ISTANBUL 2010 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

AN IMPETUS FOR THE REGENERATION OF THE HISTORIC CITY

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Abstract

The initiative for Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture, which started as a civil organisation, has been presented as a project of citizenship, besides its apparent goal of increasing the publicity of Istanbul as a multi-cultural metropolis. In this framework, highlighting the city's cultural heritage has been one of the principal objectives of the project. The organisation of Istanbul 2010 ECOC has been engaged to provide exemplary projects especially for the sites inscribed in the World Heritage List by UNESCO, by promoting participatory urban experiences based on knowledge-based, multi-action coordination models. Although the ECOC process has not been completed yet, one can argue that the Istanbul 2010 Agency has achieved its objectives in a number of urban rehabilitation projects, while «urban renovation projects» led by district municipalities still remain highly controversial.

Introduction

On 16 January 2010 Istanbul became the European Capital of Culture with spectacular inauguration ceremonies held in seven different places that symbolically represent the seven hills of the old capital of empires. This was an expression of the close involvement of the ECOC project

with the cultural and historical heritage of the city. Besides making Istanbul a «trade mark» to increase its attraction as a centre of tourism, it has been devised as a social project of citizenship in which urban conservation and regeneration have been given a place of priority. In this paper, Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture project, which is an uncompleted process, is presented from the perspective of urban conservation and regeneration projects which constitute an integral part of the overall programme.

1. Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture: a civil initiative

The initiative for Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture was started by a group of people, who were representatives of a number of NGOs, associations of culture and of the media. They formed an «initiative group» in July 2000, after the 1999 EU resolution that extended the European Capital of Culture project to non-member countries (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2007: 8). The group took the necessary steps for the candidacy of Istanbul to the programme, obtaining also the support of both the local and central governments. In December 2005, the governor of Istanbul, the mayor of the Metropolitan City, the general coordinator of the Istanbul 2010 Organisation and representatives of the civil society submitted the bid to the European Commission. Following a successful presentation to the committee of selection, Istanbul was finally announced, in November 2006, with the approval of the European Parliament and the European Ministers of Culture, to be the European Capital of Culture for 2010 together with Essen/Ruhr in Germany and Pećs in Hungary. The role that the civil society and the local governments played in the initiative was one of the main reasons why Istanbul was selected.

The Agency for Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture (ECOC) was founded by a law that the Turkish National Assembly enacted on 2 November 2007 (law no. 5706), as an autonomous legal identity that would operate under private law – and not as a governmental agency

under state law. «The aim of establishing the agency in this way [was] to minimize institutionalisation and give space to existing organisations», as it is stated in a report for monitoring (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency: 9). The Agency was «founded for the purpose of planning and managing the activities for preparing Istanbul as European Capital of Culture by 2010 and coordinating the joint efforts of public bodies and institutions in order to realize this goal» (http://www.en.istanbul2010.org/2010AKBAJANSI/hakkında/index.htm). It is a semi-official organisation, which brings together the representatives of NGOs, professional organisations, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the Istanbul Governor's Office and Ministries of Culture and Tourism, and Foreign Affairs. The organization has a tri-partite structure composed of a coordination board, an advisory council and an executive board.

1.1. *Objectives of the Istanbul 2010 ECOC project*

The objectives of the Istanbul 2010 ECOC project are enumerated in several other documents. It is possible to group them under three main headings to highlight the historical heritage of Istanbul and contributing to its conservation, to publicise the city internationally, and to reinforce the sense of citizenship.

«To prove the importance accorded to the historical cultural heritage of Istanbul which was the cradle of several civilisations by contributing to the conservation and restoration of monuments and regeneration of historic sites», is the first objective cited. Not only does it point to the significance of the historical heritage of the civilizations that the city embodies, but it also presents the Capital of Culture project as an opportunity to demonstrate the importance that Turkey accords to this heritage by the impetus that will be given to the conservation and regeneration of historic sites and monuments.

«To publicise Istanbul and Turkey to the World by emphasising the multi-cultural aspects and values that the city is dotted with» and «to attract the attention of the world's public opinion» define the second group of objectives of the Istanbul 2010 ECOC project. It is seen as an opportunity to upgrade the image of Istanbul, to make it known as a

city of culture and as a multi-cultural metropolis not only in Europe but in the whole world. In parallel to this, «placing Istanbul with its identity in the cultural map of Europe» is set as an objective that refers to Turkey's being a part of Europe with its particular identity. «To develop new possibilities of investment», «to increase the number of tourists and incomes from tourism» and «to increase the average duration of accommodations in Istanbul» are set as objectives to achieve in consequence of the city's increasing publicity.

Finally Istanbul 2010 ECOC project has objectives concerning the citizens: «to enable the meeting of the inhabitants of Istanbul around the nodes of culture and art», «to bring together people from all different groups around common points», and «to make people acquire a sense of citizenship». The Agency aims to achieve these objectives by public participation and the support of both the central government and municipalities in collaboration with NGOs (İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı, *Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Uygulamaları Programı*: 5-6).

Istanbul 2010 Agency operates in 3 strategic areas. These are culture and arts, urban implementations and conservation of the cultural heritage, and tourism and publicity. Directorates of Urban Implementations, Urban Projects Coordination, and Cultural Heritage and Museums carry out projects related with the conservation and regeneration of the urban cultural heritage (http://www.en.istanbul2010.org/2010AKBAJANSI/hakkında/index.htm).

