Design in Informal Economies: Craft Neighborhoods in Istanbul

Cigdem Kaya[1]
Burcu (Yancatarol) Yagız[2]

Introduction

The modes of production in informal economies in developing countries are highly dependent on social relationships, including apprenticeship and vocational training.[3] As a result, different design processes can be expected to emerge in informal economies. Such contexts can require a different understanding of artistry, "objecthood," labor, and time. Some designers in clustered craft contexts in Istanbul, a representative of informal economies in the world, develop strategies and embed their design knowledge in new processes in ways that are not addressed in "modernist" design education.

The aim of this paper is to present how the encounter of designers and craftsmen[4] can create a genuine blend of practice that particularly stems from dialogical bonds as a new "designing" typology in informal contexts. Such bonds and the practices they engender simultaneously empower designers and local craftsmen, such as goldsmiths, stone setters, neon sign makers, inlayers, coppersmiths, and welders, in urban Istanbul neighborhoods.

To explore these new processes, we undertook in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 14 trained professional designers and the master craftsmen who work with them in Istanbul. In this article we selected significantly representative excerpts from these interviews to illustrate how craftsmen and designers coax each other to be open and alert for opportunities that arise during the collaborative production or design process. The research also aims to understand the effects of the unplanned exposure of the traditional culture of "crafts" and the culture of "design" to one another in a context of non-Western modernity.

Designers in Istanbul Neighborhoods

Located between Europe and Asia, the city of Istanbul is a unique case in terms of the dynamics between its urban layout and the modes of industrial and non-industrial production. The city's urban layout is a scaffold for the formation of an economic structure that accommodates different scales of production, dynamically linked within "a continuum between formal and informal economies."[5] The urban informal sector is estimated to be about 26% of the entire

1 Çigdem Kaya
2 Burcu Yançatarol Yagız
3 Ozlem Unluhisarcikli, "Training on the Job in Istanbul: A Study of Skills Acquisition in Carpentry and Car-Repair Workshops," *International Review of Education* 47:5 (2001): 443–458.Ozlem Unluhisarcikli, "Vocational Training through the Apprenticeship System in Turkey" published phd: (The Future of Lifelong Learning and Work Conference Proceeding, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 2005), (Accessed online May 11, 2009 at: http://lifelong.oise.utoronto.ca).
4 Although, "craftsmen" as a term is not gender inclusive, it is widely used in the craft literature today to address all craftspeople.
5 Martha Alter Chen, 2007. "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment" (DESA Working Paper, no. 46, 2007) (Accessed online September 28, 2009 at: http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp46_2007.pdf).

economy of Turkey, and Istanbul, as Turkey's leading city of national and international economic development, accommodates a large part of the informal sector in her urban neighborhoods.[6] The number of people who make their living from the informal sector can be as high as 90% in the developing world,[7] which indicates that informal clusters in Istanbul provide a vital source of income and a context of practice for a variety of populations.

Crafts clusters in Istanbul's urban neighborhoods constitute a significant part of the urban informal economy and present a significant scale of operation for designers.[8] Organization of crafts clusters at the neighborhood level has had considerable importance in Istanbul's historical urban life because these clusters have been sustaining the co-existence of urban life and economic activity for hundreds of years. The architectural heritage and the objects in the treasuries of the Byzantine Empire, followed by the Ottoman Empire, reveal advanced craftsmanship in the variety of urban businesses once practiced here. Although the majority of these craft businesses disappeared or have lost their centrality as "businesses," the remnants are still an economic force that cannot be overlooked. Such remnants can be regarded as evidence of how traditional modes of production can require a very long time to change and can even resist changing, despite the influences of globalization.

