Isomorphism in Provision of Culture: The Case of Municipalities in Istanbul and Their Cultural Centers[1]

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Introduction

During the 2010 International Conference on Cultural Policy Research (ICCPR), "Insomniac Isomorphia?," a paper about the increasing homogenization of Finnish cultural policy by Kangas et al., greatly captured my interest. At that time, I had recently detected the first isomorphic features in the provision of culture at the level of Istanbul's district municipalities in spite of the city's social, cultural, political and geographic diversity. Seeing similar isomorphism mechanisms operating in Finland and Turkey, encouraged me to scrutinize the incentives and processes that make organizations, even countries, converge. In this paper, which puts a special focus on the mechanisms that lead to isomorphism, I will argue that it is the three interconnected concepts of democratization, professionalization and marketization that promote cultural convergence at the local level of district municipalities.

The present study adopts an interdisciplinary, crosscutting and relational approach in order to understand and explain why and how isomorphism transpires to the provision of cultural services at the level of Istanbul's district municipalities. It benefits from "(new) institutional theory," which is at the intersection of sociology and organizational science, and draws from "isomorphism

Regardless of the diminishing budgets for culture in Europe, Turkey has reinforced its investment in the cultural sphere, especially at the municipality level. Since 2000, 61 cultural centers have been opened in Istanbul alone. In spite of the growing cultural and artistic diversity and Turkish society's various demands in cultural services, the programs of Istanbul's cultural centers seem to converge. The apparent homogenization of Turkish cultural policies on a local, city, and national level serves as a starting point for investigating how isomorphism transpires to the provision of cultural services on the level of Istanbul's district municipalities. This study not only explains the role of district municipalities in the cultural field of Istanbul, but also argues that three interconnected concepts—democratization, professionalization, and marketization—promote cultural convergence.

Keywords: Cultural Policy; New Public Management; Municipalities; Cultural Centers; Istanbul; Turkey

theories" (DiMaggio and Powel) to explain the resemblance and the transformation of organizational structures within municipalities.

The article begins by conceptualizing democratization, marketization, and professionalization as the primary political, economic and social processes that dominate cultural policy making in Turkey. The subsequent section explains the role of district municipalities in Istanbul's cultural field, before proceeding with a case study that illustrates the isomorphism in the provision of culture by the 39 district municipalities of Istanbul. The article then attempts to connect the local level (district municipalities) with the city (the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality—IMM) and the national level (the Justice and Development Party Government—AKP) with reference to the cultural policy discourse and practices under the three mechanisms that create isomorphism. The article concludes by discussing the alternate role of legitimacy and competition as incentives behind isomorphism.

This contribution builds on empirical data gathered for my doctoral thesis and was mainly obtained through observation, semi-structured interviews and a cultural management formation training program (shortly Formation Program). The Formation Program, whose curricula I developed myself in connection with the Istanbul 2010 European Cultural Capital (ECC) program, involved the participation of 90 cultural administrators from Istanbul's district municipalities. I participated as a trainer and coordinator.

Overarching Processes: Democratization, Marketization and Professionalization

Cultural policy discourses and practices usually emerge in Turkey under the umbrella of *marketization*. On the local level of district municipalities, they range from the privatization of cultural services to putting cultural management of the centers out to tender. On the city level of the IMM, they span from the implementation of the "new public management" (NPM)[2] concept to massive urban reconstruction with the aim of establishing Istanbul as a global center. Finally on the national level of the present AKP government, these discourses and practices largely take the form of provisions designed to encourage private investment in the cultural sphere on the basis of incentive and sponsorship laws.