1.2. *Istanbul 2010 ECOC as a project of citizenship*

The whole city of Istanbul with its metropolitan area is defined as the geographical area where various activities of the Istanbul 2010 programme take place. It extends over two continents, with its European and Asian sides. Istanbul is a big metropolis with a population of more than 12 million, which is 17 percent of Turkey's total population. The most populated city not only of the country but in Europe, Istanbul is the financial and cultural capital of Turkey (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2007: 11), Yet, only 38 percent of its population was born in Istanbul;

in other words the majority of the population is constituted by immigrants, many of which do not consider themselves as belonging to this city. Hence Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture is regarded «not only as a cultural, but also as a social and urban transformation project» that aims at making the inhabitants citizens of Istanbul. In that sense it is a project of urbanity and citizenship that ultimately strives to create both an urban culture and a public realm in which citizens participate actively. This transformation is thought to be achieved through (1) a participatory model for neighbourhood rehabilitation and urban transformation, (2) reinforcing the citizens' sense of belonging, and (3) the municipalities' participation and appropriation (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2007: 20-21). The Istanbul 2010 Agency has won recently the Melina Mercouri Award for its efforts and achievements in this direction (İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı 2009).

1.3. *Projects of urban transformation and conservation of cultural heritage*

In conformity with this citizenship project, the priorities of the Istanbul 2010 Agency in urban projects are set as «to coordinate partnership exercises between public institutions, NGOs and institutions specialised in different areas, to help creation of new urban experiences», «to encourage citizens to get involved in the decision-making processes, to support efforts to carry the city into the 21st century». In line with these, the Urban Implementations and Urban Projects Coordination directorates have defined a number of objectives for the projects that they would support and/or conduct. These have been formulated as providing «participatory urban transformation», «sustainability of the cultural heritage», creating an «infrastructure of culture and arts for a creative metropolis», «collaboration for developing the public realm of Istanbul» and «multi-culturalism and international dialogue» (İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı, *Press release PPT presentation*, 2008).

Participatory urban transformation is to be achieved «by stimulating those who live in Istanbul to acquire a sense of citizenship and to be proud of their city, making an ever increasing number of people a

part of the urban transformation process» (İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı, *Press release PPT presentation*, 2008). The sustainability of the cultural heritage can only be realised through its appropriation by the citizens. Therefore, Istanbul 2010 aims at making the rich cultural and historical heritage a part of the citizens' everyday life by rehabilitating them and by encouraging projects that will contribute to the conservation of the cultural heritage as well as to the cultural production. Hence it will reinforce Istanbul's place on the World Cultural Heritage List of UNESCO.

Istanbul, the historic capital of empires, has an invaluable heritage accumulated through ages. The Istanbul 2010 organisation has declared that the sustainability and creative utilisation, conservation and promotion of this rich cultural heritage was an important issue to be raised in this context, and this had to be done «in accordance with the international conventions laid out by UNESCO» (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2007: 22). This last involvement has guided the policies and decisions of the Istanbul 2010 Agency.

One of the targets of the Istanbul 2010 ECOC project is to generate an infrastructure of Culture and Arts for a «creative metropolis». It intends to realise that «by supporting projects that propose mechanisms and policies enhancing the quality of works of art and the status of the artist» (İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı, *Press release PPT presentation*, 2008). Instead of building directly a physical infrastructure, it financially supports projects that provide facilities for arts and culture (from libraries to arts and culture centres, museums, exhibition and school buildings) and make them widespread. For this reasons it encourages projects that will be realised by the collaboration of the public sector, local government, civil society, educational institutions and independent institutions of art in priority within the framework of Istanbul 2010. It is believed that such a policy will help to develop practices of collaboration between institutions and the civil society, hence contributing to the flourishing public realm of Istanbul.

It has been decided from the start that the development of the cultural infrastructure of the city would be addressed to the conservation, reutilisation, redevelopment and promotional projects for cultural heritage sites, museums, archaeological sites, industrial heritage sites.

While all these activities necessitated long-term planning, Istanbul 2010 set its mission as:

> initiating a process to bring together agencies and authorities responsible for the protection and development of the city's cultural heritage whereby sustainable and creative utilisation of the city's cultural heritage can be achieved (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2007: 22).

This process of «long-term planning and co-ordinated action» is expected to be an experience acquired as per the main legacies of Istanbul 2010.

2. UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List and the reactive monitoring process in Istanbul

A number of sites in the historic city of Istanbul were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985. Several areas including those located in the historic peninsula, Galata and natural sites along the Bosphorus had already been declared as zones of conservation subject to national legislation. The Archaeological Park of Sultanahmet, The Theodosian Land Walls and their zone of protection, and two historic neighbourhoods, Süleymaniye neighbourhood adjacent to Architect Sinan's Süleymaniye complex and Zeyrek neighbourhood around the Byzantine Church of Pantochrator - Zeyrek Mosque, have been listed as core areas of the World Heritage property (*Fig. 1*).

However, considerable threats to the historic sites were observed after they were enlisted by UNESCO. The potential negative effects of the construction of large-scale transportation infrastructure projects besides the poor quality repairs and excessive reconstruction of the Roman-Byzantine City Walls and the demolition of the timber houses from the Ottoman period were enumerated among these threats. In 2004, the Deputy Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre suggested, for the first time, that «the Historic Areas of Istanbul might be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, unless urgent improvements in safeguarding and management were instituted» (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2009: 6).

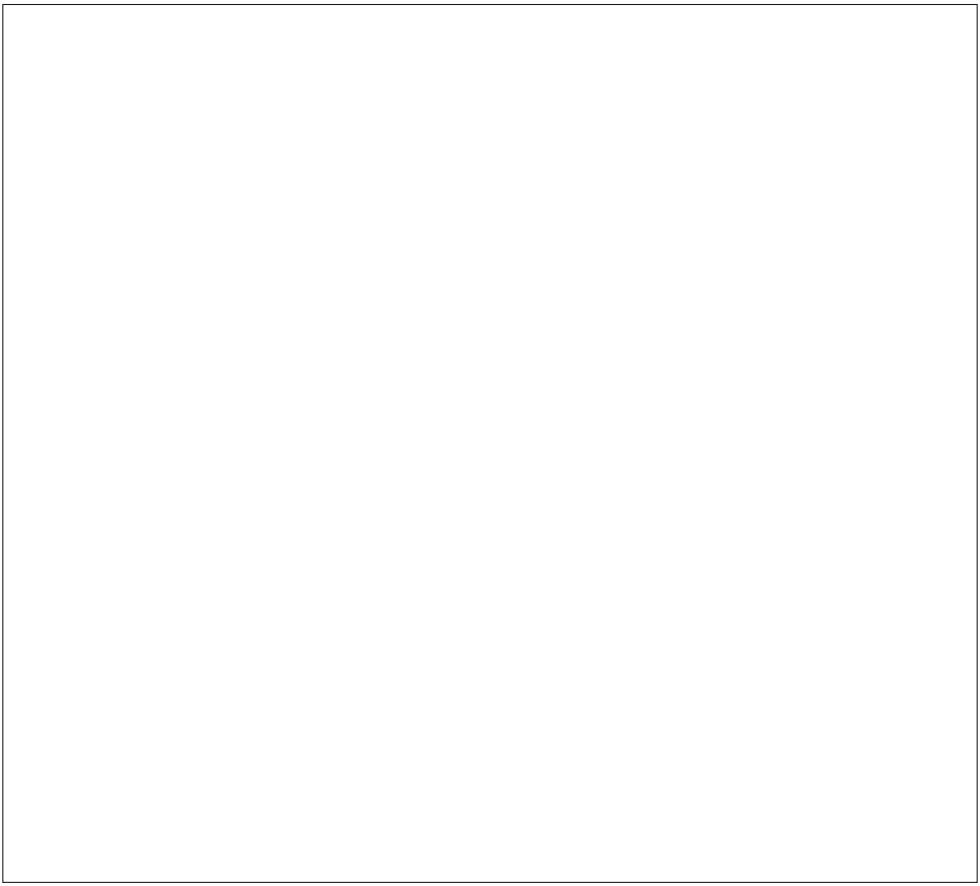


Fig. 1
UNESCO World Heritage List core sites and the Historic Peninsula Management Plan Area in Istanbul (2009); scale: 1/130000.

A «reactive monitoring process» has been conducted by the Joint UNESCO-ICOMOS Monitoring Mission since 2004. The effectiveness of organisational relations and coordination between decision making bodies responsible for the safeguarding of the World Heritage have been questioned by the committee.

In the 2008 and 2009 Monitoring Reports by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, it is stated that significant improvements have been made. The Istanbul Cultural and Natural Sites Management Directorate was established in 2006 and a World Heritage Site Manager was appointed (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2008: 8). The State party has taken a number of measures to increase the funds available for the conservation of the historical heritage. An additional funding has been provided within the framework of Istanbul European Capital of Culture; 20 percent of the funds raised for this purpose are to be spent on the World Heritage Site (The Turkish Grand National Assembly allocated USD 201,475,000 to Istanbul European Capital of Culture 2010, of which USD 40,300,000 is allocated to the conservation of the World Heritage Site, with the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism) (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2008: 24). In addition to these, an initiative of the Metropolitan Municipality is worth mentioning here. The establishment of KUDEB (Conservation Implementation and Control Bureau of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) in 2006 has increased private conservation initiatives by providing expertise, craftsmanship and sponsorship by the use of the newly issued «Encouraging Cultural Investments Act».

In spite of such improvements, in the same reports, the committee points to the persistence of serious threats to the outstanding value and integrity of the World Heritage property. Among these, it emphasises the absence of a World Heritage management plan, which resulted in major infrastructure projects being planned without regard to the impacts that they might cause on the «outstanding universal value of the site». It also points to the destructive effects of a new law, enacted in 2005, on the conservation of the cultural heritage in the historic peninsula. The Law for the «Preservation by Renovation and Utilisation by Revitalisation of Deteriorated Immovable Historic and Cultural Properties» (law no. 5366) enables local authorities to intervene on the «worn-

out» historic areas through «regeneration plans». However, the reports stress that this legislative tool is used for renewal projects directed to «land-development» (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2008: 35-36 and 2009: 16).

In April 2009, the UNESCO World Heritage mission concluded with a number of recommendations such as the necessity of developing an integrated and comprehensive management plan for the whole World Heritage property in international standards, and of revising all projects concerning this property proposed by the municipalities, including those designated under the law no. 5366. The revisions of Sultanahmet, Süleymaniye, Zeyrek and Theodosian Land Walls Conservation Implementation Plans are required «to realise the in-situ conservation of existing historic structures rather than rebuilding, making new construction and land development» in the framework of the overall World Heritage Management Plan. A «Conservation Action Plan» is asked for the entire circuit of the city walls that will guide their conservation «in accordance with international standards». A specific mission is assigned to the Istanbul 2010 ECOC programme in this framework:

> While the efforts of the Istanbul European Capital of Culture programme in incorporating activities to promote the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Property should be praised, it should also emphasise its role as providing a platform for exchanges between the civil society and local and national authorities (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2009: 7).

As the projects that are going to be undertaken by the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency are mostly under the responsibility of the Site Management Department, the application by this latter for «financial support» was accepted by the Agency as an opportunity to work together and build a capacity for partnership. Following a protocol between the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency and the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul, the Agency has been charged with preparing the Conservation Management Plan for the Historic Peninsula.

2.1. *Controversial urban renewal projects and the position of the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency*

Istanbul has been the arena of contesting prospects in the last decades more than ever before. The historic heritage sites of the city do not constitute an exception to that. Conservation of the cultural heritage and historic sites had long been a struggle led by professionals, i.e. architects, planners, specialists of conservation, besides a few intellectuals, yet the appropriation of the civil cultural/historic heritage by a larger public is a recent phenomenon in Turkey in general and in Istanbul in particular. The efforts of civil organisations have had a remarkable effect on the creation of awareness towards this heritage. The Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency has adopted such a mission from the very start.

The historic peninsula has increasingly attracted immigrants since the mid 20th century, and housed the poorest sections of the urban population. The historic quarters and buildings have been subjected to a continuous process of decay, occupied by all kinds of incompatible uses. However, it is possible to observe, today, that the conservative party in power, both in the central and local governments, attribute a symbolic value to the historic city of Istanbul and its architecture. This is one of the reasons why they give a particular importance to the upgrading of the historic neighbourhoods. However, these areas have also been perceived as profitable real estates to be developed in line with the neoliberal policies of the government and other economic actors. Making the historic core of Istanbul a centre of tourism is another vision that might result in its gentrification. The following cases illustrate competing visions on the historic sites of Istanbul, and the position that the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency took in some controversial situations on the rehabilitation of historic sites and the destiny of their inhabitants.

Süleymaniye Urban Renewal Project. The Süleymaniye district, which is one of the core sites of the UNESCO World Heritage property, has been subject to a project, called the «Ottoman Neighbourhood in Süleymaniye», developed by the Municipality of Fatih in 2005. An area of 10.2 hectares containing 333 historic buildings was declared as a project area depending on the Law no. 5366 for «the Preservation by Renova-

tion and Utilization by Revitalizing of Deteriorated Immovable Historic and Cultural properties». KIPTAŞ, which is a semi-private enterprise founded by the Metropolitan Municipality mainly for the provision of housing, was charged by the implementation of the project. After acquiring the property of more than 200 buildings and plots, this enterprise proceeded to the demolition according to the district renewal plan. The project consisted in the construction of a neighbourhood of more than 400 modern buildings in reinforced concrete. These buildings were to be replicas of old houses «in harmony and respect for the neighbourhood» and «the original street morphology [would] be maintained» (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2009: 44). The UNESCO Mission Report of 2006 recommended a comprehensive revision of this renewal project with a new focus on the conservation of existing buildings of heritage value, rather than on new construction and development (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2008: 16).

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality applied to the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency for financial support, not for the implementation of this renewal plan, but for the restoration of the enlisted houses in Süleymaniye. The Agency returned these projects by referring to the UNESCO Mission Reports, as no revision was made in the original plan by the Municipality. Yet, it supported financially the individual implementations of restoration made by KUDEB in the area and its vicinity (e.g. in Zeyrek).

Hatice Sultan and Neslişah Neighbourhoods (Sulukule) Urban Renewal Project. Another controversial project of the Fatih Municipality is the urban renewal project that covers the entire neighbourhoods of Hatice Sultan and Neslişah (known as the Sulukule district) where Gypsies lived for centuries. The urban renewal project imposed the displacement of the local people from their homes and places where they worked, through compulsory purchase arrangements. A new «neighbourhood of Ottoman style» has been projected to replace the old neighbourhoods, qualified as a derelict area. The residents of Sulukule resisted against relocation and the demolition of their houses and workplaces by getting organised with the help of the civil society through public manifestations (*Fig. 2*).



Fig. 2
Protest of the local residents and associations against relocation and the demolition of Sulukule (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency, photograph by Najla Oserian, 8 April 2009).

The Istanbul 2010 ECOC organisation proposed to collaborate with the Fatih Municipality in order to turn the urban renewal projects into exemplary practices by undertaking them «democratically and without forcefully relocating people» (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2007: 20). It was mentioned, in the same report, that two associations, the Sulukule Platform and the Sulukule Romany Mutual Support were created by the civil society in order to defend the inhabitants' rights. The Istanbul 2010 organisation proposed to lead a participatory project together with these associations and with the collaboration of the University College London Planning Unit and PhD students from this university. The primary objective of this project, called «Sulukule 2010», would be «to develop a model to enable local residents to improve their living conditions» (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2007: 20).

Unfortunately, things did not happen as the Istanbul 2010 organisation wishfully expected. The Fatih Municipality continued to demol-

ish houses and all other buildings with the exception of a few listed monuments and buildings which remained isolated in the middle of a *tabula rasa*. The inhabitants of Sulukule were relocated to a newly built desolated housing area – Taşoluk – outside the city, in exchange for their old properties. Many of them are unhappy with their new environment and are trying to sell the apartments allocated to them to move to other places (Sulukule Platform 2009).

3. Urban rehabilitation and regeneration projects directly supported by Istanbul 2010 Agency

In spite of such unfortunate implementations where Istanbul 2010 Agency has had neither the power nor the authority to intervene, there are also cases where it could collaborate with the local government (*Fig. 3*). Three projects in the scale of neighbourhood rehabilitation proposed by the district municipalities to the Agency for financial support have been maintained. The Eminönü Municipality, which was united later with the Municipality of Fatih, applied for two urban rehabilitation projects: Sirkeci – Hocapaşa Urban Regeneration project and Upper Laleli Urban Street Rehabilitation project. Istanbul 2010 Agency decided to support both projects. In addition to these, a street rehabilitation project for the Kadınlar Pazarı area, proposed by the Municipality of Fatih was also supported and put into implementation.

Sirkeci – Hocapaşa Urban Regeneration Project. Amongst the rehabilitation projects of urban scale, «Sirkeci-Hocapaşa Urban Regeneration and Pedestrianisation Project» has been directly conducted by the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency. Workshops, site visits and meetings were organised in the first place as part of a creative process to gather ideas about the site. Multiple actors and stakeholders have been involved in the development of the project. The Eminönü Municipality, academicians, civil organizations and associations, local craftsmen, directors of urban transportation projects, the Advisory Group and the Mission Group of the project have been the participants of the

process. The aim of the project has been defined as the rehabilitation of the Sirkeci – Hocapaşa area by «providing a participative, inclusive development perspective instead of a single-acting, physical modelling approach»(İstanbul 2010 ECOC Agency, Urban Implementations Directory, *interview with D. Ayman*, 2009). A multi-acting modelling approach has been introduced with this project as a model that enables to discuss the dimension of the projects in a broader perspective and participation. It is to note that the 2010 Agency has suggested the same approach for the Süleymaniye Urban Regeneration Project, UNESCO WHL core site.

Objectives of the Sirkeci-Hocapaşa project are defined as the «redevelopment of multi-use pedestrian and public areas», «rediscovering and preserving cultural heritage», «preparing conceptual projects and design manuals» under the joint supervision of Yıldız Teknik University and Siegen University (Haznedar *et al.* 2009) (*Fig. 4*).

Upper Laleli Area Street Rehabilitation Project. The Upper Laleli Area Street Rehabilitation project was proposed by the Municipality of Eminönü, which was merged later with the Municipality of Fatih. The upper Laleli area that extends on an area approximately of 20 hectares from Divanyolu to the Şehzadebaşı Street is a neighbourhood where hotels are concentrated. Hence the rehabilitation of the public spaces, i.e. the streets and the refurbishment of building façades, will contribute to the betterment of tourism facilities within the historic centre of the city. The project is based on a traffic study oriented toward the arrangement of certain streets for pedestrian use. Street pavements, lighting and other street furniture have been studied in detail in this project (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency, Urban Projects Coordination Directory, *Notes on the projects*, 2009). Being different from the previous project, it was followed by a conventional project development process (*Fig. 5*).

In addition to these, there are other projects of urban conservation in which Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency is directly involved. Among these, two significant archaeological conservation projects in the historic peninsula are the Roman-Byzantine City Walls and the ancient port in Yenikapı.

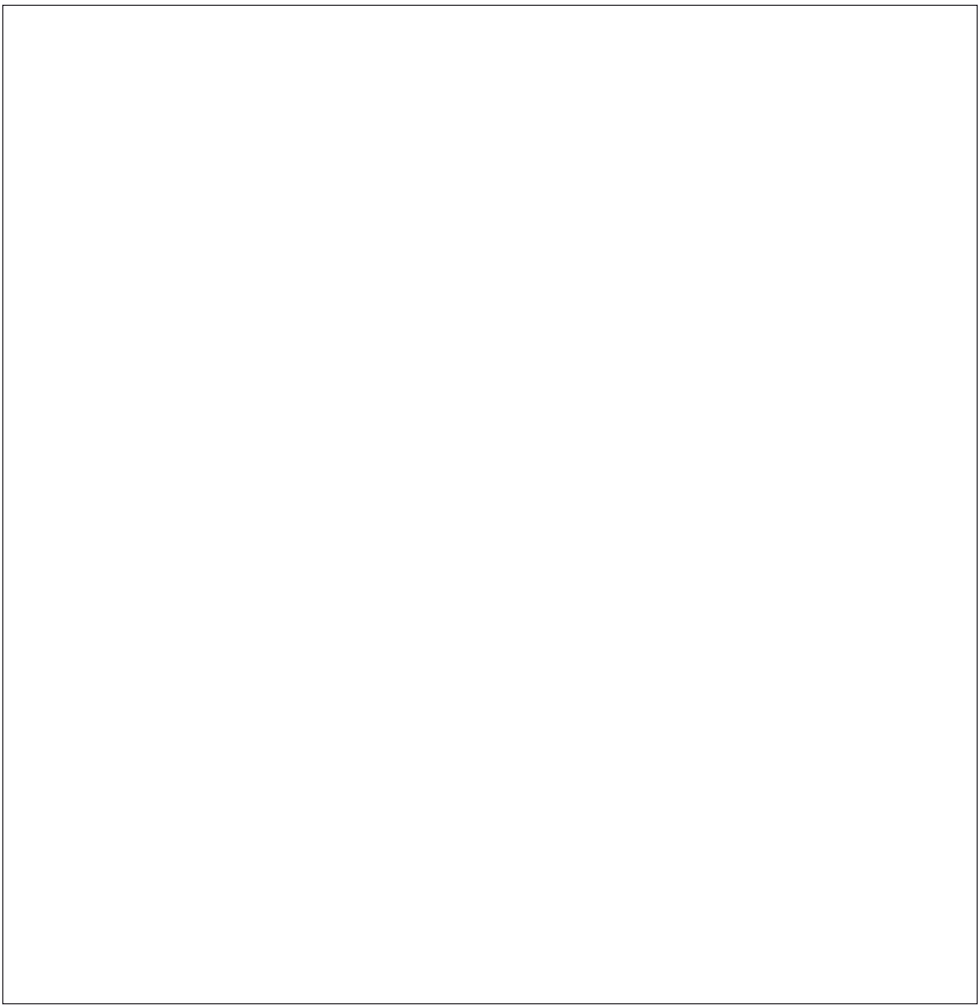


Fig. 3
Urban rehabilitation projects supported/directed by Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency and the areas subjected to urban renewal by the district municipality (map prepared by Tümay Arıcan).

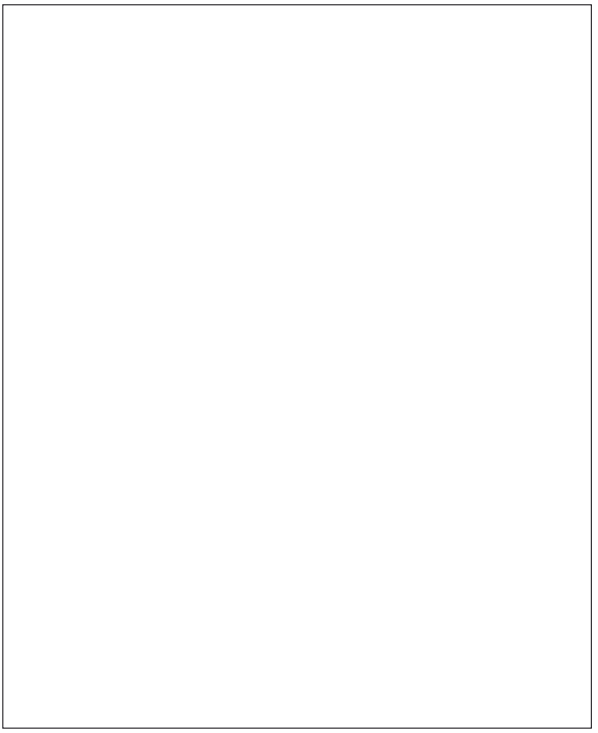
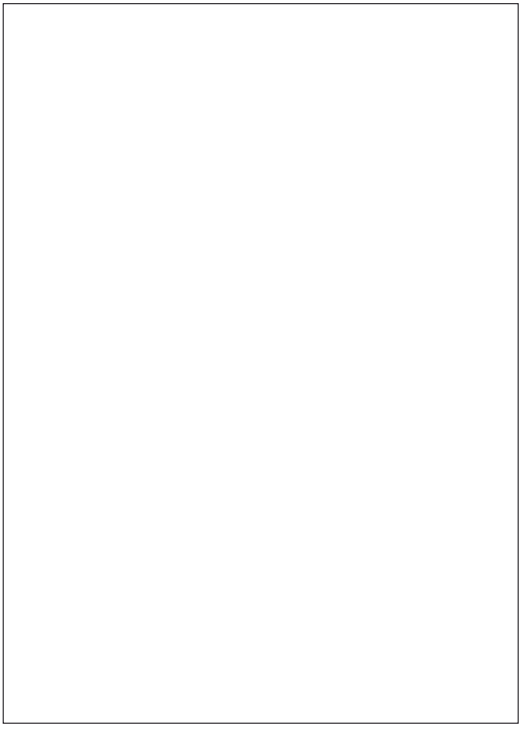


Fig. 4
Sirkeci-Hocapaşa
Rehabilitation Project
by TEB Mimarlık:
general approaches to the site
(Istanbul 2010 ECOC,
Urban Implementations Directory
and Haznedar, F.T. et al., 2009: 26).



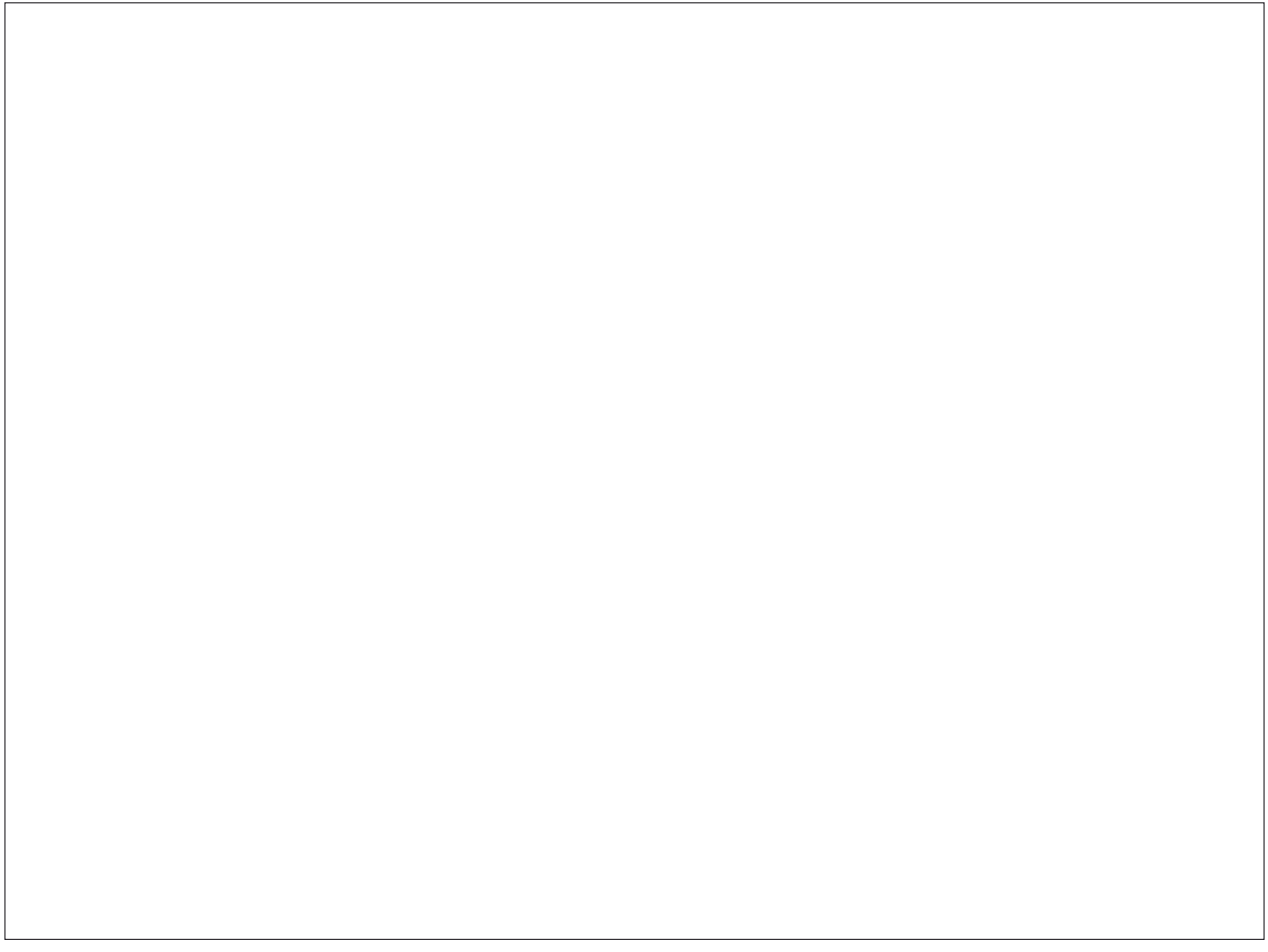


Fig. 5 - Upper Laleli Rehabilitation Project (Istanbul 2010 ECOC, Urban Projects and Coordination Directory, 2008-09).

Theodosian Land Walls. Theodosian Walls of Istanbul constitute the oldest city walls of this length in the world, which survived until the present day. The Land Walls are among the core sites of the UNESCO World Heritage List (*Fig. 6*). They have suffered, however, from unqualified restoration works that damaged their historic value and also from the construction of motorways, railways and other interventions as well as from natural decay. UNESCO World Heritage Committee, in the monitoring reports, warned the local authorities about the «poor quality repairs» and «excessive» reconstruction and indicated the necessity of preparing a «conservation action plan» for the entire circuit of the city walls, including the Theodosian Land Walls, the buffer zone of protection and the Sea Walls.

The Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul has recently undertaken the preparation of a Management Plan for a special section of the Theodosian Land Walls. Simultaneously, the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency has been conducting activities focusing on the possible planning approaches to this site. Korhan Gümüş, the coordinator of Urban Implementations Directorate of the Agency stresses that «the project developed by the Istanbul 2010 Agency for the Theodosian Land Walls aims at creating a platform of knowledge with multiple stakeholders» (Gümüş 2009b: 53).



Fig. 6
One of the World Heritage List core sites: The Theodosian Land Walls (Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency 2009).

The objective is to support the conservation management functions and participatory projects that the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul has been conducting under the supervision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Istanbul 2010 Agency has declared its willingness to conduct the process for obtaining an action plan for the Land Walls with a «knowledge-oriented conservation implementation» (Gümüş 2009b: 53). Hence, the Agency proposes to establish a «subject-based management» that provides the communication of all the related institutions and stakeholders. It is to note, however, that Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality directed the project development process without the Agency's involvement until recently. The Agency has organised workshops with the participation of universities, schools of architecture and other institutions from Istanbul and abroad. The process of developing a participatory project in which different stakeholders will take part to prepare an inventory of the past and present projects, academic studies, which will provide a knowhow for the coming projects and the action plan that is being undertaken in the short-term.

Yenikapı Urban Redevelopment Project and Transportation Transfer Node. Large-scale projects of transportation infrastructure have been under construction in the last decade in Istanbul. The subway, the first part of which was opened from Taksim toward the newly formed financial centre, will soon be connected to the historic centre of the city, crossing the Golden Horn by a bridge and ending at Yenikapı (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2008: 29 and 2009: 6).

A much more pretentious project is the Marmaray project which will connect Europe to Asia with a railway tunnel under the Bosphorus between Sarayburnu (the tip of the historic peninsula) and Üsküdar. The railway lines go into the tunnel at Yenikapı where they meet the Taksim-Yenikapı subway. These two major public transportation lines will cross one another at the transfer station of Yenikapı. As anyone who knows the historic topography of Istanbul could expect, the archaeological remnants of the Roman-Byzantine port were found immediately after the excavations for the Yenikapı transfer station and the tunnel of Marmaray were started. The construction works were stopped by the decision of the Conservation Council and the archaeological excavations started

(UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2008: 29-30). The construction of both the tunnel and the transportation transfer station will begin as soon as the archaeological works come to an end. However, it is certain that the project cannot be that of a simple transfer station anymore. It also concerns the conservation and display of the archaeological site and redeveloping a void created within the urban fabric.

The port of Theodosius, the largest Roman port that has been brought to light by the archaeological excavations conducted by Istanbul Museum of Archaeology since 2004, embodies invaluable findings which illuminate the city's history. Mud carried by the Lycos creek conserved unexpectedly well a good number of organic material including animal bones, textiles and wood. More than 30 Byzantine ships were found in the place where they had sunk. The most unexpected of all was the discovery of a late Neolithic settlement dating back to 6500 BC underneath the port and below sea level, proving that the Marmara Sea was then a lake. A very well documented exhibition was prepared by the Istanbul Museum of Archaeology and Koç Foundation, with a catalogue publication (Karamani Pekin 2007) (*Fig. 7*).



Fig. 7
Excavations of the Port of Theodosius at Yenikapı
(UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2008: 2).

A totally new project management model that relates three different areas, transportation, cultural heritage and «urban renewal», with one another, will be conducted by the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency (Gümüş 2009b: 52). It has been decided to transfer the direction of the Yenikapı – Marmaray Transportation Transfer Node Project to the 2010 Agency after long discussions and efforts of the latter. This decision provided the Agency with the opportunity to elaborate an integrated coordination model that will bring together archaeology and architecture, engineering and urban development.

With this project, Istanbul 2010 Agency will also continue its function after the activities of the European Capital of Culture are over at the end of 2010. The Agency is planning to organise an international architectural competition, in collaboration with the Department of Architecture of Bilgi University, a private foundation university in Istanbul.

Besides the ones situated in the historic peninsula, 2010 Agency leads other projects of rehabilitation as well. Among these, the reorganisation project for the Museum of Topkapı Palace, directed by the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, is of particular significance.

3.1. *«One City and Three Worlds»: a museum park within the precinct of the Topkapı Palace*

The Topkapı Palace Museum is one of the two most visited sites of Istanbul with 2.5 million visitors per year, together with the Museum of Hagia Sophia. However, the museum is insufficient in hosting this number with its existing layout (*Fig. 8*). A search meeting was organised by the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums of the Agency, to discuss alternative ways of relieving the burden of visitors, better preserving the palace and better displaying its architecture with its original functions. The necessity of conducting a study that covers the entire site enclosed by the precinct of the palace was the conclusion at this meeting held with the participation of specialists and academicians. The idea of preparing a long-term strategic vision plan emerged as a result of this process as well (http://www.en.istanbul2010.org/PROJE/GP_533963).

