

Istanbul

European Capital of Culture 2010

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Introduction

Istanbul: City of the Four Elements. 'Once it was the gold that people saw as the perfect blend of four elements. Istanbul, which once ruled lands on three continents, throughout the ages has served as a magnet for migrants for whom its streets are paved with the proverbial gold. After all the traumas it has experienced since its foundation, symbolically guided by the four elements, Istanbul is now promising to revitalise the formula imprinted in its genes. In cultural and in artistic it will be worth its weight in gold to the world as a European Capital.' (Official ECOC 2010 bidding document)

Istanbul will be one of the three European Capitals of Culture in 2010, along with Essen (Germany) and Pécs (Hungary). With its ambivalent identity, stuck between Europe and Asia, it might be one of the most interesting Cultural Capitals in the history of the European project.

My personal interest in the city was triggered when I first visited the city in 2003. Over the years, Istanbul has become my second home, after having spent about two years living there. I might also have been attracted to its indeed ambivalent identity which leaves room for discussion and different interpretations. Whereas I often felt that in my home country (being The Netherlands) everything was fixed (from general beliefs to the rules applying to the color of your house), Istanbul provided me with a flexible environment in which nothing stays exactly the same for even one single day. It can be nice to live in such a dynamic setting, but I would be lying if I did not admit that it also lead to serious love-hate affairs between the city and myself. An ambivalence within an ambivalence....

The love for the city encouraged me to pick up this thesis topic. I was very interested to see what Istanbul is doing with its Cultural Capital title and why it decided to become involved. The hate sometimes frustrated me, making me wonder why certain things relating to Istanbul 2010 could not be more organized, why opportunities were sometimes lost, why things had to be so complicated. But love makes one blind, and in my research I thus also found myself defending Istanbul 2010 on issues that I did not perfectly agree with. Nonetheless, I have tried to be a perfectly rational 'European' and switch off my emotions whenever they seemed to come to dominate my senses.

Of course, I am and will always remain a foreigner. I might never come to understand Istanbul completely for the simple fact I spent my 'formative' years somewhere else. I have heard this argument being used many times before by Turkish people in response to my personal utterings on the country. I admit that the fact that I am not from Turkey might in

some cases have blurred my vision or kept me blind from the truth. Not knowing Turkish perfectly has definitely restricted me in using certain sources. However, I have tried my best to dig into the sources available to me and I do moreover also believe that an outsider's view may provide insights that insiders are not able to see themselves. I have tried to keep my colored European glasses off and attempted to look at Istanbul 2010 from an objective point of view. However, this has not prevented me from giving my own opinions on the project and the city whenever I felt this was appropriate...

The main questions in my thesis will be as following:

1. What is the current agenda behind the Istanbul ECOC 2010 project? Why was the project taken up and by whom? What are its goals?
2. How is the cooperation between the different parties involved being shaped?

I believe these questions are most essential in both assessing the motivations behind the Istanbul 2010 project and the functioning of the organization itself. The organization of the project is rather unique for Istanbul standards, but I will come back to that further on.

In the first chapter I will discuss my methodology, followed by a theoretical chapter providing a general context for the European Capital of Culture event. In the third chapter I will focus on the background of Turkey and Istanbul in particular, discussing its recent history and developments. Hereby I will also give special attention to the development of the cultural sector in the city. Chapter four will discuss the results of my research into the Istanbul 2010 case and provide a thorough analysis of the state the project is in nowadays. In the fifth and concluding chapter I will present my overall results and thoughts, including some suggestions for the future...

1. Methodology

In order to do my research and answer the questions I set for myself, I made use of several methods. Apart from an extensive literature review, the study of newspaper/magazine articles, the examination of reports and theses written in the recent past and visiting some events/meetings (view bibliography for more details), my research was greatly dependent on the interviews I conducted. The Istanbul 2010 organization has been working under several formations since the year 2000, but only in 2006 did it become clear that Istanbul would actually become a European Capital of Culture. The 'real' preparations thus did not start until that time. This means that the amount of written information on the project today is still limited and it is for that reason that my interviews became even more crucial. The personal discourse my interviewees provided in their meetings with me form the basis of what is written in this thesis.

In order to talk to people in person and get a better feel of the situation the Istanbul 2010 project is in, I spent three months in Istanbul in the summer of 2007. In total I was able to interview eighteen different people from both the public, private and third sector during this time. Most of these people have positions within the advisory or executive boards of the Istanbul 2010 organization. Overall I talked to eight representatives from the non-governmental sector, of which two were also involved in private affairs. Four of my interviewees came from private companies/organizations and six were representatives of governmental bodies.

Before starting my research I decided it would be easiest to interview people who are currently directly and actively involved in the organization of the ECOC event in Istanbul. It is for that reason that I first turned to members of the advisory/executive committee of the organization. I visited the ECOC office in Istanbul in June and asked Nilgün Ören, Deputy Administrative Director of the ECOC main office, which people on the two boards were most active in the project. She gave me these people's contact details and I then approached them. Apart from a few exceptions I have been able to talk to all the people I asked for an interview. I believe I have made sure to keep a good balance between the different sectors involved. When it proved to be necessary to interview some people outside of the project, to provide some external or additional information, I decided to contact several people who were not directly related to the ECOC 2010 organization (this refers to the interview with Beral Madra and the last two interviews I have had with the Metropolitan Municipality). The total list of interviews is as following:

Interviews (in chronological order)

