009)		Total (2009)		Total (2008)
	# of nights	avrg. stay	# of nights	avrg. stay	# of nights	avrg. stay	bed capacity
Islands	7.085	3,4	24.578	3,6	31.663	3,6	552

(Enlil, Dinçer, Evren, & Seçkin, 2011, p. 79)⁷

The Museum of the Princes' Islands ('MoPI')

The Museum is located at the most ancient part of the Island, Aya Nikola, which goes back till 259-336 A.D. The place, which became the dumping ground for the municipality during 1990's, try to be revitalized by the newly established museum and its surrounding. (visit to Museum of Princes' Islands, 2013)

⁷ <http://kultur.gov.tr/TR/belge/1-63769/tesis-istatistikleri.html> den düzenlererek oluşturulmuş.



* **Aya Nikola, 1963.** The photo is taken from archives of the museum during the visit at 10th April 2013.



* **Aya Nikola, 1996.** The photo is taken from archives of the museum during the visit at 10th April 2013.

MoPI has been established after long years of exertion with the cooperation of the Municipality of Island, Foundation of Island ('Adalar Vakfı') and the financial support of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency ('İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı') with a total budget of 1,8 million TRY in 2010. (Adalar Müzesi , 2013). The museum, belonging to Islands Foundation ('Adalar Vakfı') is audited by the Directorate of Istanbul Archeology Museums ('İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri Müdürlüğü').⁸

According to the quantitative result conducted by Maltepe University, 35,6% of the participants have seen the museum so far. And 46% of Büyükada residents say that they have been to the museum. 28,8% of the participants support or approve the Museum and 6% is indecisive. , 5,1% are against where this ration increases to 9,6% for Büyükada. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 72)

Rate of visits to Museum of Princes' Islands (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 77)

Have you ever been to Museum of Princes' Islands?		
	Büyükada	Total Princes' Islands

⁸ <http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR,43980/ozel-muzeler.html>

Yes	Nr	116	192
	%	46%	35,6%
No	Nr	131	341
	%	52%	63,1%
No comment	Nr	5	7
	%	2%	1,3%
Total	Nr	252	540
	%	100%	100%

Opinions on Museum of Princes' Islands			
		Büyükkada	Total Princes' Islands
Fine, I am for it	Nr	56	125
	%	31,5%	28,9%
I am undecided	Nr	22	26
	%	12,4%	6%
I am against and do not support it	Nr	17	22
	%	9,6%	5,1%
I know nothing about the museum	Nr	61	207
	%	34,3%	47,9%
Location is too far, needs to be changed	Nr	22	52
	%	12,4%	12%
Total	Nr	178	432
	%	100%	100%

The results are engrossing considering that less than half of the Islands' population have seen the MoPI,; but the more interesting is that the rate of appreciation decreases among the ones who already have seen it.

Indeed some of the deficits that the museum seem to be ameliorated easily; for example an uplift on the very insufficient signaling from the quay to the museum can increase noticeably the visitor rate. Considering that the museum does not shine with a stimulus epiphany, it can be barely seen when it is arrived. The pale pre-fabric construction of the low ceilings, which were the part of the old hangar

which is used for ambulance helicopters in 1997-98, prevents the eyes looking for the salient structures where especially in an Island which is famous with its historical architectures.



- The museum building view from outside.

However, the inside reverses the first impressions while delivering more than expected. The welcoming galleries beginning from geology and consists of different sections including a wide range selection from the biology to the belongings of famous artists who lived in the Islands, from the Greek school study table to the interviews reflected on the widely used digital screens astonish the visitor and draws into its own story. The museum acts as a medium, as a mirror which reflects the colorful cultural mixed heritage of the Princes' Islands; it makes the visitor feel that it tries to prove itself as connoisseur of the Island's real story and blend in the Islander identity in the old belongings and old photos.

First Intercultural Project from MoPI

MoPI is distinguishable with its support from the first EU supported museum program in Turkey. The project "Introduction to City Museum Concept" within the scope of the *Civil Society Facility EU-Turkey Intercultural Dialogue: Museum (ICD-MUSE) Program* was even ready before the museum was opened. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 9) The project started in November 2011 within a three partnership of Greece, Sweden and Germany, targets the year 2014 for more detailed work. Since migration was a shining subject, the first step of the project; the exhibition is so-called "The Project of Migration Connections Exhibition". During the project, a very important fieldwork, reflecting different approaches, not only the minorities but also people migrated from other parts of Anatolia, generated some of the above mentioned data has been carried out by Maltepe University. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, pp. 9-12) The first step of the project is not added-value only for its generated quantitative data input, and also its experience and long-lasting relation between

different participants such as; staff, academia, international institutions, but it is also important to impress the future projects of the museums to create an engagement with its Islander community.

Although 'Islander' means disparate meanings for different persons, the referred common meanings are to live in the island for a long time, to accommodate with the islanders and the multi-cultural structure of the island. (Museum of the Princes' Island, 2012, p. 32)

"The people who live without conflict and discrimination are Islanders."

Italy: Where does it stand for cultural policy framework?