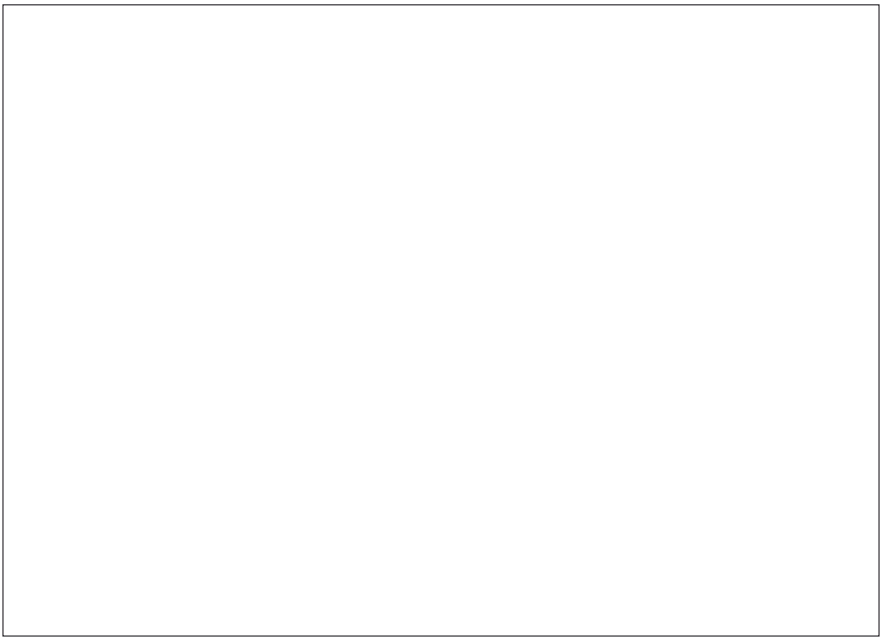


Fig. 8
The Topkapı Palace: «One City and Three Worlds» - The Ottoman World
(Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency, photograph by Coşkun Aydın).

In this project, the Istanbul 2010 Agency has worked with a British enterprise for the development of this strategic plan. The general vision of the project is identified with the motto «One City and Three Worlds». It aims at creating «a world-class park» that will consist of three museums representing three worlds or three eras: the Ottoman (in the Topkapı Palace, the Mint, the gardens of the palace), the Byzantine (in the Church of Hagia Irene) and the Classical World (in the Archaeology Museum). The buildings and the gardens within the precinct of the palace will be conserved and revitalized as part of this museums project.

The project is presented as the first step of the Site Management Plan for the Historic Peninsula required by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, in the report of the related directorate of the Agency. Yet, the main decisions of the Strategic Vision Study for the precinct of

the Topkapı Palace need to be re-evaluated with regard to its impacts on the whole historic peninsula. The concentration of three important museums in this sector which is already overloaded – because of the presence of the Museum of Hagia Sophia, Sultanahmet Mosque (the Blue Mosque) besides the Topkapı Palace – will result in creating a tourist city within the city, while depriving the rest of the historic districts of the benefits of the tourism activity. A traffic plan of the whole historic city has to be developed in consideration with the nodes of tourist attraction – especially the new concentration of museums in Topkapı Palace – and the necessity of providing sufficient parking areas for tourist buses.

4. Conclusion

As Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture is a process in the making, it might be too early to evaluate the success of both the project and its consequences. The present article aims at presenting the policies and implementations of the ECOC project with regard to the cultural heritage of the city in general, and the World Heritage sites inscribed by UNESCO in particular. Publicising Istanbul with its multi-cultural heritage and hence contributing to the conservation and regeneration of its historic sites has been part and parcel of the project from the very beginning.

Started as a civil initiative, the Istanbul 2010 ECOC organisation is based on a participatory governance model, which has brought the representatives of NGOs, the public and private sectors together. Accordingly, Istanbul 2010 has been presented as a social urban transformation project aiming at reinforcing the sense of citizenship among the inhabitants of the city. In this perspective, the Istanbul 2010 Agency, has defined its role as a coordinating / mediating organisation that brings different stakeholders together on the basis of a participatory, multi-acting model. It has been also engaged in playing this role in the urban conservation and rehabilitation projects, including the core sites of the World Heritage List. The Agency has proposed to act as a mediator between the

UNESCO World Heritage Committee and the local governments in a number of urban projects, some of which being highly controversial. It intended to turn these into exemplary «urban regeneration» implementations by introducing participatory project development methods. However, as a semi-official organisation, it could not have much stake in these projects – in Sulukule and Süleymaniye in particular, to which it clearly declared its opposition. Nevertheless, it has been successful in a number of other urban rehabilitation projects, as in the case of Sirkeci-Hocapaşa, relevant for the inclusive process of decision-making and planning conducted.

The Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency has successfully promoted two other pretentious projects in the city scale. The project of Yenikapı Transportation Transfer Node is being conducted through an integrated coordination model elaborated by the Agency. It is a complex project of urban archaeology, urban development and transportation engineering that brings together multiple stakeholders, and will probably take many years. And finally, the creation of a Museums Quarter within the precinct of the Topkapı Palace is also a long-term project, based on a strategic vision plan. They will certainly have positive impacts on the historic city in the long run. Yet, the principal legacy of the Istanbul 2010 ECOC process will hopefully be the adoption of participatory models of governance and project development in which public and private parties and civil organizations could collaborate in the future.

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Riassunto

L'iniziativa per Istanbul 2010 Capitale Europea della Cultura (ECOC), iniziata come una iniziativa civile, è stata presentata come un progetto di cittadinanza, nonostante il suo fine apparente di aumentare la pubblicità per Istanbul, metropoli multiculturale. In questo quadro uno dei principali obiettivi del progetto è stato quello di mettere in luce il patrimonio culturale della città. L'organizzazione di Istanbul 2010 ECOC è stata assunta per realizzare progetti pilota specialmente per i siti storici inclusi nella lista del Patrimonio Mondiale dell'UNESCO, promuovendo esperienze di partecipazione urbana informata e modelli di coordinamento multi azione. Sebbene il processo ECOC non sia stato ancora completato si può dimostrare che l'Agenzia Istanbul 2010 ha raggiunto i suoi obiettivi in un numero di progetti di riabilitazione urbana mentre «i progetti di rinnovo urbano» gestiti dalle municipalità rimangono ancora altamente discutibili.