

BIENNIALS OF SİNOP, ÇANAKKALE, AND MARDİN IN THE CONTEXT OF
BIENNIALIZATION



BEGÜM GÜNEY

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BY
BEGÜM GÜNEY



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ARTS AND CULTURE MANAGEMENT
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PLAGIARISM

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BEGUM GUNEY

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ABSTRACT

Since 1987, Turkey became an important figure in the international art scene due to the organization of the Istanbul Biennale. Other cities like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin also organized their own biennials, however, there is a lack of studies conducted concerning those biennials. This study aims to present a useful source of information about the biennials of Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin while discussing them in the larger context of biennialization. To accomplish this goal, a series of interviews were made with the founders and organizers of those biennials. In the light of these interviews, it is evident that the biennials of Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin form a more efficient relationship with their locality and they may be considered as qualitatively more successful examples when compared with the large-scale biennials like the Istanbul Biennale. Furthermore, this discussion also stresses the need for questioning the dichotomy between “central” and “peripheral” biennials while presenting the need for a new understanding.

Keywords: biennial, central, peripheral, glocalizatio

ÖZET

1987 yılından bu yana, İstanbul Bienali'nin organizasyonu nedeniyle Türkiye Uluslararası Sanat sahnesinde önemli bir figür haline geldi. Sinop, Çanakkale ve Mardin gibi diğer şehirler de kendi bienallerini düzenledi, ancak bu bienallerle ilgili yapılan çalışmalar oldukça az. Bu çalışma, Sinop, Çanakkale ve Mardin bienalleri hakkında yararlı bir bilgi kaynağı sunmayı ve bunları daha geniş bir bienalizasyon bağlamında tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu hedefe ulaşmak için, bu bienallerin kurucuları ve organizatörleri ile bir dizi röportaj yapıldı. Bu söyleşiler ışığında, Sinop, Çanakkale ve Mardin bienallerinin yöreleriyle daha verimli bir ilişki kurduğu ve İstanbul Bienali gibi büyük ölçekli bienallere kıyasla niteliksel olarak daha başarılı örnekler olarak görülebileceği açıktır. Ayrıca, bu tartışma aynı zamanda "merkezi" ve "periferik" bienaller arasındaki ikilemi sorgulama ihtiyacını vurgularken, yeni bir anlayışa duyulan ihtiyacı da vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: bienal, merkezi, merkezdışı, küyerelleşme

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are hundreds of biennials happening around the globe since the first one in 1895 and they assumed the duty of mediation; through exhibitions, biennials provide a context for art to meet new audiences and gain recognition (Patel & D'Souza, 2018,p. 9). Etymologically, the word "biennale" comes from the Latin word "biennium" which signifies the duration of time in two years (Patel & D'Souza, 2018,p. 9). Since the Venice Biennale is the first international exhibition that holds this name and since it became very influentially famous, the term "biennale" is generally used for visual art exhibitions instead of other organizations that have been happening every two years (Patel & D'Souza, 2018,p. 9). Furthermore, the term "biennial" is also used for indicating triennials, quadriennials, documenta and other art exhibitions that occur according to a temporal pattern; contemporary artworks from different artists that comes from various nations hosted by the biennale and most of the time, these artworks are unified with a curatorial theme (Patel & D'Souza, 2018,p. 9). Therefore, biennials provide an environment that allows artworks to manifest the artist's ideas on political, social, and economic issues on an international level (Patel & D'Souza, 2018, P. 9). Due to many different elements like economical benefits, international attention and artistic representation biennials spread around the globe and each country has their own biennials.

Although biennials of Turkey can be traced back to Asian-Europen Biennale in 1986, the İstanbul Biennale may be seen as the most significant one among those biennials. Since the first edition of the İstanbul Biennale in 1987, Turkey became an important figure in the international art scene, and also the art scene in Turkey has developed rapidly ever since. Taking the biennials of Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin as examples, this study was aimed to present a comprehensive analysis for those biennials while portraying a useful source of knowledge about biennials of Turkey that are organized outside of the cultural centers of the

country. Although few papers discussed and referenced this subject, there is a lack of detailed elaboration in the literature which requires compensation to form a clear understanding of the Turkish art scene. Naturally, most of the studies on biennials focus on the İstanbul Biennale since it is the first art event that significantly increased Turkey's popularity in the international discussions, and most certainly it is the most popular one. However, a closer look will make it clear that the İstanbul Biennale cannot be taken as the only example of a successful international art biennial of Turkey since, as discussed above, biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin can be perceived as more successful in many respects when compared to the İstanbul Biennale. Thus, the motivation behind writing this paper was to examine the biennials that are organized outside of İstanbul, putting forth an elaboration on the status of those biennials, emphasize the qualities that made them unique and successful by collecting the scattered pieces of information, and presenting them in a unified way, moreover, presenting additional information from our interviews with the founders and organizers of those biennials and discuss this information in this context.

As a secondary objective, this paper attempts to present a simple historiography of biennialization and understand Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin in that context; also discussing them in the light of the debates in the literature on the major subjects like locality, center-periphery dichotomy, globalization/glocalization, economy and politics of the biennials and contradictory dynamics of biennials. Therefore, both the history of biennialization in the world and the historical development of the Turkish art scene needed to be addressed comprehensively. To accomplish this goal there was a need for a detailed literature review. Thus, the early parts of this paper include firstly, a historical elaboration of biennials by discussing subjects like first examples of international art exhibitions, foundation and spread of the biennial phenomenon, the main discussions on the political dimension of biennials in terms of nationality and hegemony. Secondly, the discussions about the developments of the

art scene in Turkey, the status before and after the İstanbul Biennale, and the significance of discussing other biennials of the country are also included. By stressing these points, it was aimed to provide a suitable context for our main discussion since the earlier parts may help to form an understanding regarding both the international and local art scene which provides a ground for discussing Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin from a larger perspective.

There are plentiful number of biennials happening and their numbers are increasing, it seems like people desire more and more biennials, therefore, one wonders how it all begin and how biennials came to be. If we listen to the voice of commonsense we immediately draw similarities from Olympic Games, local festivals, trade fairs, or World Expositions (Bydler, 2004, p.84). We can trace these events even to the Middle Ages (Bydler, 2004, p.84). Even though many expositions occurred in Europe that resemble the structure of a biennale, therefore can be seen as an ancestor, The Great Exhibition and The Universal Exposition sticks out among these events (Bydler, 2004, p.84). The Great Exhibition was in London in the year 1851 and The Universal Exposition was in Paris four years after The Great Exhibition (Bydler, 2004, p.91). They are similar to a biennale in terms of scale, complexity, underlying dynamics, and the concern for international recognition (Bydler, 2004, p.84). Byder puts the Great Exhibition in a special place because she thinks that it shows the hardships of conducting an exhibition according to a plan while awaiting high numbers of visitors.

1.FIRST EXAMPLES AND THE SPREAD OF THE BIENNIAL PHENOMENON

1.1. The Great Exhibition, London 1851

As regarded above, Europe has witnessed many great exhibitions such as French's national exhibitions during the Napoleonic wars, however, there has not been an exhibition that included artists from other countries (Bydler, 2004, p.85). To put it differently, there were no international exhibitions until the Great Exhibition. The idea of organizing an exhibition at this scale came to Henry Cole at the Paris Industrial Exhibition in 1849 (Bydler, 2004, p.85). Cole wanted an exhibition that resembles the one he is observing in England but he wanted it to be greater at scale (Bydler, 2004, p.85). The Great Exhibition managed to improve Britain's image in the eyes of the other nations, promoted world peace in liberal terms, and once again promoted Britain as an imperial power (Bydler, 2004, p.85). The exhibition was hosted by Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace and was opened on the 1st of May (Bydler, 2004, p.87-91). There were over 100.000 pieces from different countries that are displayed during 140 days and seen by more than six million people (Bydler, 2004, p.87-91). The composition of the exhibition was indicating the power of Britain in terms of knowledge and resources due to the great scale and variation of the objects (Bydler, 2004, p.87-91).

One of the most significant elements of the Great Exhibition was the audience; even though people from different economical classes had different opportunities according to their fee, the exhibition welcomed everyone regardless of their economical background and people were not spatially separated (Bydler, 2004, p.92-93). Bydler posits that the Great Exhibition was also called the "democratic exhibition" for that reason. Therefore, the Great Exhibition seems to include something for everyone and the conductors of this exhibition seem to be put effort to please all of the audience and in this atmosphere, everyone gave their meaning to the

exhibition (Bydler, 2004, p.92-93). Thus, these varied opinions and interpretations created an environment for discussion and interaction between subjects of the exhibitions. Besides the defined Britishness of the atmosphere, a sense of identity is also felt amongst people according to Bydler, a sense of "we" as she puts it.

Since the exhibition welcomed all economical classes, it used the model of a family and like many other forces of globalization, it related itself with goodwill, fellow-feeling, and brotherly love which are traits that bind a community regardless of their classes (Young, 2009, p.21).

In our case, we should look for elements that made it an ancestor for the biennale phenomenon. Firstly, the motives behind this event are as complicated as an international art biennale. Economic sponsors, governmental departments, municipal and domestic administrators, private enterprises, commissioners, artists, curators, and workers form a complex and dense unit and each party has its interests (Bydler, 2004, p.85-95). Secondly, besides being the first international art exhibition at that scale, the Great Exhibition becomes an example of the challenges and difficulties of conducting an event like this; great knowledge, economical power, and organization skills were required (Bydler, 2004, p.85-95). Thirdly, as we will see this more clearly with the Universal Exposition, it gave identity to both the audience and the exhibition itself (Bydler, 2004, p.85-95). Especially the audience's sense of identity is a crucial element since it will help us to understand the relationship between hegemony and biennials.

1.2.The Universal Exposition, Paris 1855

Four years after the Great Exhibition, another international exhibition was organized in Paris during Napoleon III's reign. The Universal Exposition was hosted by Palais de l'Industrie and visited by over five million people (Chandler, 1986, p.7-8; Kaiser, 1999, p.

239). After the Great Exhibition took place many French intellectuals felt disappointed and frustrated since the first international exhibition was conducted by Britain, therefore, although the Great Exhibition was the first of its kind, French people were dedicated to surpassing the Great Exhibition by organizing a better exposition (Chandler, 1986, p. 7-8). Naturally, there were many comparisons were discussed among the public and one thing was sure; the Universal Exposition seemed to be organized to exceed the Great Exhibition (Trapp, 1965, p.300). According to Arthur Chandler, even Prince Napoleon himself argued this subject with the Emperor and stated that universal expositions have utmost importance for the modern world.

The importance of the Universal Exposition, and mid-19th-century expositions in general, can be seen both nationally and internationally. Nationally, these exhibitions, as regarded above, contributed to the idea of national unity; people from all around the country came to see the art pieces of these exhibitions and personally take part in these massive events (Kaiser, 1999, p.239). Besides, creating a sense of identity, a sense of "we", these exhibitions made citizens proud of their nation's artistic and technological developments (Kaiser, 1999, p.239). Even though in 1855 over five million people came to see the exposition, in 1900 fifty million people from both France and other countries came to take part in the exposition (Kaiser, 1999, p.239). Here, the international importance of these events appears. Due to the Universal Exposition's competing motives, these exhibitions gained international importance besides their national scope since France tried to show a good national image to other countries (Kaiser, 1999, p.240). Therefore, the audiences' national pride gained another dimension since they also compare their nation's success with other nations. Therefore, we can conclude that these exhibitions, just like their successors will be, are crucial in terms of manifestation of a national-cultural identity, experiencing the difficulties of organizing such a large scale art event and creating demand for other international large scale art exhibitions.

1.3.The Venice Biennale, 1895

One of the most important works about The Venice Biennale, and it is most certainly one of the first comprehensive studies, was written by Lawrence Alloway. In his book which is called *The Venice Biennale, 1895-1968; From salon to goldfish bowl*, Alloway also relates The Venice Biennale to the 19th-century exhibitions (Alloway, 1968, p.31-52). He calls these exhibitions "prestige exhibitions". Even though he mentions previous European exhibitions, he emphasizes the Great Exhibition and the Universal Exposition. According to Alloway, these two exhibitions are very important since they represent the crucial points in the world's history in terms of creating a global contact amongst nations, changing people's view on the scale, and exemplifying that conducting such a massive event requires high organization skills, determination, planning and logistic efficiency on an international level. Therefore, it can be said that these two exhibitions paved the way for The Venice Biennale.

In the year 1893, 19th of May, the Municipality of Venice decided that the city should contribute to humanitarian and cultural matters to celebrate King Umberto I and Queen Margherita of Savoy's marriage anniversary (Alloway, 1968, p.31-52). Besides charity organizations and aid policies, it was decided that a national biennale exhibition of art would be organized (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). Even though the decision was made in 1893, the biennale did not take place until the year 1895 and although it was decided as a "national" biennale, it is later changed to an international exhibition that included artists and art pieces from foreign countries (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). This emphasis on internationality became very important.

The area chosen for the biennale to take place was a public garden Giardini di Castello which is the Venice Lagoon's center island (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52; Bydler, 2004,p. 100-111). When the Syndic (mayor) of Venice, Riccardo Selvatico, announced the event, he stated that regardless of the countries, the noblest works of the modern world would be represented

in the Biennale (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). The Venice Biennale was containing 514 artworks by both Italian and European artists (Alloway, 1968, p.31-52). Fifteen nations were represented with Italy in the biennale and it was considered a success since the first biennale welcomed over two hundred thousand visitors (Bydler, 2004,p. 100-111). According to Alloway first biennials were heavily under Italian influence. Since both historical, biblical paintings and paintings that depict everyday scenes remained in the same area, the lines that separate these two kinds of works were disappeared and this led to a naturalistic, non-heroic conceptualization (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52).

The Venice Biennale had undergone some changes over time. For example, in the early years, foreign countries' artworks were exhibited in separate rooms of the same building (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). The exhibitions were separated according to national units and geographical groups (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). However, throughout the years, foreign countries' exhibitions were held in their pavilions (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). The first pavilion was for Belgium which was first used in the year 1907 and it was followed by Hungarian, British and German pavilions (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). Another important change was the rule governing the number of artworks that can be shown by each artist (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). At first, each artist was able to exhibit one or two works but as years go by, the biennale gave importance to the one-man shows (Alloway, 1968, p.31-52). For example the while in the first biennale Hubert von Herkomer had his one-man show, in the second biennale Rodin exhibited five works and Wilhelm Leibi exhibited seven works (Alloway, 1968, p. 31-52). These one-man shows contributed to the fame of great artists like Monticelli, Renoir, Courbet, and Klimt (Alloway, 1968, p.31-52).

With the inclusion of national pavilions, organizers tried harder to acclaim foreign interest and make people from other counties visit the city of Venice (Bydler, 2004, p. 100-111). Even though during the years of The Second World War biennale became very much

under the influence of the fascist party, after the war in 1948, the biennale separated itself from the influence of the fascist party and focused more on international professionalism (Bydler, 2004, p.100-111). As we have seen in the discussion above, what is meant by international is means European; besides little influences from Japan, U.S.A, and other non-European countries, The Venice Biennale mostly included European countries in the early years (Bydler, 2004, p.100-111).

1.4. The Spread of The Biennals

As we have seen in the discussion above, international exhibitions and international art biennales have many benefits besides artistic enthusiasm. The Great Exhibition, the Universal Exposition, and The Venice Biennale are all seen as a success due to several different parameters like public interest, economical developments, international prestige, and cultural identity building. Even though analyzing the success of these events and examining every parameter that made them successful is a task that would be impossible to accomplish due to the scope of this paper, it is important to understand the elements that made international biennales attractive for other cities and other countries of the world which would follow The Venice Biennale.

The dynamics of a biennial can be seen as a composite, complex unit of interests (Bydler, 2004, p.96-100). Firstly, when we look at the subject from a perspective that is based on art, we see that biennales are contributing to the local art life of the city or region that they are organized in (Bydler, 2004, p.96-100). An organizer with strong relations and brings together the artists and curators which create opportunities for different parties (Bydler, 2004, p.96-100). Participating artists gain recognition and a chance to present their art pieces to a massive audience, curators get a chance to show their skills (Bydler, 2004, p.96-100). Moreover, this atmosphere provides many opportunities for artists and curators to extend their market and get in touch with people who would help them to build an efficient network such

as critics, art historians, academics, curators, gallery dealers (Bydler, 2004, p.96-100). Besides the art life, a biennial also has many benefits for other parties; for example, many biennales make their opening with seminars which may help lecturers to present their work and ideas to increase their reputation (Bydler, 2004, p.96-100). Moreover, if we look at the big picture, we see that biennales are also beneficial for secondary subjects such as restaurants, hotels, public transport, sponsors, and many other local businesses (Bydler, 2004, p.96-100).

It is easy to see that biennales are contributing to the tourist industry and they make cities, regions more attractive, therefore, more and more cities seek biennales of their own, and more peripheral areas like small towns also trying to draw attention by organizing biennales (Marchart, 2014, p. 264). Even though these economically based benefits of biennales are evident, the issue cannot be just reduced to economical factors (Marchart, 2014, p. 264). As we have seen in the previous parts, biennales also present the prestige of the host city or country, therefore, besides economical contributions, the image of the country also improves on an international level. Examples of this can be seen via examining the Universal Exposition or the previous events that have been discussed before. Moreover, it is also about identity building. Biennales are closely related to the national, cultural, or continental identities that are being represented (Marchart, 2014, p. 264). The events that are discussed before also exemplifies this phenomenon. Even though, yet we just examined the major Europe-oriented art events, non-European examples will be crucial turning points in the history of biennialization (Marchart, 2014, p. 264) and they will be discussed later.

In the light of these issues, biennales were spreading across the world (Patel & D'Souza, 2018 p.11). Even though there were biennales organized outside of Italy like the Corcoran Biennial in Washington (1907) and the Whitney Biennale in New York (1932), these biennales had a national focus, therefore, it was not until 1951 there was a biennial that truly

followed Venice (Patel & D'Souza, 2018 p.11-12). After the Sao Paulo Biennale in Brazil (1951) many cities followed and used the Venitian form to organize their biennales (Patel & D'Souza, 2018 p.11-12). This format evolved and changed through the second half of the 20th century. Around the 1980s and 1990s there was a dramatic increase in the number of biennales across the world; especially in the developing countries (Patel & D'Souza, 2018 p.11-12).



2.THE BIENNALE POLITICS

Before talking about the political discussions on biennales, it is important to stress their complex, multidimensional, and sometimes even can be addressed as contradictory nature. Panos Kompatsiaris dwells on this subject and tries to show the ambivalences of biennales via analyzing their economical and cultural dynamics. He emphasizes that on one hand, biennales are agents of critical discourses as places for contemporary art, on the other hand, they are also workplaces and their existence is dependent on funds and investments (Kompatsiaris, 2014). For example, even though the 11th Istanbul Biennale held liberal ideas that made it seem to be a symbol of freedom and emancipation, it also served the capitalist interests of its big sponsors like Koç and Turkcell. Kompatsiaris gives a more specific example for this issue; the 7th Berlin Biennale (Kompatsiaris, 2014, p.83).

Took place from April 29 to July 1, 2012, the 7th Berlin Biennale's main title was "Forget Fear" (Kompatsiaris, 2014, p.84). The strategy for curation was all about the issues of non-censorship, freedom, and autonomy; there was also an emphasis on contributing to the recognition of events like the war in Palestine (Kompatsiaris, 2014, p.84). The biennale caused many polarized discussions due to the presence of a radical political agenda (Kompatsiaris, 2014, p.84-85). Occupy Berlin movement was highly involved with the biennale also (Kompatsiaris, 2014, p.84-85). These issues eventually led the German Cultural Foundation to threaten organizers to stop the funding (Kompatsiaris, 2014, p.86). In his very detailed and well-documented paper, Kompatsiaris discusses that there is an ambiguity in terms of the conception of biennales. In the light of these considerations, it becomes really difficult to read biennales whether as capitalist spectacles or spaces for radical political agendas.

Regarding the discussion above it is not difficult to comprehend that biennales are

complex, multidimensional creatures, therefore, interpretations of them are varied in terms of different parameters. Nationality and cultural hegemony of biennales are subject matters that had diverse scholars and have been discussed in the literature from different perspectives (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 2) While some interpretations seem to portray that biennales are forms of manifesting different identities, "democratic ways of redistributing cultural power" and can be optimistically seen as forms of resistance, other interpretations imply that the biennales are instruments of cultural domination and cultural re-colonization; a global tool for West to culturally dominate the world (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 2). Each perspective, which will be discussed later, has its strong points. This discussion ultimately will lead us to another discussion about culture and hegemony.