The development of the museums in the west did not happen independently of the intellectual, political and economic developments in the society. (Ünsal, *Museums and Belonging: Visitors, Citizens, Audiences and Others*, 2008, p. 65) Industrial revolution which began at the end of 18th century in England reached Italy via the finance of already industrialized countries for Italy's railway infrastructure and electricity supply networks. In the same period, the interest towards folklore and popular culture raised and first extended space for non-European people has been reserved in Florence, 1869. However, Italian industrialization did not accelerate till the end of WW II. Even during 1950's, half of the population has been living in rural areas. This situation changed quickly transferring a third of the population transferred from agriculture to industry either within country or emigrating. Agriculture itself was mechanized, this period has been called Italian economic miracle. Due to this preponderance of the rural population till the end of the industrialization did not help too much to reveal the interest upon the ethnographic museums, as it was in, for example, England, where the 'noble' peasant community rised and interested in their roots. (Forni, 1999, pp. 47-8)

Till 1993, the management of Italy's cultural heritage was in turmoil. To visit and see a Raphael in Milan, a Michelangelo in Florence or others was tantamount to finding a post office open at 01 pm. But within a decade, the experiment has been converted to a success. (Zan, Baraldi, & Gordon, 2007, p. 50) However, the 1990s were characterized by major reforms affecting the cultural heritage. While a set of laws and legislations were being issued, even the Ministry's name has been changed from "Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage" to "Ministry for cultural Heritage and Cultural Activities" (Legislative Decree 368/1998). This helped to a merge performing, contemporary arts and film. Another important transformation came out with Decree no.490/1990, revising the status of the museums from *universitates*, meaning "a set of objects with artistic value arranged and classified in relation to a common aim" to "an organized structure for preserving, creating value and public access to cultural heritage collections". These legislations paved the way for more 'customer oriented' approach for the museums. (Zan, Baraldi, & Gordon, 2007, pp. 54-55)

A Chosen Project ‘Choose the Piece’ of Modena⁹ for Map for ID

- **Funding:** European funding (project “MAP for ID – Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue”) plus the Museum’s own budget.
- **Goal:** to develop the museum’s potential as a place for intercultural dialogue; · to awaken “new citizens” to Modena’s cultural heritage; · to urge the autochthonous community to become an active player in the integration process.
- **Target:** 60 students of immigrant background (young people and adults) attending Modena’s Centre for Adult Education and Training (CTP).
- **Duration:** July 2008 – July 2009
- **Description:** One of the 30 pilot projects implemented in the framework of project “MAPforID”.
- **Process:**
 - contact with local institutions involved in the development of immigration or integration policies,
 - survey of the main migrant groups living in Modena,
 - contact with the local CTP representatives and selection of cultural mediators and of the four classes involved in the project,
 - selection of 30 museum objects symbolising Modena’s history from the Palaeolithic to the Middle Ages.
 - Following an overview of the city’s key historical events, each participant was invited to “adopt” one of the 30 objects. Their choice was guided by CTP teachers and the museum staff by playing on personal tastes, memories, specific interests and affinities with objects connected with the different countries of origin. Students were also asked to write down the reasons for their choice along with a short biography, which led to further analysis and activity under the guidance of the museum staff. In receiving a certificate finalising the symbolic adoption of an object, each participant committed him or herself to preserve it and to spread its knowledge.
 - Adoptions were visually documented by professional photographer. The images, accompanied by a text providing information on the object and a short biography of the participant, were published in a “multicultural diary” for 2010 (see “Publication and resources”).
- **Lessons to be learned:**
 - promoted in participants a greater knowledge of local history and heritage through active involvement and participation,

⁹<http://fondazione.ismu.org/patrimonioeinterculturala/index.php?page=esperienze-show.php&id=57>

- A new image of migrant citizens, connected with the cultural life of the city, was promoted through the dissemination of the “multicultural diary.”
- participants sometimes found it difficult to share their own life stories. In some cases this was because of an understandable desire to keep aspects of their lives private, in other cases it was because of linguistic barriers,
- If you think ‘intercultural project’ you must be convinced that you are omitted and you will continue long, because people do not come at the beginning easily, but once they see it and experience the participation increases, at that moment you do not have to close the doors to them. Also the partner institutions need to care about it.

In short, it can argue that the European project Map For ID threw light upon museums which have long been engaged in this challenging process of institutional change. And it is understood that only through the redefinition of its identity can the museums can meet the needs of today and tomorrow’s audiences. (Pereira, Salvi, Sani, & Villa, 2010, p. 29)

Conclusion

When communication goes on with different people from different cultures, it is important to remember that culture and communication are strongly connected. The way that people view communication –what it is, how to do it, and reasons for doing it- is part of their culture. The chance of misunderstanding between members of different cultures increases when this important connection is forgotten.¹⁰

Based on the research realized by MoPI, the problems of the Islanders are delineated and it seems that to live in a multicultural environment within a better communication is an important issue for the participants.

The goal of the selected pilot projects of Map for ID included to ‘conceive the museum not only as a cultural space for interaction, but also as an institution encouraging participatory and cooperative planning. Istanbul and its periphery, which have significant cultural potential, still are not able to flourish due to a lack of sound public and cultural policy. (Enlil, Dincer, Evren, & Seckin, 2008) Ironically, at a research on ‘Main indicators on cultural participation in Europe’ Turkey is ranked as 30th (out of 30 countries) (Morrone, 2006, p. 45) Even though Turkey has to do a lot in terms of ameliorating cultural policies in order to use more effectively the museums as more effective

¹⁰ ‘Intercultural Communication An Introduction’; Fred E. Jandt (fjandt@csusb.edu) , Sage Publications 2001, ISBN: 0-7619-2202-4 , Pg. 45-46

communication means, I do still want to believe that there is hope to execute good examples with the dedicated work of the museum staff and willingness of the community in Turkey. MoPI seem to be the first examples of this process, and hopefully be a case study for further examples. As T. Bennett alleges that '*a more inclusive society is the one that is both more just and better integrated, and it is somehow able to be both by becoming more different at the same time.*'¹¹

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