

## Art, politics and the city fact which is shaping there in

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### Suggested Citation:

Yılmaz, B. (2016). Art, politics and the city fact which is shaping there in, *Global Journal on Humanities & Social Sciences*. [Online]. 03, pp 200-206. Available from: <http://sproc.org/ojs/index.php/pntsbs>

Received January 11, 2015; revised March 12, 2015; accepted April 24, 2015.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Milan Matijevic.

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### Abstract

Art and politics in which human are two major tools for states and dominant forces use to manipulate to masses. This manipulation uses, ideologies of states integrate masses along with the impact the politics on art. Art is a political device for sovereign; is a propaganda tool. In this context, the city is an area where political will can feel its power and thought. The city is shaped by the political ideas through art. Art and politics are two important factors in the formation of the city.

Keywords: city, politics, ideology, art.

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## 1. Arts and Politics

Arts and politics are two comprehensive fields with a long history. These concepts are interwoven and both have been influenced by the other throughout the history. Not only arts but also political thought take its roots from social reality, which consists of relations between human motivations, different interests, pressure and desire mechanisms. Politics intervenes in arts, while arts also intervenes in politics.

Despite the ideas that it is dangerous to bring arts and politics concepts together, or arts should be independent from all purposes and targets, Philosophers had usually looked from the field of politics when they talked about arts and politics until modernity.

Politics has been considered as 'the state' between 15th and 20th centuries. The developments on research methods and concepts have brought a new dimension to politics. According to this, politics is "the process of making and executing socially binding decisions". Politics, as an activity or process, is managed by solid institutions (governments, parties and pressure groups, etc.) today. Through the period from 18th century to the late 20th century, it became impossible to pronounce the idea that arts is fundamentally responsible for social welfare. Supporting the idea would have made someone be marginalized from arts, philosophy and aesthetics and positioned anti civilized and even authoritarian. On the other hand, the same period is: "the period that the dose of politics has increased in arts, moreover, partisan art pieces were being created; however, even the artists who stated that they used their artistry for ideological interests said their artistic creativity shouldn't be subjected to "outsider" political pressures, interventions or censorship (Kreft, 2014).

Considering arts' relations with politics, the leading headline they have in common would be nation-state construction. The history of arts-politics relations model based on nation construction and totalitarianism goes back to 17th century, and its development to 18th century Europe. It is still a matter of agenda in the 21st century. Modern nation-state realizes itself through a center and a ruling organization, draws internal and outsider borders. Thus, it isolates itself from other nation-state systems and represents a ruling system that only has itself as the center. It approaches other nation-states as "a person among people" (Kreft, 2009). In that approach these persons (state) have their own ideology and these ideologies are executed through ideology tools (religion, law, culture, family, information...). This is how arts could be used to represent a specific ideology, which is politicization of arts. Actually, we can already see that art is political within itself through history. We observe that artists and art have chosen specific topics and techniques, have covered some and left others out periodically. Art has become magic sometimes, a tool for religious representation or a strong medium for spreading ideologies.

It started in the Ancient Greek where the government's propaganda used art piece to have masses learn and adopt ideologies. But it is in every society that art has a role in building belief for an ideology. "Regime" description states in Chevalier Jaucourt's encyclopedia: "Power holders have always used paintings and sculptures to create feelings in people" (Burke, 2003). At the beginning of 20th century, art has become a political tool for not only at totalitarian regimes but also democratic regimes. For example, Nazism, Fascism and Communism all created art models and artists, and used cinema, theater, literature and plastic arts as propaganda tools for imposing their own ruling model to society.

Influence power is fundamental at successful and effective politics. And this is only possible if art's visual and verbal possibilities are used efficiently. In fact, in a society of various socio-economic classes, target audience is individuals in all parts of society and the perception that common society is addressed by the politics generated should be built. The politician should target society's emotions, and use music, visual arts, written/verbal literature when necessary to increase the acceptance rate of his ideology. This is a striking example to politician's using art as an illusion to impose. The political ruler uses special emblems conveying national or universal messages, to represent their core values of political images and the very nature of their policies.

## 2. Power and Propaganda

"Propaganda", meaning "things to spread" in Latin, doesn't mean "deceptive information" originally and didn't have a negative emphasis until it got its political meaning at the World War I. With its current meaning, propaganda is used as "any verbal, written or similar activity for targeting to introduce someone, and have someone adopt a doctrine, thought and belief" (Puskulluoglu, 2004, p.1089). "The word's authentic meaning which means systematically spreading belief, values and applications goes back to 17th century, to the name given to the missionary organization Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), established by Vatikan in 1622 over Pope 15th Gregorius's efforts to wipe off Protestant reform's heresy" (Clark.2011).

The use of the word propaganda has gained a negative meaning with the World War I. The conventional ways were not effective enough for replacing the troops after casualties during this war. "Fighting countries had to watch over the public opinion at a national importance level; the public was addressed by the state propaganda almost everyday through developed mass communication tools such as cheap newspapers, posters and cinema (Clark, 2011).



Figure 1. James Motgomery Flagg, I Want You For U.S. Army, 1917. Poster

Art can be used via different tools and methods for propaganda. For example painting, cinema, leaflets, theater, posters were used in different period in different ways for propaganda.