2.1.The Matter of Nationality

Since Venice, international biennales always welcomed artists, curators, visitors, and other groups of people from other countries. Therefore, the matter of national representation is always been a part of the phenomenon. The choice of artists always seen as an issue of utmost importance due to national representation so international diplomacy became a great part of the biennales and higher state officials like people from the Foreign Office or The Ministry of Culture closely interested in the process (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3). They chose national commissioners to decide which artists would be sent abroad for the biennales (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3). Regarding this discussion, it is not difficult to understand why the matter of nationality is often discussed in the literature. Because due to the reasons discussed above, biennales are always have been a big part of international relations, therefore, closely related to the issue of nationality (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3; Vogel, 2010, p.7).

Elaborating on this issue purely in the context of organizational and institutional issues would be misleading because a big part of the biennales is cultural competition (Tang, 2007,

p. 248). As we have seen before common sense relates biennales directly to Olympic Games or international competitions (Bydler, 2004, p. 84; Sheikh, 2010, p. 153). This can be related to the status of the world when the first biennale did take place. Due to the cultural rivalry between Britain and France manifesting itself via the Great Exhibition (1851) and the Universal Exposition (1854), moreover, the occurrence of the Olympic Games in 1896 gives us the idea that the international atmosphere of that time was competitive (Vogel, 2010, p.17). By this view, Bertele describes biennales as instruments of manifesting power (as cited in Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3), while Jeannine Tang sees biennales as a channel to take part in the geopolitical game, he describes biennials as an occasion that provides a possibility to question and reshape the national or cultural representations in terms of cultural race; these exhibitions also can be evaluated as useful tools to attract attention to the region and increase its value in the art market.

In the light of these discussions, national importance appears as a very important part of this issue as mentioned before. Julia Bethwaite gives an example about Australia's participation in The Venice Biennale which will clarify this issue for us. In 1958, Australia participated in the biennale for the first time, however, there was a twenty-year gap between Australia's first and second participation (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3). Australians were seeing the counties included in the biennale as a way to improve their international connections, therefore, they were very delicate about the issue (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3). According to Scott due to this concern, there was a big argumentation about the decision of artists who would participate in the biennale since the chosen art style would represent the country. The main concern was to choose art pieces that have national flavors and represent the countries artistic power (Scott, 2003, p.59). The argument resulted and abstract art pieces were excluded due to being more international than national (Scott, 2003, p.62).

Most artists today reject the idea of nationalism and most of the art world is getting far

away from this (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3). For example, 26th Sao Paulo Biennale criticized nationalism and hold its motto following the idea of resisting cultural dominance (Vogel, 2010; 7). Even though these are factually true, some scholars still do not see these events as a way out from the dark reality of nationalism and cultural dominance. According to Wu (2007), national pavilions in Venice are still carrying their predecessor's discriminative elements. Another view like this comes from Tang, who elaborates on the positioning of national pavilions in Venice and claims that the pavilions are located by the power of the nations that they represent. For example, the most powerful countries were occupying the central part which is more accessible for the visitors, while pavilions of the countries that are being seen as less important or less powerful are located away from the center are, thus being less accessible for the visitors (Tang, 2007, p.253).

Caroline A. Jones (2010) points this conflict and interprets the inclusion of perspectives that reject nationalism as a disguise for empowering the national image. According to Jones, these are attempts that are portrayed as deconstruction or criticism of nationalism, however, what they do is to empower the idea (Jones, 2010, p.76). A similar interpretation can be seen when looked at Chu-Chiun Wei's (2013) elaboration on the Taiwanese pavilion. According to Wei biennales are very slippery in terms of cultural representation, therefore, they can be seen both praising and criticizing the idea of nationalism and modern nation-states (Wei, 2013, p. 471-472).

Even though so far we emphasized the views that elaborate on the nationality and sees biennales as the cultural power instruments in the geopolitical game, another group of interpretations dwells on the opposite view. Besides the elaborations we discussed above, many scholars view biennales as global, post-national, or trans-national phenomena (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 3). According to Carroll, regardless of the nations and identities, contemporary art has a common understanding and shared tradition. Even though there are

many art forms from different nationalities, they have shared discourses and revolve around similar subject matters due to the globalization of the culture (Carroll, 2007, p.140-141). These shared discourses manifest themselves via an emphasis on subjects like postcolonialism, feminism, gay liberation, globalization and global inequality, the suppression of free expression and other human rights, identity politics, and the politics of representation, as well as a generic antiestablishmentarianism (Carroll, 2007, p.140). Therefore, we can conclude that this approach sees national boundaries vanishing with the effect of the shared culture of artists.

For some scholars, biennales also help to build "alternative" worlds. While Boris Groys elaborates on the fact that biennales can be used for creating new global systems (Groys, 2009, p.64–65), de Duve stresses the fact that biennales can be used to create a sense of "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" (de Duve, 2007, p. 684). It is true that spatially biennales are occurring in a limited, local environment and maybe politically beneficial for governments or countries, however, the art exhibited in these biennales are helping to contribute to a universal idea of aesthetics due to shared feelings and ideas of human beings regardless of their country or ethnicity (de Duve, 2007, p. 684). Therefore, it is reasonable to say that art hosted in the biennales helps to transcend the limits of space and nationality via creating an aesthetic understanding that is cosmopolite and general (de Duve, 2007, p. 684).

Another side of creating "alternative" worlds can be discovered via Vogel's (2010) words; even though the newly founded nations of the third world did not get the attention of the Western art critics, art dealers, or gallery owners when they participated in the international biennales, the act of participation itself very important. Because it meant that these nations are entering the international art world via presenting their cultural identities with their art in these mass international events (Vogel, 2010, p. 41). Similarly but with a different scope, Siegert focuses on the biennales and art exhibitions happening in the Africa

continent and tries to discover the dynamics of a biennale that happening in the marginalized south. She first contemplates the term "art world" which can be defined as the network of people and organizations who take part in the production and distribution of art (Siegert, 2014, p.176). According to Siegert, when individuals talked about the art world they often exclude the countries that are in the south; more specifically African countries. However, the art world today is consists of small local art scenes that have very different stories and varied histories. Siegert points out that the biennales organized in Africa (Johannesburg, Cairo Biennial, Dak'art, Rencontres de Bamako, etc.) played an important part in the reconceptualization and reconstruction of these countries images in the world's eyes (Siegert, 2014, p.177). These events helped to rebuild the national and cultural identities of these countries as decolonized free communities and helped them to join the international art scene via their biennales.

2.2.Biennials and Hegemony

The discussion above eventually leads us to the issue of hegemonic dominance. If we follow the views of the scholars in the first group which generally sees biennales as instruments of power and cultural domination, we end up wondering that if it is the case. Since biennales can be seen as a phenomenon that is capable of affecting crowds, produce and reproduce the power relations of cultural domination, it is important to elaborate on biennales relations with empowerment, resistance, and most importantly hegemony. Before we dive into the discussion it can be useful to shortly talk about what hegemony is in the first place to clear the air.

In terms of biennias, hegemony often is the implication of cultural and economical power on a global scale. According to Nancy Fraser (2019), Gramsci's term "hegemony" should be understood as the actions of the ruling class which aims to show their domination as a natural phenomenon via presenting their values and presuppositions as the general

knowledge or the common sense of the society. Furthermore, this hegemony is built by combining different social forces and asserting the ruling class's superiority. Therefore, it means that the people in power adding a new layer of domination by replacing common sense and agreement with their own set of values (Hall, 1986, p. 16-17). Fraser also elaborates on the fact that hegemony determines what is good and what is just by using both cultural and economical reality. Hegemony can also be seen as the forced superiority of allied social forces (Meeteren, 2020, p. 159). Thus, hegemony can be only challenged via creating new, alternative alliances to create an alternative common sense that will oppose the common sense of the ruling hegemony, some may also call this a counter-hegemony (Meeteren, 2020, p. 159).

Whether biennales serve the ruling Western hegemony or they are the instruments of resistance became a very highly debated subject (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 5). According to Filipovic (2014) biennales claim to portray an alternative paradigm against the Western conceptions, however, all they have been doing was really to reproduce and replicate those conceptions. He stresses the topological format of biennales. Biennales and large-scale exhibitions insistingly separate themselves from a museum, however, regardless of their efforts, their specially constructed areas and rigid geometries mimic the site of a museum (Filipovic, 2014, p. 48).

Furthermore, it is commonly claimed that biennales in general (The Venice Biennial especially) reproduce the Western ideals and help to ensure the sustainability of Western cultural hegemony (de Duve, 2007, p. 681). This is mostly thought because the mid-19th-century European countries' actions of colonialism under the disguises of states which tries to spread modernity and civilization, therefore, as a result of these events, the biennale phenomenon cannot completely separate itself from this legacy (Bethwaite, 2018, p. 6). Valeria Kabov (2016) stresses that even though African pavilions were established in the

Venice Biennale and African nations were represented there, the expectation criteria for artworks in those pavilions were strongly based on Western (Northern) perspectives.

According to Kabov, many countries looked up to Venice because they wanted recognition, however, the decision was not theirs to make but West's. She also points out that The Venice Biennale seems to be a democratic and equalitarian event that gives post-colonial discourses a space for representing themselves, however, behind this favorable image, The Venice Biennale reproduces inequalities, existing power relations on a global scale over and over again via different forms of strategies (Kabov, 2016, p. 3-5).

A view that following this perspective comes from Chin-Tao Wu. Wu (2009) argues that the rise of the biennale format helped dramatically to the artists from developing or less developed countries who strived for recognition, visibility, and attention, however, she sees this as a necessary side effect of the globalization phenomenon and it is different from other dynamics of globalization which are not as positive as this side effect. The major actors of globalization are always investing money for another exhibition, therefore artists and curators are always moving and traveling to different places; even though this helps them to create a network and make them connected to the art world, it is making them culturally rootless (Wu, 2009, p. 7). Furthermore, the forces behind the biennales; sponsors, investors are not even interested in the art nor they have time to understand and comprehend the meaning of what is exhibited in those biennales (Wu, 2009, p. 7). According to Wu, biennales are the most popular organizations of the present day art world but despite their decolonizing and democratic claims, they are still serving the traditional power structures of the West and their only different feature is the usage of the word 'global' instead of 'Western'.

Besides these pessimistic views on hegemony and biennales, there is more optimistic discussion present in the literature, mostly elaborating on the view that sees biennales as events that provide space for resistances and gives counter-hegemonies a chance to challenge

the ruling hegemony. Lara Van Meeteren's (2020) work on the analysis of three biennales organized in Thailand presents a very explanatory example in terms of showing how an alternative biennale is possible via examining its dynamics and background. As it would not be possible to elaborate on the whole paper here, The Bangkok Art Biennale and The Bangkok Biennale will be discussed as two opposites in terms of their relation to Thailand's ruling hegemony.

After the revolution in 1932, the absolute monarchy has ended in Thailand and the Thai hegemony included the values of a modern nation-state, as a result, there was a great emphasis on modern art in the post-absolutist era of Thailand and a year after the revolution a national art academy was founded and this academy would later turn into Slipakorn University which will become a major institution for the management and government of the art world in Thailand (Meeteren, 2020, p. 160). Slipakorn held the monopoly of representing Thai culture following the ruling hegemony via controlling the art in the country (Meeteren, 2020, p. 160). Even though there were alternative attempts to challenge this institution and build a counter-hegemony, Slipakorn kept its position as central in Thailand (Meeteren, 2020, p. 160).

In late 2018, Bangkok Art Biennale was organized and it was Thailand's earliest world-class event (Meeteren, 2020, p. 162). The biennale was directed by the artist Apinan who was formerly working in the Ministry of Culture and besides company's like ThaiBev's inclusion, it was important also for the state since it was a big event that could be beneficial for the country's economy and representation (Meeteren, 2020, p. 162). In terms of touristic attention, economical contributions, and city benefits, the biennial became successful and it is safe to say that Apinan fulfilled his task in terms of these considerations (Meeteren, 2020, p. 162). However, since Apinan is a personality who had close ties with the government, it was apparent that the biennale was not going to be curated independently (Meeteren, 2020, p.

164). The choice of artists and artworks made in the light of Thai hegemony; works or artists seen as dangerous for the hegemony was not preferred and international curators were not permitted to work with the biennale's curators (Meeteren, 2020, p. 164-165). Even some works held a discourse and can be considered conceptual, they were presented as they were mere objects, therefore, de-contextualized (Meeteren, 2020, p. 164-165). Regarding this information, evaluating this biennale as an event that contributed to Thailand's ruling hegemony seems to be suitable.

In contrast to this example, another biennale was organized in Bangkok in a counter-hegemonic way. The Bangkok Biennale was present from July to September 2018. Biennale was directed by three independent artists and there was no financial or curatorial center (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). The event was organized in a way that was meant to challenge the authority and centralized understanding of art in Thailand (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). Instead of a central exhibition, there were seventy pavilions and since there was no central curation, each pavilion was responsible for itself, therefore, this created a collective understanding (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). Unlike the Bangkok Art Biennale, the Bangkok Biennale was not monitored by Slipakorn, therefore, this opened space for both experimental styles of art and alternative social roles amongst the participators of the biennale (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). For these reasons, the Bangkok Biennale became a very crucial point for the alternative tradition's history in Thailand (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). However, Meeteren stresses that this kind of decentralized curation is not enough for evaluating this event as a counter-hegemonic biennale (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). The fact that each pavilion was given the freedom to fully control its content surely contributed to the creation of a counter-hegemony but Meeteren also points out that deconcentration also a big part of this creation (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). The general understanding in Thailand view's Bangkok as the central and evaluates the city as the top of the cultural hierarchy, however,

besides other countries included in this biennale, cities from the periphery of Thailand were also given a chance to present themselves in this biennale (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). Another important aspect that made this biennale a counter-hegemonic biennale was the interaction between artists, artworks, and the audience (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171). In contrast to the Bangkok Art Biennale and other art exhibitions in general, the audience was conceived as the collaborators and participants of the biennale; since there was no middle point of mediation like institutions or sponsors between artists and the public, it opened space for intimate and sympathetic relationship (Meeteren, 2020, p. 169-171).

While Meeteran's example portrays the possibility of resistance to the ruling hegemony via biennales, more scholars are arguing that this is the case and biennales can help us to challenge existing hegemonies. According to Paul O'Neil (2012), biennales and large-scale exhibitions proved themselves as counter-hegemonic dissent instruments against Western hegemonic powers. The reason for this result is the fact that the biennales provided space for transcultural, heterogeneous identities, therefore, they are contributing to an alternative understanding, a counter-hegemony that criticizes Western modernism and colonialism (O'Neil, 2012, p. 85). By doing this, biennales also enabled artists and curators from all around the world not to depend on museums or galleries since they have alternative mediums for presenting their works (O'Neil, 2012, p. 85).

Regarding these arguments, it is possible to say that biennales may become the tools for creating a counter-hegemony. Chu-Chiun Wei (2013) discusses the Taiwanese pavilion in the Venice Biennale and points that this might be the case and Wei does this by looking at the birthplace of the biennale phenomena. After the year 2003, the Taiwanese pavilion started to change its attitude towards the Venice Biennale (Wei, 2013, p. 475-481). In the early years, the Taiwanese pavilion was a representation of Taiwanese culture and aimed to make the public aware of Taiwanese culture, however, this situation changed throughout the years and

the Taiwanese pavilion became marginalized since it started to become critical of the ideals held in the Venice Biennale (Wei, 2013, p. 483). According to Wei, the Taiwanese pavilion became the critique of the Venitian logic, therefore, marginalized. As we can see here, the Taiwanese pavilion shows that non-Western cultures which represented in the biennale do not have to be oppressed and passive "others" of this event, rather, they can be seen as participants that do not obey the hegemony of the Western modernism and create their counter-hegemony (Wei, 2013, p. 483).

Another important point comes from Simon Sheikh (2010) who describes biennales as heterotopias instead of utopias. According to Sheikh, although biennales are part of international cultural hegemonies and they are useful in terms of monopolization of the capital via city branding, tourism events, and the benefits of secondary parties' like hotels, restaurants, they do not necessarily represent only these elements (Sheikh, 2010, p. 8). The existence of biennales are relying on these features, however, they can also do something else entirely at the same time because they are heterotopias that allow heterogeneous, conflicted features and discourses to exist simultaneously (Sheikh, 2010, p. 8). According to Sheikh besides the fact that biennales had been seen as hegemonical power instruments, they are also places for hope.

Similar to the scholars whom we discussed above, Rafal Niemojewski (2010) also first admits that some biennales are reproducing existing power relations and by doing this they become the representations of Western cultural hegemony, however, he also sees a possibility of resistance in biennales. While treating a group of biennales such as the Venice Biennale as indeed representations of this hegemony, it is unjust to evaluate all of the biennales as same in this respect (Niemojewski 2010, p. 95). He elaborates on the Havanna Biennale which can be seen as the most important example of the contemporary art biennales; since Havanna Biennale holds so much relevance, it will be discussed later in a more comprehensive way but

for now, it will be discussed in the context of Niemojewski's analysis. As he points out the Sao Paulo Biennale, the Documenta and the Carnegie International are perfect executors of Venetian form, however, they are not representing the contemporary biennale format that has dominated the world since the mid80's (Niemojewski 2010, p. 95). When the Third World's first large-scale biennale was organized in 1984, the attention was shifted to the countries that participated from the Caribbean, Middle-East, Africa, and Asia for the first time in the history of biennialization (Niemojewski 2010, p. 95). It was groundbreaking in many ways; The Havanna Biennale provided alternative art routes and challenged the idea that the civilizations of the world were developing from primitive underdeveloped societies to modern communities via presenting multiplicity and variation of cultures (Niemojewski 2010, p. 95). The focus was shifted from West-oriented central biennales to peripheral, Third World art scenes for the first time with the Havanna Biennale (Niemojewski 2010, p. 95).

3.BIENNIALIZATION AS DECENTRALIZATION

Oliver Marchart (2014) defines globalization as the decentralization of the West. In the last century, the world witnessed the rise of non-Western countries in the Pacific Region, Africa, and Asia (Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265). It is apparent that there is a struggle for hegemony in the context of globalization; each nation tries to gain acceptance, recognition, and cultural power over others (Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265). One of the most important dimensions of this hegemonical struggle is can be seen in art scenes and art worlds. The most powerful institution amongst many others is international art biennales in terms of mediating international, transnational relationships (Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265). Therefore Marchart refers to biennales as ‘hegemonic machines’ that connect local and global in the context of symbolic validation.

Even though organizations like the Great Exhibition, the Universal Exposition, and the Venice Biennale can be seen as the first examples of biennale format, this format changed dramatically since the first examples with the influence of globalization. According to Marchart biennales do not appear as glamorous, prestigious cultural instruments that flatter the host nation anymore, instead they became something entirely different; pioneers of decentralization of the West (Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265). Therefore, evaluating biennales as phenomena that represent the Western values and hegemonies is problematic, since it is also apparent that biennales today also stand for decolonization struggles of former colonies which are trying to achieve their cultural freedom (Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265). These facts may refer to a time of change and the rise of non-Western cultural identities. In this respect Ranjit Hoskote, co-curator of Gwangju Biennale, names biennals like São Paulo Biennale, the Triennale-India, the Havana Biennale, the Asia-Pacific Biennale, the Gwangju Biennale and the Johannesburg

Biennale as "biennals of resistance"(as cited in Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265).

These biennales form a resistance alliance that challenges former biennales of the Western countries and puts effort into the recognition of newly formed regionalities; a representation of commonality which contains Asian and Pacific countries in the historical context of the post-Cold War world (as cited in Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265). Many biennales that are being formed recently and these biennales regarded above compose a counterpoint and an alternative to the Venitian model which was universally seen as a general form of the international art biennales; this leads us to the point that shows us there is a different, alternative -or even can be considered counter-history of biennialization that separates itself from the Venitian tradition (Marchart, 2014, p. 263-265).

