

Does favorite design lead to good design?: Taxi design competitions in Istanbul and New York City

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Abstract

The changes in both urban and national bureaucracy over the last few decades have been described as a shift from “government” to “governance” or as a move from the “old government” to “new governance” (Kjaer, 2009, p. 138). A shift in the public affairs from old public management to the new public management has reasoned the emergence of pluralism and open-discussion platforms into the public tradition, which has also triggered a new paradox: The challenge of pluralism. Although pluralism is an essential ingredient of participation, it accommodates difficulties. The society consists of a huge diversity of different social, cultural, anthropological and emotional attachments. We have different moral codes. When our design ideas compete, so do our values and societal commitments. We recognise those tensions in the rival claims of ideology, ethnicity, gender, religion and locality (Bellamy, 1999, p. 1). Within this article the struggle between the searches for good design vs. popular phenomena is being questioned out of Istanbul and New York City’s (NYC) taxi design competitions’ methodologies and results. Experiences revealed from both case studies prove that the challenge between the popular taste and search for good design may not always promote either design itself or the promoter.

Keywords

Design, Society, Good design, Popularity, Competition, Governance.

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical approach

According to Kjaer (2009), since the 1980s, public administration has been reformed towards a new focus and hierarchy between politics and public administration through the term governance. This was also a shift to an organisational set up emphasising the functionalities of the networks and juxtaposing roles of politicians, public administrators and civic actors (Kjaer, 2009, p. 138). This is no less the case in the local state where the change has been described as a move from “local government” to “community governance”. Urban Governance theory thus highlights changes in urban bureaucracy such as the move towards a blurring of public private boundaries, the rise of an increasing number of governance networks and a greater inclusion of actors other than the local state in the pursuit of community goals (Kjaer, 2009, p. 138).

In late 1960s, rationalist architects such as Christopher Jones, Christopher Alexander, Tom Markus and Ray Studer claimed that considering some mathematical models could objectify a better programmed decision-making process (Broadbent, 1980). However, by the 1970s these highly rationalist design methods had been rejected since they were also setting the goals in a top-down approach defining the problems away from a world made up of a great diversity of values and priorities (Comeiro, 1990). Scholars underlined the difficulties faced when applying mechanical-rationalistic methods to design problems. Contemporary society has complicated issues related to everyday urban life that straight methods of planning can no more deal with. Conventional approaches to already defined problems could no longer be adapted to the wide array of today’s wicked problems which are in fact symptoms of some other everyday problems with no formulated solutions. Different layers of the society with different value judgements would no longer face the problems triggered by some other problems with the same set of criteria. There is no common “true” or “false” where of incomplete

and contradictory knowledge with a vast amount of people and opinions involved. In such ambiguity, the search of a solution that works for everyone becomes a useless struggle with conventional top-down decision making traditions (Comeiro, 1990). Thus urban life-related design problems would be best solved in a process that paves the way for direct involvement and deliberative dialogue among the all concerned ones. Hence, design comes up as a public discourse and paves the way for public debate in order to expose and spread the current state of art knowledge about the problem, since no one in fact has expertise to come with a solution. Fischer (2000) in “Symmetry of Ignorance” draws a core understanding and states that individuals are not equal in what they know, but in what they do not know. The knowledge or the opinion that each of us has, may greatly alter and evolve the content and profile of the solution. This view, especially in metropolitan cities, encourages rejecting the conventional top-down methods to find out solutions to design related urban problems. Thus, it surely encourages democratic and open-discussions where all the stake holders or interest groups should have their interests and opinions articulated.

By the late 1980s a clear change occurred in local administrations’ approach to commissioning design. Accordingly, they started to plan the entire design process in a participatory manner, opening up to all stake holders in collaboration with actors of private sector and academia. This new pluralist, open and transparent “Second Generation Design Method” (Comeiro, 1990) resulted not only in a new role of the public authorities but also for designers. Governance in design triggered a trend from user-centered to user-led design (Sanders, 2002). Blurry lines between the designer and user ushered in a rise of highly programmed interactive platforms for understanding the user’s experiences, needs and reactions. In a transition from government to governance, the notion of design has surely had its share from this transition. The focus of the design activity shifted from the design object itself towards participative and inclu-

sionary character of the process of the design. The core contribution of participatory design methods is, to the extent possible, that the user's knowledge and intervention is collected and utilized in design process. Theory of participatory design methods also underlines that in addition the democratizing the design it also promotes the identification of the point-in-question design matter. Participation is also considered as a method for legitimizing the majority's views and unifying the opposing views in a collective way. Thus, participation as a tool acts like an educative and socialization catalyser (Comeiro, 1990).

The reflection of "new governance" in design finds itself as "participatory design". Participatory design in architecture and planning, together with its theory and techniques have been on the agenda of city planners and architects since the 1970s, as a considerable movement towards the direct involvement of the public in the definition of their physical environment. Participatory industrial design later followed the way. Participation is a matter of control over decisions by the participants. Having explained the shift from local government to a new governance and its synergy of win-win interactions between public, private and community; and the relationship between the new governance and participatory design, two participatory design intend from two different cities -Istanbul and New York- that are comparable in certain aspects will be discussed. In the two design competitions discussed here, the activity of "participation" is enabled through competitions where professional/independent designers or manufacturers were invited to make new taxi designs and public to select its favourite by the local governments of two metropolitan cities¹. According to Wulz (1986/1990, p. 39), a design competition is a solution to alienation between designers and users through allowing users to employ their influence in the design or decision making process. Participation is a general concept with different forms of decision making methods by the involved parties. Participation can be active or passive as Wulz defines in seven different forms and stages: Representation,

Questionnaire, Regionalism, Dialogue, Alternative, Co-decision and Self-decision (Wulz, 1986/1990, p. 41).