1. Cengiz Aktar, Bahçeşehir University, **private**, 18 June 2007
2. Cumhuri Güven Taşbaşı, Vice-governor at the Istanbul Governorship, **public**, 22 June 2007
3. Esra Nilgün Mirze, Director of Corporate Communications at IFCA (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts), **non-governmental**, 25 June 2007
4. Faruk Pekin, Cultural Awareness Foundation & Festtravel, **non-governmental & private**, 25 June 2007
5. Suay Aksoy, History Foundation, **non-governmental**, 26 June 2007
6. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Representatives, **public**, 26 June 2007
7. Vecdi Sayar, Intercultural Communications Association & PPR, **non-governmental**, 27 June 2007
8. Gülsen Kırbaş, TÜRSAB (Turkish Association of Travel Agencies) & Novitas Travel, **private**, 27 June 2007
9. Arhan Kayar, dDF (Dream Design Factory), **private**, 28 June 2007
10. Özgül Özkan Yavuz, Turkish Ministry of Culture & Tourism, **public**, 3 July 2007
11. Korhan Gümüş, Human Settlements Association, **non-governmental**, 3 July 2007
12. Mahir Namur, European Cultural Association, **non-governmental**, 9 July 2007
13. Gürhan Ertür, Açık Radyo, **private/non-governmental**, 9 July 2007
14. Beral Madra, AICA (International Association of Art Critics) & European Cultural Association, **non-governmental**, 11 July 2007
15. Representatives of the Department of Culture, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, **public**, 17 August 2007
16. Çetin Şimdi, cultural advisor of the Deputy Secretary, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, **public**, 17 August 2007
17. Belkis Boyacıgiller, Pozitif, **private**, 21 August 2007
18. Şule Soysal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **public**, 22 August 2007 (email interview)

The interviews I had were semi-structured, but I have always made sure to ask at least my key questions to everyone. These key questions included:

1. When and why did your organization become involved in Istanbul 2010?
2. What are your organization's main hopes for the ECOC event in Istanbul? What kind of focus should it have?
3. What are your organization's main goals for the ECOC event in Istanbul?
4. What is your organization's main idea on what the ECOC 2010 project can do for Istanbul?
5. What has your organization done for the ECOC 2010 project so far?
6. How is the cooperation with other actors involved in the project? Who are your main partners?

Most people were very happy to talk to me and showed great enthusiasm. Many interviews thus became very lively and open. Even though this might have not always had a positive effect on the structure of my interviews, it did contribute a lot to the amount of (inside) information I was able to acquire. I have allowed myself to interview rather informally in order to be able to have access to more information. I processed all the information I gathered during the interviews in summaries, of which I have used fragments directly in my thesis. Outside my official thesis framework I have also talked to many different people about my topic. These informal talks have also definitely contributed to my understanding of the questions I tried to answer in this thesis.

The Theory

For my theoretical analysis I have mainly made use of the urban regime theory. Even though the theory as it was defined by Clarence Stone in 1989 might not fit the Istanbul ECOC 2010 case perfectly, the theory is able to give insight into the problems public-private cooperation is causing for the Istanbul 2010 project. It is said that in order to organize a capacity to act in a city, informal networks that unite the state, the private sector and the third sector are needed. These different actors cooperate in order to reach a common goal and each bring in their own resources (e.g. in the form of money, knowledge, locations) Without cooperating the individual actors would not have enough power or strength to pursue their goals, so collaboration is crucial. However, trust and a shared common agenda are important and a lack of these elements might result in a failure of the regime and the goals it has set for itself. We

will come to see that this characterization fits exactly to the situation the Istanbul 2010 project finds itself in. Even though the urban regime theory was originally developed in an American context, this does not hinder the application of its ideas to the situation in Turkey as the local political situation there might be closer to that in the United States rather than Europe. Local government in Turkey does not have a long tradition, the national government used to be far more dominant and did not show a great interest in urban policy until the 1980s. Private money could thus gain a stronger position as there was a lack of public involvement in the city. In today's Istanbul this is still visible by the large amount of private hospitals, universities, schools, museums, libraries and other services which in Europe are often funded by the state. I will further elaborate on these matters in the first two theoretical chapters providing a contextual background to my thesis questions.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Urban Governance

As the era of the 'modern city' came to end and the 'post modern world' came into existence, Western cities were forced to deal with growing problems of industrial decline, unemployment and changing global structures in the form of globalisation. In today's world of heightened competition for capital, labour and resources, cities have been forced to improve their comparative advantage and attractiveness in order to compete with other cities. Urban governments thus had to be more innovative and entrepreneurial and open to new ways and methods in order to overcome the new problems that were presented to them. This necessitated a shift from 'urban managerialism' to 'urban entrepreneurialism', implying a more entrepreneurial stance for the local government and the consequent increase of public-private partnerships and elite-based growth coalitions. (Jones & Wilks-Heeg, 2004)

There are different ways for urban entrepreneurialism to intervene in the city, one of them being the attempt 'to improve a city's comparative position with respect to the spatial division of consumption.' (Harvey, 2002) In order to attract consumers, urban investments in this respect have been increasingly focused on 'the quality of life' stimulating gentrification, cultural innovation, physical upgrading of the urban environment, consumer attractions, entertainment and cultural events/festivals. The connections between 'market-oriented economic growth' and the development of conditions favorable to 'elite consumption practices' in de-industrialised cities are especially significant from the point of view of cultural policy. 'Civic boosterism, toy town architecture, 'postmodern' festival and spectacle, generally, are very congenial to the professional-managerial class.' (Harvey in McGuigan, 2005).