Therefore, we need to examine these alternative histories of biennales to understand peripheral biennales efficiently. According to Marchart, this history begins with the Sao Paulo biennale which occurred in the year 1951. Even though early biennales of Sao Paulo closely followed the Venice Biennale's values and themes were generally revolved around European identity, this changed with the inclusion of the non-Western nations; for example in 1954 Israel and Egypt were included and other countries like the Philippines, Senegal, Taiwan, and Vietnam also included in the following years (Marchart, 2014, p. 265-267).

Other biennales that followed Sao Paulo played major roles in the counter-history of biennales. For example in 1966 a more radical festival was conducted in Dakar (Marchart, 2014, p. 265-267). Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres, involved with the Negritude movement, aimed to represent all different kinds of African art to contribute to the self-confidence of African nations (Marchart, 2014, p. 265-267). Although several biennales were conducted such as Alexandria Biennial (1955), Triennale-India (1968), Cairo Biennial (1984), and Istanbul Biennial (1987), Marchart points out that most of them are in the middle of a continuum that has a postcolonial version of the Venice Biennale and instrumentalized 'non-

Western' art traditions in the name of identity politics as its opposite ends. Since it will be beyond this paper's scope, examining all of these biennales is not possible. However, one of these stands out as a groundbreaking example of the biennales of resistance and it is worth our time to dwell upon it; The Havana Biennale.

3.1.The Havana Biennale

The first Havana Biennale was organized in the year 1984 and hosted 2000 works by 800 artists (Bydler, 2004, p.111-122). Although the first biennale was accepted participants only from the Caribbean and Latin American countries, the second biennale included also African and Asian countries (Bydler, 2004, p.111-122). In 1989, when the 3rd Havana Biennale was organized it became the biennale of the Third World because the poorer areas in the world were also included and the biennale was explicitly different from the biennales in the other parts of the world (Bydler, 2004, p.111-122). Besides the choice of countries that included, many progressive curatorial strategies made this biennale unique. The artists were not presented under the name of their nations during the biennale and there were no prizes given to any artist, furthermore, also artists which are living in Western diasporas are included, the intention was to extend the scope of the biennale and put emphasis on immigration issues (Marchart, 2014, p. 267). According to Bydler, the fifth edition of the Havana Biennale is the phase that the biennale gained maturation. Environments and circumstances; Migrations; Marginalizations; Appropriations and Intercrossing; and Individual reflections by men was chosen as the five themes of the biennale and it was after this edition curators began to intervene more closely regarding the interpretations of artworks. The management of the biennale improved in terms of several aspects such as layout and biennale themes; the main concern was to giving importance to meaning within the larger art world-system (Bydler, 2004, p.111-122).

Rafal Niemojewski's (2010) comparison between the Venice Biennale and the

Havanna Biennale may shed light upon the subject and help us to see differences more clearly. Firstly, while the Venice Biennale was insistent in terms of excluding the avant-garde non-Western art for a long period, the Havanna Biennale was specifically focused on contemporary artworks that originated in the non-Western world (Niemojewski, 2010, p. 99-100). Secondly – might be considered as the base of the first point-, the circumstances and temporal contexts of these biennales were completely different (Niemojewski, 2010, p. 99-100). The Venice Biennale was founded in the atmosphere of the mid-nineteenth century which was a period that the idea of the modern national state increasingly accepted and celebrated (Niemojewski, 2010, p. 99-100). On the other hand, the Havanna Biennale was founded in a time where the world was changing and going in a new direction. When the Havanna Biennial first came to be the world was going through the process of globalization, thus the emphasis on nationality and modern Western ideals was replaced by the emphasis on transnational, multicultural, diasporic, and post-colonial identities (Niemojewski, 2010, p. 99-100).

Another but less clear distinction comes from Oliver Marchart. Marchart compares the Havanna Biennale with *Magiciens de la Terre* which was organized the same year at the Centre Pompidou which is a place that is considered as one of the centers of the Western art world. What made this exhibition apart from the former exhibitions in Europe was the fact that instead of having a discriminative undertone which was viewing non-Western art as an "other" opposite to the modern European art, the exhibition equally treated and presented Western and non-Western artists (Marchart, 2014, p. 267-268). Although it was one of the most important attempts that tried representing non-Western cultures at the center of the Western art world, it had its shortcomings (Marchart, 2014, p. 267-268). According to Rachel Weiss (2011), unlike *Magiciens de la Terre*, the Havanna Biennale did not focus on equalizing the art objects and regular objects for the sake of creative spirit and it also did not perceive

every contributor as a magician but as a fellow citizen. This view created an atmosphere of natural harmony rather than a forced attitude.

3.2.The Importance of the Periphery

In the light of these discussions, it is possible to conclude that throughout the history of biennialization, peripheral biennales somehow managed to surpass their predecessors that were in the "center" (Marchart, 2014, 270). According to Vogel (2010), the Istanbul Biennale happened to become the most famous biennale after the Venice Biennale. Even though due to its location and historical background the establishment of the Istanbul Biennale, can be considered as a peripheral biennale, according to Vogel, The Istanbul Biennale proved itself to become one of the central art scenes in the world which managed to stress issues like politics and economy. Surely this does not mean that Venice or Kassel lost their importance, however, today we can say that the biennial phenomenon's definitive qualities are more comes from the peripheral biennales (Marchart, 2014, 270). Therefore, only viewing biennales today via an economical lens that emphasizes city marketing or economical benefits is not a comprehensive view; biennales are places for redefining artistic canon and redefining hegemonies (Marchart, 2014, 273). Therefore, decentralization of the Western form of biennales does not mean destroying the values that biennials stand for. Instead, it can be viewed as decentralizing biennales mean that changing the compositions of them and creating an open space for dissident practices and discourses (Marchart, 2014, 273).

4.TURKISH ART SCENE BEFORE THE ISTANBUL BIENNALE

4.1.Early Developments Until 1980

For hundreds of years, Turkish art was redefined with the political, socio-cultural changes occurring in the world and regardless of its content, Turkish art kept developing itself over time (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3307). Since the appearance of visual arts in Turkey, artists have always tried to form communions, raise awareness towards artistic developments and increase their visibility (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3307). The chain of events that led to the foundation İstanbul Biennale is a period that constitutes a very long and complex group of developments. To understand and examine the foundation of the Istanbul Biennale, it would be helpful to take a look at the artistic developments that occurred in Turkey in the pre-biennale period.

Before the conceptualization of art in a modern or Western sense, miniature art has been a great part of Turkish art life (Keskin, 2014, p. 89). Influenced by Indian and Iranian art, miniature became the representation of traditional Turkish art until the appearance of paintings (Keskin, 2014, p. 89). Due to religious reasons, the field of arts was limited to literature, music, and miniature since creating sculptures or paintings were seen as a sin, therefore, all art was following socio-cultural norms, and the subjectivity of the artist was seen as a vice (Keskin, 2014, p. 89). However, in the 19th century, these values started to change and artists started to look for renewal and turned their faces towards Western art (Keskin, 2014, p. 89). First Turkish painters were all nobles or higher state officials who were able to afford to visit Europe and learn the methodologies that have been foreign to them (Keskin, 2014, p. 89). Thanks to these people, Western art was introduced to Turkish people.

Starting from 1845, there was an increase in the number of Western artists who entered the palace by presenting and marketing their works (Rastgeldi, 2019, p. 27-28). This group of

artists included oriental painters like Jean Leon Gerome who contributed to the foundation of the collection of oriental paintings in the palace (Rastgeldi, 2019, p. 27-28). The idea of creating a collection of paintings came from Sultan Abdulaziz himself (Rastgeldi, 2019, p. 27-28). These attempts were the first steps for the change of artistic perception in the 19th century (Rastgeldi, 2019, p. 27-28).

In 1873, the first painting exhibition was organized under the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz and it was called Sanayi Mektebi Sergisi (Exhibition of the School of Industry) (Yaman, 2012, p. 101). The exhibition was well appreciated by the public, media, and the elites (Uslu, 2010, p. 12-13). However, the second exhibition was more interesting in many ways; the majority of artists were non-Muslim and according to newspapers, this exhibition surpassed the first one and most of the references were implying that this exhibition was superior (Yaman, 2012; Uslu, 2010). Sultan Abdulaziz's close interest also seems to be appreciated; it has been said that Sultan collected his favorite artworks and bring them to the palace, furthermore, it has been also recorded that Sultan gave rewards to the artists that caught his attention (Yaman, 2012; Uslu, 2010). Several years later (1882), Ottoman Empire's first fine arts academy "Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi" was founded (Uslu, 2010, s. 12).

In the last twenty years of the 19th century, many art practices became recognized by the public and the state; sculpturing and drawing were included in the education programs and many artists came together under professional associations (Keskin, 2014, p. 265). As a consequence of these events first painter community was founded in the early years of the 20th century and it was called, Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti (Ottoman Painters Society) (Keskin, 2014, p. 265).

In the early republic years, the government enhanced and radicalized the Westernization efforts which was supported by artists and intellectuals of that time (Yılmaz, 2014, p. 298-299). Until the election of the Democratic Party in 1950, the art scene was

mostly monitored and has been developed by the state, however, in 1950 liberal market system started to dominate the art fields (Yılmaz, 2014, p. 298-299). Most of the artists had contradictory opinions with Democratic Party, due to corruption and land policies that empowered landlords against peasants (Yılmaz, 2014, p. 298-299). When the coup of 1960 occurred there was a slight interruption regarding the artistic developments (Yılmaz, 2014, p. 298-299). However, AP came to power, these developments continue and in the '60s, government policies were aiming to remove many important artists like Nazım Hikmet and Aziz Nesin from art scenes due to their political opinions (Yılmaz, 2014, p. 298-299). Therefore, most of the artists of that time adopted a critical attitude towards the government (Yılmaz, 2014, p. 298-299).

Throughout the 70s and post-coup 80s, the art scene in Turkey has gone through many important changes (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). The distinction between the art piece and its sociological, cultural influences became blurred in this period (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). With the high urbanization, artists started to look at the events that have been happening around them with an urbanized lense, therefore, cultural variation and multiplicity became important (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). Art pieces became more post-modern; the structure of most art pieces transformed, arrangements that involve the exhibition site itself, the appearance of more conceptual artworks, interactive drama plays imply that this generation was open to new ideas and they are very different from their predecessors in terms of relation to tradition (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). First galleries appeared in this period and quickly improved themselves over time; exhibitions with a curator and curatorial concerns first started in these years(Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). With liberal policies and the free market economy's influences, art pieces started to be perceived as investment options and objects of trade, therefore, the common conception of an art piece started to change (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). The art language which had strictly aesthetic

concerns transformed into a language that was influenced by sociology, philosophy, and other fields (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). These period is marked by important exhibitions like "Yeni Eğilimler" (New Tendencies) in 1977, "Günümüz Sanatçıları" (Contemporary Artists) in 1980 and "Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit" (A Section of the Pioneering Turkish Art) in 1984 (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3308). These exhibitions gave the way for the organization of biennales later on.

4.2.Developments in the 1980s

The government policies of this era can be seen as an important factor that created the base for international art biennales and changed the introverted, closed attitude of the Turkish art scene, and slowly transformed it into an international one which became a part of the global art scene (Madra, 2005). With the communicational and logistical developments in the late '80s, local art has been forced to be involved in the international dynamics of the global art scene (Madra, 2005). Even though many rich people were not educated and lacked vision, they still bought art pieces and supported artists due to the prestige that they gain by possessing such pieces and at the same time, high art and subcultures started to intervene and this led to many unique art practices that originated in Turkey (Madra, 2005). According to Beral Madra, several conditions made paintings "consumable products" which in some sense contributed to the popularity of arts in general in Turkey. The established galleries started to present themselves as "work" spaces, painting began to be perceived as an independent profession, therefore, the artworks started to form a free market (Madra, 2005). Moreover, while immigrants who came from the Turkish periphery started to present themselves with their art, Turkish capitalists who started to enter the international business communities were trying to mimic the Western bourgeoisie (Madra, 2005).

Politically, the '80s was a complicated and crucial period that contained dramatic changes in the history of modern Turkey. Even though he has close relations with the junta,

Özal tried to surpass the effects of the coup; he took important steps for rebuilding the democracy and energizing the economy with liberal policies (Zürcher, 2004, p. 283). These policies aimed to build a free-market economy based on export and lower inflation (Zürcher, 2004, p. 283). This period also is crucial for the world due to a dramatic increase in the accessibility of information and globalization, therefore, Turkey also took its share in terms of these factors. It can be seen that there was an atmosphere of outward orientation in economics and investments, however, this tendency to take part in international scenes was not limited to economics; the socio-cultural structure and values of Turkish people started to change and started being presented in the international sphere (Bek, 2002, p. 42). In the light of these developments, two important exhibitions marked Turkey's entrance to the global art scene; "Ankara Uluslararası Asya-Avrupa Sanat Bienali" (International Ankara Asia-Europe Art Biennale) and "1. Uluslararası İstanbul Çağdaş Sanat Sergisi" (1st Istanbul International Contemporary Art Exhibition) which is later called the Istanbul Biennale (Bek, 2002, p. 42).

According to Beral Madra, two important factors gave the way for the establishment of biennales in Turkey. Firstly, the country or the city that hosts a biennale presents its cultural identity via becoming a part of a massive international scene that contains a competitive atmosphere in terms of ideology, economy, and aesthetics; secondly, biennales are manifestations of globalized art systems of the U.S.A and Europe which are intervened since the 1950s, therefore, if a country is in a position that can show reactions to these art systems, it is a big chance for that country to be a part of that international nexus and present itself (Madra, 2003, p.211).

4.3.Asian-European Art Biennale

The first international art biennale of Turkey was organized in the year 1986 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's division which was responsible for fine arts (Bek, 2002, p. 42-43). The committee was containing ministry officials and artists who were responsible for

discussing foreign countries' ministries for the choice of artists and attaining a curator for the international exhibition who would be also a member of the committee (Bek, 2002, p. 42-43). The Asian-European Art Biennale aimed to provide a space in which the local artists of Turkey can participate in an exhibition that contains internationally important artists in the plastic arts field and communicate with those artists (As cited in Bek, 2002, p. 42-43). It was also aimed that by using a unifying language via arts, the exhibition would signify an event that can contribute to the ideas of international "peace and friendship" (As cited in Bek, 2002, p. 42-43).

Being a state-organized biennale, Asia-Europe Art Biennale was conducted four times in the years 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, and the biennale was hosted each time by the State Museum of Painting and Sculpture (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3310). Although in the first biennale there were four categories of art pieces such as painting, sculpture, ceramic and original print, these categories were not stressed in the later three biennales (Bek, 2002, p. 42-43). These exhibitions were considered as competitive exhibitions, therefore, many artists and art pieces were given prizes by the international committee (Bek, 2002, p. 42-43). In contrast with the other biennales which were organized by other countries at that time and biennales in general, Asia-Europe Art Biennals' curation was not done by an emphasis on a theme or a concept, however, by providing a scene for representation for artistical movements and contemporary artists in Turkey, these exhibitions also gave a chance to artists in terms of inclusion of individuality and interpretation (Bek, 2002, p. 42-43). Therefore, the conceptual framework or theme of these exhibitions was given by each artist's interests and concerns which were reflected on their art pieces (Bek, 2002, p. 42-43).

4.4.The Istanbul Biennale:

The second biennale of Turkey is the "1. Uluslararası İstanbul Çağdaş Sanat Sergisi" (1st Istanbul International Contemporary Art Exhibition) and the exhibition lasted from 25th

of September to 15th of November 1987 (Bek, 2002, p. 43-44). İstanbul Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts) which was founded by Eczacıbaşı had been organizing art festivals since 1973 and these festivals were containing concerts, drama plays, ballet shows, cinema events with plastic art exhibitions (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3310). However, IKSİV later decided that the exhibitions for plastic arts should be presented separately, instead of including them in the festivals that they used to organize before and this decision became the beginning of the Istanbul Biennale (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3310).

Beral Madra, the coordinator of the 1st Istanbul International Contemporary Art Exhibition, stated the aims of these events as adding elements to the International Istanbul Festival which can bring a universal understanding of arts, emphasize the events of culture and arts, attracting international attention for the local art scene and presenting each country's understanding of art by including them in this exhibition, introducing artists that are trying to contribute to the artistic developments in Turkey to the international artists, critics, and collectors (2003, p.13). While IKSİV states the purposes of the biennale as introducing international artists to the Turkish public and, at the same time, introducing local artists to the international art scenes, forming a relationship between the international art scene and the Turkish art scene by creating a suitable environment for communication and documenting international art exhibitions (Anonymous, 1987).

One year before the Istanbul Biennale, Turkey's reputation in terms of artistic developments was challenged by the fact that the Head of State demanding the removal of several art pieces from the Asian-European Art Biennale (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). Due to this incident, the biennale was considered a failure in the international art scene (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). Therefore, when the 1st Istanbul Biennale happened, nobody was sure that it would continue and become the biennale that it later came to be (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). Since the foundation of Proje4L's non-profit space for contemporary art in Istanbul called the

Museum of Contemporary Art, there were no places for exhibiting or collecting modern or contemporary artworks (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

In this atmosphere, Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts acted as "the unofficial Ministry of Culture" -as Bydler calls it- and had seen, an opportunity to organize a biennale due to the need for international representation in the local art scene. It was a convenient time for that also because of the crucial developments that happened throughout the 1980s, furthermore, as a gallerist and coordinator from Istanbul, Beral Madra was frustrated due to difficulties of organizing an international art festival in Turkey which results from the lack of international contact with the art scenes around the world (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). Eventually, the 1st Istanbul Biennale came to be and although chronologically it did not become the first international art biennale of Turkey, it became the first Istanbul biennial of contemporary art (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

The efforts of Beral Madra were not in vain, because the second edition of the Istanbul Biennale was conducted in 1989 and at that time, there was a discussion about Turkey's entrance to the European Union which seems to be a suitable atmosphere for such an event to occur (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). According to Bydler, the second edition of the Istanbul Biennale had changed the topological structure of the art scene in the world. When the first edition of the Istanbul Biennale was organized, it was seen as a peripheral biennale that was hosted by a peripheral city when compared to other central biennales (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). However, this slightly changed when the second edition of the Istanbul Biennale was conducted; the biennale was perceived as a semi-peripheral biennale, therefore, the second edition should be considered as an important turning point in terms of an international image of Istanbul (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

The first biennale's theme was "Geleneksel Yapılarda Çağdaş Sanat" (Contemporary Art in Traditional Spaces) and there were two locations that hosted Turkish and foreign artists

(Bek, 2002, p. 43-44). While the bath of Hagia Sophia was hosting local artists who were asked for re-interpreting traditional architecture of the Ottoman Empire, Hagia Eirene Church was hosting foreign artists who were asked for re-interpreting traditional Byzantine architecture (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3311). The situation was vice versa when the second edition of the Istanbul Biennale was organized in 1989; while Turkish artists were hosted by Hagia Eirene Church, foreign artists exhibited their works in Hagia Sophia and Süleymaniye Kültür Merkezi (Süleymaniye Cultural Center) (Bek, 2002; Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017). The theme of the second biennial was slightly different from the first one; it was decided that the theme also contain these traditional structures' environments, therefore, the theme was stated as "Geleneksel Yapılarda ve Çevrede Çağdaş Sanat" (Contemporary Art in Traditional Spaces and Environment) (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3311). There were 141 artists from 12 countries and while re-interpreting traditional structures, contemporary concerns were also stressed (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3311). As can be seen, there were two different sub-themes for each area under one curatorial theme. With Germano Celant's advice -who has been a part of the Venice Biennial for a long time- historical city settings were chosen (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

The third edition of the Istanbul Biennale was curated by Vasıf Kortun and the theme selected for the biennale was "Kültürel Farklılığın Üretimi" (The Reproduction of Cultural Difference) (Bek, 2002; Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017). It was planned to exhibit in 1991, however, due to financial and construction problems it was delayed until 1992 and the exhibition was present from 16th of October to 30th of November (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3312). There were 75 artists from 15 countries and the maximum age limit of artists was 40 (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3312). Feshane – formerly a textile factory- was used as the only exhibition site and a national pavilion system was used (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3312). The usage of the pavilion model did not imply that Istanbul was following the Venetian model;

according to Bydler, the first three editions of the Istanbul Biennale presented Istanbul as an alternative center, because, the usage of the pavilion model located Istanbul in the middle of a continuum of Venice and Havanna at the opposite ends (Bydler, 2004, Marchart 2014). In the first three editions, the number of Turkish artists was disproportionately higher, however, this changed when the local artist numbers were reduced and curatorial statement gained importance in the fourth and later biennales (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

Bydler considers the fourth edition as a "milestone" for the Istanbul biennial historiography. Organized in 1995 and Rene Block as its artistic director, the fourth edition of the Istanbul Biennale had some important differences from its predecessors. Firstly, the national pavilion system was abandoned while a symposium and a workshop were added; secondly, curatorship was separated from the organizational board which made this edition a "mega-show under a single curator and a theme" like the Sydney Biennale (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). The theme chosen by Rene Block was "Orient/ation. The Vision of Art In a Paradoxical World" which attracted significantly higher international attention (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). Even after the biennale, Rene Block kept close relationships with the Turkish art scene and artists who were involved in the fourth edition of the Istanbul Biennale (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

The fifth edition was curated by a relatively less known Spanish curator Rosa Martínez in 1997 (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). The selection of curators for the later biennales proved that there was a tendency for inviting promising curators instead of well-known famous curators such as Paolo Colombo from Switzerland for the sixth (1999), Yuko Hasegawa from Japan for the seventh (2001), and Dan Cameron from the USA for the eighth biennial (2003) (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). These selections point out that there was a concern for a balanced representation of Eastern and Western cultures, therefore, we can conclude that the Istanbul Biennale is expected to serve as a cultural merger between East and West (Bydler,

2004, p.132-139).