Professionalization emerges as both the requirement and consequence of cultural policy practices. Organizational structures, which must become standardized, at least to a certain extent, in order to compete with the private sector and even with themselves, have found legitimacy by adopting the practices of management science under the pretext of increasing efficiency and productivity. Practices aimed at implementing the NPM and the "good governance" approach, which is recommended by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, have gone into effect with the reforms of metropolitan and district municipality legislation in Turkey. In doing so, they have also affected the supply of cultural services. As a result of these shifts, professionalization in cultural services has also been placed on the agenda of Istanbul district municipalities. "Access to culture," "cultural rights" and "participation for all" are central issues of the *democratization* of culture, which only can be realized through national cultural policy and is therefore, first and foremost, the responsibility of the central government and other public institutions. Prerequisites for democratization, as outlined in numerous international treaties and charters signed by Turkey, include the empowerment of local governments and the transfer of certain cultural services. The AKP, unlike previous governments, clearly declared that its cultural polices will fit within the context of the aforementioned good governance principle and grant access to culture for everyone. However, democratization has been sidelined next

to privatization and marketization throughout its term in office.

New Player: District Municipalities in the Cultural Field of Istanbul

The AKP's cultural policies could be interpreted as "demoting the state's role in the cultural sector, from being the main producer and distributer to being a facilitator" (Aksoy, "The Atatürk Cultural Centre" 197), especially where it favors private enterprise. However, in the case of Istanbul, another public institution, the collection of municipalities, has taken over the state's role with great support by the government. Before discussing this further, it is important to remember three facts: Firstly, the cultural sector in Turkey has never been subsidized, aside from state institutions, such as the State Opera, Ballet and Orchestra. Secondly, the state still continues to invest in building cultural spaces as a continuation of the (modernist) tradition of building monuments in the form of sculptures or cultural centers. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has built 147 spaces for culture all around the country, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has opened 20 Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers abroad as new Turkish Institutes of Culture (Ince, "Isomorphism"). Thirdly, Istanbul holds a special place on the political agenda of the AKP, as the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the former Istanbul Metropolitan Municipalities' (IMM) mayor from 1994 to 1998. Thus, the relations and coordination between the IMM and national government improved operationally.

Throughout the history of municipalities in Turkey, the intertwined state of relations between the central government and the local administration has always been an area of conflict. Thus, with the aim of enabling its supporters to win the local municipal elections, ruling parties tend to introduce clientelist investments and changes. In the history of the AKP, the reverse has been true. The party won confidence and increased their local votes through a social practice that was termed "social municipalism," which has included free municipal aid packages, in-kind or in-cash donations to the poor, soup kitchens, etc. After becoming the ruling party in 2002, the AKP expanded the authority and responsibility of municipalities by issuing new laws and making other laws more effective in various fields including culture. This restructuring has been implemented via a series of transformative laws, such as the Financial Administration and Control Law No. 5018, the Special Provincial Administrations Law No. 5302, the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216 and the Municipality Law No. 5393. These transformative laws have been justified by referring to the increasing and diversifying demands of Turkish society due to its profound development from an industrial society to an information-based society. This appears to be the rationale behind an extensive reconstruction of public administration that is centered on increasing effectiveness and participation, but also on retaining the AKP's power at the local level. This is supported by "the transformation of the economy and administration" (globalization), "the competitive structure of the private sector and its achievements" (privatization), and "social criticism and the development of civil society" (de-etatization) in addition to Turkey's democratization goals on the way to its EU accession (Ince, "Cultural Policies" 238).

In addition to international-focused reasoning, other internal problems relating to Turkey's administrative structure are listed in the rationale section (B.02.0.KKG.0.10/101-751/5767) of the 2003 NPM package as "improper division of labor between the central administration and local administrations; inadequate financial resources, organizational and staff-related problems; unnecessary tutelage practices on the part of the central administration, insufficient transparency and participation; and excessive dependency on the central administra-

tion." As a solution to a highly centralized and bulky administrative structure, the AKP has used NPM tools, such as strategic planning, annual activity plans and budget, performance indicators, and the collection of statistics.

Due to these competition and NPM-driven changes, municipalities have become proactive, flexible and entrepreneurial. They began to cooperate with large investors, developers and consortiums of private firms (Uzun). They have also initiated and led large-scale urban development projects, such as the renewal of historic sites (Dincer). However, as Harvey (15) underlines during the shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism, "new forms or paths of capital accumulation have to be explored" to secure a continuous capital flow in order to mark the city as global. In the case of Istanbul, several attempts have been made including the pursuit of becoming the economic, touristic or congressional capital of the world.