As a result of this more economic or entrepreneurial approach to culture, triggered by the growing importance of neoliberalism in the world, the (cultural) landscape of a city cannot solely be determined by some policy-makers working for a local government anymore, but has to be developed with the support and input of other agents. Political action requires more actors beyond governmental representatives. Businesses, NGOs, citizen groups etc. have become important players in the policy making process. Along with public bodies they form public-private coalitions and greatly influence urban developments. These so-called 'urban regimes', a concept coined by Clarence Stone in 1989 based on his extensive research of urban developments in Atlanta (US), can shape and influence different policy terrains. The urban regime theory claims that for policy goals to be reached, different interest groups must cooperate, as one group is unlikely to be strong enough to exercise complete control.

A regime can thus be defined as ‘an informal yet stable group consisting of public and private actors with access to institutional resources’ (Stone, 1989) This coalition of actors is not naturally given but has to be achieved. The combination of the various resources that the different actors hold, creates a ‘capacity to act’. Consensus forms the basis of interaction – complete agreement is therefore not a prerequisite. The regime agrees on a certain general direction but does not have to share the exact same thoughts on how to achieve this. A common direction or agenda is however essential. Policy is therefore formed on the basis of the structure of the regime and its strongest or most dominant visions.

Trust between the different actors involved is crucial in order to preserve the stability of the regime. A lack of trust might result in a failure of the regime and the goals it has set for itself. We will come to see later on that these two important elements of a common vision and trust among the people involved in Istanbul 2010 are problematic, thus putting a great burden on the organization of the project.

2.2 Cultural festivals

Leisure and culture have become important elements in the competition for economic growth. Cultural policy has therefore gained a growing importance as a tool for urban regeneration in Western cities. Festivals, forming a part of such cultural policy, are seen as effective strategies for urban regeneration as they can combine tourism policies with urban planning while at the same time encouraging local confidence. (Garcia 2004)

Whereas festivals traditionally were celebrations of collective belonging to a group or a place, shared cultural practices and histories, and formed a place for social interaction between local people, today’s festivals have added an entire range of new objectives to these rather ‘humble’ goals mentioned above. Festivals used to be mainly focused on their immediate locale; today they are mega-events increasingly organized in the light of the global market of cities competing for tourists, capital investment, services and residents. They have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance. (Roche, 2000)

Cultural festivals are deemed to be successful in urban regeneration because they provide a possibility to side tourism aims with urban planning. Moreover, it provides an occasion for the urban elites in a city to invigorate local collective identities and create a larger awareness of the city among its citizens, thus leading to a larger degree of pride between local people. (Cox & Wood in Quinn, 2005)

However, as festivals have become part of ‘city-branding’ and ‘cultural tourism’ strategies and thus focused on improving the international profile of a city and attract tourists, they have been criticized for creating an idealized, sanitized version of the city which reduces

opportunities to really connect with the city and its cultural realities (Quinn, 2005) and for reducing multiple, diverse social realities and lived experiences into a readily consumable package (Jones & Wilks-Heeg, 2004) – transforming the city into a successful spectacle. (Yardımcı, 2004) ‘Cities are turned into profitable, luxury, fun commodities that can be rapidly consumed by tourists; leisure spaces commodified constantly by tourist purchases.’ (Balibrea, 2001)

It is said that most of these limitations owe to a lack of coordination among event organizers, tourism bodies, city planners and the arts community. Cultural and tourism objectives should be connected in a productive way (Mommaas, 1999, pp. 41) but the fact that the various actors involved in cultural festivals are all involved in different sectors applying their own methods and notions complicates such developments. Especially the borders between public and private form a problematic separation where cooperation actually should take place.

Cities often fail ‘to acknowledge the critical importance of understanding and responding to the needs of local places, and of closely linking city marketing and urban regeneration strategies with the specificities of particular city contexts.’ (Quinn, 2005) There is always a risk for so-called ‘festivalization’, which, ‘through the commercialization of everyday life, comes to endanger a city’s cultural sustainability, leaving the local people with the feeling they are part of a show which is put up for the sake of tourists.’ (Richards, 2000) Moreover, the synergies between popular event activities and implementation of arts activities has not been investigated adequately. (Garcia, 2004)

The changing content of festivals is nonetheless also part of a transformation of the entire arts and culture scene, which has been forced to become increasingly focused on audience attendance, government subsidies and commercial sponsorship. Its new bond with tourism pushed its activities into the realm of economics and tourism. (Waterman, 1998) In that sense it has become much more difficult not to lose focus on the balance of cultural activities. ‘Cultural production is beginning to eclipse physical production in world commerce and trade’ (Rifkin in McGuigan, 2005) In the era of cultural capitalism, culture is becoming utterly commercialized. According to the European Cultural Policies 2015 Report, ‘art and culture have come to serve new ends and it is expected that in 2015 art will be almost completely instrumentalized in the economic sense, regardless of whether financing is private or public. Art will then serve either national or European interests that wish to construct a certain identity: it will be a desirable marketable commercial good for private ownership and can contribute to regional development and provide society with new creative employment opportunities. In 2015 art can moreover be used to stave off undesirable fascist and nationalistic tendencies in society.’ (Lind, 2005)