5.AFTER-MATH OF THE BIENNALE PHENOMENON IN TURKEY

Until it participated in the international art scene via organizing biennials, the Turkish art scene was a closed ecosystem that does not interact with the outside (Bek, 2002, p. 44-49). In the 19th century, Turkish artists started to participate in international art events and changed their views on art via practicing in the other fields of visual arts besides miniature art (Bek, 2002, p. 44-49). This "Westernization" process continued when Ottoman Empire gave the way to the Turkish Republic and slowly developing itself, Turkish art scene went through different developments, and eventually, these developments led to the organization of biennales (Bek, 2002, p. 44-49). The interdisciplinary and contemporary art presented in those biennales attracted attention and was welcomed by the public (Bek, 2002, p. 44-49). In this context biennales in Turkey provided contemporary art practices a chance to increase their visibility and acceptance (Bek, 2002, p. 44-49).

Perceived as the most popular and important form of exhibiting art pieces, biennales made the concepts like "curator" or "biennale" a part of the Turkish art scene and contributed to the understanding of contemporary art while changing the artist characteristics (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3317-3318). These changes can be seen via examining the art pieces and it can be said that these changes include more material usage, new and comprehensive methods of production such as installation (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3317-3318). There are also changes regarding the content of the artworks; most of the artists started to include their political or philosophical ideas into their pieces via emphasizing subject matters like women's rights, identity, inequality, freedom of speech, globalization, communication, poverty, war, environmental concerns, migration and technology (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3317-3318).

Another contribution of the Istanbul Biennale was the fact that it created an alternative

to traditional art exhibitions in Turkey; since the exhibitions were presented in public spaces and accessible locations all around the city, the line that separates a public space and an art exhibition became blurry (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3317-3318). Art was formerly seen as an activity that belongs behind the closed door, however, the Istanbul Biennale extended these limits via carrying art to the billboards, streets, metro stations, airports, historical and touristic places (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3317-3318). Therefore, these developments helped to change the former public opinion about artistic practices and contribute to the union of art and daily life (Okur&Bozdoğan, 2017, p. 3317-3318). Regarding the discussions above, it is easy to see that the purposes of the Istanbul Biennale are mostly fulfilled. Biennial carried Istanbul to an important position in the international art scene and managed to form a base for artistic developments in Turkey by taking it to another level; artists, curators, collectors, critics, and authors are closely following the developments of the Istanbul Biennale. Therefore, we can conclude that biennales are important early steps for artistic developments in Turkey.

As it was mentioned early in this study, biennales have an ambivalent, complex structure which makes them a subject for debate in terms of politics, culture, and hegemony. Even though the Istanbul Biennale is successful in terms of forming a base for artistic developments and being the first comprehensive contemporary art biennale of Turkey, it is not an exception and cannot be regarded as a separate phenomenon from the general. Most of the discussion revolve around the choice of curators, especially foreign curators.

The choice for a free-lancer foreign curator as the artistic director of the Istanbul Biennale has its upsides and downsides according to Bydler. Starting with planning, in every step curators and artists are always interacting with their foreign colleagues. This is very important for the art community in Turkey because they get a chance to form an international network of people from the global art scenes and they get access to the same opportunities with an international artist who works generally with higher professional standards (Bydler,

2004, p.132-139). Furthermore, even though foreign artists also add to the media value to the biennale, it is a little change when compared to foreign curator's media value (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

Besides these positive contributions, there are also downsides to recruiting a foreign curator. Firstly, there were local criticisms for dependence on the outside; secondly, there were a lot of complaints about irrational respect for foreigners; these complaints revolved around a lack of understanding of the cultural significance of Istanbul and inequality between foreign and local artists (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). To be more specific, local artists had much less space for their artworks to be presented, and their number was decreased when compared to former (first three biennales) biennales (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). On the other hand, as a semi-peripheral biennale, Istanbul is expected to represent its eastern elements with the western elements and form a synthesis (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). However, after the third biennale due to the choice of curators from nations such as Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and the USA, the Western character of the biennale was emphasized (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139). Even though 7th Istanbul Biennial's artistic director Yuko Hasegawa's theme "EGOFUGAL: Fugue from Ego for the Next Emergence" contained some eastern philosophical elements, the choice of artists implied that there is a tendency to choose white European male artists (Bydler, 2004, p.132-139).

A similar criticism comes from Atagök and Platt (2001). Like many writers such as Sezer Tansuğ, they stress the decision of decreasing the number of Turkish artists participating in the biennale (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109). When the number of artists decreased from hundreds to only five or ten artists, this number continued decreasing in every biennale (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109). Even though several different methods were used to choose local artists, there were apparent repetitive selections of the same artists (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109). Eventually, this led the public to gradually lose interest in the

Biennial since it is getting more and more contradicted due to its procedures (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109). Therefore, the expectation that the Istanbul Biennale is meant to enhance the contemporary art in Turkey and represent Turkish or unknown Middle-Eastern artists in biennales while introducing them to the international audiences seems to be failed (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109). Instead, the Istanbul Biennial seems to be a part of predictable Eurocentric exhibitions (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109). According to Atagök and Platt, the multilayered history of the country and its unique geopolitical location which is a place that intersects Asia, the Middle-East and Europe can provide Turkey the chance for presenting provocative new perspectives. However, disregarding these concerns means also disregarding local artists and gifted artists of the periphery (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109). This concern does not signify a nationalistic agenda, on the contrary, the conservative mainstream approach of the Istanbul Biennale leads to a wasted opportunity to represent highly sophisticated who have been producing their works in Turkey, Middle East, and Asia (Atagök&Platt, 2001, p.109).

Another important consideration stresses the city's usage. Ceren Özpınar (2011) elaborates on the Istanbul Biennale and its relation to the individuals and the city itself. Generally, it can be said that biennales serve to the marketing of the city in a globalized art market and by doing this it creates an economical advantage (Özpınar, 2011, p.279). Elements like the exhibition sites, themes, the visiting hours, routes, and styles of presenting all re-organized for the sake of the biennale, therefore, the art world mixes with the public spaces of daily life (Özpınar, 2011, p.279). These public spaces are important for mutual recognition and understanding, therefore, participation in the biennales should not be restricted to a limited people, rather, it should be an event that is open to common use, have pluralist features, and include mutual respect while resisting bureaucratic hierarchy (Özpınar, 2011, p.279). Even though biennales mostly fulfill

these expectations, Özpınar stresses that biennales should search for answers for socio-cultural problems and include critical discourses to go beyond the limited modes of thinking and emphasize social responsibility while creating deep relationships.



6. BIENNIALS AT THE PERIPHERY?: THE CASES OF SINOP, ÇANAKKALE AND MARDIN BIENNIALS

Institutionalization of the Turkish art market extended its scope starting from the '80s and with the establishment of the Istanbul Biennale, these developments accelerated the process when we come to examine mid 90's (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128). After its first extensive Biennale experience, the motive of organizing a biennale was encouraged and other cities of Turkey began to take their part in the biennial histography (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128). Turkey's first biennale that has been organized outside of İstanbul is "Sinopale". Sinopale was conducted in Sinop in the year 2006; Mardin followed Sinop in 2010 and Çanakkale also organized a biennial in 2011 (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128).

Sinopale is a significant biennale since it stands out as an example which can be seen as a peripheral biennale that opens space for new, progressive ideas (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128). The structure of the biennale was different in terms of formality; the majority of the participants were volunteers and the public's inclusion was stressed which brought artists and audiences together while presenting an unconventional approach (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128). The national pavilion system was not used and every art piece was exhibited in an order which disregards nationality (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128). The Sinopale is happening every two years and each year has its conceptual framework.

So far there were seven biennales has been conducted as; 1st Sinopale "Thing", 2nd Sinopale "The New Order of Things", 3rd Sinopale "Hidden Memories, Lost Traces", 4th Sinopale "Wisdom of the Shadow: Art in the Era of Corrupted Information", 5th Sinopale "Clusters and Crystals: Observing at Point Zero", 6th Sinopale "Transposition" and 7th Sinopale "Here and Where" ("Sinopale Nedir?", n.d). Sinopale is a very strong biennial

organization in terms of curation; Melih Görgün and Beral Madra, two experienced curators, participated as curators in most of the biennales and their experience and skills contributed even more with a crowded biennale team (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128). In total, the number of curators who worked for Sinopale is higher than the Istanbul Biennale (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128).

Organized by the CABININ (Canakkale Biennial Initiative)- a nonprofit organization formed by members from different areas which assume the duty of organizing, supporting national and international events, creating artistic platforms- Canakkale Biennial pursued its existence from 2008 to the present day ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018). Starting from the first exhibitions, Canakkale Biennial always tried to emphasize the integration of contemporary art and daily life of Canakkale locals via providing a space in which art becomes a medium of common understanding and democratic discussions ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018). For this purpose empty structures like Old Armenian Church, Korfmann Library, Er Bath were used; the choice of Biennials was carried out meticulously to bring together locals' everyday activities with biennales ("Canakkale biennial," 2018).

Until the present day, there have been seven Canakkale Biennales were organized but the 5th Canakkale Biennale was not exhibited (Madra & CABININ, 2016). Curated by Denizhan Özer and Seyhan Boztepe, first Canakkale Biennale's conceptual framework was "Transparent Illusions" and 2nd biennale's conceptual framework was "Fictional Realities, Transformations". The conceptual framework was "Fictions and Dissensions" for the 3rd, "Only The Dead Have Seen The End of War" for the 4th, "Homeland" for the 5th biennale, "Before the Past / After the Future" for the 6th, and "Constellation" for the 7th biennale. The last biennale also was available for online visitors due to the pandemic (CABININ, 2020).

The second city which followed Sinop was Mardin in 2010 (Otyam, n.d.). Three more biennales were organized respectively in 2012, 2015, and 2018. The main aim of the Mardin

Biennale was to carrying contemporary art from West to Eastern parts of Turkey via defending the idea that the art itself cannot be restrained to the limits of the geography and presenting a different view on center-periphery discussions (Beldan, 2017, p.125-128). Besides these efforts, the biennale also stresses attracting attention from academicians, students, artists, curators, critics, and different cultural groups by doing, the biennale was aimed to increase Mardin's visibility and create new spaces for intellectual and artistic sharing ("Bienal – Mardin Bienali," 2018).

The first biennale was from 4th of June to 5th of July and it carried Mardin to another level in the eyes of contemporary artists while enabling the local public to participate in the biennale via the clever choice of locations ("Bienal – Mardin Bienali," 2018). The first Mardin Biennale was curated by Döne Otyam who would become an important figure for the biennale and the exhibition was titled "Abbarakadabra". The second edition of Mardin Biennale was titled "Double Take"; the conceptual framework was "Mythologies" for the third and "Beyond Words" for the forth and latest biennale.

These biennales offer an alternative to the well-established and institutionalized Istanbul Biennale. All of the three biennales aim to present an experience that is far from the cultural center and by doing this, they also try to merge the artistic practices with the daily life of local citizens. However, there is a big blank in the literature and most of the texts lack extensive elaboration. Therefore, contemplating these biennales and evaluating them holds utter importance. To understand their stories, a closer look is required before going further.

6.1.Sinop Biennale (Sinopale):

The founder of the International Sinop Biennale, T. Melih Görgün describes Sinopale as an attempt to gather locals to create an atmosphere for collective artistic production and form an artistic language in the context of local development. In 2005,when Görgün and his friends Beral Madra, Handan Börüteçene, Emre Koyuncuğlu, Sinan Niyazioğlu, İpek Duben,

Umut Südüak, Mahir Namur, Nezaket Ekici, Elif Kuli visited Sinop, the idea for creating an international biennial in Sinop had come to Görgün (Görgün, 2019). This experience led them to consider the concepts like "participation" or "imece" (Turkish term for local cooperation in places far from industrial centers) in the context of arts (Görgün, 2019). According to Görgün, there is a friendly story in Sinop and this sympathetic feature of the Sinopale made it strong. The biennale influences the public and it makes people of all ages consider their living places differently and think on the subjects like common historical memory, problems of the city (Görgün, 2019).

Sinopale became a pioneer in terms of peripheral biennales of Turkey. Since the people of Turkey are used to see such events only in the cultural centers, the existence of the Sinopale itself changed this perspective and encouraged others to follow (Görgün, 2019). Görgün stresses that although it is very satisfying to manage to do something like this, it has its challenges. Years of experience and the vision of the organizers catalyzed the process (Görgün, 2019). Görgün also emphasizes that the fact that he is himself a local citizen of Sinop and the helpful attitude of Sinop locals also helped them to create such an important event. He also points that the conceptual framework of each biennial is based on people's problems and opinions. For example, their first conceptual framework "Thing" was decided with the help of the locals (Görgün, 2019). Sinop is also significant because of its geographical and historical position (Görgün, 2019). Firstly, it was home to Diogenes and it has been witness to many civilizations' rise and fall. Since ancient times Sinop was a city of creativity, therefore, the biennale emphasizes independent and collective working, organizers try to encourage the public and artists to work together. To elaborate on the biennale further, it is useful to examine each Sinopale with their conceptual framework.

6.1.1. 1st Sinopale and "Thing"

As mentioned previously, Sinop holds historical significance since the city witnessed

different important points in history. In the Ottoman period, Sinop was a trade center which mostly used for ship production ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). However, as an isolated landscape, Sinop is perceived as a suitable place for a prison ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). In later years, the city mostly talked about its prison which welcomed individuals arrested because of their political opinions ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). Even though the prison was aimed to isolate these dangerous political ideas, on the contrary, it made Sinop a center for dissent and a place for intellectual production ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006).

In the cold war era, due to its geographical significance, NATO built a base to keep Soviet Russia in check ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). The economy of the city was based on this base in those times and the government disregarded Sinop's other qualities which made Sinop citizens feel a sense of abandonment, therefore, the locals of Sinop became more aware of their environment, and being witnessed those events made them think and produce on those matters ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006).

Those developments contributed to form an urban profile that is contemporary and dissident; the prison works of thought criminals, artistic events, and events regarded above formed a base for establishing a new center for cultural development ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). The fact that the central government disregards Sinop's natural and cultural resources forced locals to show a "counter-behavior" ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). The thing that led to this "counter-behavior" and the thing that presented art as a value that should be treated respectfully is the same "thing" that gave the 1st Sinopale its conceptual framework. "Thing" is a concept that relates to our responsibilities, the things we disregarded, the space between re-construction and destruction, our purity ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). All these relational points were stressed in the works which presented in Sinope Prison where most of these "thing"s dwell

("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006).

Starting from the 80's government restricted its policies of arts and culture to the private organizations, therefore, art had become an instrument for marketing that aims to attract audiences for consumption; this led to an understanding which disregards social concerns and only tries to create an impact on the masses so all significant cultural and artistic events were gathered around the center which excluded the cities like Sinop from the global art scenes ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). In the light of these developments, Sinop represents a dissent against this view and appears as an alternative that emphasizes the individual initiative of the local public members.

The artworks in the first edition of Sinopale were located in places like Sinop Prison, Ethnography Museum based on artist's preference ("Sinopale, 1. Uluslararası Sinop Bienali," 2006). The interactive feature of the biennale encouraged the public to engage more. With its three curators, T. Melih Görgün, Beral Madra, and Dr. Vittorio Urbani, 1st Sinopale still holds a great significance for the peripheral biennales of Turkey.

6.1.2. 2nd Sinopale and "The New Order of Things"

Exhibited from 16th of August to 5th of September 2008, the second edition of Sinop Biennale has a crowded group of curators and artists. Beral Madra states that they borrow the conceptual framework from Foucault's work titled "The Order of Things" and changed it with the inclusion of the word "new". Madra stresses that as a philosopher Foucault is mostly occupied by criticism and deconstruction of the existent cultural and ideological structures, therefore, he does not try to offer an alternative that would replace these existent structures. Even though 2nd Sinopale does not claim to surpass Foucault's wisdom, it tries to emphasize the "new order" via presenting artworks from a city in a very conservative region of Turkey (Madra, 2008).

With its complicated political history, Sinop has a very important symbolic

significance and represents the dogmatic order of things in every sense (Madra, 2008). Therefore this biennial aims to have a deconstructive effect on these matters and raise awareness about the outputs of this order of things (Madra, 2008). As the first edition showed, Sinop locals adopted contemporary art as an instrument to elaborate on the collective memory and question the daily developments (Madra, 2008). Previous concerns about the NATO base and the cold war are replaced by the environmental concern regarding Nuclear Plantation (Madra, 2008). People of Sinop seem to be very aware and reactive in terms of these matters (Madra, 2008). The artists who gathered for the biennale exhibited artworks that formed a meaningful context for thinking about these matters, emphasizing a possibility for a new order of things in the economical crisis and chaotic political atmosphere of 2008.

6.1.3. 3rd Sinopale and "Hidden Memories and Lost Traces"

The third edition of the Sinopale stresses that every city has a visible and a latent, hidden side (Madra et al., 2010). To understand the hidden stories of a city, one must experience this city (Madra et al., 2010). Even though globalization seems to provide a semantic extension for cities, it serves contrary to this extension and has an influence that made cities monotype places for looping routines (Madra et al., 2010). The effects of globalization led organizers to conduct events which disregard cities' historical past and erase the spirit of these cities (Madra et al., 2010). As a process that encourages limitless consumption dynamics, globalization made people forget the uniqueness of each city (Madra et al., 2010).

In this context the 3rd Sinopale aimed to reveal the hidden memories and lost traces of Sinop and form a collective memory; artists who were informed about Sinop's extensive historical developments before the globalization were tasked to search for methods to find new ways to recollect and reveal these lost memories of the city with their memories (Madra et al., 2010). In the most northern part of the Karadeniz Region, Sinop appears as an isolated

city that has a complex memory (Madra et al., 2010). Sinop Prison, contradictory political developments, energy problems, and its geopolitical location are all parts of this complex memory (Madra et al., 2010). In this respect 3rd, Sinopale aimed to elaborate on dichotomies like "choice of the rulers" and "choice of the people who live in Sinop" (Madra et al., 2010). The biennale tried to present hidden memory of the city in the contexts of individuals and neighborhoods while keeping its interactive quality (Madra et al., 2010).

6.1.4. 4th Sinopale and "Wisdom of the Shadow: Art in the Era of Corrupted Information"

4th International Sinop Biennale exhibited from 1st of August to 26th of August 2012 and had five groups of curators for each location. The conceptual framework elaborated on Diogenes of Sinope and his philosophy while taking a look at the current developments (Önol, 2012). Conceptions of "shadow" and "darkness" have been always implied ignorance and the absence of knowledge in Western philosophy (Önol, 2012). Therefore, the choice of name for the 18th century is not in vain (Önol, 2012). We can see that there are parallel dichotomies between light and dark, knowledge and ignorance in the Western world (Önol, 2012). The light signifies wisdom and knowledge; most people still relate these two concepts, on the other hand, the concept of shadow was always has been perceived as "the other", "the unwanted" and "the dangerous" (Önol, 2012). However, the line that separates wisdom and ignorance became thinner and thinner with the rise of social media and the beginning of the era which is commonly called "the information age" (Önol, 2012). Perceptions of "true" and "false" are now mixed due to pollution of information (Önol, 2012).