Over the last decade, culture has been identified as the new path. The designation of Istanbul by the European Union as the European Capital of Culture (ECC) 2010, which underlined the accumulated cultural and artistic supply in the city, fostered increasing private sector investment and great interest in reappraising the city's historical and industrial heritage. The ECC

2010 Agency suggested a collaborative urban management style with new projects and furthermore sought to open the discussion about the "culture-led urban regeneration" ideal. However, in such a competitive environment, the city's cultural potential that had been unified under the stimulating effects of ECC 2010, was taken as a unique opportunity by the public authorities and resulted in an "instrumentalization and exploitation" of the project by the government and the IMM "for the purposes of city marketing, tourism and gentrification" (Aksoy, "Riding the Storm" 95). Continuous efforts to position Istanbul as a culture/tourism/congress center in the race among global cities have redefined the city's relationship with district municipalities on the local level, as well as its national position.

As of today, there are 39 district municipalities in Istanbul, all of which are diverse in terms of their demographic, geographic, economic and even ideological characteristics. During the last local elections in 2014, the AKP won 25 district municipalities, followed by the Republican People's Party (CHP), which secured control over 14 municipalities. Presently, 32 of the 39 district municipalities have at least one cultural center. The total number of cultural centers in Istanbul is 74, 61 of which were built after 2000.

Those cultural centers are mostly designed as multi-purpose complexes that exhibit theatre, film screenings, concerts, talks and conferences and even educational programs. Considering that municipalities are traditionally concerned with the infrastructural needs of its inhabitants as well as with the growing economy of construction in Turkey, it is not surprising that new cultural venues are built. These cultural centers, in fact, welcome 4.4 million visitors per year and answer to the cultural needs of the 15 million inhabitants of Istanbul (Aksoy and Enlil). However, when looking more closely and comparatively at the cultural provision in those cultural centers, it is surprising to find that their (monthly/yearly) programs converge. Despite Istanbul's cultural and artistic diversity and the multiple-demands of the inhabitants of the districts, the programs are nearly identical.

Isomorphic Cultural Centers

Isomorphism as a concept refers to "the process of homogenization" and is widely used in new institutional theory to define increasing convergence between institutions or organizations. DiMaggio and Powel (148, 150) explain similarity among organizational forms and practices with three "isomorphism mechanisms:" coercive, mimetic and normative. They look at

the organizational fields, which are constituted by producers, suppliers, resource and product consumers and regulatory agencies in aggregate, and they argue that institutions become similar as they compete not only for resources and customers but also for political power and institutional legitimacy.

For private institutions, which operate under the market conditions that stipulate competitiveness, the rules of competition require convergence. For public institutions, despite being bureaucratic structures, their status of legitimacy has become a driving force as they have also become marketized. Thus, the state of isomorphism at municipality cultural centers stems from both the conditions of competition and the need to ensure legitimacy. The following section will explore these three mechanisms that create isomorphism regarding organizational structures, norms, staff, cultural management models and strategic plans under the NPM reform.

1. Social Municipalism Under NPM

"*Coercive isomorphism* [emphasis added] results from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other institutions upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function." (DiMaggio and Powel 150). The

district cultural centers are tied to the legal and organizational structure of the municipalities.

The Municipality Law and NPM are the basic formal constraints that shape the provision of culture at municipalities. The Law No. 5393 defines the organizational structure of the municipalities and places cultural services under the local Directorate of Social and Cultural Affairs. Each directorate has to act in accordance with the five-year-period-strategic-plan prepared by the district municipalities. The budget, personnel law and, most importantly, the political ideology usually professed by the mayor are other factors that create limitations. These directorates must prepare annual performance programs and activity reports, so that tasks and the approximate budget of each activity, including measurable outcomes, can be identified from the outset.