2.3 The European Capital of Culture project

The European Capital of Culture initiative (formerly European City of Culture) was launched in 1985 following a proposal put forward by the Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouris. In the initial resolution establishing the inter-governmental action, its goal was 'to open up to the European public particular aspects of the culture of a city, region or country concerned, and to concentrate on the designated city a number of cultural contributions from other Member States' (Resolution 85/C153/O2, Palmer/Rae, 2004) Founded as an educational festival promoting arts and culture, its informative role was soon to be more or less replaced by other objectives, as the action evolved at a time when cultural initiatives started gaining more importance in urban regeneration. Because there was a policy shift in Europe from reconstruction to city marketing in cultural policy, the ECOC event developed and diffused quickly among the EU Member States. (Richards, 2000)

Especially after Glasgow's apparent 'European Capital of Culture success-story' of 1990, which tells about the way the event helped the city regenerate and put itself back on the cultural world map, the ECOC project became an issue of fierce competition between cities waiting to get the opportunity to reap the same benefits as the city of Glasgow. Whereas the event could be characterized as a celebration of the 'classic' cultural capitals of Europe such as Athens, Florence, Amsterdam and Berlin in the first years after its inception, it became a project especially attractive to post-industrial 'secondary' or 'non-traditional' cultural cities desiring to reposition themselves culturally, socially and economically, after the now famous Glasgow case. The event came to be hosted by de-industrialising cities in need for new investment, thus shifting the focus of the ECOC event from cultural to more economic driving forces. Or as Evans puts it, the bidding process of the European Capital of Culture now 'parallels the build up and optimism surrounding Olympic, EXPO and major event competitions driving by geopolitics, commercial sponsorship and the high risk associated with aspiring culture cities which lack the scale, image and infrastructure necessary to achieve success.' (Evans, 2003)

Apart from its regeneration aims, the Glasgow ECOC year was characterized by a wide definition of culture, a scattering of activities beyond the city centre into the peripheries, both international flagship projects and grassroots activities and an allocation of funds to both temporary and permanent activities and infrastructures. (Garcia, 2005) These are all elements which have often been applied by other Capitals of Culture ever since, hoping they will render the same results for them. The view of the European Capital of Culture event as a celebration of (high) culture and art faded and made place for a different approach.

Even though the objectives and the scope of the ECOC event have been widened, economic development and gain are nonetheless still one of the most important incentives to host the ECOC event. Even when these goals are not explicitly mentioned, they remain one of the key elements underlying the aims of the project for most cities. The question then arises whether one needs a cultural event, as large business conventions, international sports events or other major corporate events may also do the trick if these are the main outcomes to be strived for. (Garcia, 2005) The dominant focus on economic returns is moreover somewhat striking if we consider the fact that the outcomes or results of individual ECOC events have often not been monitored and/or measured properly. The positive (economic) impacts of the projects were expected but there was no concrete proof that the event was a major contributor to the development of the city. Findings in research suggest that ‘softer, less tangible, cultural benefits have often been better sustained, while other widely acclaimed economic benefits are questioned.’ (Garcia, 2005).

2.4 The Palmer/Rae Report

The publication of the Palmer/Rae Report in 2004, which reviewed and analyzed the 21 cities that have held the title of the European Capital of Culture between 1995 and 2004, has however attempted to shed some new light on the ECOC event, such as its goals, organizational structure and outcomes. I will here discuss the main results of the report in order to provide a background to the strengths and weaknesses of the project and to be able to evaluate the progress the Istanbul ECOC 2010 organization is making.

In relation to the goals of the project, the report stated that even though cities had various individual objectives, many could be formulated as either hoping to raise the international profile of the city and its region, to run a program of cultural activities and arts events, to attract visitors and to enhance pride and self-confidence. Most of these, fit perfectly with Cox and Wood’s assertion described earlier. What happens though, is that in their quest for similar outcomes, cities have come to replicate each other’s successful strategies. This development is leading to a loss of distinctiveness among ECOC events, but also among cities. (PICTURE Report, 2006). The spectacle that is created by cities in the form of an ECOC covers cities with a colourful veil, which is actually similar everywhere, and covers the variety and disorder of urban living behind a visually coherent appearance. (Yardımcı, 2004). ‘The serial reproduction of the event without creative thinking on the actual city’s cultural offer can lead to ignore or even obliterate some local specificities, and result in a loss of comparative advantage.’ (PICTURE Report, 2006).

It is therefore suggested that it is important to keep residents in the project by mobilizing them to be active participants in the organizing process and the actual yearlong event.

The problem that then arises for ECOC organizations is that they have to start concentrating on multiple layers and aims, while not losing focus on the overall goal of the event. Many cities taking part in the research indicated that the setting of the objectives and sticking to them was difficult, especially in the light of diverse interests and opinions within the organization. Political and economic interests often dominated, which led to frustration among others who were more culturally/socially oriented. A well-functioning team in which discussion is possible and stimulated was thus valued as a very important ingredient of the organization of an ECOC year. This team should moreover consist of experts with good connection with the public, business and cultural sector.

Organizing a successful ECOC year seems to be greatly dependent on ‘balance’; artistic vision and political interest, traditional and contemporary culture, high-profile events and local initiatives, city centre and suburb/regional locations, high art and popular art/culture, established cultural institutions and independent groups and artists, attractiveness to tourists and the local population, international names and local events, usual activities and new activities, professional and amateur/community projects – these are all extreme ends that have to be incorporated in the project in a sensible way. Therefore, open discussion among different members of the organization and between the organization and ‘the city’, agreement on the general objectives and consensus in relation to policies and strategies are important in order to come to such a balanced program. For that reason, it is also required to have a stable team, which, considering the fact that most previous Capitals of Culture had a very high turnover rate of directors – mainly due to internal conflicts, is not as easy a task as it appears.