In this context 4th, Sinopale emphasizes the philosophy of Diogenes which is closer to the eastern philosophical ideas; according to Önol, even though there is no written text of his own, we know that Diogenes rejected the idea of civilization and defended the idea that happiness can be only obtained by a harmonious life with nature. In this sense, Diogenes'

ideas are following the main ideas of Eastern philosophy (Önol, 2012). While Westerners see darkness as a fearful object and try to avoid it, Eastern philosophy embraces darkness as much as lightness and accepts them as they are while trying to find beauty in even darkness (Önol, 2012).

4th Sinopale contemplates these issues and criticizes the policies of globalism which make people want more and more without a limit (Önol, 2012). The biennale calls people to think about the resources that are being wasted for the sake of consumption and "development". Instead of bringing light into the darkness, 4th Sinopale invites darkness to form an interactive context and contemplate our existence (Önol, 2012).

6.1.5. 5th Sinopale and "Clusters and Crystals: Observing at Point Zero"

Organized between mid-July and mid-August of 2014, the fifth edition of Sinop Biennale presents itself as an event-oriented, process, and location-focused biennale (Sevova&Örgün, 2014). As regarded above, Sinopale explores new modes of production and tries to merge art with daily life (Sevova&Örgün, 2014). Besides the exhibitions of Sinopale, there were also performance-based events, movie events, and courses for children and locals of Sinop (Sevova&Örgün, 2014). The fifth edition aimed to emphasize the art's power of re-shaping the nexus of values and do it in the city's historical context (Sevova&Örgün, 2014). The conceptual framework for the fifth edition of Sinopale signifies a new experience in terms of perception while elaborates on the creation and destructions of public, spiritual environments (Sevova&Örgün, 2014).

6.1.6. 6th Sinopale and "Transposition"

Curated by T. Melih Görgün, Nike Batzner, and Jonatan Habib Engqvist and exhibited 1st of August - 17th of September 2017, 6th edition was the tenth anniversary of Sinopale ("Transposition / Aktarım", 2017). During this period Sinopale managed to carry contemporary art to a peripheral area of Turkey ("Transposition / Aktarım", 2017). By the

participation of people from different ideologies and cultures, encouragement of locals for engaging in the matters of the biennale, Sinopale again presents an alternative image ("Transposition / Aktarım", 2017).

The conceptual framework of the sixth edition stands for several meanings but all of these meanings signify an interaction among values ("Transposition / Aktarım", 2017). 6th Sinopale tries to elaborate on the issue while creating new spaces for interaction; thanks to the European Cultural Association, Sinopale pursued its existence via efforts of volunteers and micro-political dynamics ("Transposition / Aktarım", 2017).

6.1.7. 7th Sinopale and "Here and Where"

The seventh edition of Sinopale was organized in 2019 and curated by Aslı Serbest and Mona Mahall. The term "here and there" was altered and changed to the title of the biennale; "here and where" and this title signifies the places in the limits of our perceptions (Serbest & Mahall, 2019). The present is formed by geo-cultural and geo-political realities' mythological, linguistic and material changes and this requires local politics, however, local politics does not signify the local place as the area of its knowledge (Serbest & Mahall, 2019). Rather, the 7th edition of Sinop Biennale emphasizes the importance of the route instead of the location (Serbest & Mahall, 2019). The location, therefore, is understood as not a singularity of space but a set of relations and intersections (Serbest & Mahall, 2019).

Following this context, curators planned to carry the exhibition to Istanbul, Berlin, Vienna, and Stockholm; just like Diogenes' route to Athens (Serbest & Mahall, 2019). The aim of this journey was not just restricted to exhibit the artworks but interact with people in those locations and making them active participants rather than passive observers (Serbest & Mahall, 2019). Curators also stress that by doing this, they wanted to see thinking subjects when they looked back instead of just objects (Serbest & Mahall, 2019).

6.2. Çanakkale Biennale:

According to Beral Madra, when organizing a biennial the most important thing that is considered is the city's sociological potential. As discussed earlier, Mardin is a city that stands out with its culture and diversity and one of the most important cities in the Middle East, on the other hand, Sinop is a city that witnessed important political developments like the cold war, isolation policies, and usage of the Sinop Prison as a place for thought criminals (Madra, 2016). In this context, Çanakkale is the city that Ottoman Empire gave the way to the Turkish Republic (Madra, 2016). Madra points that it contains contradictory elements; while it represents the foundation of modernism, it also represents a struggle, a fight against the imperialism of the West. Besides the historical elements, Çanakkale is one of the most strategically important cities of the Aegean Region, and due to its huge University, it has a wide range of young people, therefore, has a very suitable base for touristic activities (Madra, 2016).

Seyhan Boztepe, one of the founders of Çanakkale Biennial states that it was CABININ that made the biennale possible. Since 2006, CABININ had been organizing and supporting national and international art events or social responsibility projects and it had many contributions to the city of Çanakkale, especially the Çanakkale Biennale in 2008 (Boztepe, 2014). Çanakkale Biennial tried to merge local public life with artistic practices via using public places or governmental buildings since the first event ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018). Mostly the emphasis was on representing unrepresented parts of the community and the subject matters of these biennales were topics like teenagers, children, gender inequality, people with disabilities, old people's struggles ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018). With its unique structure and devotion, Çanakkale Biennale managed to maintain the support of local authorities as well as non-governmental organizations and private investors ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018).

6.2.1. 1st Çanakkale Biennale and "Transparent Illusions"

Curated by Seyhan Boztepe and Denizhan Özer, the first edition of the Çanakkale Biennale welcomed over 50 artists from different countries and exhibited in 2008. International exhibitions were conducted before in Çanakkale with the help of CABININ and they were titled "The Past Time Dreams" (2006) and "Borderline" in 2007 ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018). Even though these exhibitions cannot be compared to the scale of a biennale, it is important to mention them since they gave way to the first biennale. The first exhibition aimed to present daily issues with references to the past and the second exhibition "Borderline" tried to emphasize the present-day situation of Turkey and Çanakkale in the context of the events that happen around the globe ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018). In the 1st Çanakkale Biennial, the conceptual framework stressed, criticized, examined, and questioned the issues related to social problems of Çanakkale and Turkey via using a language formed by contemporary art ("Canakkale Biennial," 2018).

6.2.2. 2nd Çanakkale Biennale and "Fictional Realities, Transformations"

The second edition of Çanakkale Biennale contemplates the problems of the 21st century in terms of fictional worlds and stresses that while people claim that humanity is developing, they ignore the fact that our daily lives are getting more difficult due to unnecessary problems and we waste most of our energy on these insignificant matters ("2. Çanakkale Bienali," 2010). With its history full of wars, genocides, and economical crises, humanity reached a point where fictional realities are founded and natural reality is disregarded ("2. Çanakkale Bienali," 2010). These fictional realities are kept existent by the mediums like media, art, and education which regard life as separated from thought and philosophy ("2. Çanakkale Bienali," 2010).

Even though these issues affected human life negatively, there is a possibility for dissent because the reaction against fictional realities helps people to form new ways of thinking and triggers new transformations ("2. Çanakkale Bienali," 2010). The second edition

of Çanakkale Biennial emphasizes that life in the new century is different from the 20th century in which the production practices were centered and all the resources were used for keeping the existent power structures ("2. Çanakkale Bienali," 2010). In this new age, these issues are questioned and new ways of living, thinking, and producing are being explored ("2. Çanakkale Bienali," 2010). Stressing these issues, 2nd Çanakkale Biennial was curated by the previous editions' curators and welcomed over 70 artists from different nations ("2. Çanakkale Bienali," 2010).

6.2.3. 3rd Çanakkale Biennale and "Fictions and Dissentions"

The third Çanakkale Biennial was curated by Beral Madra, Fırat Arapoğlu, Seyhan Boztepe and Deniz Erbaş ("3. Çanakkale Bienali," 2012). Exhibited in the eastern shore of The Dardanelles Straights in 2012, the third edition of the Çanakkale Biennial aims to present contemporary art aesthetics and dissents of its time via using visuals and performing arts ("3. Çanakkale Bienali," 2012).

Çanakkale is a city that very suitable for reflecting resistances and questioning the order of things since it has been a very important city both historically and geographically; from Troy to 1st World War many nations and factions tried to control Çanakkale because it is a city that binds continents, cultures, and civilizations ("3. Çanakkale Bienali," 2012). In this context, the 3rd Çanakkale Biennial calls artists to form spaces of engagement, activity, and interpretation ("3. Çanakkale Bienali," 2012). Because only by doing this, artists can show people that there is a possibility of resistance, there is a possibility of hope and prove that democracy and freedom can be attained both globally and regionally ("3. Çanakkale Bienali," 2012).

6.2.4. 4th Çanakkale Biennale and "Only The Dead Have Seen The End of War"

The 4th edition of the Çanakkale Biennial was exhibited in 2014, the 100th anniversary of the 1st World War and one year before the 100th anniversary of the Ottoman Empire's

victory in the war for Çanakkale (Madra et al., 2014). According to Boztepe, the biennale aimed to represent the effects of war by taking 1914 as a starting point and stress these effects via contemporary art exhibitions (Boztepe, 2014). The choice for the conceptual framework is highly significant because as a city that has militaristic and nationalist connotations, Çanakkale is a perfect place for questioning the effects of war and criticizing these connotations. Instead of historical sites which were used before, a furniture warehouse in the center of the city was used to exhibit the artworks (Madra et al., 2014) which were possibly intentional.

The biennial provided a common space for collaboration, production, and communication which enabled artists to meditate upon the effects of the 1st World War and the 20th century in general (Madra et al., 2014). Artists from Europe, the Balkans, the Middle-East and the Caucasia were invited to interpret the consequences of war via their artworks, however, the focus of these works was not limited to artists' own countries, rather, they elaborated on other countries' and nations' struggles as well (Madra et al., 2014). Collectively, these artists were managed to form a common visual memory (Madra et al., 2014). Curated by Beral Madra, Seyhan Boztepe, and Deniz Erbaş, 4th Çanakkale Biennial leaves a strong impression on young people and future generations that hopefully learn from the wrongs of their ancestors (Madra et al., 2014).

6.2.5. 5th Çanakkale Biennale and "Homeland"

Organized to exhibit between 24th September and 6th of November in 2016, 5th Çanakkale Biennial was influenced by philosopher Villem Flusser's ideas on immigration. According to Madra, Flusser emphasizes that being an immigrant, besides its difficulties and struggles, signifies freedom, and creative productions can come out from this freedom. In a time which more than 3 million Syrian immigrants have entered the country, Beral Madra states that these immigrants would want to create a new life and create new things. In this

context, the 5th Çanakkale Biennale was planned to elaborate on issues of 20th-century nationalism and its horrible consequences while stressing the life of immigrants, refugees, and exiles by inviting artists, curators, art, and culture institutions to participate in this biennale (Madra & CABININ, 2016).

However, the 5th Biennale was canceled because one of the officials from the governing party and who is also an MP from Çanakkale, accused Beral Madra, co-curator of the Çanakkale Biennale since 2012, of supporting terrorist and advocating the coup (Birgün Gazetesi, 2016). As a result, Beral Madra resigned from her position and this led to the cancellation of the biennale (Madra & CABININ, 2016).

6.2.6. 6th Çanakkale Biennale and "Before the Past / After the Future"

Taking inspiration from Homer's Illiad, the 6th edition of the Çanakkale Biennale problematizes past and future about Trojan War which happened where Çanakkale resides today (CABININ, 2018). Trojan War is a unique event that can be interpreted according to different dimensions (CABININ, 2018). We can both evaluate it as literary fiction and as a historical fact (CABININ, 2018). Although it is a literary work and contributed to the Western art world greatly; even today there are tons of references to Homer both in popular culture and in the artworks, it is also a historical document that gives us the details of a ten-year-long war (CABININ, 2018).

Even though thousands of years passed, we can still look at Trojan War and find fundamental issues that present themselves even today; the conflict between East and West, North and South, the inescapable reality of war are some of these issues (CABININ, 2018). In this context, the 6th Çanakkale Biennial focuses on historicizing time and the exhibition forms an artistic relationship with the concepts of before and after, while attempts to look towards the past from a very long distance and try to elaborate on it objectively (CABININ, 2018). Also questioning our understandings

of past-future or before-after in terms of relativity, perspective and, ethos, the 6th edition of Çanakkale Biennale was organized in 2018 and directed by Seyhan Boztepe (CABININ, 2018).

6.2.7. 7th Çanakkale Biennale and "Constellation"

From the moment humanity looked at the sky, they saw groups of stars and they assumed fictional borders which separated these groups (CABININ, 2020). As a way to understand how the universe works, humanity tried to give meaning to these clusters of stars by personification and myths (CABININ, 2020). Constellations are formed by connecting the dots in the sky, therefore, it can be also seen as a phenomenon that occurs when different elements, particles come together, intersects, and complete each other (CABININ, 2020).

The term "constellation" is used to imply groups of objects or people which are similar and interrelated in everyday language (CABININ, 2020). In the context of Çanakkale Biennale, it stands for the curatorial strategy of the CABININ. In the seventh edition, Çanakkale Biennale aimed to create a space for contemporary-art-based relations and collaborations while providing a context for interdisciplinary, intersecting disciplines like architecture, archaeology, history, and ecology (CABININ, 2020).

6.3. Mardin Biennale:

Döne Otyam, the founder of the Mardin Biennale, reports that she was always interested in the south-eastern region of Turkey due to the influence of her father. She states that she had always felt sympathy for those regions and assumed the duty of introducing these regions to the larger world. In 2009 Döne Otyam and her Ferhat Özgür decided to organize an exhibition in Mardin which later gave the way to the Mardin Biennale. This experience helped Otyam to form relationships with the local people of Mardin and prepare her for the biennale (Otyam, n.d.). Otyam states that it was a challenge to organize an exhibition in Mardin, however, Mardin Cinema Association helped her greatly. According to Otyam, Mardin is

very rich in terms of architecture, history, and geography, therefore, it is almost natural to establish a biennale in such an extraordinary city. In this context, Mardin offers an alternative collective memory while representing a part of the peripheral alternative culture of Turkey (Otyam, n.d.).

6.3.1. 1st Mardin Biennale and "Abbarakadabra"

To turn Mardin into a center for modern contemporary art, Mardin's first international biennale was organized and exhibited from 4th of June to 5th of July ("Bienal – Mardin Bienali," 2018). 1st Mardin Biennale's purpose was to gain international attention and acceptance with its "catchy" name and important content ("Bienal – Mardin Bienali," 2018).

The term "abbara" is a name for structures that have passages for both private houses and streets, therefore, in an age that private and public is getting mixed, the name holds great significance ("1. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2010). These structures were there even before the modern world, therefore, while they hold philosophical and sociological significance, we can also see them as objects of foresight for later developments in the modern world ("1. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2010). The title also stands for magic; the union of traditional and modern Mardin via art ("1. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2010). It was planned that artists would spread all around the city and try to re-imagine Mardin with their artworks; in other words, creating a "today" by using the history and heritage of Mardin ("1. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2010). This helps people to imagine old and new Mardin as two distinct places and helps them to re-consider their perception while seeing the city in a new way ("1. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2010). By doing this biennale attracts international attention via emphasizing Mardin's features that made it a unique city in a world full of monotypic cities that serve the idea of globalization ("1. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2010).

6.3.2. 2nd Mardin Biennale and "Double Take"

Curated by Paolo Colombo, the 2nd Mardin Biennial was organized on the 21st of September and the 21st of October 2012. The main exhibition was hosted by the Tokmakçılar Konağı (Mallesters' Mansion) and the buildings architectural layers, the complex structure resembles Mardin's multicultural atmosphere ("2. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2012). Besides this main exhibition, there were also other artworks exhibited in several different locations scattered around the city ("2. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2012). The scope of the artworks was very wide; such as video art, carpets, and interior architecture ("2. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2012).

There was an important effort to make the biennale blend with the city, therefore, it is stated that some artworks are very difficult to detect since they were so cleverly blended with the city's texture ("2. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2012). Regarding this concern, the curatorial strategy of the 2nd Mardin Biennale excludes radicalized artworks that stand out and manifest themselves overtly ("2. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2012). According to Döne Otyam, this biennale aimed to direct people to take a second look at the place they were seeing and reconsider their views. Maybe it is helpful to read the curatorial strategy in the context of Otyam's explanation.

Regardless of its artistic success 2nd edition, Mardin Biennale could not escape from criticism. According to Ali Artun choosing Paolo Colombo as the curator of the 2nd Mardin Biennale was a mistake. Even though Colombo emphasizes he stressed the city's cultural significance and conducted his curation following the local culture; according to Artun as a foreign curator who has never been in Mardin and did not experience its culture, Colombo cannot comprehend these issues as a local person. Therefore, the 2nd Mardin Biennale seems like a failure since it made the public distanced to the biennale.

A similar criticism comes from Emre Zeytinoğlu. Even though his points are not aimed at only Mardin Biennale but peripheral biennales of Turkey in general, it is worth

mentioning. According to Zeytinoğlu in places like Mardin or any city which is far away from the center, organizing events like art exhibitions is a challenge since the local public generally perceives these events as inconvenient "alien" interventions. Therefore, it is very crucial to conduct the process very carefully via considering the problems of the local public and the city to present the biennale not like an "alien" but as a part of the city.

In the light of these criticisms, Artun offers an alternative method for organizing Mardin Biennale. Mardin's location is the center for the culture of Mesopotamia; from India to Egypt, the geography of these regions witnessed all three of the big religions and different theological practices (Artun, 2014). Besides these issues, although Mardin was exposed to political and economical violence, it successfully kept its multicultural, unique texture (Artun, 2014). Furthermore, Mardin is a city that contains many different practices of craftsmanship (Artun, 2014). Therefore, naturally, Mardin can be considered a city of arts. In this respect, Artun offers to organize Mardin Biennials as festivals in which all of the elements of the city are represented and most of the public is included. Instead of inviting famous foreign curators and alienate the locals and adopt the colonial heritage of Venice, Artun suggests that Mardin's cultural capacity is suitable for a counter-biennale that represents local cultural and artistic practices (Artun, 2014).

6.3.3. 3rd Mardin Biennale and "Mythologies"

When we look at the 3rd Mardin Biennale, it is almost certain that Döne Otyam considered Ali Artun's criticism as a significant interpretation. Planned to exhibit in the year 2014 but delayed due to the developments in Kobane, 3rd Mardin Biennale exhibited in the May of 2015. Otyam states that it has been more difficult than the first two editions due to financial reasons, however, it became the most significant one in terms of its content. She also states that the devotion of collaborators, artists, and organizers helped her greatly with the organization and conduction of the biennale (Otyam, n.d.).

The curatorial strategy of the 3rd Mardin Biennale was different than the previous ones; there were no central curators and the process of curation was conducted collectively ("3. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2015). It is stated that the curators of the 3rd biennale are Mardin's local people just as most of the artists ("3. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2015). By choosing such a curatorial strategy, biennale aims to reject the idea of a foreign curator who did not experience Mardin's culture, instead, the biennale's purpose was to question this model and offer an alternative to the conventional biennale structure ("3. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2015).

Besides these developments, the inclusion of craftsmen/women into the biennale is another important decision. These decisions can be understood better in the context of the conceptual framework of the biennale. As mentioned above, Mardin is a city that holds varied cultures and religious beliefs, therefore, the city is a host for different "mythologies". The traces of these several mythologies can be seen everywhere in the city such as talismans, necklaces, clothes, books, pictures, pots and pans, carpets that occupy homes, stores, public places, and different scenes in Mardin ("3. Mardin Bienali – Mardin Bienali," 2015). To recollect these traces and represent them, the 3rd edition of Mardin Biennial also includes craftsmen/women and helps to attract attention to this collective, alternative memory. According to Otyam, there is a significant increase in the number of people who are participated in the biennale as the audience when compared to the first two biennales; the effects of these directorial choices cannot be disregarded in terms of public engagement.

