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Could you please introduce yourself?

I am a faculty member in the Sociology department in the Faculty of Literature at Selçuk University. I have been living in Konya for the past 19 years.

What was your role in My City project? What was your experience like?

I was invited to help the artist who was going to work in Konya, to find an assistant for her and provide consultancy. I tried to help her as much as I could. I introduced her to a graduate student of mine. I had a chance to learn about the project and its unfolding both from my student who had become the artist's assistant, and from the artist herself whom I met from time to time. Since our areas of interest were overlapping, I had a lot to share with the artist. I can say that we had very good discussions about language, art, social philosophy and interpretative experiences. Joanna had very interesting observations regarding Konya, and she was comparing these with her own country and other countries in the Middle East that she had visited. Her insights were original and inspiring. For instance, her insights on the formation of public spaces and the appropriation of public space in Konya were very different from the commonly assumed interpretations. I also helped her to overcome communication problems with the local administrators when her work required interaction with the local administration. This mediation between the artist and the local administration was not just about translating between two different languages but required the reconciliation of different cultural backgrounds.

How would you define public space in Konya? Can you describe the different usages of public space here? How do the people of Konya experience arts and cultural productions in public space?

The concept of public space is a fairly controversial issue in Turkey. The debate over where public space begins and ends is intertwined with the debate over individual rights and the restrictions that should or could be placed on them. Hence, at first sight it seems difficult to offer a clear analysis on the ways in which public space is experienced. Still we can say that compared to other cities, people are more conservative in public

spaces in Konya. Tacitly accepted rules are strictly followed in such spaces. As to works of art in public spaces, there is a set of specific practices and preferences in Turkey as an Islamic country. Sculptures are not a favoured form of art. People would demand a well-designed garden or an architectural work in public spaces. The aesthetics of spaces around the mosques historically have become an integral part and parcel of the worldviews of the people of Konya. There are many architecturally significant historical mosques. Traditions are carefully guarded in these spaces. Music is performed within the Rumi tradition in houses and common places, and it facilitates and enables socialisation. Streets and avenues are lively life spaces. In this sense, there are a lot of common spaces that enable neighbourhood and other forms of long-term relations. In this sense, the city boasts a very established culture of neighbourhood. There is something else that Joanna keenly captured. Different from the West, somebody can put a chair in front of his/her home or shop and, by sitting on that chair, can turn that space which essentially is public into his/her private space. This comfort and ease in the appropriation of space ties into the perception of the state in Turkey. In the West, the state looks invisible but it actually is very dominant in protecting property and hence, it would not be easy for Westerners to engage in such practices. Because of this, in the west, common spaces continue to decrease and neighbourhood culture cannot develop.

What is the significance of *Walter Benjamin in Konya* project for the city? How do you evaluate this project in relation to public space practices in the city?

This project involves the building of an architecturally original pool in one of the most favoured and busiest squares in Konya, which is surrounded by a series of historical mosques. The quotation in Ottoman, first and foremost, has the potential to trigger all kinds of different interpretations and myths for the people of Konya. Even on the day of the opening of the pool, I overheard a few different interpretations that were being voiced which would not even have crossed the artist's mind. The work provokes reflections on the nature of dialogical translation processes. It points towards the difficulties of translation between different languages and also aims at bringing people together who have lived and are living in different times. There is no predetermined point that this meeting would end in. Where the quotation from Benjamin takes you is exactly such a place of elusiveness. This is a very meaningful choice for Konya. This is the land of Rumi who had once said, "Whatever you say, your words mean as much as they are heard by the listener," a Rumi who has tried to hear the story of the reed torn from its reed bed through the sound of a reed flute, a Rumi who has produced his work in Persian on Turkish speaking territories. I believe that this work will contribute to the culture of the city and motivate a series of parallel meanings and images.

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