According to Wulz (1986/1990, p. 41), representation is a passive form of participation where designer, with a clear social sensitivity, considers himself/herself as the user or client in design process and designs accordingly. Questionnaire is another passive form of participation of the anonymous user. The objective is clear; more observable and statistically comprehensible data can better take the designer to the user needs and experiences. Regionalism appears as a solid concern for the place based values and references of a particular territory where the design is made for. Dialogue is based on the concept of using people's knowledge as a source and asking them to comment on the designer's proposal while the design process is in progress. This sort of dialogue may either happen face to face or through a dynamic interface. Alternative is a form of participation where the users are encouraged to make selection out of a number of different design alternatives. The critical aspect of this type of participation is the possible restrictive effects of the presentation. The way that the alternatives are presented is vital in terms of the impression created. Co-decision is a participation method where the citizen/user has the biggest role starting from the design process to decision making out of alternatives. The promoting agency manages the entire process without imposing or dominating the design. The citizens are both active designers and the decision makers throughout the entire process. Competitions from ideas, emerged from the public, to the selection of the final design among the alternatives have a lot to offer in sense of co-decision way of participation (Volker, 2010) (Nasar & Kang, 1989). Self-decision is a participation model where not only the majority but everybody has equal right to influence the design. Wulz (1986/1990, p. 46) states that this is a form of self-build or self-help method where the designer or architect is engaged as a consultant. However, self-decision design method can only be applied in small groups for productive design processes. If not,

¹ *Istanbulites experienced this type of a collective decision making before the new taxi competition, for selecting the new city boat in 2006. The Department of Istanbul Maritime Lines asked people to vote for their favorite boat design out of 8 different alternatives. The majority (41% of the voters), voted for the design resembling the former the most (Hurriyet, 2006). Today, the old and new boats float among giant oil tankers on the Bosphorus, surrounded by armies of seagulls (ZeroIstanbul, 2012, p. 110).*

representatives of the groups need to work with the consultant and this may undermine the synergy of this method. Below the steps taken in “taxi design” attempt of both cities are discussed with reference to aforementioned participatory design methods where there are similarities.

2. A brief review of both design competitions: commonalities and differences

The necessity of new design concepts led to design competitions for taxi cars in NYC and Istanbul during approximately the same time period. Istanbul’s competition launched in March 2011 while NYC’s occurred in May 2011. In NYC, pre-competition process and R&D phase started in 2007 with a vast amount of public consensus studies. The city administration issued a request for proposals for the manufacturers and designers to submit their designs for a purpose-built taxi design to serve as NYC’s taxi of tomorrow (DTPS, 2007) (nyc.gov, 2011). The shortlisted entrants to NYC competition were announced in February 2011 for the online voting and the winning entry was announced in April 2011. Istanbul’s early pre-competition studies started in 2009, through meetings with Chamber of Istanbul Taxi Drivers, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s (IMM) Mass Transportation Services, independent designers and manufacturers, lasting from 2009 to 2010 (IBB, 2010). The competition design brief was prepared in 2010 and the competition has been launched in March 2011 (www.taksitasarim.ibb.gov.tr, 2011).

This paper draws a critical perspective on the participatory design attempts for designing the next generation of taxis by two world class cities, NYC and Istanbul, with diversified rankings of business activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience and political engagement (Hales, Peterson, Pena, & Gott, 2014). The paper builds a critical review on both cities’ participatory design activities in their differences and similarities. Apparently, two cases have methodological differences as well as some similarities. Differences of both cases are considered to be factors contrib-

uting to the argument for questioning the tension between the search of good design and challenge of popular phenomena.

Two important points need to be stated in the beginning of the paper, one of which is about the term good design, and the second is the involvement of the authors in the mentioned competitions. It is obvious that there are different sets of characteristics attributed to good design when gazed into design history and theory, and the paper is held within this acceptance. On the other hand, there are common characteristics such as usefulness, understandability, unobtrusiveness, aesthetics, honesty, sustainability and environmental friendliness, most of which can be traced in the ten commandments of good design put by the German designer/architect Dieter Rams in the 1970s. The first author of the paper, free from evaluation of the entries, was in charge of providing independent design consultancy to the City of Istanbul throughout the entire competition.

Both cities witnessed a thorough R&D process as the private sector and NGOs focused on the quality of taxi services. Thus both cities perceived the issue as a societal matter as well as design and they planned an open process for designers and for the citizens who would be able to vote for their own favourite taxi concept.

3. Istanbul and New York City cases: Istanbul case

Taxi service in Istanbul is a complex issue. Considering Istanbul’s heavy traffic congestions make it clear that taxi cabs are effective for the citizens, thus they bear an importance not only for their service but also for the aesthetic effects created by the taxis within the city. It is not only a vital part of daily transportation but also the centre of controversies with its ever growing chronic problems on city’s agenda. IMM’s Department of Mass Transportation Services reports that there are 18,000 registered cabs, and between 30,000 to 60,000 illegal taxis giving service around Istanbul, a city of 14 million (IBB, 2010). According to Aydinonat general public perception

about the service quality of the taxis in Istanbul is remarkably low (Aydinonat, 2013). Principally IMM restricts the number of registered taxi plates, which can be leased for taxi service. Thus an ever increasing demand at the city for taxi service is making the value of a single taxi plate a very profitable investment tool, in free market. Today the value for a taxi plate is listed at almost 1,2 million Turkish Lira (approx. \$500.000) (milliyet, 2013). Ownership of constantly increasing taxi plates is perceived as an alternative investment instrument. Therefore providing a high quality taxi service has become less important. Problems with Istanbul taxis' low service quality are more or less a result of this fact together with the issue that there exists no rivalry on the quality of service provided by taxis.