6.3.4. 4th Mardin Biennale and "Beyond Words"

The latest edition of Mardin Biennale was conducted on the 4th of May 2018 and hosted by Mor Efrem Monastery which belongs to the Syriac Catholic Community (Arapoğlu, 2018). The biennial included 50 artists from local and foreign art scenes and curated by Firat Arpalıoğlu, Nazlı Gürlek and Derya Yücel. Each curator had his/her exhibition respectively

titled "Endless Look", "Body Language" and "Limits and Thresholds" (Arapoğlu, 2018). Even though these curators had so much in common, there were also differences between them, therefore, the 4th edition of Mardin Biennale can be seen as a context for different views and understandings (Arapoğlu, 2018). Having their own visual and poetical language, each curator tries to get beyond these differences and create a common artistical language (Arapoğlu, 2018). The artworks of these exhibitions imply that there is an understanding beyond the "words" and beyond the limits of our language (Arapoğlu, 2018). In this context, the conceptual framework of the 4th Mardin Biennale tries to present the commonalities in terms of the efforts for creating a meaning, a "word" while looking at the world and arts (Arapoğlu, 2018).

7.DISCUSSION: LOCALITY, ECONOMY, POLITICS AND GLOCALIZATION ASPECTS OF BIENNIALS

7.1. Biennials and The City: The Relationship Between Biennials and Locality

Also stressed by my interviews, in the literature on the biennials it is underlined that biennials create their meaning in the context of the city which they are organized and cannot be contemplated regardless of that city. It has been argued that biennials are mediators between the art scene and the large public; they assume the duty of a bridge between the art worlds and the daily lives of citizens (Esche&Kortun, 2005, p.25). In other words, while they are agents that redistribute art, they also enhance cities' economies by attracting people which in turn creates a source of income, moreover, they also serve for answering cities' demands for contemporary arts and cultural activities (Esche&Kortun, 2005, p.25). In this context, neither Istanbul nor the other biennials in Turkey are no exceptions.

Even though claiming that biennials that are organized outside of İstanbul are a homogenous union and stating that they are completely different from İstanbul Biennale might be perceived as an overstatement, a closer look will make us aware that there is a significant contrast between the aims of Istanbul and aims of other biennials. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, while Ankara has been the center of state and bureaucratic relations, Istanbul has always been the center for touristic and cultural activities. Therefore, after the Asian-European Biennale experience, choosing Istanbul for the organization of an international biennale is not a random decision. As mentioned before, the aims of IKSİV mainly revolved around connecting the Turkish art scene with the international art scene while providing a chance to local artists to participate in an international art exhibition via presenting them to the world (Anonymous, 1987). Thus, it can be said that the

Istanbul Biennale was an attempt to institutionalize and improve the art scene in Turkey while representing the country in the global culture. Although simply concluding that the Istanbul Biennale is organized with concerns that are more international than local may lead us to disregard some of its qualities, this statement seems to hold some degree of truth.

In the light of our interviews and the elaborations in the literature which were discussed before on the Çanakkale, Sinop, and Mardin biennials, it appears that one of the common aspects of their purposes is the emphasis on locality. In an interview with Beral Madra who was the curator of the first and second editions of the İstanbul Biennale and seen as a pioneer figure for Turkey's art scene, she states that the appearance of these biennials led artists, art critics, and people from art worlds, both in a national and international sense, to exposure of the reality in Turkey rather than Istanbul; the choice of the city for Madra is a sociological phenomenon, therefore as cities that have historical and geographical significances, these cities are suitable cities for organizing biennials and present Turkey's reality(2016).

Mardin Biennale in that sense provides a good example since its main purpose is to attract students, academicians, and people from the art world to Mardin and create a space for sharing art while presenting an alternative understanding of a "center" ("Bienal – Mardin Bienali," 2018). When it is asked about the choice of the city and its relations with the biennale, Firat Arapoğlu, co-curator of the 4th edition of Mardin Biennale, stated that the biennial always had the concern of blending into the city and public. The choices of locations for exhibitions like shops, churches, and public buildings contributed to this idea (Interview with Firat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview) . Even though the first two biennials were starring well-known curators and had high budgets, in the latter editions a different mentality was stressed. Craftsmen/women's inclusion and emphasis on locality had increased, therefore, the public participated more and more in the biennials because biennials started to

communicate with the public more directly.

On the other hand, Deniz Erbaş, co-curator of the Çanakkale Biennale, points out that they did not choose the city for the biennale because the people of Çanakkale already had a demand for artistic and cultural activities. Furthermore, the artistic organizations conducted by non-governmental organizations like CABININ prepared the conditions that are suitable for organizing a biennial (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). Being a city of tourism, Çanakkale always had a suitable structure for organizations like art exhibitions, therefore, the organization of the biennale is a very natural phenomenon according to Erbaş. At the beginning of the millennium, Çanakkale was very active in terms of non-governmental organizations and with the foundation of the CABININ, the demand for artistic and cultural activities started to being answered (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). In 2007 an exhibition took place which spread all across the city was organized and most of the press was calling it a "biennale" and this created conditions for the birth of the Çanakkale Biennale (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). Therefore, the launching of the biennale in Çanakkale is can be seen as just a natural reaction to the city's demands and existing potentialities (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview).

A similar explanation comes from Melih Görgün, the founder of Sinopale. According to Görgün (2021), the concepts of life, place, and people are all interconnected. To understand one of those concepts, one must understand its relations with others (Görgün, 2021). In this context, Görgün(2021) states that the idea of organizing a biennale in Sinop did not come out of anywhere. As a fellow Sinop citizen, he states that he loves where he grew up and cannot be unresponsive to the stories that this city holds and remain unheard of (Görgün, 2021). Therefore, as a result of a chain of experiences he lived throughout his life and a quest for searching for stories and making them visible, he came up with the idea of organizing a

biennale in Sinop (Görgün, 2021). He describes his main purpose as making visible the unheard stories of Sinop via giving a chance to the city to actualize its potential (Görgün, 2021). As mentioned earlier, the conceptual frameworks and the problems of the Sinopale are formed with a conversation with the public. According to Görgün(2021), one cannot organize and maintain such an event without understanding and internalizing the texture of the city. Therefore, each Sinopale had an emphasis on the problems of the city and ordinary people.

The discussion above makes it clear that even though these biennials have a purpose to enhance their cities' conditions and participate in the international art scene, their main focus is local when compared to the large-scale scope of the Istanbul Biennale. However, it does not mean that these biennials are organized without any problems. Firstly, in the case which involves a curator who is foreign to the city, Nazlı Gürlek Hodder,co-curator of the 4th Mardin Biennale, stresses that the “foreignness” is impenetrable, at least for a while. Whatever research processes are conducted or whatever efforts to reduce this downside, in practice, there is always a distance between the city and a foreign curator (Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). Therefore, there is always a need for a mediator who is a local of the city who understands its dynamics (Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). Moreover, cities like Mardin also have infrastructural problems. For example, Nazlı Gürlek Hodder reports that they had to call an electrician from Ankara to form a suitable technical foundation for the biennale to take place. Unfortunately, the problems did not end there according to Hodder; due to a lack of professional understanding, the choice of artists was also based on personal and not professional evaluations. For example, she mentions that she wanted to include a student from a local Fine Arts University, however, due to personal problems between one of the organizers and the institution, this person was not included in the biennale.

The discussion about the relationship between the biennale and the city naturally leads

us to a discussion about its relationship to the sociological structures of those cities. These elaborations also help us to comprehend the focus on locality in those biennials. Regarding this matter, it is imperative to elaborate on the relationship between art and sociological developments. According to Arnold Hauser (2012), both arts and sciences are inseparable from human life. Even though science deals with facts, truths, and empirical research on principles of nature, art is not different from science in terms of its ties with the reality that every human being is living in, however, it represents the human experience (Hauser, 2012, p.3-18). Hauser states that art's main objective is to mimic the real world and alter life, moreover, the artistic activity also serves to aid humans in their struggle for existence and survival while helping them to deal with reality. Cave paintings provide a good example for this discussion. They are considered as the first known artworks of human history and according to Hauser, Paleolithic people who drew those paintings were aiming to increase their chance of survival. He stresses this point as follows: "They represent the means of a practicality which was concerned with the support of life, and they stem from primitive hunters who lived in a world governed by purely practical interests adapting themselves to conditions in which all their energies were put into the acquisition of food.". Therefore, it is suitable for us to conclude that artistic activities come from our archaic tendencies, and participating in those activities is very natural for us. In his work titled "The Social History of Art", Hauser also portrays an understanding of history in which the increase of access to the art world by the public and the decay of hierarchical structures are seen correlated (1999). Even though elaborating on this work further and comprehensively talking about it will exceed the scope of this study, it is important to mention this view for the sake of our inquiry.

Following this discussion, the organization of biennials mostly related to the demand for artistic activities in cities. Since art comes from the core of human reality, naturally, people would be inclined to participate in those activities. For example, Deniz Erbaş states

that there was a huge demand for access to art and cultural activities in the context of Çanakkale; and the Çanakkale Biennale was born with the efforts of people who wanted to answer that demand. On the other hand, Çanakkale is a city of culture and tourism; the historical significance of Çanakkale makes cultural values and tourism become interrelated, therefore, the vision for a biennale can be easily attached to this atmosphere. Erbaş reports that people of Çanakkale have been always excited and eager to participate at both the Çanakkale Biennale and other organization which was held by the CABININ. Surely, the fact that the biennale is founded by a civil initiative also contributes to the fact that the people of Çanakkale are so welcoming and have a positive attitude towards the biennale. Regardless of being an organization that naturally stems out of public demands, Çanakkale also holds sociological significance due to its emphasis on including artists from Anatolia and the periphery of Çanakkale.

Melih Görgün(2021) also claims that Sinopale is an attempt to create a biennale that goes hand in hand with the local public's concerns and problems rather than an art event foreign to the city which perceives itself as superior to the audience. He stresses that the main focus was always to produce something while including the local public and create an atmosphere of "imece" (mutual aid) (Görgün, 2021). As a person who is local to Sinop, Görgün catalyzes the relationship between the art world and the citizens of Sinop. Görgün wanted to rediscover the stories and experiences he collected throughout his life in Sinop and since he served as a mediator in this context, the inclusion of local people has been easy according to him (Görgün, 2021). He often stresses that the main elements of artistic creation in Sinopale are both the artists' and curators' visions and the local public's contribution to these visions (Görgün, 2021). For example, Görgün tells that Nezaket Ekici, the student of famous performance artist Marina Abramovic, wanted to present a performative artwork about women's struggles in the Sinop Prison, and while preparing her costume and hairstyle

Ekici did not take any help from outside of Sinop, rather, she used the help of local tailors and hairdressers which emphasize the contribution of local people and create new meaning in this relation (Görgün, 2021). Furthermore, Görgün also talks about an artist who wanted to mimic the sinking of a Spanish galley that was built in Sinop during the Ottoman period, he made a copy of the galley from cardboard (Görgün, 2021). Even though local experts were first mocking this idea, after the performance they saw that a boat made out of cardboard can be built and sail on water (Görgün, 2021). According to Görgün while this performance presented Sinop's history and culture, it also contributed to the vision of shipbuilding experts by proving a boat made out of cardboard can sail on water.

Besides presenting the texture of the city and presenting the local concerns of the public, biennials also can have sociological significance in terms of visibility. Fırat Arapoğlu states that even though the struggle of the certain regions, cities, or countries involves a complex structure of political elements, in terms of representation of local artists and local art scenes, these biennials have a contribution to those struggles by increasing visibility and representing the unique position of the place that they dwell. As they become more and more become hegemonical structures, biennials hold more significance both nationally and internationally (Interview with Fırat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview). In this context, Mardin Biennale, when considered all the editions, portrays an important organization in terms of the political atmosphere, Turkey's art scene and culture, and for the Middle-East region. Furthermore, Arapoğlu also mentions that he thinks that Mardin Biennale stresses significant sociological problems. This significance results from its "amateur spirit" which separates it from large-scale and prestigious biennials such as Istanbul and Sao Paulo (Interview with Fırat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview).

When we look at the information presented by the interviewees of this study who are people that are closely related to the foundation and execution of their biennials it is almost

certain that one cannot disregard their understanding of locality. Even though it was said earlier that they had a local focus, this argument needs further elaboration. When examined closely, we understand that these biennials' perception of the "local" differs dramatically from the large scope biennials like Istanbul Biennale. Hou Hanru discusses that with the biennialization of the global art scene a new form of locality is presented which is a part of a great deal of global cultural relations. To form a healthy relationship with the locals, biennials not just have to represent their reality, they also have to understand and comprehend the reality of the place that they are dwelling (Hanru, 2005, p. 58). However, it is not surprising that large-scale biennials often fail to do so. For example, Jasmine Lee (2013) argues that even though, 15th edition of the Istanbul Biennale tried its best to stress the events that took place during the Gezi Parkı protests, she could not help to feel a lack of locality due to its lateness. On the other hand, Jörg Heiser had a similar impression about the 9th edition in 2005. Artworks included in the 9th edition of the Istanbul Biennale were not exhibited in closed areas or touristic areas which made this edition unique since it had a different approach from the previous editions. There was an also attempt for including art classes for students and people eager to participate which are called "Hospitality Zones", however, Heiser claims that it was seen as a strategic move rather than "heartfelt" (Heiser, 2005).

Before discussing Çanakkale, Sinop, and Mardin in this context, it might be helpful to add Ana E. Bilbao's discussion about biennials and Small Visual Art Organizations (SVAOs). In her paper, Bilbao discusses the parallels and differences between these two forms of curatorial strategies (2019). While they are similar as they are both contemporary art practices, they differ in their technical elements, budget, and scope (Bilbao, 2019). SVAOs are art exhibitions that rarely exceed 1,000 m² of space, have few staff members, and limited budgets (Bilbao, 2019). Moreover, in Bilbao's words "They are characterized by their interest in the local community in which they are located, as well as in diverse urban issues ranging

from new technologies to social art practices in their cities." Regardless of their structural differences, these organizations very similar to biennials in terms of content and they mostly formed due to a lack of contemporary art practices in certain local areas (Bilbao, 2019). Since SVAOs are small-scaled exhibitions that have an orientation towards the local communities, the inclusion of the public is much easier when compared to large-scale events (Bilbao, 2019). The audience usually does not feel "alienated either by the event's overwhelming ambition, by the expected codes of behavior". Moreover, while biennials usually have a global focus in terms of problems that they stress, SVAOs often have a local focus in which they elaborate on the problems of local people, therefore, locality becomes a part of artistic production.

Regarding the discussion above, it is now suitable for us to discuss Çanakkale, Sinop, and Mardin in this context. Although these organizations are referred to as "biennials" it is almost impossible to detect their similarities with SVAOs. Even though it may not be proper to call them SVAOs, it is possible to draw parallels between these organizations since they share important qualities. As seen in the previous elaborations, large-scale biennials like Istanbul Biennale usually fails to form a proper relationship with the locality. However, this is not the case for other biennials of Turkey. As mentioned before, these biennials have a focus on locality which separates them from the general understanding of a biennale. Moreover, just as Melih Görgün emphasizes that Sinopale is an art event that combines local community and artists to create artworks which are contributing to both parties and while doing this Sinopale also focuses on local problems of Sinop and its people. Moreover, both in Çanakkale and Sinop there were art workshops for women, children, teenagers which helped to raise local artists which would become also artists that are contributing to the biennale both in terms of organization and in terms of their artworks. Therefore, we can see that where large-scale biennials fail and SVAOs accomplish to form a good relationship with the local public, Sinop also shares this success according to Görgün. On the other hand, it is possible to see this also

valid to say the same things for Çanakkale and Mardin's latest editions. Deniz Erbaş's comments on people's positive attitude towards the biennale and demand for artistic activities or Arapoğlu's term of "amateur spirit" both seem to follow these discussions. These events also share the quality of personal initiative due to a lack of contemporary art practices in locals that are away from the centers. Thus, in the light of these discussions, it is suitable for us to conclude that biennials of Çanakkale, Sinop and Mardin differs from İstanbul and other large scale biennials in terms of their focus on locality and these biennials also accomplishes where these large scale biennials fail; forming a beneficial relationship with the local.

Another important aspect of these biennials is the potential for contributing to the local public in terms of access to artistic activities while increasing the visibility of the local struggles. For example, Sarah Ralfs' experiences during her visit to India may give us a suitable context (2016). Ralfs examines three art organizations in her work; Pad.ma, Ninasam, and Kochi-Muziris-Biennale. Pad.ma is a digital database that includes India's alternative contemporary artworks, Ninasam is an amateur theatre organization and Kochi-Muziris Biennale is the first biennale of India (Ralfs, 2016). While Pad.ma attracts attention to the locality of India, Ninasam portrays an example which asserts that a region that is far from the cities and centers can be an alternative center for artistic production and finally, Kochi-Muziris Biennale reveals the hypocritical nature of Indian governments and corporations which claim to defend India's best interests, however, their invasive policies that take people's lands (Ralfs, 2016). Regarding this example, it is evident that artistic practices in local areas can contribute to the local struggles and increase these problems' visibility. Beral Madra also stresses the importance of the periphery by stating that artistic activities in areas like Diyarbakır can be helpful in terms of including the people who live there in the art scenes and educate them while it can help to empower the democratic attitude in the country (Madra, 2005). Regarding this discussion, when we go back to Fırat Arapoğlu's statements about

Mardin Biennale, the significance of the organization becomes more visible. It is possible to see proof of this fact when we look at Lokman Toprak's paper on the economical development of Mardin. In this paper, Toprak states that Mardin Biennale dramatically contributed to the city's visibility, thus helped to increase touristic activities via advertising the city.

In conclusion, large-scale biennials like İstanbul Biennale often have problems with forming a genuine connection with the local people and usually fail to stress local concerns. On the other hand, even though the lack of opportunities like a high budget, including a large variety and high numbers of artists and artworks, these disadvantages may become advantages for relatively small-scaled biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin. These downsides force organizers to use local resources and the help of the local people, thus, these biennials are encouraged to draw their power from the locality. Naturally, they became more successful in terms of stressing local concerns and forming a strong relationship with the local people. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that large-scale biennials' focus mostly revolves around international representation and forming a connection with the global art scene, on the other hand, small-scaled biennials focus on locality and the inclusion of local people while also have a concern for international representation.

7.2. Economy and Politics of Biennials:

Organizing any kind of event with a sense of integrity that aims to welcome an audience cannot be evaluated without its physical conditions. Regardless of the artistic inspiration and artistic vision, to actualize the final output of artwork or an exhibition in our case requires physical conditions like space, budget, and sustainability to be suitable for it. The relationship between art and money can be sometimes problematic, therefore, it may need moderation. Even though all kinds of art exhibitions require some kind of budget, according to Beral Madra (2010), qualities like a sturdy artistic vision that involves a message that tries to solve the contemporary socio-political problems and an investigative spirit are elements

that are more crucial than the budget. Therefore, an exhibition still can achieve its goals with a low budget if it has the proper intellectual background.

Surely, it all comes down to the physical conditions of an exhibition, however, curatorial wit can always aid exhibitions when a problem appears regarding these conditions. For example, Nazlı Gürlek Hodder reports that due to the limitations of the Mardin Biennale, in the fourth edition, she did not use complex installations or anything that requires hard labor and risk of collapsing before the exhibition which would make the process frustrating for both the Biennale and the audience. Rather, she used performance artists which is a smart choice in this context since presenting performance art did not require hard labor or transportation of materials which are hard to carry and manage in that context (Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). When asked about the development of their biennale and the effects of physical conditions in terms of the content and structure of the biennale, most of our interviewees responded with an answer concerning the political and economical connections of the biennale. Therefore, it would be helpful to first elaborate on their answers and later discussing them in a proper context.

According to Deniz Erbaş since the foundation of the Çanakkale Biennale, there has been a slow but consistent process of development in terms of conditions and resources. Since the Çanakkale Biennale does not possess its economical resources, this process of development included an effort to form an important balance between sponsors from the private sector, governmental institutions, and non-governmental organizations (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). The main effort of CABININ is to maintain this balance by preventing one of those parties to dominate others (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). The opening of Çanakkale Biennale's art center in 2013 also contributed to this development and provided freedom in terms of artistic production (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). One of the most important changes

is the support of the local municipality. Even though the governing party stayed the same, CABININ decided to end the relationship with the municipality because, in their view, the municipality started to get above and distort this balance (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). According to Erbaş, one of the main reasons for this outcome is the fact that municipality's presentation of the biennale as an event that they are organizing and executing, since this was not the case, after the 4th edition of Çanakkale Biennale, CABININ decided to separate themselves from the relationship.