Turkey's transition from a local crafts-centered economy to a formal industrial economy provides the contextual background for design practice's unique progress in Istanbul's urban setting. This transition phase, marked by the establishment of industrial design education as part of the Turkish nation's modernization process,[9] excluded crafts as handwork or as an outdated mode of production. However, the new generation of designers has started to embrace marginalized crafts production as the advantages of being close to the production process have been recognized. In fact, some young designers have discovered the possibilities of working with local craftsmen and blending their industry-oriented design education with crafts processes.[10]

Today, Turkish design education aims to equip industrial designers with skills that can respond to the demands of an advanced formal industrial economy based on the corporate culture of designing. Although the design education system idealizes design and industrial production processes, almost all project mock-ups and even prototypes produced during design education are still organically connected to a master craftsman's shop, rather than to computer-aided manufacturing (e.g., rapid prototyping and CNC[11] technologies), which are expected to be provided by design schools. Designers in Turkey become familiar with crafts processes starting from their school years. On the one hand, design education equips prospective designers with intellectual accumulation based on modernity; on the other hand, it steers them to local workshops spread in different neighborhoods of the city. The culture of

6 Tuncer Bulutay, *Employment, Unemployment, and Wages in Turkey* (Ankara: International Labour Organization, 1995), 200.

7 Bill Gibson and Bruce Kelley, "A Classical Theory of the Informal Sector," *The Manchester School* 62:1 (1994): 82. Dennis Herschbach, "Training and the Urban Informal Sector: Some Issues and Approaches," in *Training for Work in the Informal Sector*, edited by Fred Fluitman (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1989).

8 The tradition of producing daily objects by hand in craft clusters is still present in both urban and rural Turkey. Gokhan Karakus, "Contemporary Turkish Design in Turkey from 1990s to the Present Day" in *Turkish Touch in Design: Contemporary Product Design by Turkish Designers Worldwide* (Istanbul: Nurus, 2007), 20.

9 Karakus, 20. H. Alpay Er, Fatma Korkut, and Ozlem Er, "U.S. Involvement in the Development of Design in the Periphery: The Case of History of Industrial Design Education in Turkey, 1950s–1970s," Design Issues 19:2 (Spring 2003): 17–34. H. Alpay Er, "Peculiarities of the Periphery: Industrial Design Education in a Peripheral Context," *Desire Designum Design,* 4th European Academy of Design Conference Proceedings (Aveiro: Universidade de Aveiro, 2001), 26–31.

10 Ozlem Er and Cigdem Kaya, "Problems or Opportunities?: Overcoming the Mental Barrier for Socially Responsible Design in Turkey," *The Design Journal* 11:2 (2008): 170–6.

11 Computer Numerical Control

modernity encounters and reconciles with traditional craftsmanship in these seemingly insignificant workshops in Istanbul.

Prospective designers' familiarity with crafts contexts has the potential to develop further into a collaborative form of production. This form of production is characterized not only by its alternative way of making products in editions, but also by its genuine blend of practices based on exchange and integration of knowledge and experience. While these designers enrich traditional ways of production and empower local crafts, they grapple with critical questions of identity: how to work in a tremendously old and traditional crafts culture as a designer?

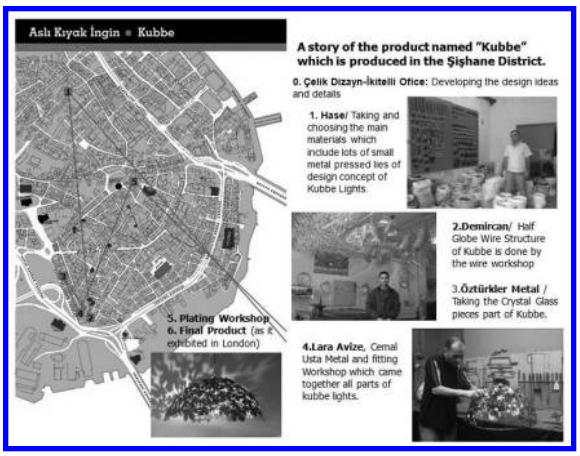
Istanbul and Crafts Workshops

Istanbul's urban layout offers designers various scales of operation in the city's economic spectrum. In addition to the industrial clusters generally situated in suburbia, informal crafts clusters in urban neighborhoods appear as unique spatial configurations where daily life blends with economic activity in various ways. "Urban neighborhood" as an operational unit and as a significant scale of production allows the blend of various forms of knowledge and practice in a daily setting. The spatial organization of a neighborhood provides a support structure for the sustainability of informal production; meanwhile, urban life on this scale facilitates the intertwining of personal and professional relationships.