In relation to the role of ECOC directors it was moreover stated that it would be desirable and advisable to have an artistic director who can keep a professional overview of the artistic/cultural shaping of the project. This is also especially important if one wants to make sure that the balance between softer values such as cultural, artistic and social developments and harder economic values is sustained. In many former ECOC conflicts arose with alternative cultural groups and artists because they felt excluded or did not agree with the political or economic path the project was following. Whereas some feel that in order to avoid such clashes it is important to include these groups from the beginning of the project onwards, others consider these kinds of conflicts as inevitable.

In order to avoid conflict, integrated planning of the ECOC event is very important, in the sense that the projects taking place during the Cultural Capital year should both be integrated with existing cultural policy and other policy fields. It was reported that mainly the

cultural professionals of a city were talking about culture whereas others concentrated only on investment, physical transformation and marketing. However, only if culture becomes a real part of existing policy in different fields, it can maintain its challenging role without only becoming a tool for city marketing, it was said.

When talking about integrated planning, also grassroots activities that may encourage community development, participation and inclusion of local communities should be considered. Some previous Capitals of Culture have gone very far to secure these so-called soft values. Many cities aimed to improve access to cultural projects and programs. But also training programs, the promotion of cultural inclusion and participation are other examples of social projects that were popular among ECOC. The most popular 'community' to focus on program wise was on was 'youth'. However, if we look at the average percentage of what is referred to as 'professional' projects as opposed to amateur/community projects of previous ECOC, the proportion is about 75 against 25 percent. This latter smaller fraction was also said to be more problematic. Social projects are generally executed on a smaller scale, are more constricted in focus and limited in time. Even though social objectives seem to have gained importance, the goals of most ECOC were only partly concerned with social questions. They generally remained subordinate to other aims such as the improvement of the city image. Respondents of the research also criticized the fact that the ECOC events were mainly focused on the city center and less on the suburbs, and therefore appeared to be unable to reach out to the wider community. This focus on the city centre seems to be part of a wider trend though as investments are often aim towards projects stimulating the beautification of the centre and the building of tourist attractions which makes residents tourists in their own city (Gürbilek in Yardımcı, 2004) hereby overlooking the periphery which consequently lacks behind. As a result of this city-centre focus, visitors of activities during the various Cultural Capital years were mainly highly educated professional people who normally also consume the cultural life of the cities concerned. The fact that most ECOC activities were visited by these kinds of people was however also due to ECOC promotion strategies, which generally ranked opinion-formers and cultural professionals first; politicians, young people and children second; and elderly people, ethnic minorities and disabled people third.

Many ECOC viewed infrastructure development as an important objective of the Capital year. New infrastructure was built and old infrastructure restored. New developments mainly, but not exclusively, concerned cultural infrastructure such as museums, cultural centers and theatres. Renovation was primarily related to historical buildings. However, most of the infrastructure projects were not initiated by ECOC. They were already part of existing plans and the event just provided an opportunity to execute these plans under one framework.

Many of the infrastructure projects turned out to be problematic as time to complete them often appeared too short and some projects were controversial among residents and sustaining the infrastructure after the Capital Year was said to be difficult.

The ECOC project was created with a strong European dimension. It was to generate a greater knowledge and understanding of European cultures within the Member States of the European Union. However, this European element has often not been considered as a key importance. Most ECOC preferred to focus on a broader 'international' rather than a solely 'European aspect. Even though especially cities on the geographical periphery of Europe took the opportunity of being an ECOC to introduce European artists to the audience and create European networks among cultural partners, the majority of the cities applied a wider scope. ECOC also organized many projects in cooperation with non-European countries. An important factor limiting the amount of European projects was claimed to be an inadequate source of finance for these projects, along with a lack of experience to organize such European programs.

ECOC years were funded by different actors, the main being the public and the private sector. On average 78 percent of all income sources of ECOC came from the public sector, 13 percent from the private sector and 9 percent from other sources. Sponsorship and the meaningful involvement of the private sector are stated as a critical component of the success of an ECOC. In the light of changing attitudes towards the public sector and the problems of government funding in certain countries, private sponsorship has become increasingly important. It remains problematic however in the sense that many Cultural Capitals do not have a sufficient understanding of attracting sponsors and managing a sponsorship program. Sometimes sponsorship deals are even blocked by feelings of distrust by the organization towards the private sector.

Attracting visitors is an important element of an ECOC year, even though it is generally not the main motivation. Instead of stating they want to increase the number of visitors to their city, most Capitals refer to the promotion of cultural tourism and raising the international profile of the city. Visitor objectives were usually part of general tourism strategies such as the development of new markets and to improve the city image. Many cities seemed to make a distinction between visitors (or cultural visitors) and tourists. The latter are associated with leisure tourism whereas the latter is viewed as a more justifiable type of cultural consumption. This sometimes resulted in strategies either to decrease the role of tourism or to specifically target cultural tourists as such. Overall, the majority of the Cultural Capitals saw an increase in visitors to the city during the ECOC year, however whether the event really impacts the number of visitors/tourists after the event remains

relatively unknown as the figures are hard to measure due to different objectives and indicators.

As already mentioned earlier, it is important for the cultural and tourism sector to cooperate if they want to integrate these two factors in the event in a meaningful way. Even though successful examples of such cooperation are mentioned in the report, problems concerning the collaboration were more frequent. A lack of communication, a lack of a clear visitor strategy and insufficient planning were one of the most heard difficulties. Communication problems generally occurred because of a difference in working culture and expectations between the two sectors. However, these kinds of challenges could mostly be overcome.