There are also illegal taxis around the city because of growing demand for taxi services. These illegal ones are fulfilling this need. It is estimated that government's annual tax loss due to illegal taxis is approximately 100 million Turkish Liras (cnbce, 2013). Under these circumstances, the rationale behind the restrictions on the number of registered plates becomes dubious. One answer could be the vested interests of current holders of these plates. In Table 1, Aydinonat (2013) sheds some light on facts and figures about number of the taxis around the world metropolitan areas as in the following (TUBITAK & Cetin&Oguz, 2007, *Table 1. Number of the taxis around some of the world's important metropolitan areas (TUBITAK & Cetin&Oguz, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2008).*

City	Number of Person Per Taxi	Number of Taxis Per 1000 People
Washington, DC	83	12,00
Queensland	125	8,00
Seoul	142	7,04
Miami	192	5,20
İzmir	219	4,57
Stockholm	331	3,02
Auckland	341	2,93
London	362	2,76
Ankara	580	1,72
New York City	662	1,51
Istanbul	800	1,25
Los Angeles	833	1,20

2010, 2013, 2008);

The above numbers show that on average a single legal taxi is giving service to 800 people in Istanbul, versus 662 people in NYC. Although the numbers for Istanbul point out an insufficient amount of legal taxis in the city, authorities still prefer not to increase the number of the registered plates. Apparently as long as the numbers of the registered plates remain constant, the service quality of the legal taxis will have no reason to increase in Istanbul. In other words, currently there is no reason for emergence of competition for a higher quality taxi service among the taxi service providers in Istanbul apart from IMM's concerns. Nevertheless under these circumstances in the period between 2009 and 2010, IMM's Department of Urban Design began to work organising a taxi design competition to increase the standards and service quality of Istanbul taxis (IBB, 2010).

City of Istanbul's main concern was to make a process of design involving open dialogue, communication and trust as Sanoff cites as the integral parts of participatory design (Sanoff, 1990, pp. 5-21). Istanbul's attempt, almost in the same period with NYC, to launch a taxi design competition for the city, was a national and two-phased "Taxi System Design Competition". In March 2011, IMM has launched Istanbul's new Taxi System Design Competition as a design idea competition to seek and promote creative ideas, approaches and new design concepts under 4 sub-design themes: a taxi for the general purposes, eco-taxi, a taxi communication system and a taxi stop/service point, and with 3 different designer profiles; professional designers, university teams and high school students. The city's participatory design proposition as Sanoff (1990, pp. 6-7) also describes was based on a belief that people affected by design decisions should be involved in the process of making those decisions. In other words, IMM paved the way for the emergence of the local creativity.

Having understood the reasoning behind the attempt of a design competition for the city's new taxi concept, searching for a consensus at second

stage for the shortlisted design proposals presented another challenge: finding balance between the creativity of emergence and stability of design (Hamdi, 2004, p. 18). The finalists in each design case were announced on the competition's web site and their proposals were put to a popular vote. All around the world, nearly 1.5 million people visited Istanbul's taxi design competition web pages and more than 340.000 people voted for the shortlisted design proposals over 15 days (www.taksitasarim.ibb.gov.tr, 2011). Finally an interdisciplinary jury made its decisions for the award winning designs in line with people's votes through considering the amount of the online votes for each design proposals. The whole process was a step-by-step interactive design activity from the beginning till the end and an "open to everybody's ideas" process intending to make the new taxis "everybody's taxi". Sanoff states his experience in user participation in design as "the main source of user satisfaction is not so much the degree to which his or her needs have been met, but the feeling of having influenced the decision" (Sanoff, 2006, p. 140)

3.1. The general structure of Istanbul's design competition

Istanbul's competition granted a feeling of control over the new design ideas was also a social contract between the city and citizens as Sanoff (1990, pp. 5-21) depicts, implying that their needs, values and ideas would be taken into consideration. The competition's design brief explained that the city authority invited all the professionals, college and high schooled designers into the competition no matter what company or manufacturer they were working for. Istanbul city authority and the jury both accepted this principle to provide and strengthen the equality and avoid any conflict of interest between the contestants, the jury and the city authority (IBB_Design-Brief, 2011).

As a step by step interactive design activity, Istanbul's taxi design competition was a collaboration between the contestants, executing authority of the city and the members of a multi-disciplinary jury. By definition of par-

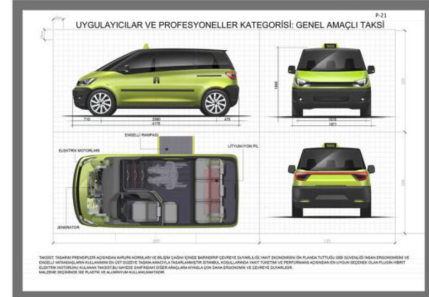
ticipatory design Wulz defines this as co-decision in his approach of seven forms and stages of participatory design (Wulz, 1986/1990, p. 41). Prior issue of co-decision is developing a balance between design process and decision-making. According to Wulz (1986/1990) co-decision involves the stake holders from the beginning of a design process and aims at user's direct and active participation.

The jury of Istanbul's competition has been chaired by a keynote personality, Önder Küçükerman, who pioneered both the establishment of industrial design education and corporate design activities in Turkey. By the

(P4) 28,5%
(36938 votes)



(P21) 41,2%
(53455 votes)



(P48) 18,5%
(24026 votes)



(P50) 11,7%
(15164 votes)



Figure 1. Shortlisted final 4 design proposals presented at the online poll (www.taksitasarim.ibb.gov.tr, 2011).



Figure 2. General view of Istanbul's winning taxi design proposal (www.taksitasarim.ibb.gov.tr, 2012).



Figure 3. General view of Istanbul's winning taxi design proposal (www.taksitasarim.ibb.gov.tr, 2012).



Figure 4. General inner view of Istanbul's winning taxi design proposal, (www.taksitasarim.ibb.gov.tr, 2012).

end of the first step evaluations of the design proposals, high school students' category award winning designs were determined by the jury (IBB-Rec1, 2011). The shortlisted design proposals on each of the four sub-themes belong to professionals' category and university students/teams' category have been chosen and announced, as entrant codes, on the competition's website (IBB-Rec2, 2011). Another two months of project developing process was given with a new set of criteria developed by the multi-disciplinary jury for the shortlisted projects in each design cases (IBB-Rec2, 2011). By the end of the

second phase, the jury again chose the properly and satisfyingly developed four design proposals in Figure 1. to present at online polls at competition web site during fifteen days (IBB-Rec3, 2011). According to the city authorities, people's votes were meant to distinguish the good designs and to end up the all process without ambiguity and discussion (IBB-Rec5, 2011). On-line poll results clearly pointed people's favourite designs on each theme for both contestant profiles. Sanoff defines it as "the issue of individual influence in decision making and its proportional impact that can best be resolved by the participants themselves" (Sanoff, 1990, p. 1).

