

Collaboration and Visibility: An Anthropological Analysis of Community-Based Art Practice in Turkey

Short Abstract

This paper illustrates the impact of community-based art practices on local communities by focusing on the cases from contemporary Turkish art scene. In this context, it aims to shed new light on the potential of anthropological analysis of community-based art projects.

Abstract

After the 1990s, the number of art fairs and biennials in Turkey has not only increased but also with the involvement of art world institutions in the art scene, artistic practices have been transformed. This transformation resulted in a growing interest in inter-disciplinary works that inspired contemporary artists to engage with ethnography as method in different ways. Some of these practices are community-based that focused on creative participation (e.g. Oda Project, PiST), some artists aimed to portray the community with video interviews or by documenting their rituals (e.g. Kutluğ Ataman, Köken Ergun), or some others recorded issues about the struggles in Turkey (e.g. Artıkışler Collective). In all cases, these socially-engaged art practices from Turkey deal with the notion of otherness, as these closed communities are from different social identities or from neighborhoods located in the outskirts of the big cities in Turkey. I aim to illustrate the significance of working with a community as an artist in this context, as artists have the potential to raise awareness to the community's struggle; generally by making them visible with the artistic process. My paper focuses on this interaction between aforementioned artists and the communities from an anthropological perspective, in order to demonstrate the effect of artistic practices on local conditions. In conclusion, this project, by examining this interaction, sheds new light on the potentials of anthropological analysis of community-based art projects through the cases from contemporary Turkish art scene.