Summarizing all the different elements of an ECOC year and directing our focus to the legacies and long-term effects of a Cultural Capital year we see that there are three long-term effects that are highly valued by respondents of the research, namely cultural infrastructure improvements, more developed programs of cultural activities/events and an increased international profile of the city/region. However, effects of an ECOC year were difficult to be measured, mainly because not so much time has past between the event and the time of the research. Moreover, when asked to present their measured long-term effects, they often present results which idealize the situation and mainly focus on their successes while putting less stress on failures.

2.5 Shifting to Istanbul

The European dimension of the ECOC initiative has been very clear from the beginning. It might therefore be considered as remarkable that in May 1999, in Article 4 of the European Parliament and Council decision 1419/1999/EC establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019, it was decided that: 'European non-member countries may participate in this (ECOC) action.' This is a remarkable development in the sense that in the 1990s, the European Union attempted to reinvent Europe in terms of an enlarged nation-state, basing it on the idea of a European identity deriving from Greek, Roman and Christian cultures, hereby excluding societies on the Southern and Eastern boundaries of Europe and the new migrant population that had come to play an important role in the internal demography of Europe. (Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006, pp. 5) The opening up of the ECOC project might be the beginning of a new approach towards the cultural definition of Europe. It is therefore interesting to see that the first non-member city to be awarded the ECOC title is Istanbul, a city in a country which 'Europeanness' has been contested by many in the discussion of the possible future accession of Turkey to the

European Union. A city also which is very eager to prove that it is worth the 'European' or 'EU' label and might for that reason be one of the first cities to include the 'European' aspect in the way it was integrated in the initial plans of 1985.

Istanbul will celebrate its Cultural Capital year in 2010. Because Istanbul is such a unique case in the history of the ECOCC event a (non)European mega-city that has transformed in the very recent past, it is interesting to wonder why the city has taken up the Cultural Capital project and who is behind it exactly. What are the goals the organization hopes to reach with this event and how do these goals influence the Istanbul version of the event? How is the event interpreted by the organizers in Istanbul and does this interpretation differ from the prevailing discourses in former Capitals? And also very importantly, how is the cooperation between the different partners involved in the project?

In order to be able to answer these questions accurately, I will now first focus on the city's urban development (including issues of local identity), its use of culture and cultural policy and its relations with Europe and the European Union in the next chapter. What kind of urban change did Istanbul undergo and what has been the role of culture in this respect? After first answering these questions it will be possible to analyse the Istanbul ECOCC 2010 project in the context of the city's (recent) history, political situation, social dimensions and cultural sphere.

3. Turkey & Istanbul

The European Capital of Culture event does not take place in a historical, social, political or economic vacuum. As we have seen in the previous chapter it is an event that is very much part of today's society and the way it functions. If we thus wish to understand how the ECOC project is implemented and conducted in Istanbul, we must first consider its local context. In this chapter I will touch upon six crucial elements in the analysis of the ECOC event.

First I will turn to the issue of Turkish identity and modernity; a long history of modernization and attempts to be closer to Europe and/or the West. From there we move to Istanbul in order to see how the city has developed. Hereby I will mainly focus on the past two decades, as they form the beginning of a new era in the city. Changes in the urban fabric however also translate into changes in identity. The third paragraph of this chapter therefore touches upon the 'Istanbul identity', which very much concerns the delineation of the middle classes; a growing class which also plays an important role in the consumption of culture and cultural events.

The European Union and Turkey's attempt to integrate into this union form a significant element in the exploration of civil society in Turkey and therefore also Istanbul's cultural sector. In the last three paragraphs I will therefore focus on these issues. The background provided in this chapter will form the basis for understanding the discourse analysis of the actors involved in the European Capital of Culture project in Istanbul, presented in the third chapter.

3.1 Turkish identity & modernity

‘Modernity asserts and reasserts itself through negation. Only if several things are constantly changed, and at least others continuously replace certain things, can modernity maintain its identity...Moderns do not acknowledge limit, they transcend it. They challenge the legitimacy of institutions, they criticize and reject them: they question everything,’ (Heller in Robins, 1996)

As the modern Western identity was being shaped by the questioning of every truth, so vital to reach the state of modernity according to the quote above, one essential element that could fix their identity seemed to be missing, namely an ‘inferior’ civilization that they could compare themselves to, in order to see that indeed the Western culture was the best human luggage a man could possess. The Orient then formed the main ‘other’ through which the modern Western identity was formed. Modernity was imposed as the ultimate goal for every culture in the world, including all the ‘rules’ this way of life entailed.