Taxi for the general purpose of the Professionals Category online poll results were shaped as in the following (IBB-Rec4, 2011) (www.taksitasarim.ibb.gov.tr, 2011):

According to the jury evaluations, the project with P4 code was one of the most promising one in terms of its satisfying and advanced project presentation shown as in Figures 2, 3 and 4 (IBB-Rec4, 2011). This fact was appreciated by the jury at the last meeting before the online voting process (IBB-Rec4, 2011). However, the project also conveyed some unqualified design decisions and incorrect technical resolutions (IBB-Rec4, 2011). Even though the jury was impressed with its professional presentation, the odds with specific design and technical proposal were also openly criticised (IBB-Rec4, 2011) (IBB-Rec5, 2011). The jury articulated the general problems as exaggerated proportions, bad seat positions and inappropriate placement of the sliding doors (IBB-Rec4, 2011) (IBB-Rec5, 2011). According to the members of the jury, the majority of the voters would have never seen the projects through the eye of a technical expert but his/her own personal taste of aesthetic or beauty (IBB-Rec4, 2011) (IBB-Rec5, 2011). The modest and appropriate design features and the consistent inner and outer technical resolutions in appropriate proportions of the taxi design project with the P21 code were also noted and appreciated by the jury (IBB-Rec4, 2011) (IBB-Rec5, 2011). 129,575 votes had



Figure 5. Jury and technical committee studies (IMM-Department of Urban Design Archive, 2012).

been clicked for the finalist four design projects in general taxi design category (IBB-Rec5, 2011). The design proposal P21 was voted by 41,2%, while project P4 was preferred by 28,5% of the voters (IBB-Rec5, 2011). The jury has chosen P21 as the winning design of the general taxi design category and it was awarded with 100,000 Turkish Liras (IBB-Rec5, 2011).

In spite of the written objections raised by the designers of P4, the jury and the technical committee in Figure 5, noted that “We have been looking for a taxicab with clear taxi proportions not a taxicab with minivan proportions” (IBB-Rec5, 2011). Jury also states that “Online poll results are also clearly pointing out to this vital detail. This is why the winner of this theme is the project P21” (IBB-Rec5, 2011). According to the jury, citizens’ favourite design was obviously the fruitful result of the search of “good design” in Istanbul’s taxi design competition (IBB-Rec5, 2011).

3.2. New York City case

“A taxi is not a car; it is a moveable public space. It may have four wheels and carry passengers, but the circumstances are completely different” (DTPS, 2007). A Ford’s Crown Victoria Taxi cab, shown in Figure 6, in NYC are both loved and hated by the New Yorkers. They are assumed as practical and alternative modes of transportation over Manhattan throughout the routes not sufficiently fulfilled by the subways (www.ny.com). One can say that the traffic that results alongside the Manhattan’s streets is the flood of the yellow cabs. With over 10,000 yellow cabs giving service to NYC is the prior reason to the mid-town traffic



Figure 6. In yellow-cab form, Ford’s Crown Victoria has been an integral part of the New York cityscape for years (<http://news.drive.com.au/drive/motor-news/revealed-new-yorks-new-yellow-cab-20110504-1e79l.html>).

(DTPS, 2007). Goldberger, the Dean of the Parsons The New School for Design, says that “What is troubling about the NYC taxi is not that it is ubiquitous, but that it is so ill-suited to its job. There is something brightening to the cityscape in the constant flow of deep yellow vehicles along the city streets but then you get into one of them, and you are reminded that it is hard to enter, hard to leave, uncomfortable to sit in, and awkward to carry luggage in. It is as likely as not to be dirty, and it may or may not have a functioning air conditioner. It is hard to communicate with the driver. And, although you are unlikely to realize this is as a passenger, the NYC taxi is no friend to the environment (Goldberger).”

There is no doubt, hailing a cab in NYC -with its spirit of freedom, power, and anonymity - is more and more a “must to do” thing in the city. A number of people visiting the city and experiencing the taxi cabs are making the “NYC cab notion” among top tourist attractions (DTPS, 2007). Although taxis still accommodate a crucial NYC experience, few would oppose to the idea that they should be more comfortable, better designed, and accessible for all. Hence at the hundredth anniversary of the gasoline powered taxi in 2007, the NYC’s Design Trust for Public Space has been studying how this iconic wealth of transportation could be revised, with the eventual goal of making a new taxi design for the century turn over. In total, over 50 designers and taxi stakeholders took part in a spirited discussion of all things about taxi where the participants discussed trends in taxi design, the taxi’s role as

a public space, and the ideal taxi of the future, from the perspective of a taxi passenger. On the basis of the effective and operative efforts developed by the NYC’s Design Trust for Public Space,

Table 2. NYC’s poll results for the “Taxi of tomorrow” (Taxi of Tomorrow Survey Results, NYC, TLC, 2011).

Karsan	Total	Percentage
Like It	6,001	26.6%
Love It	8,788	38.9%
No Way!	2,221	9.8%
Not for Me	2,097	9.3%
Take It or Leave It	3,471	15.4%
Grand Total	22,578	100.0%

Ford	Total	Percentage
Like It	5,284	23.4%
Love It	3,297	14.6%
No Way!	3,857	17.1%
Not for Me	4,213	18.7%
Take It or Leave It	5,907	26.2%
Grand Total	22,558	100.0%

Nissan	Total	Percentage
Like It	6,913	30.7%
Love It	2,633	11.7%
No Way!	2,651	11.8%
Not for Me	3,250	14.4%
Take It or Leave It	7,087	31.5%
Grand Total	22,534	100.0%



Figure 7. Design proposals for the New York’s “Taxi of Tomorrow”(www.taxioftomorrow.com, 2011).

the studies and workshops have been done for capacity building processes in the search for NYC’s taxi of tomorrow (DTPS, 2007).

Later on, in 2007, city officials convened a group of stakeholders, including representatives of taxi drivers, owner and passengers, to create a set of goals for the next NYC taxi cab, a project called the “Taxi of Tomorrow”. In December 2009, the authorities initiated a “request for proposals,” inviting auto manufacturers and designers to submit their best ideas for a purpose-built vehicle to serve as a NYC taxicab. On May 3, 2011 it was announced that the NV200, designed by Nissan had been chosen as the winner of the competition (nyc.gov, 2011) (DTPS, 2007) where the other two finalist producers were Ford, and a Turkish company Karsan.

Participatory point of NYC’s process of seeking the “Taxi of Tomorrow” is its online poll process for the three finalist automotive companies’ design proposals. According to the poll results, as appears in Table 2, Karsan was voted as the “most loved” design, with 38,9% of the “Love it” votes, by the New Yorkers. The poll raised a unique question; “What do you think of the new designs?” and requested five different feelings for each design from the citizens: The results, for the design proposals shown in Figure 7,were shaped as in the Table 2 (nyc.gov, 2011);

For each of the following design proposals;

Eventually, NYC authority chose Nissan as the “Taxi of Tomorrow” by putting the poll results aside assuming that the New Yorkers “loved” the Nissan’s design too. However, this decision has led to some controversy. Journalist and blogger James Wagner wrote in



Figure 8. Prototype of selected design concept of Nissan NV 200 model. (www.taxioftomorrow.com, 2011).

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his e-article “NYC gets yesterday’s taxi, not ‘The Taxi of Tomorrow’ “ stating “Although the very modern, beautifully-designed, extraordinarily-roomy and fully-accessible Karsan V1 was hailed by New Yorkers as their favourite, the City ended up choosing the least popular entry, the hideous Nissan NV 200” (Wagner, 2012).

He continues by saying “While the Nissan was certainly the most conservative response to an important challenge, in the end it will prove to have been the most impractical choice, and therefore the most radical, given the parameters of the search: Of the three finalists it responds the least well to current taxi needs, and its environmental and accessibility inadequacies, among others, will look even more grotesque as time goes by. According to Wagner “in picking the barely-adequate, ungainly and unlovely Nissan “they” struck out once more, embarrassing New Yorkers who actually care about the city’s ability to get things right (both better than and before others do, if possible)” (Wagner, 2012). As a response to the critics and reactions, city authority informed that a French designer François Farion would work on the Nissan’s proposal to make it better in design as the “Taxi of Tomorrow” for the New Yorkers.

Immediately after TLC has announced their final choice of the competition, City Authority of NYC signed an agreement worth \$1 billion with Nissan to supply city’s new unique taxi cabs each for \$29,000 market price for the next ten years. Queens based Taxi Safety Committee came out with a claim that Nissan NV200, shown in Figure 8, models were not up to date in terms of taxi cab safety issues and they litigated. Recently in early October of 2013, the Supreme Court decided for a suspension of execution on the account to the fact that the city has no privilege to designate one single company to provide city’s new taxi cabs (NYTimes, 2013). Apparently this has brought a new and unexpected twist to the city’s agenda on the process of implementation of the new taxi cabs.

Wulz in his article of “The Concept of Participation” claims that there is always a controversy in participatory

design when majority’s choice dominates minority’s expectations (Wulz, 1986/1990, pp. 41-44). In NYC case, city’s final choice that paying no attention to citizens’ decision is beyond disturbing for both parties. Although there may be many different reasons on the selection of the Nissan’s design, NYC’s decisions reminds the challenge of “what happens when the most favourite design is not approved as the good design?”

4. Potential outcomes and critical comparison of both cases

In NYC the designer companies have been technically briefed prior to making their bids. However in Istanbul, IMM purposely let the designers free for encouraging original ideas in the first phase and briefed the short-listed entries on technical details in the second phase of the competition (IBB-Rec3, 2011). People in NYC expressed their feelings for each design entry in 5 different ways from “like it” to “take it or leave it” while in Istanbul, people have only been asked to choose their favourite design out of four finalist entries. This paper considers the ratio of “love it” votes in NYC as an equivalent parameter to the ratio of “favourite” votes in Istanbul’s poll. Other four feelings for each of the three finalists’ design proposals in NYC are valuable and yet might be considered as data for another case study.

Post-competition agendas of Istanbul and NYC were slightly different. NYC authorities openly expressed that it was a purpose built design competition while City of Istanbul stated that the winner design proposal could partially or fully be implemented or considered as a capacity building activity for better taxi service standards for the future (nyc.gov, 2011) (IBB_Design-Brief, 2011). In addition to that, City authority of Istanbul also required the entrants to contest, free from their corporate attachments, as independent designers. These methodological differences affected the profile of the entrants in both competitions. Due to differently articulated purposes of the competitions, corporates and manufacturers such as Nissan, Ford and Karsan entered the competition

in NYC while designers participated in the competition in Istanbul as independent contenders. From this point of view Istanbul's design competition aims at involving the citizens in this design experience as independent designers while in NYC companies are in charge of design and citizens are only getting involved in the process via online voting. The backbone of the participative process of NYC design case is mainly structured on getting people's feedback on the features of each design proposal. Istanbul in this respect is programming the entire competition with a concern for promoting the citizen involvement as much as possible for different designer profiles and different design themes (IBB_Design-Brief, 2011, p. 5).

Both processes had different methodological characteristics. Even though NYC had three design proposals with complete R&D backgrounds developed by the manufacturers, the entire process was finalized by the "least loved" design (NYCTL, 2011). On the other hand, Istanbul's design competition for taxi and its system pieces have promised to be multidisciplinary design opportunities for the independent designers and design teams. Even though Istanbul's method seems more risky and challenging especially for the post-competition progress and the industrialization of the designs, the high calibration between people's favourite designs and jury selections have proved the success of the participation. Istanbul's design competition in Wulz's (1986/1990, pp. 44-45) terms is a co-decision participation model that mostly occurred as a balanced decision making process. Likewise influencing population had a direct influence on the final decisions in Istanbul's competition. Jury showed highest effort to get in line with people's favourite designs in all themes (IBB-Rec5, 2011). As an exception, although one of the finalist design proposals on "taxi stop/service point" category was the most favourite one by the poll, due to a considerable amount of objection emails from the public against it, the jury approved the second most favourite design as the winner (IBB-Rec5, 2011).

Putting the manufacturers or de-

signers at the very centre in the process and encouraging them for new design concepts for the city's new taxi design is somehow a serious task and a heavy responsibility. Considering the vital claims of "taxi is a design object" and "taxi is not a car but a moving public space," its comfort, security, and urban identity issues are respectfully vital. Thus design of a taxicab may become an even more complex issue. When this sort of responsibility is programmed as a step by step interactive design process between city authority, designers and citizens genuinely, then the new design ideas inevitably may have the chance to emerge from the inside of the city. That is to say, the collective taste of design may appear on the stage. The good potential of the pluralism in the society may activate a fruitful discussion for the different design ideas. However, academia emphasizes that good design does not always have to mirror the users' wishes and tastes. Users' tastes, desires and interests on a particular design object do not always imply the success of it (nyc.gov, 2011). One can say that the politicians behind both Istanbul's and NYC's processes did not only disregard this claim but also the question of "is publicly favourite design enough?" (Maile, 2012).

Numerous similar experiences exist between the cases of NYC and Istanbul. One of the design proposals in both cases had clearly been highlighted by significant public support. The city authorities would have never felt better about the results had they not consulted with the broader society. Apparently none of the political figures in both cities would disagree on these clear outcomes. Thanks to the well-organized propaganda which is one of the greatest weapons of pluralist western democracies, missions in both cities created successful PR processes out of taxi and design issues. Yet the results evolved differently.

Leading political authorities' final decisions in both cities had vital role on the results of both processes. There existed a respectful amount of a public support for one particular design idea, and the rejection of that design for concerns of avoiding failures, and continuing with a "least loved" de-

sign proposal, triggered enormous controversy in NYC. Avoiding the institutional failures but faced with unpleasant critics may be defined as the unforeseen risk of the game. According to McGrath “most organizations are profoundly biased against failure and make no systematic effort to study it. Executives hide mistakes or pretend they were always part of the master plan. Failures become undiscussable, and people grow so afraid of hurting their career prospects that they eventually stop taking risks” (McGrath, 2011). This is, more or less, what happened in NYC where the process was barely supported by the civic society until the politicians decided to continue with the “least loved” design concept of the competition (nyc.gov, 2011). This situation had increased a public tension especially at intellectuals’ side of the city. They all raised the same question: Is the taxi of tomorrow the least loved design idea? Where is the vision in it? The fact is that the visions may be revised. Lootsma states “let us define our terms” and continues: “revisionism is a tendency where in general politics take position (Lootsma, 2011). This is a tendency to conserve what once existed and still aims at radical change in the present system. Revisionism is a path between revolution and conservatism. Needless to say that this is the route and the tension of post-modernism (Lootsma, 2011). Apparently this tension was the major struggle that politicians in both cities have faced.

Relatively Istanbul’s experience is no more different in this respect. The Istanbulites’ favourite design and the common taste of design of the public majority was awarded as the winner design which had a support of 41,2% amongst all (IBB-Rec5, 2011). To this end, Istanbul’s competition did not only award the designers but also to the public opinion and its common taste. Due to no prior commitment for the production of the winning design, designers had no concrete expectation for the production. Following the city’s responsible authorities decided not to produce the winner design but considering and implementing its high service and design standards for the different type of taxicabs that will pro-

vide service within the city in the near future (hurriyet, 2011). Being different from NYC, Istanbul’s design competition and its following process, with 4 major design cases, 3 major designer profiles and online voting to search for a public consensus, was a city wide capacity building process. Istanbul has never committed the production of the winning design concepts as a whole as New York did. To this end public discomfort against to all process in public opinion in Istanbul is much harmless when comparing to the opposition voices in New York.

When considering the controversial topic on the post-competition progress of NYC’s “taxi of tomorrow” project, one can say that NYC does not have a publicly-supported new taxi design concept as Istanbul achieved at the end of the whole competition. Differently from Istanbul, NYC wanted to develop the new design concept for the city’s new taxicabs through a process that invited and included manufacturers. Similarly, both NYC and Istanbul made the citizens to vote online for the shortlisted design ideas. Istanbul and NYC political authorities’ enthusiasm to consider public reactions for taxi and its system design made both processes into a popular design activity.

4.1. Comparative and theoretical discussions: The challenge of plurality in design

The Reagan and Thatcher era of the 1980s was characterized by an array of new public management reforms that were, if not global, then at least very widespread in geographical scope. Although there is no agreed upon definition of new public management, most observers seem to agree that it entails at least seven aspects transferred from private sector management principles to the public sector, such as hands-off, professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, managing by result and value for money, privatization, agentification, competition, decentralization and citizen empowerment (Kjaer, 2009, p. 138). However, a new paradox appeared: challenge of pluralism. Needless to stay, discussions in open and pluralist platforms are far more chal-

lenging than those happening behind the doors.

According to Bellamy, such pluralism gets into modern societies, the mixed blessing of their differentiation and openness (Bellamy, 1999, p. 1). When the associated diversity enhances one's everyday life's efficiency, it may also reason many of its troubles being obliged to choose between conflicting constraints, purposes, rules and considerations. The theory and practice of politics are no less stable in a world of rapidly growing social and value pluralism. Due to a trend of becoming more and more heterogeneous, citizens hold ever more atypical and often contrary identities, ideologies and interests in western developed societies. Not only private but also public life may encounter problematic and occasionally even tragic choices. However these circumstances place contemporary orders in a dilemma: can they respect plurality yet produce collective contracts that govern an unobligated loyalty?

When reconsidering the concepts of the popularity of design and the power of plurality in the same pot, Istanbul's taxi design competition is inspiringly convincing to develop inquisitorial analogies about the tension between popularity of design objects and the search of good design. Both cases suggest that crediting the majority's "good" as "good" without experiencing it, emerges to be a paradoxical issue.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Populist Politicians react with a post-modern, but confused, way (Lootsma, 2011). Confusion may appear in any way that the politician would not prefer to be a part of, especially after all his attempts to reach to the pluralist creative opinion of the society via a well-organized process. A dilemma between public opinion and some technical or legal concerns may put the politician in an opposite position in comparison to overall mission of the process.

Beyond a doubt this kind of change in expression and in mind setting might result by a decrease in his or her public support. Looking for innovation to upgrade the urban life may be energized through populism from a political point of view. However, possible

conflicts between populism and real world constraints especially for design ideas obtained via open public processes may naturally bring up some unexpected concerns on public stage. One can say that developing creative ideas for design objects for wide public use throughout an open and participatory process has its own rules.

This may imply a shift in literal and technical definition of governance in design issues. Evidence gained from both metropolitan cities' participatory design processes suggests that when the deal is design, populism does not always take us to good design and the political promoter may somehow be harmed through the process. Instead of making generalizations on the issue of good design versus the popular one and its relation to participatory approach, two concrete competitions with similarities depicted a fruitful platform to engage critical review. Is the most popular design always the good design? or "Is publicly favourite design enough?" Design thinkers and academia suggest that the answer might just be "no" (Maile, 2012) (McGrath, 2011). Experience revealed from both of the different approaches of NYC's and Istanbul's design competitions and post-competition discussion and decisions inform us that the design preferred by the public on paper may not always be the good design unless it is produced, used and proved. On the other hand a good design as defined and agreed by the experts may not always be the most popular design for people who may have different criteria and taste from those who determine what the good design is.

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İyi tasarımı "favori tasarım" yoluyla aramak: İstanbul ve New York taksi tasarım yarışmaları

Son bir kaç on yıldır ulusal ve kenttsel bürokraside yaşanan değişimler "Yönetimden" "Yönetişime" veya "Eski Yönetim" biçiminden "Yeni Yönetişim" biçimine geçiş olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Kjaer, 2009). Bu aynı zamanda çeşitli ortak özel amaçlar için bir araya gelen yerel yöneticiler, kamu idarecileri, akademisyenler veya kar amacı gütmeyen sivil aktörlerden oluşan bir ağ yapısının hedeflenen belli bir amaca dönük tanımlanan bir organizasyon yapısı olarak kurulmasıdır. Literatürde bu şekilde özel bir amaca dönük yatay ve dikey hiyerarşileri olmayan esnek ve çoğulcu örgütlenme biçimi "Yerel Yönetim" den, "Toplumsal Yönetişim"e geçiş olarak da tariflenmektedir. Yönetişim teorisi bunu kamu, özel ve sivil

toplum arasındaki kesin çizgilerin bulanıklaşması olarak da tanımlarken söz konusu ağ yapılanmasının başarısını; ilgili tüm aktörleri dahil edebilmesi ve hedeflenen amacı gerçekleştirmeye dönük kurduğu ilişkileri ile de orantılar (Kjaer, 2009, p. 138). 1960'larda Christopher Jones, Christopher Alexander, Tom Markus ve Ray Studer gibi rasyonalist düşünce temsilcisi mimarlar bir takım matematiksel modellerin tasarımcıları daha iyi karar alma süreçlerine götürebileceğini savunmaktaydı (Broadbent, 1980). Ancak 1970'lerde oldukça rasyonalist bu önerilerin aslında muazzam bir değerler ve öncelikler çeşitliliğini içinde barındıran bir dünyaya ait problemleri doğru tanımlamada yetersiz kaldığı görüşü önem kazandı (Comeiro, 1990). Günümüz çok sesli ve çok katmanlı modern toplumları için kent hayatına dair karmaşık

sorunlara çözüm üretmede geleneksel yukarıdan-aşağı tek yönlü karar alma süreçleri yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu yetersizlik kendini en çok geniş halk kitlelerini ve kent hayatını doğrudan ilgilendiren tasarım problemlerinin doğru tanımlanması ve iyi tasarım önerileri geliştirilmesi ihtiyacında göstermektedir. Bu ihtiyacın beraberinde getirdiği sorunsallardan en önemlisi ise “çeşitlilik” olarak kendini göstermektedir. Toplumsal yapı farklı sosyal, kültürel, antropolojik ve duygusal bağları olan yüksek bir çeşitliliği bünyesinde barındırmaktadır. Hepimizin farklı estetik ve ahlak/etik kodları bulunmaktadır.

Bu nedenledir ki; kamu çalışmalarında eski kamu yönetiminden yeni kamu yönetimi anlayışına kayış; çoğulcu ve tartışmalara açık platformların kamu geleneği içinde kendini göstermesiyle birlikte yeni bir paradoksu tetikledi: Çoğulculuk Meselesi. Çoğulculuk katılım için olmazsa olmaz bir girdi olmasına rağmen bir takım zorlukları da beraberinde getirmektedir. Kendi içinde yüksek bir çeşitlilik ve çok seslilik barındıran bir kent toplumunun günlük yaşam standartlarını ilgilendiren tasarım problemlerine çözüm ararken genel-geçer doğru ve yanlışlardan söz etmek ve herkes için işleyen bir çözüm geliştirmek güç bir durum haline almaktadır. Çünkü toplumsal çeşitlilik ve farklılıkların tasarımdaki karşılığı yaklaşımların, fikirlerin ve önerilerin çeşitliliği olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bizler tasarım fikirlerimizi yarıştırdığımız diğer yandan değerlerimizi ve toplumsal, sosyal ve mekansal yorumlarımızı da yarıştırmaktayız. Tüm bu gerilimi, eğitimin, ideolojinin, etnik yapının, toplumsal cinsiyetin, dinin ve yerelliğin birbiriyle örtüşmeyen, rekabet eden veya çelişen kabulleri içinde teşhis etmekteyiz (Bellamy, 1999, p. 1). Bu makalede “iyi tasarım arayışı” ile “popülerlik / favori olma durumu” ya da daha anlaşılır bir ifadeyle “halk tarafından belirlenme ve benimsenme” olgusu arasındaki gerilim, İstanbul ve New York kentlerinin taksi tasarım yarışmalarının yöntemleri ve sonuçları üzerinden sorgulanmaktadır.

Tasarım yarışmaları bu çeşitliliği tasarıma girdi olarak değerlendirirken halk oylamaları herkesi kapsamayı hedefleyen çoğulcu bir karar alma yön-

temi olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu açıdan değerlendirildiğinde katılımcı tasarım kuramlarına göre tasarım yarışmaları ve halk oylamaları “birlikte karar alma/co-decision” modeli olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Wulz, 1986/1990, p. 41). Bu makalede anlamlı benzerlikleri olan iki örnek olay olarak, “İstanbul için Taksi Tasarım Sistemi Yarışması” ve “New York için Geleceğin Taksisi / Taxi of Tomorrow for New York”, tasarım yarışmaları ve halk oylamaları yukarıda tanımlanan “birlikte karar verme” katılımcı tasarım uygulamaları örnekleri olarak incelenmiştir. Her iki tasarım yarışması kendine özgü farklılıklara sahip olmakla birlikte özellikle katılımcı tasarım uygulamaları açısından benzerlikler arz etmektedir. İki yarışmanın birbirinden ayrılan en belirgin özelliği, yarışmaya katılabilecek kişilerin nasıl tanımlandığıdır. İstanbul’un yarışması özgün fikirleriyle katkı sunabilecek her kesimden insanı -orta öğretim öğrencileri, üniversite ekipleri, profesyonel tasarımcılar kategorileriyle - bağımsız tasarımcılar olarak tasarım sürecine dahil ederken; New York yarışma komitesi, tasarım sürecini davet ettiği otomotiv sektörünün temsilcileri, Nissan, Ford, Karsan gibi profesyonel tasarım oluşumlarıyla sürdürmektedir. Her iki yarışmada finalist tasarım önerilerinin yarışma web siteleriyle halk oyuna sunulması izlenen temel ortak katılım yöntemi- dir. Makalenin argümanı İstanbul’un halk oylamasında profesyonel kategoride genel amaçlı taksi tasarımı için en yüksek oyu alan, diğer bir deyişle “en favori” tasarım, New York’un halk oylamasında ise en beğenilen, yani en yüksek oranda “love it” oyunu alan, tasarım önerileri ve bu tasarımlara dair tartışmalar üzerine kurulmuştur.

Her iki örnek olayda ortaya çıkan durum şöyle özetlenebilir: Popüler beğeni ile iyi tasarım arayışı arasındaki mücadelenin, temelde aynı amaca dönük arayışlar gibi gözükseler de, farklı kaygıları bulunabilmektedir. Daha konforlu, daha “modern” ya da “güncel”, daha güvenli ve kent kimliğine katkıda bulunacak başarılı taksi tasarımlarının kent yaşamının standartlarını yükseltmeye dönük, katılım boyutu ön planda olan bir “iyi tasarım arayışı” sürecinin veya yarışmasının toplum tarafındaki

algılanışı ile hedeflenen amaca dönük ağ yapısını kurgulayan ve yöneten yerel yönetim tarafındaki algılar, kaygılar ve anlayışlar farklılık arz edebilmektedir. Bu makalede incelenen örnek olaylar şu ilişkiyi açıklamaktadır; kullanıcının tasarım sürecine katılım şansı ve süreci etkileyebilme yetisi, onun süreçten beklentisini doğru orantılı olarak etkilemektedir. Bir diğeri de kentsel yaşam kalitesini ilgilendiren tasarım problemlerinde tasarım sürecine, tasarımcı veya en beğendiği tasarım için oy kullanan kullanıcı olarak katılım sağlayan aktör ile süreci kurgulayan ve yöneten aktörün süreçten beklentisi arasındaki farklılık ne denli fazla ise de, elde edilen sonuçların toplam başarıya etkisinin o denli az olduğu görülmektedir. Bir diğeri de; iyi tasarım arayışını “en favori veya en popüler olan tasarım” üzerinden kurgulayan süreçlerin yukarıda sayılan nedenlerden dolayı bazen ne hedeflenen tasarımın kendisini ne de süreci başlatan, ağ yapısını oluşturan ve organize eden aktörü yüceltmeyebileceğini göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma ile irdelenen argüman ve örnek olay incelemeleri, hedeflenen şey geniş kitleleri

ve kent yaşamını ilgilendiren tasarım konuları olduğunda, yönetim olgusunun teorik ve teknik tanımının yetersiz kaldığına işaret etmektedir. Her iki örnek olaydan elde edilen çıkarımlar, ulaşılmak istenen amaç iyi tasarım olduğunda, “popüler olan” veya “en beğenilen” tasarımların bizi her zaman iyi tasarıma götürmeyebileceği gibi, süreci kurgulayan ve yöneten aktörün/ ağ yapısının süreçten olumsuz etkilenmesine de yol açabildiğidir. “En beğenilen” veya “herkesçe en popüler olan tasarım” her zaman iyi tasarım mıdır? sorusuna cevap ise “hayır” olmaktadır (Maile, 2012) (McGrath, 2011). Makalede karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenen iki örnek olay da buna işaret etmektedir. Sorgulanan argüman özelinde incelenen örnek olaylar ile şu sonucun olumlandığı görülmektedir: Çoğunluğun beğendiği ancak henüz üretilmemiş ve deneyimlenmemiş tasarım her zaman iyi tasarım olmayabilir. Öte yandan uzmanlarca iyi tasarım olarak tanımlanmış ve üzerinde uzlaşmış tasarımlar ise farklı kriter, beğeni ve deneyimlere sahip kullanıcılarca en beğenilen veya en favori olan tasarım olarak kabul görmeyebilir.