In the middle ages, art has been used as an important propaganda tool protecting and defending scholastic thought under religion's control, and had a static nature which accepts the statuesque with all terms and conditions. Until Renaissance, which is the real starting point of political art, art was for showing the power and magnificence of statuesque; and lines didn't go beyond religious and imperial praises. During Renaissance, artists noticed that their personal creativity was used by the system as a propaganda tool and criticized statuesque freely, laying grounds for political art.

"The function of propaganda is to attract supporters for the organization. It's second function is to tell and convince to the doctrine" (Hitler, 1972). By these words, Hitler emphasized propaganda's purpose as attracting mass's attention to specific events and requirements. Later on, Hitler also took

the chance to say: "Propaganda helped us keep the power, and will also help us conquer the world" (Domenach, 1995).



Figure 2. Hubert Lanzinger, *The Standard Bearer*, 1940

While "propaganda" word is generally linked to "totalitarianism" in western democracies, indicating fascist and communist states, most of the connotations have been developed in the USA during the Cold War. Governments always used art as a propaganda tool to impose their ideologies and maintain power.

### 3. Arts, Politics and Reshaping the City

"City is defined as the economical activity field for most of the population, and a socially and culturally organized residence space providing commerce, industry, management and services. City is where people's all needs from shelter to entertainment, goes through social improvement continuously and has a high integration rate" (Keleş, 1973) and "is a form of assembly and residence type where rational behaviour is more dominant than conventional relations in relationships among individuals" (Sencer, 1979).

City is an atmosphere of gatherings of solidarity for different reasons; as well as conflicts come together and confrontations occur. The city has developed unique collective living strategies through continuously conflicting, reshaping and compromising negotiations of power relations through history. According to James E. Vance, "cities are the geography and culture of the artifact that is generated through a very complicated game of many powers" (Vance, 1990, p.4).

Today, we observe states' and governments' efforts to create public spaces and cities through either direct projection of their ideologies or allowing artistic activities related to these ideologies. Meaning, "Propaganda doesn't have to be due to the nature of the image or the artist's intention in art, as in abstract expressionism example. Art turns to propaganda rather with its function, place, being shaped in public or private space, and its connection with a network of different kinds of object or activities" (Clark, 2011, p.18). These ideological structures create the ground for navigating art being shaped in the city and art that shapes the city. The productions which are funded and provided by the state depends on these ideological city culture creation practices. Sculptures and paintings

which are present in the public space are approved or intervened as the reflections of the same cultural politics along with the city's aesthetics.

Starting first in the Ancient Greek, governments' use of art pieces, public space and city for imposing their ideologies to masses has a long history. Giving our background as an example, sultans and other state officials used to present gifts to painters, muralists, poets and musicians. Another example would be Stalin period in Soviet Russia, when art became the way to spread state propaganda to the public, and it became a part of the communist authority to have sculptures of the political leaders looking down from above the citizens, proving the power and supervision of the state in a dreadful way everywhere. The ground of art realizing this function has been defined by "socialist realism" concept (Ersel, 2006).

Beyond doubt that Vladimir Tatlin's (1885-1953) *The Monument to the Third International* would be one of the biggest examples to the states' using art and artists for spreading their ideologies and intervention to the urban fabric. This project, being considered impossible back in its days, have become a symbol for Soviet modernization's future success.



Figure 3. Vladimir Tatlin, *The Monument to the Third International*, 1920

This tower was going to become a center for mass communication, and would be completed with a radio station. The monument was to turn into a huge open air cinema with news movies to be projected on screens placed on additional buildings at nights, and project lights to the sky as slogans covering responses to the current events. So the whole building was going to serve as a huge propaganda sender.

Cities, and art pieces in urban buildings helped new forms of expressions of the national identity with many revolutions occurring in non-European countries. "Mexican revolution, triggered with the rebellion against dictator Porfirio Diaz in 1920, has helped Marksist nationalism to develop as an ideology gaining its artistic expression on wall-paintings on Mexican walls. In 1921, a group of Mexican wall artists has developed a state-sponsored artistic approach with an epic scale expression of national history" (Clark, 2011).

With 'A History of Mexico' (Picture 2), a nation's history and future has been portrayed through the regime's perspective on three walls of the National Palace in Mexico by Diego Rivera (1886-1957).



Figure 4. Diego Rivera, A History of Mexico, 1929-35

In Turkey, republican architecture and art has officially represented the state/regime, as an ideological tool for the government for physically restructuring Anatolia and planning public life in cities, designed and realized a totally different city organization than Ottoman Empire. Boulevards and government buildings are pictured with Ataturk sculptures, Turkishness has become the symbol of nation-state perception, being totally different than the central fabric of Ottoman which was built around the commercial structure.



Figure 5. İzmir Alsancak Ataturk Monument.

City, being the common activity field for both art and politics, is under great influence of both dominant phenomenons. The intervention of art to politics, and politics to art, is a universal element of shaping of city.

As the city's function is to have human life, production and public order possible, it is also to integrate culture to its resident society through a certain level of education or visual know-how. If aware of this fact, the power holder and governments use art and politics in art for this shaping with this notion.

#### 4. Conclusion

Power holders used art to influence masses throughout the history. Art's power of manipulating ideologies and ideas of individuals or regimes has proven the important role of cities. Because the city has a structure not only shelters the mass, but also imprison them and impose certain ideas. As a result of these interactions, the city has two phenomenons to shape it. These are art and politics. Both being managed by human, are inevitable parts in utopias; and these utopias require the "city" as the activity field of their realization.

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