Meanwhile, the in the eyes of the moderns ‘non-modern’ cultures were desperately trying to fit in and to be modern according to Western standards, one of these being the newly established Turkish Republic. When the Turkish state was born in 1923, its founding father Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) confidently started his journey on the road to a modern lifestyle, equal to that in Europe. The path to the state of modernity was treated as an extensive project, which did not only include an increase in rationality, bureaucracy and organizational efficiency, but also aimed at a social transformation to reach secularization and autonomy for the individual and equality between men and women. (Keyder in Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997) The social arrangements of modernity were put into place but its dynamic element remained absent. The attempts to modernize by imitating the ‘modern West’ were only rarely translated into authentic modernization. (Robins, 1996) Instead, a copy-culture was developed which was completely dependent on its Western variant for survival. It is often stated that there has been a creative void at the heart of modern Turkish culture. ‘The elite put the old order into question, but it was not able through this process to liberate new meaning of a creative kind. It was an ersatz modernism that supplanted Ottoman culture.’ (Robins, 1996) The traditional or historical culture and its values were viewed as the enemy of progress, and therefore denied and suppressed. The inherent problem of this denial was the fact that this traditional lifestyle actually lay at the heart of Turkish culture and the Turkish people. The country was forced to deny its own existence and play a strange role to fit in the play of modernity. ‘The Turkish nation was born as an autonomous and independent entity, but in seeking its reference points, it could find only itself, since its past was denied.’ (Robins, 1996)

Turkey saddled itself with an identity crisis. The political elites forced a modern culture upon the Turkish people, while the largest part of the population was only familiar with their own traditional ways of life. However, they could not do anything against the marginalization of their own lifestyles. According to Çağlar Keyder one could even go so far as to say that ‘Turkish nationalism is an extreme example of a situation in which the masses remained silent partners and the modernizing elite did not attempt to accommodate popular resentment.’ (Keyder in Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997) The Kemalist program of modernization, of which Atatürk still remains the main symbol, is even today still setting the frame in which discussion can take place. Whether one talks about politics, social developments or national identity, Atatürk’s legacy keeps these discussions within its boundaries. (Midgdal in Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997)

Since the mid-1980s Turkey has experienced several major developments deeply affecting its political and cultural life. These changes slowly started to alter the Turkish self-image. What exactly happened during that time that resulted in a transformation of thought? First of all, Turkey increasingly opened itself to the world. Under the forces of internationalization, the national Turkish culture was contested. As the Cold War came to an end, Turkey had the opportunity to increase its contacts with its Central Asian neighbors. The strategic position of Turkey has become increasingly apparent in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Black Sea area. The importance of the country was realized and the Turks ‘came to see themselves once again at the centre of a world emerging around them rather than at the tail-end of a European world that is increasingly uncertain whether or not it sees Turkey as part of itself.’ (Robins, 1996) The enhanced bonds with Central Asian partners have brought the Turks closer to their Ottoman past. The former tradition of multiculturalism in the Ottoman Empire came to the eye of many Turkish people, reminding them of their own personal roots.

Internally, the military coup in 1980 can be appointed as the main event which opened the debate on the Turkish identity. The coup created a political and cultural vacuum, which could not be filled by the Kemalist ideology. A new political party, the Anavatan Partisi (ANAP – Motherland Party), set up by Turgut Özal, was confident to fill up the cultural void in Turkey. By uniting the mainstream political groupings under the ANAP and refocusing the cultural orientation of Turkish society, he wanted to give Turkey a ‘new identity in changing times’. (Robins, 1996) Islam was one of the main unifying elements on Özal’s agenda, but at the same time he also stipulated the fact that diversity and acceptance of diversity was an important goal. Özal wished to reserve a place for the real Turkey in the modernization process. ‘A change from below’ (Robins, 1996), was the way to reach this. His ideas were exceptional because they combined an emphasis on continuity (with both the Kemalist and the

Islamic pasts), yet at the same time sought to release repressed and dynamic elements in the culture.

At the same time social and cultural divisions became more visible. During the 1980s, many people migrated from the countryside to the large cities. In this way, the city became a space where the secular and modern lifestyle was confronted with a traditional and religious background and vice versa. Turkey's largest city Istanbul 'became a melting pot in which the diverse cultural of Turkey are juxtaposed, and then mixed further with the diversity of world cultures.' (Robins, 1996) Turkish society became increasingly aware of its diverse population, but today it is still struggling with its implications for society and politics. Relating to each other and living together with their diverse interests, still seems to be an issue of fierce debate. The Turkish people are now ever more in search of an identity that is real and that does not only include the modern elements Atatürk prescribed, but also touches upon long-lived traditions and religion. This does not necessarily imply a return to earlier times (although some claim it does). It means that the Turks are finally looking for their own roots, their personal modernity shaped by themselves and not solely by Western standards. However, as we will see later, this identity search is complicated by for example the EU accession project.

3.2 Istanbul in the age of liberalization and internationalization

Istanbul in the 1950s was a completely different place than it is today. With a population of one million inhabitants and a main focus on production subsidized by the Turkish state, the city was still relatively uncomplicated in comparison to the complexity it is facing today. Businesses were protected from international competition as imports, foreign capital and foreign exchange were controlled by the national government which resulted in a rapid growth of industry and an increasing immigration of workers from Anatolia. (Yardımcı, 2004).

However, as already stated above, 1980 was the year in which the past and the future of Turkey started following a different path. It was the time when economic, social and political transformations were made ‘which in their comprehensiveness were on a par both with the Atatürk revolution that created the modern Turkish nation-state and with the later transition to multi-party politics.’ (Rustow, 1985: in Heper, 1989) 1980 was the year when a military government seized power and set out on the road of liberalization, privatisation and internationalisation. With the help of the Structural Adjustment Program of the IMF the national economy was repositioned from an import substitution state based regime to an export-oriented privatised market economy. (Helvacıoğlu, 2001: in Yardımcı, 2004) It was attempted to ‘dramatically reduce the scope of the state sector and to situate the Turkish economy within the unitary logic of global capitalism.’ (Keyder, 1999, pp. 13) The elected government following the military regime in 1983, led by Turgut Özal, continued on the way of liberalization with even more enthusiasm.