Even though half of the budget was coming from the municipality, this separation did not damage the continuity of the biennale according to Erbaş, because this development led CABININ to form different relationships and expand (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). The declaration of "Trojan Year" became a beneficial development for the biennale, since their focus also shifted to the Çanakkale's significance in terms of the Trojan War, lots of connections were made (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). For example, the canceled 5th edition of the biennale was supposed to be exhibited in the old archeological museum. Furthermore, it helped CABININ to form a local relationship with the *Opet*, the company was interested in the biennale in terms of the "Trojan Year" (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). Erbaş reports that the separation with the municipality encouraged them to form relationships with the private sector. Even though they had joint projects going on with the governmental organizations, she reports that they did not get direct support from the state. Rather they formed relationships with the local Çanakkale brands such as *Kale* and *Dardanel*, furthermore, they also formed international relationships with Osnabrück, Thessaloniki, and International Biennale Association (IBA) which expanded their network (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview). Regarding these developments, Erbaş stresses that to form a sustainable biennale, one must possess a "knowhow". This know-how can be

defined as experience, skill, and vision in terms of organizing a biennale. According to Erbaş, if this know-how exists, other problems can be solved easily because this is the key to navigate the organization towards the solutions. As a civil initiative, CABININ has members from different occupations and from all around the world, therefore, solving these kinds of problems is not a difficult task that threatens the continuation of the biennale (Interview with Deniz Erbaş, 17.04.2021 zoom interview).

Melih Görgün also portrays a similar image with the Sinopale. Görgün defines Sinopale as a non-conventional biennale. All the problems are solved with mutual discussion and brainstorming (M. Görgün, personal communication, 25.04.2021). Since it is not a large-scaled event like many other biennials, Görgün states that it is important to comprehend the limits of the local and develop strategies according to those limits. The organization of the biennale includes this comprehension and strategies which results in convenient usage of the local resources with whatever can be used and holds significance for the biennale (M. Görgün, personal communication, 25.04.2021). He states that working in this style still present in the current editions of the biennale and the main focus is to influence the modes of thinking of the local public with each edition.

Sinopale appears to be a self-sustained biennale. For example, Görgün states that the children and young people who were educated in the workshops of the biennale now constitute the brain team of the biennale and developing their strategies for the sake of the biennale. The main element of this self-sustainability seems to be the voluntary spirit of the biennale and the mutual aid (imece) (M. Görgün, personal communication, 25.04.2021). In other words, the increase in the quality and quantity of the "human resources" of Sinopale (Görgün, 2021). Furthermore, he also emphasizes that Sinopale also participates in international discussions and represents itself in the international art scene by doing this. He also adds that physical conditions are not limiting them since according to Görgün, a small

garden is enough to organize an exhibition if you have the proper vision; the idea of "white-cube" is not a concept that concerns Sinop Biennale (M. Görgün, personal communication, 25.04.2021). Since Görgün also states that they are not financially supported by the local municipality (Eriko et al., 2017, p.86-87) and institutions, the biennale is largely based on voluntary participation, therefore the self-sustainability of the Sinopale becomes more clear. In this regard similar to Çanakkale, Sinop's power stems from its voluntary spirit and dedicated organizers. Because the main aim of Sinopale is to focus on Sinop's problems, including the local public in artistic production, and connecting Sinop to the international discussions via emphasizing the geopolitical significance of the city, Görgün states that they insist to involve any contributing parties to the biennale which implies that they do not side with any political agendas, therefore, keeping Sinop and the problems of the locals as their focus.

Thirdly, Mardin Biennale went through several changes during its development. According to Fırat Arapoğlu, one of the most important changes is the support of the GAP administration. The first two biennials were funded by the GAP administration which provided the budget and resources for preparing exhibitions and inviting famous curators like Paolo Colombo. However, as Arapoğlu suggests, after the first two editions, the state practically stopped supporting the biennale. This may result from several aspects. Firstly, Arapoğlu states that the support from the GAP administration was supposed to last for two editions, therefore, this matter had not discussed further. However, he also stresses that the change in the management of the local municipality. According to Fırat Arapoğlu when the governing party was chosen for the local municipality rather than the HDP, the dissident party that occupied the municipality before, the attitude towards the biennale is changed; he states that the state thought that the artistic vision of the Mardin Biennale did not match with the vision they had in mind (Interview with Fırat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview). After

these developments, the relationship between the local government institutions reduced in the form of permissions and formality (Interview with Fırat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview). In other words, these institutions did not prevent the biennale from happening but they also did not support it further. Even though the relationship with the local municipality seems to be good, the relationship with the state institutions is not ideal (Interview with Fırat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview). All in all this discussion leads to the fact that biennale had to sustain itself via different relationships.

Especially the observations and statements of Nazlı Gürlek Hodder in the context of the 4th edition of the Mardin Biennale can enlighten us in terms of these new strategies. It was a problematic edition since the delay due to events happening in Kobani (Interview with Fırat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview; Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). It was also problematic because there were no financial resources besides the investments of a few people who were from the personal network of organizers (Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). Therefore, funding the biennale became a huge problem. Thus, Hodder came up with the idea that raising money from the FONGOGO which is a platform to raise money for projects, events, etc. The funding was promoted via the social media accounts and done with dedication (Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). She mentions that every day she was checking her notifications and social media account to promote and increase the visibility of the biennale. Besides these developments with the efforts of Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, Mardin became part of IBA. To increase the visibility of the biennale Nazlı Gürlek Hodder also used her relations and invited her journalist friends or asked them to write about the exhibition (Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). These are just a small group of examples that portrays the efforts to organize and maintain the biennale.

As we have seen in the previous discussions, regardless of the heartfelt motivations

and encouraging discourses, biennials and all kinds of exhibitions rely on some degree of financial and political elements to provide sustainability. Problems that evoke from those elements may vary and their degree of difficulty may differ for each case. However, large-scale international art exhibitions like Sao Paolo or Istanbul Biennale can solve and overcome these problems easily due to their institutionalized structure and funding from powerful, resourceful companies like IKSÜ. When we look at the examples of Çanakkale, Sinop, or Mardin, even though they are well-organized exhibitions that work with efficient teams, it is visible that their sustainability and survival are affected more by these issues; when examined, one quickly realizes that this results from the fact that they are organizations which rely on volunteering, personal ambitions, dedication and non-governmental initiatives rather than institutionalized and powerful sponsors.

Literature also shows that sponsorship and financial support are crucial for the success of a biennale. In their paper, Yanxiu Jin and Baiyang Jin examined the China Shanghai Biennial and South Korea Gwangju Biennial as examples and compared them while elaborating on art sponsorship in China and concluded that a biennial to be considered as successful, a combination of natural cultural industry, market economic operation, and corporate sponsorship is needed (2012). Another research by Pascale G. Quester and Beverley Thompson also showed that the sponsorship is executed most efficiently when the sponsors are also willing to contribute to the advertisement of the art exhibitions (2001). Regarding these parameters, it is possible to evaluate biennials like Çanakkale, Sinop, and Mardin as "unsuccessful" biennials, however, it is important to mention that the criteria for "success" are always questionable for any context and any case. Therefore, evaluating those biennials in the context of these parameters may be a problematic way of thinking.

On the other hand, as previously discussed, biennials as large-scale art exhibitions are ambivalent creatures. As Panos Kompatsiaris elaborates on the 7th Berlin Biennale titled

"Forget Fear", he shows that there is a huge contradiction between the discourse of the biennale and the reaction of sponsors, for example, due to radical political agenda that has been presented in the biennale, German Cultural Foundation threatened the organizers by stating that they will stop funding (2014). He expresses similar thoughts on the 11th Istanbul Biennale, regardless of the dissident content and philosophy of the biennale, it served its big capitalist sponsors' interests like Koç and Turkcell. Therefore, besides the limitations in terms of content is in question due to sponsorship, there may appear also a dangerous gap between "what biennial says and what biennial do" in the case of these kinds of large-scale biennials (Kompatsiaris, 2017, p.76-132). Thus, we are inclined to search for alternatives and other measures for "success" in our research.

Regarding these discussions, it is now helpful to go back to the discussions about Small Visual Art Organizations (SVAOs) and evaluating "success" with the insight that these elaborations will provide us. Due to globalization, now scale became an important aspect of international contemporary art practices, and large-scaled biennials mostly represent these phenomena via their huge scope (Bilbao, 2018). Sustaining this kind of scale is necessarily related to sponsorship, financial support, and high budgets, thus, these exhibitions also focus on quantity in terms of the number of visitors, the high number of artists, artworks and curators included, and surely income (Bilbao, 2018). Under these conditions, pressure also increases due to expectations and risks of failure, therefore, affecting the content of these exhibitions. In contrast with those large-scale events, SVAOs appeared as a counter-effect in the late 1990s (Bilbao, 2018). Unlike the possible expectations, these exhibitions did not appear in the "periphery"; namely the southern hemisphere or in the Asian countries, rather, they appeared all across the world including Western countries (Bilbao, 2018). Among the common qualities of these exhibitions, there is a significant engagement with the local problems of the place that they are exhibited in, limited budgets, quasi-institutional structure,

and sympathetic environment instead of a formal distant atmosphere (Bilbao, 2018). Even though the main focus seems to be exhibit art, these organizations also engage in social art practices and public affairs which can be exemplified by art workshops, initiatives for the problems of the local people, etc. The budget for SVAOs usually comes from fundraising activities and personal contributions of artists and their networks (Bilbao, 2018).

When we look at the SVAOs we see that they cannot be evaluated based on large-scale art events which were mentioned before. Their methodologies differ dramatically from those events. As discussed, these large-scale art events like Istanbul Biennale appear with a focus on globalization, large scope, and quantity in terms of both volume and financial concerns. However, SVAOs offer alternative strategies which may provide useful solutions to the problems which result from these specific qualities. According to Bilbao, SVAOs present a decentralized and alternative narrative for organizing and executing exhibitions (2018). In this sense, SVAOs is offering a methodology that is based on collectivity and mutual support which balances the negative qualities that are discussed above in terms of large-scale art events and also they portray an image that is more engaging and caring for the local problems while opening a space for artists and communities to try new ideas and interact in new ways without the pressure of sponsors with high expectations due to their investments (Bilbao, 2018). Thus, although they are not "successful" from a quantitative perspective and scale-based point of view, they offer us a new kind of "success".

Now, this context established it would be more convenient to exemplify the elaborations above with Çanakkale, Sinop, and Mardin biennials. Even though talking about those biennials as SVAOs can be perceived as a categorical mistake the similarities and shared qualities cannot be ignored. Since this is the case, we can at least give examples from those biennials. The common understanding in all three of these biennials in terms of physical and economical conditions is the importance of dedication and a comprehensive vision. First

Arapoğlu's "amateur spirit", Deniz Erbaş's "knowhow" and Melih Görgün's ideas about the "white-cube" are all can be interpreted similarly. Each of these interviewees was referring to the fact that what makes an art exhibition or a biennale sustainable is the qualities like dedication, artistic vision, and creative problem-solving skills of the organizers, not the amount of money they receive as funds. Moreover, regarding the information these people gave us, we can see that the qualities of these biennials match with the qualities of SVAOs, therefore, it is suitable for us to also draw similar conclusions. Even though these biennials do not have huge scopes or artworks from hundreds of artists exhibited in a gigantic place, what they have is what large-scale art exhibitions lack; having a sincere artistic atmosphere without the pressure of satisfying expectations and engaging with their surroundings much more efficiently.

However, when we elaborate on the subject in a more "down to earth" way, we quickly perceive that there are also downsides of these conclusions which are worth mentioning. Firstly, although the skills and dedication of organizers are the keys to make a biennale sustainable, in some cases it may not be enough. Since the fact that these biennials rely on people who are resilient to financial problems thanks to their problem-solving skills, this also means that without those people biennale cannot continue, thus it is dependent on those people. For example, Fırat Arapoğlu shares his concerns about this issue and states that without the efforts of the people like Döne Otyam, Melih Görgün, or Seyhan Boztepe, biennials like Çanakkale, Sinop, and Mardin cannot go on unless the institutionalization of those biennials which brings the issues mentioned before (Interview with Fırat Arapoğlu, 10.04.2021 zoom interview). Secondly, organizing such an event based on personal dedication can be exhausting for the people who work in the biennale. In Nazlı Gürlek Hodder's case for example, although she stresses that she enjoyed curating the 4th edition and she loves Mardin, this was a frustrating experience due to heavy working conditions and lack of professionalism

(Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview). Thus, she states that a professional approach and institutionalization are imperative to make biennials like Mardin Biennale sustainable and reliable (Interview with Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, 12.04.2021 zoom interview).

All in all, while large-scale biennials like İstanbul Biennale can be evaluated as “successful” in terms of quantity, small-scale biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin qualitatively more successful than their large-scale counterparts. Even though there are physical limitations due to economical or political restrictions, these biennials develop creative strategies for their survival and they can be perceived as more successful events in terms of engaging with the public, creative artistic vision, and endurance against various problems. Due to high budgets and advertisements, the expectation from large-scale biennials usually leads to pressure for satisfying those expectations, thus, damaging artistic freedom and sincerity. Since these expectations are not directed towards them, biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin are free from those problems and they are more competent at presenting unique exhibitions in which the artworks are created by the mediation of the biennial between artists and locals.

7.3. Glocalization and the Discussion on "Center-Periphery" Dichotomy:

The answers that Melih Görgün and Deniz Erbaş gave for our questions would eventually lead us to question the paradigm that divides biennials in the context of the "central-peripheral" dichotomy. As will be seen in the discussions later, both Erbaş and Görgün rejected this kind of thinking and claimed that their biennials are also central since any place can be center based on the perspective. In this section of the paper, these considerations will be discussed, however, it is important to clarify some points before we get further.

In the previous discussions due to our aim to detect commonalities and elaborate on

them, it may be perceived as that Çanakkale, Sinop, and Mardin biennials were presented as a unified cluster, however, this is not the case in many respects. Although from several perspectives these biennials could be called "peripheral biennials" and they seem to share a lot of qualities that were stressed before, Deniz Erbaş disagrees with this view. According to Erbaş, the term "peripheral biennial" has become something like a buzzword, and although it attracts attention and provides new opportunities for these so-called peripheral biennials, least she states that this is not the case for Çanakkale and other biennials in Turkey because the fact that they are not being organized in Istanbul is not enough to talk about them as a unified group. Each biennale has its own origin story, own methodologies, and has a separate identity. Therefore, calling all these examples "peripheral biennials" may be problematic.

This even becomes more clear if we examine the operations of each biennial. For example, Sinopale is completely organized and funded by voluntary participation, therefore, it makes the biennial largely based on organizers and presents a unique example, the other hand, as it is discussed Çanakkale was getting support from the local municipality, and later they searched for support from the private sector, moreover, the Çanakkale Biennale is conducted by CABININ, an organization which is a non-governmental civil initiative and dedicated to compensating the demand of Çanakkale's local people for artistic cultural organizations which implies that it can be seen as a more institutionalized biennale. Although this is the case, Çanakkale and Sinop are very similar in terms of locality and bottom-up organization strategy. When Mardin Biennale is included in this context, it is easy to perceive that Mardin deviates from the line of Çanakkale and Sinop in terms of curatorial strategies and local participation. For example, although after the 3rd biennale the craftsmen/women are included and the organizers chose to include the local public more, it was not the case for previous editions; the biennale had a centralized organization, hosting single curator, and curated by famous curators like Paolo Colombo and according to Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, very

exclusionary towards the local public which separates Mardin from other two biennials.

This being said, it is now time to examine the statements by the interviewees and discuss them while presenting a discussion about the "center-periphery" dichotomy. In the previous parts of this paper, it was stated that some scholars categorize biennials based on their discourses, curatorial strategies, and the region that they were organized as central or peripheral biennials. During the conversations with our interviewees, it was apparent that this dichotomy may not be accurate, therefore, it is imperative that first, we should dwell on the subject.

Although Mardin Biennale seems to accept this conceptualization and define itself as a peripheral biennale, it can be seen that it also questions this conceptualization. For example, Nazlı Gürlek Hodder states that although peripheral biennials exist and define Mardin Biennale as a peripheral one, these biennials cannot escape the fact that they are determining their position against the central biennials, therefore, still positioning themselves based on those centers as antitheses. In this case, it is easy to see that even though the usage of these concepts may be accepted among many people, the discursive and conceptual background of these definitions imply that these biennials still depend on central biennials since they are defining themselves concerning them. Even though, it can be said that they represent alternative approaches in terms of national representation, curatorial strategies, and artistic visions, defining these biennials as peripheral is also reconstructs the power relations on a linguistic level. The word "center" and the word "periphery" can be used for any place on our planet, using those terms for biennials or any other subjects may reconstruct the relations about center-periphery and superiority-inferiority, therefore, completely negates the empowering attitude towards those biennials.

When asked about the commonalities and parallels between Çanakkale, Mardin, Sinop, and other peripheral biennials, Deniz Erbaş stated that the usage of the word

"peripheral" as a buzzword may be problematic. Since each biennale is a unique entity with its qualities like curatorial strategies, working dynamics, and scale, it is a reductive attitude to mark a group of biennials under a single concept. According to Erbaş, some biennials are completely organized by private companies, some biennials are organized in the context of city management, industrial biennials, biennials that have academic concerns rather than aesthetic concerns. Since there are too many variables and parameters, this conceptualization may fail to define this crowded, varied group. On the other hand, Erbaş also states that the increase in the number of biennials and the spread of biennials around the globe can be also seen as a reaction to Venice. Since Venice is called the "center", each biennial that is not organized in Venice can be seen as a peripheral biennale, therefore, dividing this large number of biennials into two groups is not an accurate way to understand the developments of biennialization. In this context, she avoided defining Çanakkale as a peripheral biennale and stated that they perceive the center-periphery relationship in a very different way. For the organizers of Çanakkale Biennale, Çanakkale is the center and has its periphery, and Çanakkale Biennale is trying to listen to its periphery's problems while endeavoring to be meaningful for this periphery.

A similar objection comes from Melih Görgün. According to Görgün the term "center" is a problematic one because there is no single meaning that can be derived from it. For example, he states that what we understand from the center or periphery may differ due to what is meant by the center, therefore, implying that the term has a blurry background. Due to this argument, agreeing on where can be called a center becomes a very important part of this discussion. The most accepted view is that Venice is the center for all biennial organizations in the world since as the first biennale Venice provided the foundation of the biennale phenomenon. However, according to Görgün, presenting Venice as a center may be problematic because of a lack of criteria. For example, if by using the word center we imply

the cities or regions where artistic production is very high, it would easily be apparent that Venice cannot be called a center because, except the biennale, the city is mostly inactive in terms of artistic production. The same thought of thinking would be also suitable for Documenta which is seen in the center for scholars like Oliver Marchart. According to Melih Görgün, Kassel is not a place in which artworks being produced all the time, like Venice, Kassel is also can be seen as inactive except the period that Documenta is exhibited.

He states that the usage of the term "center" for Venice or Kassel may be due to the issue of representation; meaning that these places are usually used to represent artists and artworks from all over the world. However, this may also be problematic because there is a lack of criteria again in terms of what makes those places are centers for artistic representation. Görgün also discusses the situation in Japan; there are over 120 biennials, triennials, or other art events happening regularly in Japan and all of these organizations have their agenda. Therefore, how come Japan can be a peripheral place for the biennials of the world since it is hosting so many organizations in just one country. According to Melih Görgün, these discussions imply that there is no center for biennials.

Görgün also rejects the term "biennials of resistance" and questions Ranjit Hoskote's term for biennials like Havanna Biennale and Gwangju Biennale. According to both Deniz Erbaş and Melih Görgün, these biennials are well funded and functional, therefore, how they can be called "biennials of resistance" is unclear. It is true that in previous discussions scholars like Ranjit Hoskote or Oliver Marchart were using the term to make a point about the colonialistic discourse of the Western biennials, however, if the term "biennials of resistance" is referring to the biennials which are economically self-dependent and organized in difficult conditions, this definition is problematic due to Melih Görgün and Deniz Erbaş. While rejecting this terminology, Görgün also talks about the Asian-Art Biennale which is a biennale that can be perceived as a real example for biennials of resistance but not referenced in the

discussions. As the curator of the Turkish pavilion in the two editions of the biennale, Melih Görgün states that Asian-Art Biennale is an independent biennale that even produces its billboard by using bamboo sticks and pieces of fabric which also created by the artists in the biennale. These pieces of fabric are used for writing or drawing and they are also combined with those bamboo sticks to be placed at certain points. They dig holes in the ground and put those bamboo sticks there and creating their billboards as Görgün stated.

In the context of these discussions, like Deniz Erbaş, Görgün states that they have a right to reject the terminology which categorizes Sinopale as a peripheral biennale and he stresses that Sinop is a center on its own. For Melih Görgün since every location is unique in many sense, it is impossible to talk about these biennials in a universal framework, moreover, he emphasizes that the division between center and periphery stems from a very Western point of view. Therefore, in this context, we cannot talk about centers or peripheries but connections of these unique locations. These elaborations make it necessary that these terminologies should be discussed and the examples that are given above should be contextualized.

Returning to questioning the terminology which uses center and periphery as locational categories, the 41st issue of *On Curating* is a very helpful source to examine this issue, however, in the scope of this paper, the editorial introduction should be discussed. In this section Ronald Kolb, Camile Regli, and Dorothee Richter presents their ideas and claims on this problem (2019). Citing Christoph Behnke, Cornelia Kastelan, Valérie Knoll, and Ulf Wuggenig's work called *Art in the Periphery of the Centre* Camile Regli states that some regions seem to be more fertile than other regions and these regions naturally attract artists, scholars, and people with different occupations, thus resulting in a geographical shift which makes these regions centers of production and representation (Kolb et al., 2019). In this sense, Western cities are seen as centers for centuries and they subordinated their peripheries via productivity, efficient resources, and sophisticated organization (Kolb et al., 2019). Since

centers culturally dominated the peripheries, peripheral areas became ambiguous places that are constantly excluded and marginalized by the centers while they try to form connections with centers and develop themselves, however, with the later developments and globalization, this conceptualization seems to be not working for contemporary dynamics (Kolb et al., 2019). Therefore, favoring these categories surpasses these developments and reconstructs the power relationships.

Ronald Kolb stresses this issue in a way that is following the discussion above on Nazlı Gürlek Hodder's statements. Before elaborating on Ronald Kolb's and Dorothee Richter's statements it would be explanatory to visiting Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* first. In this text, Marx claims that the basis of society is economical relations; all aspects of society are determined by this *base*. On this base rises the *superstructure* which includes culture, science, and other aspects of the society. Thus, according to Marx, social awareness does not determine the economical position of an individual in a society, rather, his/her economical class or position in the society determines his/her social awareness. In this context, it would be beneficial to examine Kolb's and Richter's statements. According to Kolb, using the terminology of center and periphery one almost refers to the economical relations of those locations. Centre always used the concepts like superiority, dominance, and advancedness while periphery always refers to the opposite of those concepts such as inferiority or underdevelopedness, thus the usage of these words creates an unequal relationship (Kolb et al., 2019). A similar claim is also portrayed by Dorothee Richter; she uses Johan Galtung's concept of "structural violence" to explain this inequality. She stresses that connect these locations by using concepts like center and periphery involves structural violence via referring to their unequal economical states. If we consider also Marx's claims, it is apparent that via using this terminology we reproduce the inequality and power relations between these locations, however, it is stated that in the fields

of arts, these relationship is constantly challenging, being questioned and turned upside down (Kolb et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be concluded that usage of this categorization has a reductive undertone that disregards the artistic production and also disregards the individuality of so-called "peripheral" locations while defining them depending on the centers.

Like previous discussions on locality and physical conditions, this discussion also forces us to elaborate on the understanding of success. According to Buchholz and Wuggenig (2005), Northwestern countries like U.S. And Germany dominated the art field for a very long time due to their economical power, thus may be seen as "successful" and rightfully can be called centers of the art world. However, Buchholz's other studies confirmed that the success of an artist has two indicators; symbolic capital, which can be portrayed as artistic recognition, and economic capital (as cited in Buchholz, 2018). Buchholz stresses that there are only a few artists who are successful when considered both of these indicators and there is even a negative relationship between them; where symbolic capital is higher, economic capital is lower (Buchholz, 2018). Therefore, defining success based on economic capital seems to be problematic. Moreover, she also emphasizes that centers and peripheries are not distinct units and they are interacting with each other all the time while challenging, encouraging, and nourishing each other (Buchholz, 2018). Thus, it is evident that there is a need for an alternative framework to elaborate on biennials and art exhibitions that are categorized as central or peripheral.

In his book, Steven Felix-Jager(2019) stresses that we live in a pluralistic age. He stresses that this occurred due to West's opening up toward the world. According to Felix-Jager, this has four indicators; globalization, advanced technology, pluralism, and social consciousness (2019, p. 35-37). With globalization, modern structures of the West spread throughout the world and the emphasis on national identity is diminished since the

relationship between societies started to be defined as transnational rather than international (Felix-Jager, 2019, p. 35-37). Surely, advanced technology played a major role because the increased communication conditions, developments in information technologies, and rise of telecommunication provided a suitable environment for people from different countries to interact with each other very easily, thus, enabling people to form a nexus via forming relationships with each other and perceive the cultural structures of the world as an organic body with plural autonomous parts (Felix-Jager, 2019, p. 35-37). With these new advantages people do not have to rely on their national media institutions to receive information about other cultures and ideologies, they became able to look for themselves, thus, they can also participate and actively shape these cultural structures (Felix-Jager, 2019, p. 35-37). As a result of these developments, now people can raise their awareness regarding good or bad policies and injustices which are happening all around the world.

This pluralistic age is usually referred to concerning the concept called “glocalization”. The concept is first used by Roland Robertson in his book *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (1992); Robertson used the term concerning the Japanese word *dochakuka* which can be translated as "globalized localization" or "localized globalization". This Japanese term was first used in the discussion of Japanese business circles in the 1980s (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2012). To understand the term we should first examine it in a contradictory relationship with "globalization". Globalization is usually regarded as a phenomenon that has negative effects on local communities; it is said that globalization threatens local values of a community via standardization and implication of sameness (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2012; Robertson, 2018). In other words, globalization is viewed as the agent of cultural homogenization (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2012; Robertson, 2018). This view stems from George Ritzer's claims which are largely based on the book called *The McDonaldization of Society*. In his work, Ritzer follows Max Weber's ideas and

tries to persuade scholars to perceive that the modern world tries to routinize and standardize the local communities with Western hegemony (Ritzer, 2013). Roland Robertson would disagree with this view and would posit that globalization does not produce sameness, on the contrary, it produces differences (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2012; Robertson, 2018).

When we look at the first usage of this term in the form of *dochakuka*, it refers to the fact that marketing for a product becomes more successful if the marketing strategy considers local values and local context (Eric, 2007). Thus, changing their attitude toward the local public. Although this seems to be a very capitalistic standpoint, it helps us to understand this concept in a more comprehensive way. Similarly, glocalization implies a diffusion of local and global structures and their interrelatedness. In Robertson's terms "Glocalization refers to the process in which phenomena are spread, flow, or are diffused from one "place" to another and are adapted to the new locality where they arrive." (2018). Therefore, in a glocalized world, the global and local in constant exchange and this relationship gives new meanings to both local and global identities. Robertson states that his view on the relationship between local and global constitutes an understanding which perceives these terms as an interconnected unit rather than contradictory parties (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2012; Robertson, 2018). In this context, we can see that global structures do not destroy local values rather they diffuse with them and form a new sense of locality while local also affects the global.

Thus, the discussion about centers and peripheries is closely related to how one perceives globalization. Most of the scholars who are in favor to use terms like center and periphery seem to see globalization as a Western tool for cultural hegemonical dominance which forces centers' values on peripheries in terms of artistic production (Marchart, 2014; Wu, 2007). For example, Wu stresses that "global" is the new buzzword for "Western"; indicating that Western hegemony is actualized via globalization (2007). Oliver Marchart also

seems to agree with this point since he borrows Hoskote's term "biennials of resistance" when referring to peripheral biennials; by defining these biennials as "biennials of resistance" he seems to be implying that Western hegemony threatens local identities using globalization phenomenon and peripheral biennials are resisting this hegemonical domination (2014). In the light of these discussions, it seems reasonable that Melih Görgün and Deniz Erbaş tend to reject these definitions because as seen in the discussion above, even though they are not organized in the cultural "centers" such as İstanbul, biennials like Mardin, Sinop and Çanakkale may not be called peripheral biennials since they are not peripheries but centers of their own. In this sense, it may be more proper to identify biennials as structures that are connected in a globalized network but still able to preserve their uniqueness, thus this network does not seem to be a homogenous group that contains similar units but a pluralistic and heterogenous group which contains unique units.

To sum up, evaluating biennials based on the "center-periphery" dichotomy may be problematic since these terms can be perceived relatively different in many respects. The usage of this dichotomy and the reference of "biennials of resistance" as biennials of the periphery usually goes hand in hand in the literature. However, as mentioned in the discussion above, this usage implies an unequal relationship between those biennials which makes the statements about biennials of resistance pointless while disregarding each biennials uniqueness. The discussion on peripheral biennials stems from the point of view that evaluates globalization as a hegemonical power tool for the Western countries which standardize and homogenize other biennials of the world, thus, damaging their individuality. However, looking at this matter in a different concept called "glocalization" provides an alternative ground for these discussions. With the developments of informational technologies, every local place has become a part of a larger union and their relationship with the global structures creates new meanings. Therefore, it is problematic to talk about centers

or peripheries; rather, it is more suitable to perceive each biennial as a unique individual part of a larger network.

CONCLUSION

After early examples of international art exhibitions like the Great Exhibition and the Universal Exposition, it is revealed that events like these can be very beneficial for a country to increase its prestige among other nations and contribute to the idea of a national identity using this medium. Thus, it is not a surprise that the Venice Biennale is organized after a short period from its predecessors. After the first editions of the Venice Biennale, a sort of paradigm was formed for the international art exhibitions and it was evident that biennials are beneficial in many respects such as the opportunity for artists and curators to use biennials to increase their visibility and build strong relationships, for local businesses to benefit from the international attention that the city gained via the biennale, and for the host countries to manage to increase their prestige and economical income by organizing such events. Therefore, biennials quickly spread around the globe and a lot of countries wanted to represent themselves in the international art scene.

After Sao Paulo Biennale in Brazil, many countries followed this example, and especially in the 1980s and 1990's the number of biennials around the world increased dramatically. As one of the most popular forms of exhibiting art and as a form of national representation, biennials cannot be evaluated apart from contradictions and debates. International art biennials may be perceived both as places for radical political discourses of dissensions and also as places for economical profit since their sustainability requires funds and investments from major companies or institutions. Furthermore, since the first examples of these events originated in the Western countries and have a colonial paradigm and a prestigious focus, many scholars discussed that biennials like Venice as representatives of nationalistic ideas of mid-19th century exhibitions. Similarly, it is discussed that these

biennials are instruments of hegemonical domination of Western cultures, thus, these hegemonies can be resisted by using counter hegemonies. Therefore, the biennials like Havana, Gwangju can be seen as alternatives to the West-oriented understanding. Since the West is mostly seen as the cultural “center” biennials that followed Venice's paradigm usually called “central biennials”; accordingly, biennials in Asia, Africa, Middle-East, or Pacific region are called “peripheral biennials” or “biennials of resistance” as Ranjit Hoskote puts it. In that context, scholars like Oliver Marchart claim that the history of biennialization is actually the decentralization of the West. According to Marchart, after the spread of biennials in the '80s and '90s, “peripheral biennials” like Havana provided an alternative space for varied cultural representations and dissident discourses that challenged the Western paradigm. Although the first examples of international art exhibitions are may be seen as representations of Western hegemony and supremacy, this is not the case for the latter examples since “peripheral biennials” stress subjects like decolonization of previously colonized cultures and presentation of cultural freedom and dissensions. Therefore, it may be accurate to conclude that these so-called “peripheral biennials” surpassed the influence of their “central” counterparts and increased visibility for cultural struggles of the countries in regions like Asia, the Middle-East, and the Pacific. In that sense, the appearance of these biennials as the decentralization of the West is a significant historical point since they changed the perspective and the paradigm in the international art scene.

Besides the developments regarding the world, the developments in Turkey also need mentioning. From the Ottoman period to the late 1980s, many important events contributed to the foundation of the professional art industry in Turkey, however, one of the most important developments in the organization of the İstanbul Biennale. The developing art scene in Turkey was taken to another level by this event. Although there were attempts to organize an event on such scale-like Asian-European Art Biennale, İstanbul Biennale made Turkey popular among

other countries and provided the Turkish art scene to interact with the international art world while becoming one of the most popular art biennials. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that most of the discussions regarding the art scene in Turkey reference the İstanbul Biennale. However, even though it is the cultural “center” of the country, focusing only on İstanbul may result in disregarding the significant developments in other cities in terms of biennialization.

Since the first Sinopale, other cities such as Çanakkale and Mardin also followed Sinop's example. Even though it is stressed that each biennial is unique and has different qualities like organizational structure and sponsorship strategies, the pieces of information that are gathered and the interviews made with founders and organizers of those biennials indicate that these three biennials have some commonalities which separate them from the İstanbul Biennale. The common qualities that differentiate them from the İstanbul Biennale can be evaluated under two headings; their relationship with locality and the physical circumstances of these biennials concerning economical and political conditions.

Firstly, our interviews and the pieces of information that have been gathered indicate that these biennials and the İstanbul Biennale differ dramatically in terms of the vision and the aim. While İstanbul Biennale has an international focus, the biennials of Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin stress their relationship with the locality. For example, when the first edition was organized in 1987, it is easily seen that organizers and İKSV has a purpose to provide an opportunity to artists and the people in the art world to form a relationship with the international art scene and increase Turkey's significance in the international discussions by forming this connection. Although every international art biennial seems to have the same objective, biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale and, Mardin seem also focusing on forming a healthy relationship with these cities. As the founder of the Sinopale, Melih Görgün frequently mentions his intentions to provide a productive atmosphere for both artists from other countries or other regions and the local habitants of Sinop. According to Görgün, his

presence as a catalyst in that equation enables Sinopale to be an event in which both local people and the artists become part of artistic production, thus creating a new meaning in the context of the biennale. On the other hand, as co-curator of the Çanakkale Biennale, Deniz Erbaş also stresses that the foundation of the Çanakkale Biennale is hugely based on the demands of local people of Çanakkale for artistic and cultural events. Erbaş stated that since Çanakkale a city of tourism, the organization of the biennale can be interpreted as a natural result of the conditions in Çanakkale. Furthermore, even though the first editions of the Mardin Biennale struggled to form a good relationship with the local public, the inclusion of local craftsmen/craftswomen in the biennale appears as a successful step regarding this problem. Moreover, Firat Arapoğlu stated that since regions like Mardin need visibility in terms of cultural struggles and economical problems, the biennale may help to provide this visibility and attention. In that context, although biennials of Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin are international art events that are a part of a larger network of art events and have the purpose to attract international attention, they differ in terms of execution from İstanbul Biennale since they also have an emphasis on local problems, representation of the local culture and inclusion of local inhabitants.

Secondly, the biennials of Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin also differ from İstanbul in terms of scale and budget, therefore, they have different working dynamics. As a large-scale biennale, the editions of İstanbul Biennale seem to be more successful in terms of sustainability and continuity since the biennale is funded by powerful sponsors and has an institutionalized style of working. Biennials' success is usually evaluated on quantitative terms like these by many scholars. On the other hand biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin seems to be based on dynamic strategy building, the personal dedication of the organizers due to a lack of institutionalization, and low budgets. From a quantitative perspective, the biennials of those cities seem to be unsuccessful and their sustainability seems to be always in

danger. Although it is important to state that these concerns are significant and the focus on personal dedication may lead to over-working and burnout, these disadvantages may be also perceived as advantages if a different approach is adopted. As it is discussed above, due to sponsorship and investments, there is a strong pressure of expectations of investors and sponsors over the large-scale biennials. This may lead to compromises from artistic freedom and contradictions between what a biennial stands for and what a biennial does. For example, many large-scale biennials like the İstanbul Biennale frequently criticized for being instruments for profit for companies like Turkcell and Koç in disguise as a place for dissident artistic discourses, thus making these discourses pointless. Since these expectations and restrictions do not apply to biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin, a qualitative approach would reveal that these biennials may be more successful in terms of artistic freedom, the authenticity of artistic vision, and forming a healthy relationship with the local people due to accessibility.

On the other hand, even though the sustainability concerns are significant, a sturdy artistic vision and open-mindedness seem to help to solve those problems. For example, Melih Görgün states that the local municipality does not help them financially but the dedication of the organizers and the positive attitude of the public helps Sinopale to sustain itself. Similarly, Deniz Erbaş also reports that their relationship with the local municipality ended due to the municipality's possessive approach, however, she also stresses that they found alternative strategies like forming relationships with the local brands like Dardanel to sustain the biennale. Mardin Biennale also has a similar story; Fırat Arapoğlu stated that the support from the state stopped after the second biennale and the organization started to base its sustainability on personal initiative. Nazlı Gürlek Hodder, co-curator of the 4th edition of the biennale stated that her personal efforts like raising funds and informing the press helped dramatically for the opening of the 4th edition. In the light of these discussions it may be

suitable to conclude that although these biennials need institutionalized and stable conditions for latter editions, they cannot be evaluated as unsuccessful events since the “know-how” of the organizers and the “amateur spirit” that drives them combined with the artistic vision and creative strategies provides an opportunity for them to succeed where large-scale biennials like İstanbul Biennale fails.

Another significant point made by our interviewees Deniz Erbaş and Melih Görgün leads the discussion to the “center-periphery” dichotomy. Although one of the aims of this paper was to draw parallels between the peripheral biennials in the world and the biennials of Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin, the interviews revealed that this would be an overstatement and an exaggeration. Both Deniz Erbaş and Melih Görgün stated that they reject this terminology. As discussed in the latter parts of this paper, the usage of the terminology that classifies biennials as “central” or “peripheral” implies an unequal distribution of power. Since the term “center” usually implies places with high economical status, calling Western biennials “central biennials” and other ones as “peripheral biennials” makes it pointless to present “peripheral biennials” as places for dissension and resistance because it would mean accepting the unequal relationship between them. Concerning this discussion Nazlı Gürlek Hodder explains that even though a biennial defines itself as a peripheral biennale, it does this concerning so-called “central biennials”, thus, basing its own definition on other biennials and accepting their superiority.

In that context, Görgün and Erbaş stress that these terms are relative terms which means that their implications change based on where people define “centers”. They emphasize that cities like Çanakkale and Sinop are their own centers and they have their own peripheries. While Deniz Erbaş states that the term “peripheral biennial” is a buzzword and by using that term people are disregarding the uniqueness and complicated dynamics of each biennial, Görgün stresses that the usage of those terms lacks criteria, and Sinopale distances itself from

this kind of thinking. These statements led this paper to discuss those biennials in a different context and evaluate them from a different perspective.

The usage of terms of “center” and “periphery” seems to be closely related to how globalization is perceived as a phenomenon. Scholars like Oliver Marchart and Chin-Tao Wu seem to perceive globalization as the hegemonical instrument of the Western countries which try to homogenize and standardize the local structures; accordingly, in that sense, peripheral biennials appear as places for resisting globalization and presenting uniqueness. However, our findings force us to question this paradigm and the issue needs another approach to being clarified. The term “glocalization” has the potential to help us in that sense. Translated from the Japanese word *dachakuka* and first used by Roland Robertson, glocalization implies that localities do not homogenized or standardized by the Western hegemony, rather, it implies a merge that includes both global and the local, creates a new meaning. The rapid developments in information technologies enabled localities to be connected in a larger network, moreover, these localities also interact with the global. This results in the appearance of unique and connected units that constantly interact with each other.

In that context, any place can be evaluated as the center, therefore, using the previous paradigm seems inefficient. Since the glocalized perspective implies a multi-centered network of places that cannot be separated as “centers” and “peripheries”, this understanding also should be applied to the biennials. Thus, biennials like Sinop, Çanakkale, and Mardin should not be seen as “peripheral biennials” of Turkey that are inferior to İstanbul Biennale, rather, they should be seen as unique events that combine the local and global in which they tell their own story by discovering new meanings, providing new perspectives and presenting alternative strategies for the biennial organization.

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