Production in neighborhood-scale crafts clusters relies greatly on social relationships and the casual exchange of know-how and resources. Spatial proximity of workshops, material suppliers, service providers, and businesses in this setting is convenient for collaborations between local businesses, crafts workshops, and designers. The nature of clustering renders the interdependency between local stakeholders an important way for using of local resources and capabilities needed in production processes. These processes are characterized by exchange of know-how, borrowing and lending of resources and materials, and instantaneous co-operation.

Concentration of crafts workshops in Istanbul neighborhoods provides the context for shared production processes between designers and craftsmen. For instance, a designer who collaborates with a craftsman in a workshop is exposed to local resources and materials in such a way that this encounter often generates a spontaneous choice of materials and improvised applications in design. This spontaneity produces genuine design solutions only if the designer spends time in the workshop with the craftsman and shares the process of design and production with him. The workshop surrounded by a convenient organization of local resources facilitates the spontaneous formation of a mutually creative process based on exchange of knowledge and experience, and that benefits from the instant transfer of know-how from the "neighbors."

Figure 1
The road map of "Kubbe", a lighting design by Asli Kiyak Ingin for Made in Sishane in 2006. The piece traveled across five workshops in Sishane before being shipped to London.



The Field: Eminonu-Karakoy-Galata-Sishane[12]

In this research we interviewed the designers who work with craftsmen in the clusters on the Eminonu-Karakoy axis. These designers, who are the first generation of designers to have worked with urban craftsmen, have been in this 500-year-old craft neighborhood for about 30 years. The area thus stands out as the oldest field where designers and craftsmen first encountered each other. Hence, there has been a significant body of knowledge that designers and craftsmen produce through collaboration. As researchers, we could therefore accumulate enough data from the experiences of both the designers and the craftsmen to be able to identify some emerging patterns.

Divided by the Golden Horn, Eminonu is the center of the historical peninsula where the majority of the Byzantine and Ottoman cultural heritage resides. The area includes the Ottoman Imperial Palace, Hagia Sophia, The Basilica Cistern, Theodesian Walls (city walls), and the Grand Bazaar. The Grand Bazaar, the west end of the Silk Road, has always been famous for its jewelry. The large cluster of metalsmiths in the area has been raising apprentices, journeymen, and master craftsmen, such as gilders, setters, inlayers, engravers, and enamellers, for approximately 500 years.[13] Several old buildings (*han*) around the neighborhood house workshops of numerous master craftsmen: wire makers, welders, polishers working in one-room workshops.

While the Grand Bazaar is full of colorful tiles, jewelry, carpets, *kilim*s, and fabric waiting to be transported to the West, the informal network of craftsmen around the Grand Bazaar area is not visible to the buyers.

From Eminonu, across the Golden Horn, the neighborhood of Karakoy houses numerous suppliers that sell all sorts of hardware equipment, generally priced by weight. These suppliers are one-room stores next to each other along one main street and its small veins. This locus in Karakoy, locally known as Persembe Pazari[14] (Thursday's Market), is connected to Galata by a major hill

12 *Eminönü- Karaköy- Galata- SiShane*

13 Bilge Armatli Koroglu, Tanyel Ozelci Eceral and Aysu Ugurlar, "The Story of a Jewellery Cluster Metropolitan Area: Grand Bazaar (Kapalıçarsı)," *Gazi University Journal of Science* 22:4 (2009): 384.

14 Spelled *Persembe Pazarı*, this is an open market where various semi-processed parts and mechanical elements (e.g., screws, nuts, and bolts) are sold.

Figure 2
Clusters in the Eminonu-Karakoy axis.
Map by Burcu Yagiz.

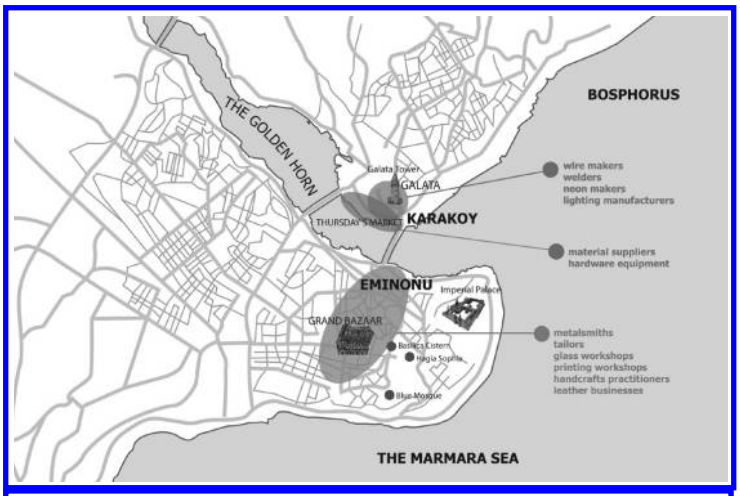


Figure 3
Çuhacıhan, one of the old buildings that house metalsmith workshops today. Photo by Cigdem Kaya.

that houses numerous workshops: welders, mold makers, neon shops, bowl turners. Galata, a 14th century Genoese neighborhood, connects Karakoy and Sishane, a 100-year-old cluster of the informal lighting industry.

The Genoese heritage in the neighborhood, including the Galata Tower, creates a cultural hub that forms a major market for consumption. The eastern side of the neighborhood is home to various artist initiatives, galleries, designer stores, and culture centers, whereas the western side houses the crafts workshops. Showrooms of some of the interviewed designers are also in these neighborhoods because the proximity of production and consumption results in a rich experience for designers. As a consequence, this area became condensed of consumption of well-crafted goods.[15] Strategic locations, such as Galata, which create interfaces imbued with cultural heritage between local production and consumption, have been the home of designers who work in informal contexts in Istanbul.

The Research

The designers and masters interviewed constitute a group that has organic and continuous ties with the research field through its practice. These designers and craftsmen have been working together in these neighborhoods for 2 to 15 years. Most of the masters and the designers have consistent interactions on a daily basis; in fact,

15 Ilpo Koskinen, "Semiotic Neighborhoods," *Design Issues* 2:2 (Spring 2005): 13–27.

we interviewed them in the workshops while they carried on with their work so that parts of their design and crafting processes in the workshop could compliment our questions.

As Istanbul-based researchers who have been trained as industrial designers, we also have prior experience in crafts as practitioners and in working with master craftsmen. During the interviews, we could embed ourselves in the working environment by incorporating our past experiences into the conversation.

The questions during the interviews focused on three major issues: the benefit of designer-craftsman collaboration, the hands on process shared by the designer and the master, including communication and learning, and how both the designers and the craftsmen identify their work as "design" and "craft." The first two sets of issues were explored by asking questions to both the craftsmen and the designers, while the identification of "design" versus "craft" has been explored by content analysis of the interview recordings.

A Dialogical Bond

A neighborhood-scale crafts cluster feeds on social relationships and vocational training, rather than on business relations. As stated above, sustaining relations in such a casual setting requires the designer, on the one hand, to engage in the daily life of the neighborhood so that he or she can understand the osmotic relationship between the workshop and its surroundings. On the other hand, being present in the workshop is fundamental when designers work with master craftsmen because working with the master is a situated dialogical process and is based on the mutual exploration of the idea and its execution. Typically, the master explores how the piece can be crafted technically by asking whether some changes are possible and even by making suggestions. This exploration is the start of a dialogue and a simultaneous hands-on experimentation that gradually shapes the object during long hours spent together. The process is re-directive in the sense that it builds on how the designer and the master both interpret the work. The masters want the designers to intervene while they work, in the improvisational nature of the craft. Designer Ozlem Tuna[16] provides an example of how improvisation, alien to the conventional design methods, is a sign of artistry for craftsmen: "Years ago unintentionally I gave out the drawings of a ring to three different master craftsmen. Although the orthographic and perspective scale drawings were identical, the master craftsmen came up with three different rings."[17]

Because craftsmen improvise by nature, the designers had to learn to think accordingly. When designer Verda Alaton went to Cuhacihan[18] to ask Mardik Usta[19] if he would be interested in working with her in 2007, Mardik Usta accepted this offer in the condition that Verda was present in the workshop and worked with him. Mardik Usta explains: "Sometimes I change my mind. Sometimes I have questions."[20]

16 *Özlem Tuna*

17 Ozlem Tuna, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, October 23, 2009, interview 02, transcript.

18 *Cuhacihan* (spelled as *Çuhacıhan*) is one of the old buildings that today houses only metalsmith workshops.

19 *Usta*, meaning master craftsman in Turkish, is used with the name as a title in the Turkish crafts tradition.

20 Verda Alaton and Mardik Usta, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, October 21, 2009, interview 01, transcript.

Figures 4a and 4b
Özlem Tuna, Vilyan Usta and Verda Alaton and Mardik Usta in the masters' studios. Photos by Cigdem Kaya.

Designer Hulya Celik Papuccuoglu[21] says that most of the time she takes advantage of being in the workshop and that, being there, she often changes her mind while the piece is being made. For instance, if the master is inlaying ivory, she might want to skip the last pencil work step and leave the ivory unframed.[22] As in the case of Papuccuoglu and Alaton, all the interviewed designers and master craftsmen have significantly described their working processes as a mutual state of constantly "changing their minds" according to the flow.[23] Designer Asli Kiyak Ingin[24] describes this state as "site-specific knowledge production."[25]

The nature of the communication between the designer and the craftsman necessitates the re-invention of site-specific tools for "designing together." Designers generally come up with an idea that is only half visualized. The work takes its shape as the master and the designer discuss what is technically reasonable, what is economically viable based on the amount of production, and what satisfies particular "tastes" (i.e., what looks good and what would look better). For this reason, although they have the necessary training, the designers deliberately do not draw technical drawings to communicate their pieces to the craftsmen. Because of the improvisational nature of the craft, the process of the master suggests much richer possibilities than simply to realize a drawing. Instead, designers use a hybrid of dialogue supported by non-detailed drawings and low fidelity mock-ups, generally from paper. Yet, the designers have all reported that the masters have such high capacity for empathy that they need to communicate just enough to let the master get "what they mean." Designer Alaton states that she and Mardik Usta's "heads match" so well that Mardik Usta can visualize in his mind a piece that Verda verbally describes.[26] Vilyan Usta, who works with designers Tuna and Papuccuoglu, says: "Masters should know designers very well. When they say something about a piece, I grasp what they really try to say."[27]

The empathetic communication between the master and the designer is central to the collaborative process. This non-verbal

21 *Hülya Çelik Papuççuoglu*
22 Hulya Celik Papuccuoglu, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, October 28, 2009, interview 03, transcript.
23 Ibid., transcript. Verda Alaton, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, October 21, 2009, interview 01, transcript.
24 *Aslı Kıyak Ingin*
25 Asli Kıyak Ingin, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, November 20, 2009, interview 08, transcript.
26 Alaton, transcript.
27 Vilyan Usta, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, October 23, 2009, interview 02, transcript.

Figures 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d
(Consecutively) works of Hülya Çelik Pabuçcuoglu and Özlem Tuna who both work with Vilyan Usta.

communication appears to be a typical silent consensus among designers and craftspeople in Istanbul workshops. While designers have the skills to communicate what they want by using mundane, non-designerly and non-measured materials, masters are so perceptive that they can identify each designer's choices as "style."

For designers from post-industrial societies, such communication is a dying ability. In October 2009, a non-profit organization called "Made in Sishane," founded by designer Asli Kiyak Ingin to make Sishane workshops visible through collaboration, invited an international group of designers to the neighborhood to work on lighting projects. According to artist Teike Asselbergs, the facilitator of the project, the service that masters in Sishane provide is invaluable:

> In the Netherlands a designer has to submit detailed technical drawings to a workshop and pick up his work when it is ready. He pays more for the machines than [the] craftsmen. … Without sophisticated tools, the master craftsmen in Istanbul invest their time in solving design problems with the designers.[28]

28 Teike Asselbergs, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, November 3, 2009, interview 04, transcript.

In the crafts cluster of Sishane, time is invested in the process of collaboration in the genuine and low-key atmosphere of the workshop. In most cases, the neighborhood structure has created such a dynamic culture of production, based on making together, that the process of design incorporates a dense transaction of knowledge between craftsmen and designers and extends beyond the walls of the workshop. This osmotic relationship between the workshop and the neighborhood, which stretches the tight bonds of design and lends authorship to multiple actors instead of one maker, is facilitated by spatial proximity: the "object" belongs to the neighborhood, and shared responsibility sustains this type of fragmented production, where authorship, authority, and control are constantly negotiated.

Design and Crafts Between Tradition and Modernity

In Turkey, the major difference between objects designed and made by master craftsmen and "designed objects" that are produced by master craftsmen with a designer's precise instructions is believed to be a matter of taste. In the Turkish design circle, it would not be wrong to say that the work of master craftsmen can easily be found "embellished," "overcrowded," "ornamented," and maybe even "tasteless," whereas design is believed to be simple and minimal—and thus "modern." Even though this classification does not fully marginalize crafts as a form of production, it does marginalize some aspects of the craftsman's organic relationship to the work. Designers and masters still converge toward each other, yet the perception of "design" and "craft" do not always blend because of the conjuncture of the era and of their representation in media. Crafts remain on the edges of the contemporary discourse of design while "design's claim on taste" can cause a discontinuity between the vocabularies of contemporary design and the tradition of crafts. The designer, as the offspring of the contextual anomalies in a non-western modernity, still owns the idea, whereas the craftsman owns the labor. Designer Tuna expresses frankly that the terminology in this context falls short: "Sometimes, I do not know who a designer is. The master can be a designer or a hobbyist at home. It is something inside the person. The definition of design changed. Like a shift of validity..."[29]

The nature of collaboration between designers and craftsmen in Istanbul neighborhoods neither isolates some characteristics of the mentioned distinct processes nor manipulates them in pursuit of a mere "design conception." Instead, it blends vocabularies of both practices in such a way that the process is able to feed on the unique details of the traditional workshop culture in authentic ways. Papuccuoglu, trained as an industrial designer, underlines that the qualities of the handmade are irreplaceable for her because of "the warmth of hand touch, like small differences in every hammer

29 Tuna, transcript.

30 Papuccuoglu, transcript.

stroke."[30] According to Ingin, "the work itself is a school" that requires the designer to let go of the earlier conception of "design" as we know it and open up to possibilities, opportunities, imperfections, and even chance.[31]

During the long hours of working together, designers and masters move across borders unconsciously. This unconscious border crossing is a way of shaping the supposedly "separate" inputs of both sides into a final object. The outcome of such a reflective process shows how different ways of working co-create some distinct features in contemporary objects, such as Mardik Usta's affinity to use sheet metal.