Istanbul became part of the ‘world-city’ discourse by trying to position itself as such in order to draw in foreign capital investments. It succeeded. The city was able to regain its regional role which had been lost as a result of the national development of the Turkish state (e.g. capital status being moved to Ankara) and the liberalization of Turkey attracted many international companies, mainly in the service sector, to invest and establish in Istanbul. As a result of the shift from manufacturing to services also a group of highly paid and educated professionals emerged with distinct lifestyle choices and consumption embedded in global fashion. ‘Istanbul in the 1980s lived through its own version of casino capitalism and yuppie exuberance.’ (Keyder, 1999, pp. 15)

As the new policies of liberalization and internationalisation became established, so did the urban problems of the city. Turkey had lacked a local government tradition until that time as a legacy of both the Ottoman Empire and the strong centralization policies of the Republic. Moreover, because of its centralist focus, ‘Turkish political elites always had an

inclination to have as much say as possible in all political processes at every level of government.’ (Kalaycıoğlu in Heper, 1989) Local politics had thus been very closely linked with national government and its dominant views and ideologies. They were completely dependent on the central government financially and did thus not have the means and independence to tackle local problems.

However, in 1983 the new government initiated political and administrative decentralization, which, even though problems persisted, provided Istanbul with sufficient funds to rebuild the city. The mayor of that time, Bedrettin Dalan (1984-1989), applied these newly acquired funds to transform the city ‘from a national primate city ravaged by rapid immigration into a newly imagined world city.’ (Keyder, 1999) He initiated several urban renewal projects clearing up old historical neighbourhoods, removing small manufacturing companies from the historical city-centre, building boulevards along the Bosphorus and Golden Horn and constructing more highways and inner-city roads. What emerged were a spotlessly clean and shining tourist centre on the historical peninsula (Sultanahmet) where tourists were close to all major attractions like the Aya Sofia and the Blue Mosque and a popular business, shopping and nightlife district (Taksim -Beyoğlu), everything connected by new roads. ‘Dalan succeeded in transforming his space shaping process into an urban spectacle: while reorganising urban space along the will of land speculators, he successfully gave the impression of solving complex metropolitan problems (such as congestion) and transforming Istanbul into a global capital.’ (Gürbilek, 2001: in Yardımcı, 2004).

The developments triggered by Dalan’s large-scale regeneration schemes were followed by gentrification of these and surrounding neighbourhoods, with artists, academics and writers moving in, followed by small-scale investors attracted by these groups. As a result rent prices increased rather dramatically along with the general cost of living further attracting high-income groups and pushing out the less-wealthy population. (Uzun, 2003) A new middle- and upper class emerged which were attracted either by historical gentrified neighbourhoods or suburban, gated communities which developed alongside the inner-city beautification.

But the yuppies and the businessmen were not alone. As in other global cities, the introduction of post-modern modes of production and consumption created disparities among the population in Istanbul. Less-fortunate people were pushed out of their neighbourhoods and the people living in the crowded shanty towns (*gecekondu*, literally meaning ‘built over night’ in Turkish) on the outskirts of the city became more and more disconnected from the rest of the city which was undergoing its beauty treatment. The millions of immigrants that had massively sought for better lives in Istanbul ever since the 1950s, but arriving in highest numbers after the 1980s, were largely left out of the new globalised activities of the city as the expansion of the Istanbul population was not accompanied by developments in the economic and social field, which made it difficult for immigrants to build up a decent existence in the

city. As manufacturing jobs gave way to service jobs, their financial situation became increasingly unstable, pushing people into the informal economy and increased malaise. A strange contradictory situation developed in which people who used to live in traditional neighbourhoods were pushed to the periphery and newcomers were able to climb up the social/economic ladder by providing services to a mafia leader, who is in turn paid by a foreign businessman. (Yardımcı, 2004). Differences in income and economic position increased dramatically. 'While the annual income of the poorest family in Istanbul is 700 dollars, that of the richest family, living a few streets away, is estimated to be around one million dollars. While the rich live in grandeur in housing complexes with their own sports and social amenities, send their children to the West to study, attend special health care centres and invest capital in global enterprises, the have-nots line up to buy bread, which, in most cases, constitutes the bulk of their daily diet.' (Sakallıoğlu & Yeldan, 2000)

The divides between the population of Istanbul were nonetheless not only drawn along the lines of class or income. Also religious affiliation played, and still plays, an important part. The political elites of Turkey, being the Republicans, made (and still make) a very clear distinction between the Islamists – their religion, particular dress and their preference for political Islam – and the secular modern citizen. This distinction has been made ever since the foundation of the Turkish Republic and still exists today, with the former group being the traditional 'other' against which the official Turkish identity is constructed. This 'other' had long been excluded from public life and public spaces. (Yardımcı, 2004)

In the 1980s this situation was challenged as the liberal government of Turgut Özal (himself coming from a religious family) also geared its economic policy towards the business of religious people in smaller cities in Anatolia. This policy choice was part of an attempt to mobilize the Muslim entrepreneurs in order to compete with the secular business world. (Navaro – Yashin in: Kandiyoti & Saktanber, 2002, pp. 224) Strong Muslim companies indeed emerged and successfully entered into competition with the secular ones. What developed was a commercial culture based on political identities. 'A highly-visible Islamist elite was established which created its own political parties, labour confederations, and business associations (MÜSİAD), its own gated communities and recreation areas, and for the ones who could afford it, its own private schools and universities.' (Yardımcı, 2004). