Assessment of the European Capitals of Culture Programme of Istanbul 2010 – Mirroring the City’s Cultural Change and Diversification

4th Annual Conference, Pécs, 14-15 October 2010
Mirroring Istanbul’s Cultural Change and Diversification

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1 Introduction

Summing up:
The task of innovation and creativity for Istanbul as a microcosmos of a globalised world is to become aware of the different cultures within, accept and integrate them to enrich the own world and build something new, for the benefit of all.

Last sentence of the presentation at the Vilnius Conference, October 2009:
2 Main Conflict in Present Politics:

Search for Cultural Identity/Unity
Turkey remains deeply polarized; the opposition distrusts the intentions of the AKP government, accusing it of seeking to introduce an authoritarian regime. The supporters of the government level a similar accusation against the opposition, and maintain that the adoption of the constitutional amendments will be a prelude to a comprehensive political liberalization.

Oral Çalışlar in Radikal writes that no single template or paradigm can account for the current state of Turkey. You can provide diametrically opposed pictures of what is happening in Turkey. On the one hand, the country is rapidly developing and prospering. Yet on the other hand, the tensions in society continue to grow as well. In fact growth and tension are two sides to the same coin. As the country experiences economic growth, different identities and aspirations come to the fore, with ensuing tensions. Kurds, Alevi, the pious, Christians, Jews, the youth, women, homosexuals, and different societal strata demand that oppression is lifted. They demand that their right to express their identities is duly respected.”


Outcome of the recent referendum on changing the constitution (12 Sept. 2010):

Reforms:
- The military is more accountable to civilian courts
- Parliament has more power to appoint judges
- Civil servants are given the right to conclude collective agreements and go on strike
- The immunity from prosecution for the leaders of the bloody 1980 military takeover is lifted

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3 Expectations of Istanbul as ECoC

Purpose

The European Capitals of Culture Initiative was set up to:
• highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures
• celebrate the cultural ties that link Europeans together
• bring people from different European countries into contact with each other's culture and promote mutual understanding
• foster a feeling of European citizenship.

(http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-pro grammes-and-actions/doc413_en.htm)
4 The Concept of Building Bridges

“The motto of the Union shall be: United in diversity.”
(The European Convention, Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, 18 July 2003)

Inaugural Address of Christian Wulff
As German Federal President, 2 July 2010:

„But we have to be open for the co-operation with all other parts of the world on the basis of mutual understanding and trust. In addition we have to know and understand other cultures better; we have to approach others here and to intensify the exchange. We can practice this with us here in our federal republic, in our colored republic of Germany (bunten Republik Deutschland).“

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Istanbul’s Concept of Forming Bridges

„Our actor is the city that connects continents, cultures and people with visible and invisible bridges – Istanbul…”

“As a capital of empires, Istanbul is one of the unique cities of the world in terms of cultural wealth. This cultural richness stems from the city’s location, forming a bridge between Asia and Europe.
5 Implementation of the Concept

„The original application for Istanbul 2010 was geared strongly towards issues of democratization and integration of various urban actors and partners. Interestingly, these aspects are no longer predominant“. Instead, the „emphasis on capital city status [...] appears to signal a longing to overcome a lost status of capital city“.

(Carola Hein, The European Capital of Culture Programme and Istanbul 2010, p. 262)
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What will happen

- From 2006 onwards the name of Istanbul will be associated with culture and the arts all over the world.
- As Turkey moves ahead with the process of its candidacy for the European Union, the projects that will be realized will demonstrate that Istanbul, the symbol of the country, has been interacting with European culture for hundreds of years.
- The city's cultural heritage will be managed in a sustainable manner and it will become even more of a magnet than ever.
- Istanbul will achieve lasting gains in the fields of urban renewal, urban living and environmental and social development.
- New museums will be established to protect and display our cultural assets and historical buildings will be renovated, given new roles and opened to the public.
- People of Istanbul will embrace new artistic disciplines. Young talented people will have the opportunity to become more closely involved in artistic creativity.
- Jobs will be created for a large number of people ranging from communications to organization, education, design, management and creative fields.
- Those who come to Istanbul for cultural and artistic projects will visit the city's cultural riches, mosques, churches, palaces and museums.
- Cultural tourism will be invigorated and develop. (Educated, cultured tourists spend three times as much as normal tourists. This means that, as a European Capital of Culture, Istanbul will have a great tourism potential.)
- Many people from the world of culture and the arts, together with members of the print and visual media, will come to Istanbul from Europe and different countries all around the world. This will make a positive contribution to the promotion and branding of Istanbul. Being selected as a European Capital of Culture will give a boost to the city’s economic relations with Europe as well as contributing to its cultural relations. With the renovation that will take place, the administrators and administered will join together, hand in hand, sharing their knowledge and experience, to develop a long-term sustainable model for the future.
- Istanbul local residents will be proud of their city as they further discover its beauty.

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„What will happen“ in contrast to former projects

**Targets**

Founded on the mission to prepare Istanbul for the process of 2010 European Capital of Culture and to coordinate joint efforts for this process Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency has got following primary targets:

- To expose unique features of Istanbul
- To realize projects for preservation of cultural heritage
- To improve infrastructure and participation to culture and arts
- To present Istanbul by culture and arts
- To increase the share of Istanbul in cultural tourism
- To encourage Istanbul people to participate in decision making process

(http://www.en.istanbul2010.org)

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(http://www.benimkentim.org/edergi/Default.aspx?langId=2)
Perception of Istanbul from the outside, the view of a guest
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curious choosing, make-up as main objective

sunrise and occident, cultures conquer geographic boundaries

district of innocence

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The two most famous museum openings this year (in Beyoğlu)

Arter’s „just for starters“

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On the banks of the Bosphorus, new art and new institutions reflect a city in full creative flow.

In his pithy and wise book on Istanbul, *The Bridge* (2008), the Dutch writer Geert Mak quotes a nineteenth-century Turkish reformer highly critical of myopic Western outsiders who view the city 'through a pair of opera glasses'. So here we are then at 360, the aptly named rooftop restaurant, and I’ve taken my specs off and slotted some lira into a viewfinder. Down below on the main drag, Istiklal Caddesi, witness the punters staring at a curiously unthreatening tank in the front window of the newly opened gallery ARTER. This is Michael Sailstorfer’s *T72* (2007), a massive emerald inflatable which sits like a fat toad, its comic gun barrel alternately flaccid and priapic. Here in a converted 1910s city block, we have a preliminary peek at the Vehbi Koç Foundation collection and its first show, *Starter,*
Beyoğlu, İstiklal Caddesi
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http://www.planetware.com

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Art holds potential for conflict

Gentrification posited as motive for attack on Tophane art galleries

Thursday, September 23, 2010
Though the motive behind Tuesday night’s attack on Istanbul art galleries remains unclear, a new theory that anger about gentrification fueled the incident has joined initial concerns about a clash between conservative and liberal factions. “People are worried that the price of the real estate will go up and they will lose their homes. The other, deeper reason is the rising conservatism,” Azra Tüzünoğlu, owner of the Outlet Gallery, told daily Milliyet on Wednesday. Culture and Tourism Minister Ertuğrul Günay visited the Tophane neighborhood around noon on Thursday [...] Expressing his hopes that the “social transformation” of the area can be carried out without disturbing anyone, the minister said: “Change always hurts. But let this be known, nobody can force their Anatolian lifestyle [upon others] in Istanbul, but nobody has the right to turn a blind eye to the [traditions] of the people here, either.”

http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=tophane-attack-on-art-galleries-more-than-meets-the-eye-2010-09-23
6 Preliminary Results

The program focuses on culture from a touristic point of view:

- Marketing and renovation of Istanbul‘s important historic buildings (Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque, Topkapi Palace, etc.)
- Make-up of already popular districts and places
- International (instead of Turkish) contemporary art

Missing:

- Diversification (like Pamuk‘s initiative)
- Decentralisation (instead İstiklal Caddesi as cultural centre)
- Intercultural bridging (awareness raising, confronting and exchanging different approaches, views, etc. peacefully)