One of the requirements of the NPM, starting from 2005 onward, states that all public institutions including the municipalities must prepare a strategic plan. Those strategic reports then must be published on the municipal websites for the sake of "transparency." The activity reports depicting the performance of all municipality departments are published online or in print at the end of each year. So it is expected that the implementation of the

plans, each constituting a political document, can be assessed by means of the activity and performance reports prepared at the end of the year. However, these documents are more likely to act as a new means of communication (a.k.a. as a propaganda tool).

Conforming to NPM practices, construction and administration decisions regarding cultural centers are made in-line with the objectives declared in the municipality's strategic plan. The importance that district municipalities assign to culture can be discerned from the goals outlined in the strategic plan, as well as from their actual investments and accomplished operations. At this point, the cultural centers stand out as the municipalities' "visible" and significant investment.

District municipalities incorporate culture into their visions, missions or strategies with a variety of objectives. Culture is associated with objectives such as urban or social transformation or improved quality of life and communication. In almost every municipality, cultural services are accentuated by image and are used as tools for promotion, competition or diversification. However, activities geared towards increasing the district's cultural wealth and the production of culture, which may be called "culture for the sake of culture," are limited.

Coercive isomorphism also stems from organizations complying with the cultural expectations of the society within which they operate. Their strategic plans have the potential to serve the democratization of policymaking. As these plans are intended to constitute the public administrations' core products, all public administration units as well as all relevant stakeholders are expected to be involved in the preparation processes. In the context of municipal cultural services, locality and cultural rights are the key indicators that help to determine and involve all relevant parties. At this point, it is important to note that the concept of locality has been revised in the new Municipal Law No. 5393. Locality, which was previously defined in this way: "everybody is a citizen of the province where he or she originates from [registered to]," has now been changed to "everybody is a citizen of the province he or she inhabits."

However, looking at the programs of cultural centers that were established in order to meet the cultural needs of the local population, it becomes apparent that the events and services offered do not pay special attention to the above-mentioned needs and demands. The cultural services are secondary among all other services, thus the abovementioned indicators of democratization of culture act as informal

pressures only if the cultural manager of a certain district municipality pays special attention to those pressures. Unfortunately, the fieldwork shows that most of the municipalities do not undertake any professional research to identify the citizens' expectations. Instead, they tend to act based on their personal observation and generalizations. The participatory approach is a must when making a strategic plan. In order to engage every segment of the district, the cultural managers are expected to involve each stakeholder. However, most of them seem to be selectively choosing only fellow townspeople associations (*hemşehri dernekleri*) while leaving out the demands and needs of ethnicity, gender, right/issue based associations. That is to say, rather than complying with everyone's cultural rights as an obligation of democracy, cultural expectations of the majority are identified or presumed in order to ensure a legitimacy without taking any risk. Consequently, the outcome of the cultural programs is rather isomorphic with generic (theatre, cinema, music) performances and traditional representation of localities, which have little to do with the true current identity of the district.

Another structural factor that leads to coercive isomorphism is the organization of cultural services. Both cultural and

social services are provided under the same division and are usually administered by one and the same manager. They therefore share a budget. Despite the qualitative differences between the two types of services, cultural services are often confused with social services. Most of the activities performed under the name of cultural services, most noticeably, are undertaken with a social objective that fits in the AKP's "social municipalism" ideal. Cultural services appear to be less important. Many cultural operators have underlined that cultural needs will only be addressed once social needs are met. As a result of this approach, public relations and publicity packages are formed by municipalities, which then present cultural services together with social services. Thus, cultural centers become multipurpose in the sense that they supply a combination of social and cultural services.

2. Bad Mimesis in Program and Operations

The *mimetic isomorphism* mostly occurs as a response to uncertainty. It designates the process when an organization imitates similar organizations in order to be more legitimate and successful (DiMaggio and Powel 151). In a city like Istanbul, where the cultural sphere is becoming richer each day through an increasing number of

companies, foundations, associations and cooperatives working in the cultural sector, as well as through the virtue of a critical mass of artistic and creative people, it seems that there are many possible models for organizations to follow. However, looking at the cultural programs of municipal cultural centers, a generic range of activities and a conventional selection of events and content manifests itself despite the diversity of artistic supply and also despite new and/or contemporary artistic production.

Considering the structure and conditions of the district municipalities' cultural divisions, this genericism and convention is not surprising. Their cultural centers are more limited than independent art initiatives and private companies. As in all municipal service procurement, cultural services are also subject to tender. Cultural departments schedule the proposed activities according to their strategic and performance plans in the event calendar. An administrative or service procurement, technical terms of reference (TOR), is drafted for relevant activities at least 70 days in advance and announced to the public. The applicant who finally wins the tender and who is commissioned to undertake the given cultural services is selected on the basis of "the most advantageous offer economically, solely on the

basis of the quoted price" (Atmaca). In short, for cultural services there are no binding or distinctive criteria save for these aforementioned technical TORs. The municipality can procure a piano in the same manner as it buys construction equipment or can put to tender the management of cultural centers just as it opens a fixed marketplace management to tender. The subcontracting of expert services, which goes as far as hiring artists by tender, is criticized.

Municipalities regard their cultural centers as an extension of their jurisdiction and apply whatever procedure they employ for managing other activities. The municipality's cultural services department presents its annual program and budget in the framework of a five-year-strategic-plan for approval every year. When it is approved, they start to develop the content and identify the appropriate companies, etc. for each year. At the same time, the municipal cultural centers' mandate to balance the supply in the cultural sphere with the demands of the local population imparts increasing responsibility on the staff of these institutions. In this respect, there are three cultural management models used for provision of cultural services. The most common is the centralized model according to which all cultural services are provided within the

organizational structure of the municipality. As there is no expert staff position for cultural management in these municipalities, one of the members of the staff is appointed as cultural operator/manager and is expected to apply the above-mentioned tender procedure.

A second option, the privatization of cultural services, has also been applied to some degree. For example, two municipalities have established municipal enterprises to procure cultural services, while another prefers to privatize only the management of its cultural centers through a subcontractor system. Only one municipality has privatized the provision of all of its cultural services. Since 2004, municipalities have been drafting an annual cultural service procurement technical TOR, which involves the recruitment of administrative staff for the cultural centers as well as consultants. With this model, the municipality aims for harmony and collaboration among its staff, which includes both public administrators and private persons who have been hired through tenders. Municipal administrators create and control the budget while private staff run the operation.

The third model is only applied by one municipality. Here, the programs of the cultural centers are determined by an advisory art council that is comprised of

the managers of its cultural centers, the cultural directorate, representatives of private companies, and two artistic (music and theatre) consultants. This model is the most autonomous in the sense that the municipal administration only superintends the company and does not intervene in the content and programing of its cultural services. Finally, a few municipalities try to fill the gap in expertise by recruiting specialists, usually as consultants to the mayors.

The lack of cultural management expertise is usually masked by imitating similar institutions. Most of the municipalities, which choose to follow the centralized model, tend to draft their programs after more congruent counterparts, especially the IMM. The IMM sets an example for most district municipalities and meets a higher standard in terms of cultural service supply due to its accumulated experience via the directorate of culture and Culture Co. (Istanbul Cultural and Artistic Products Corporation ––*Kültür A.Ş.*) that was founded in 1989.

District municipalities and Culture Co. collaborate on a program-level at the cultural centers built and operated by the latter. These programs are sometimes circulated as "readymade packages" at municipal level. There are currently nine district municipality cultural centers that are operated by Culture Co. Still, some municipalities complain that they cannot exert proper authority over cultural centers operated by the IMM, and they aim to take more control with time. But as the IMM cultural director underlines, they are only able to develop programs based on their own capacity or the knowledge and propriety of the district mayor. This in turn implies that they feature events of less cultural/artistic quality as compared to the programs under the management of the metropolitan municipality.

It can also be observed that only a few municipalities follow the model of private cultural centers. Given the objective of wide accessibility, budgetary restrictions and high ticket prices are the major obstacles to privatization. These similarities in conception and operation result in isomorphic outputs.

Municipalities seldom attempt to make use of every local emerging cultural representation; however, they like to privilege populist demands that epitomize masses. Yet, this does not explain the conventionality of the selection of cultural content. For example, there is actually no difference between the "Commemoration Ceremony for the National Hero Atatürk" organized by the republican CHP and a "Holy Birth Week for the Prophet Muhammad" organized by the conservative AKP.

Despite different political orientations, the relevant organizational and political conditions yield similar results. As DiMaggio and Powell point out, even though there is a serious quest to distinguish oneself from others, in effect, organizations only have a limited selection to choose from. Therefore, new organizations often end up modeling themselves on their predecessors. As the case of the Istanbul district municipalities shows, some districts tend to imitate the IMM or other district municipalities, preferably from the same political party. They do so rather than taking any risks of being potentially perceived as controversial. Certain districts, which claim to represent Istanbul's cultural heritage, praise and distinguish their own district from others and adopt an entrepreneurial municipal administration approach in order to transcend the boundaries of their own district. Their mayors assert the districts' significance for Istanbul (even in an international sense). This rhetoric and implicit competition is due to the public relations and publicity aspects of cultural events. The visibility of such activities can pave a longterm path towards parliament and can thereby serve a mayor's career. In the decision-making stages of programs on similar scales, patronage and favoritism may also lead to isomorphism.

These cited examples show that efficiency and performance as well as patronage and favoritism have become prominent in the centers' cultural management. On the one hand, the needs and desires of the local population are bypassed in the decision-making processes. On the other hand, the supply of rich and new cultural and artistic elements in the city have been ignored due to the cultural operators' lack of curiosity or artistic expertise.

3. Vocational Solidarity as Opposed to Expertise

The *normative isomorphism* originates from professionalism in two ways: firstly, from the need for formal education or a training to qualify for an occupation; secondly, from the development of professional collaborations among the members of occupations pursuing professional autonomy, which may in turn facilitate the rapid spread of new models. Besides these normative pressures, increasing job competition leads to the recruitment of similar individuals for certain positions or to the selection of staff members based on certain occupational criteria (DiMaggio and Powel 152).

Cultural management, which emerged as a field of expertise in Turkey in the early 2000s (Ada) has been applied by municipal staff based on knowledge and skills that were accumulated over years of experience and observation. The Formation Program—mentioned in the introductory section—was the first example of its kind. It was specially designed to introduce recent cultural management theory and practices with references to private and civil examples taken from the cultural scene.

The Formation Program brought together 90 cultural managers from different districts and public institutions in Istanbul, including the IMM, Culture Co., the Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Center, the IMM City Theatre, Arts and Vocational Training Courses of the IMM, in addition to the 78 staff members working at related departments in the 36 district municipalities. Most of these cultural managers have a background in social sciences, literature or communication, which has prepared them for the organization of cultural activities. Over the course of 18 weeks, the Formation Program enabled them to meet and discuss the various aspects and problems of the cultural sector and cultural management and allowed them to establish a network of enduring partnerships. Subsequent observations show that the district municipality cultural managers, most of them participants in the Formation Program, continue to meet about the commonalities among their vocations and

their responsibilities (Rotahaber). However, all the participants were members of the same political party in addition to the IMM cultural director. Considering that the IMM cultural director represents the city level, this once again validates the hypotheses about the mimetic relationship between these levels. Furthermore, it indicates that having the same ideological background has a role in such solidarity consolidation. Whether this collaboration can prevent the shortcuts and imitation arising from vocational solidarity remains an unanswered question.

As the case-study shows, the cultural operators of district municipalities place emphasis on developing their managerial and entrepreneurial skills over diversifying the content of their cultural programs. They furthermore do not open themselves to new companies and are not innovative in terms of new artistic productions. This is the result of the changing definition of professionalism as a consequence of NPM, which defines professionalism as "the capacity to execute their profession as an expertise" i.e. to complete the job effectively and productively. The bureaucracy-based rationality in organizations has been replaced by a market-based one. Most of the staff of these public institutions have become experts (bureaucrats) in their fields through years of expe-

rience. Recalling Weber's definition of bureaucratic organizations as "knowing but unable to learn," it will take these staff members some time to adapt to their new situation (Weber).

Conclusion: Interplay Between Levels

Over the last decade, Istanbul's district municipalities have contributed to the momentum of urban transformation through the establishment of cultural centers. Among isomorphic mechanisms, imitation is the most frequently employed method in Istanbul. The coercive and normative forms of isomorphism follow mimetic isomorphism. District municipality cultural managers share particular approaches due to the vocational collaborations they have formed and by virtue of using the same supply pool. Even though cultural supply in Istanbul is rich and multidimensional, limitations in provision arise from regulations, budgets, the tandem acts that district municipalities have to abide by, as well as the intermediary institution or the cultural management model they have chosen and, finally, the experience of their staff.

The present study shows that the use of cultural supply throughout the various districts bears great similarity. This convergence between different district municipality administrations, even if dominated by different political parties, runs counter to the different local economic and sociocultural conditions as well as to the growing and diversifying cultural production and demand in Istanbul.

This investigation also confirms that legitimization and competition are two incentives driving isomorphism, as DiMaggio and Powel noted in the 1980s. In Turkey, where marketization and professionalization together with NPM are changing cultural policy practices, competition becomes more important than legitimization. Legitimization in Turkish cultural policies usually refers to democratization processes, which are limited to discourse.

The interplay between different levels of cultural policy occurs as a result of a duty-authority relationship between the district municipalities, which on a larger scale, bonds the IMM and the national government. In the case of Istanbul, this relationship forms a monolithic whole, since all levels of government are under the control of the same political party. This unity manifests itself as a "power block" particularly in the cultural sphere, which is characterized by a strong harmony and collaboration between the government, the IMM and the AKP district municipalities. However, this ideological factor is not the sole reason for the isomorphism. Indeed, CHP municipalities

also succumb to the same isomorphic structures. Including political, economic and social processes within the perspective, I have explored the phenomenon of isomorphism in relation to democratization, marketization and professionalization. Choices and decisions relevant for the cultural sphere are linked to democratization, marketization and professionalization. The imitation and integration of these, albeit with certain variations at every level, leads to isomorphism. To summarize these processes and the accompanying transformations in the cultural sphere: The cultural centers managed by municipalities highlight the democratization process as they are the most immediate local governance unit and are therefore most relevant for cultural rights and cultural democracy as foreseen by supranational and international treaties. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the last decade has seen democratization being linked, at least discursively by the state, to access to culture for all and to decentralization in the field of cultural policy.

In practice, however, marketization has been more readily realized by the state and other public actors than democratization and professionalization. The alteration of public administration in accordance with market conditions leads to an NPM

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model. This then promotes the professionalization of public personnel in line with criteria such as strategy, performance, productivity, effectiveness. Those who work in the cultural field are under pressure to excel in public management as well as to professionalize vocationally in order to remain competitive amidst the increasing supply and demand dynamic of the cultural sphere and the increasing number of private cultural centers and public district centers. The proliferation of cultural management programs at undergraduate and graduate levels in Turkey and special programs targeting relevant professional groups is also an indicator of this situation. This research reveals that, in the context of a broad consensus among all levels of public authorities and private enterprises regarding the intended globalization of Istanbul, such benchmarks as a financial capital, a congressional city, a tourism center, etc., show that culture is gradually gaining in significance.

Notes

[1] This article is the shortened version of a paper presented by the author in 2012. Although four years have passed, not much has changed. The provision of culture in Istanbul's cultural centers still lacks diversity and the above-mentioned mechanisms of isomorphism remain in place. Cultural provision has indeed become even more homogenized due to the increasing ideologic pressure from the AKP.

[2] *New public management* (NPM), *management* techniques and practices drawn mainly from the private sector, are increasingly seen as a global phenomenon. NPM reforms shift the emphasis from traditional public administration to public management.

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