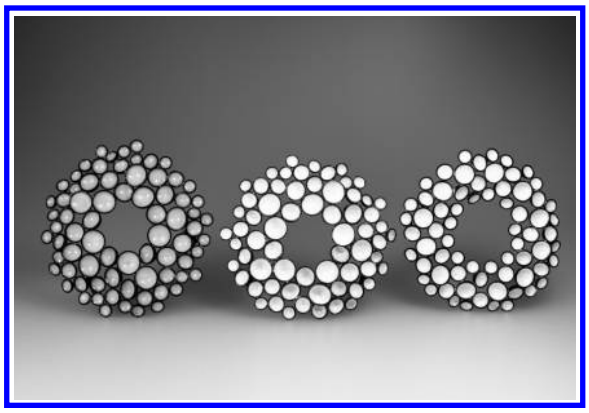
Although Mardik Usta is equipped with techniques of advanced mastery after having worked in Kapalicarsi for 35 years, he prefers to work with sheet metal, apparent in most of Alaton's minimalist work. Because each natural stone is set in its unique base, each ring brings a new design problem that challenges Mardik and allows him to reveal his mastery of construction as opposed to embellishment. Mardik Usta feels free to express his personal taste: sometimes he does not like a stone or he thinks that it will not sell. Sometimes he wants to make not a ring but a necklace, and sometimes he makes a piece on his own as a surprise for Alaton.[32] Seated right next to the workbench of the master, Alaton notes that from time to time they improvise together, just by bending sheet silver and exploring the potency of form.[33]

While masters intervene in design decisions, designers—most of whom are trained as industrial designers—have developed hands-on crafts skills, unlike a conventional designer. Designer Tuna always makes the wax models and molds of jewelry herself.[34] According to Papuccuoglu, a designer has to be able to make things herself so that she is able to understand technical decisions and to control them better. Papuccuoglu says: "Sometimes the master says that it is not possible to make something. Then I tell him that he can if he does this and this."[35] Nazan Pak, now a master metalsmith, who worked as an apprentice to a goldsmith for several years right after she graduated from design school, explains how design can follow skills:

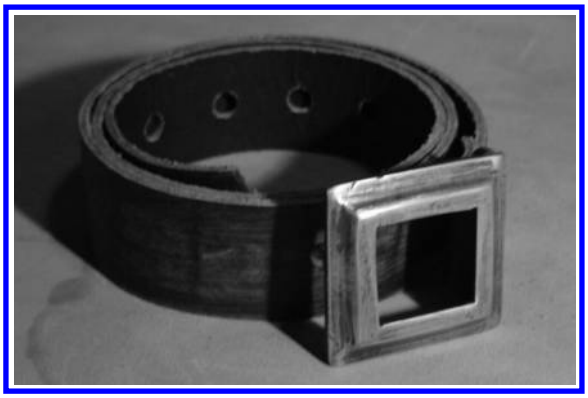
> I watched the master working for a long time when I first went to learn the craft. Then he taught me stone setting.

31 Ingin, transcript.
32 Mardik Usta, transcript.
33 Alaton, transcript.
34 Tuna, transcript.
35 Alaton, transcript
36 Nazan Pak, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, November 4, 2009, interview 06, transcript.

Figures 6a, 6b and 6c
Works of Verda Alaton, silver and natural stones.



Figures 7a and 7b
Works by Nazan Pak, a method she learned in metal, applied in resin afterwards. Necklace with flowers from epoxy resin. Foam broaches from enamelled silver. Photos by Ela Cindoruk.



Figures 8a and 8b
Batuhan Yüce, belt buckles from gas pipes and industrial profiles. Buckles are welded by a lighting maker in Sishane.

> Then I made a 3 meters long tube... Every time I learned a technique, I was drawing pieces that can be done with that technique, or only with a combination of the techniques I knew. As I grew in technique, I could draw more complex pieces to make.[36]

While all designers use craftsmanship in producing their ideas, some also welcome the opportunity to display the works of craftspeople among their work. Designer Batuhan Yuce[37] displays in his shop beadwork by prisoners known as *hapishaneisi*[38] needlework, and border lace without any modification beside his own work. Similarly, Tuna does not like to overlook a piece made by Vilyan Usta even though it does not necessarily match with her concepts, and Alaton embraces personal choices of Mardik Usta. The qualities and visual language of the craftsmen's pieces compliment these designers' missions.

Conclusion

Designers working in the informal crafts clusters in Istanbul's urban neighborhoods have been investing in processes of collaboration that re-script the interaction of the two ideologically different professional worlds. In this collaboration, they bring to mind Appadurai's

37 *Batuhan Yüce*

38 *Hapishaneisi*, meaning "prisoners' work," is a traditional needlework made with sand beads in prisons in Turkey.

39 Karen Fiss, K. 2009. "Design in Global Context: Envisioning Postcolonial and Transnational Possibilities," *Design Issues* 25:3 (Summer 2009): 3-10.

conception of indigenization in Fiss's words: "….that consumer goods, along with their attendant symbolic and ideological values, are not transferred in an uninterrupted and unmediated way to passive consumers."[39]

Among the network of neighborly collaborations and interdependent culture of production, daily encounters between both design and craft practices result in a new "designing typology" that uses both the designer's and the craftsman's skills reflectively. The workshop as a school of learning sustains the cohesive process because both the designer and the craftsmen submit to the idea of symbiosis: a kind of commitment that promises an altered experience of producing and that feeds the designer and the crafts at the same time. It is important to recognize that this symbiotic relationship is the product of the willingness by both parties to absorb and integrate each other's design processes site-specifically.

On the one hand, the heritage of crafts culture, in which masters perceive their first task as problem-solver, take responsibility for the work, and own the process with the designer, enables such a working pattern to emerge. A craftsman's willingness to experiment with the designer, as in the case of Istanbul's informal crafts culture, re-locates crafts skills and the entire support structure behind them into a new world of design: the supposedly separate worlds of modern design and traditional crafts come closer in this world, explore intersections, and reveal new "designing typologies." On the other hand, designers who choose to work at the informal end of the spectrum, on an urban neighborhood scale, already loosen their idealized formal design processes, improvise, and invent methods of communication to re-script their role so as to avoid isolating the imperfections of lived experiences in the workshop. This scale of production does not allow marginalization of "the other." Instead, owning the process mutually and sharing the outcome requires a certain commitment to participate equally.

Objects, as the natural outcomes of this symbiotic relationship, are both the shared goal and the by-products of this process. While the majority of the designers explore the skills of each craftsman as a possible means to expand their visual language according to new methods of making, the objects inherit both the craftsman's and the designer's efforts to navigate through the established codes of design/crafts communication. Even though the artistry, working techniques, and material preferences of the craftsman in the workshop provide the pathway toward the final design, the osmotic relationship between the workshop and the neighborhood always has the potential to re-direct the process. A designer might pick up an unexpected material from a hardware store on her or his way to the workshop in the morning and challenge the design of the unfinished piece to include that new material.

On the other hand, the process should satisfy the professional goals of both the craftsman and the designer on an individual level because the process is a challenge in itself: collaboration needs to alter the individual design processes of both parties. A design challenge might ask for the import of know-how from the neighboring workshop, or it might technically compel both sides to appropriate their past experiences in this new context.

This new typology strongly depends on and develops from solidarity as well. That Tuna proudly tells how Vilyan Usta prepared a big dinner and cooked fish on the roof of the workshop for her, her designer friend Papuccuoglu, and their families is remarkable.[40] There seems to be an intangible exchange, not only in terms of design and craft knowledge but also in terms of attitude. Today, in contemporary Turkey, craftsmen still believe in the essentiality of solidarity. Meanwhile, designer Yuce says that it would be disloyal to his work if he tagged his items with a barcode.[41] What is at stake in this collaboration seems to have created an unusual work typology based on constant negotiation of ideas, where no one is really overriding the other—a lost process in the developed world.

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40 Papuccuoglu, transcript.

41 Batuhan Yuce, interviewed by Cigdem Kaya, November 5, 2009, interview 07, transcript.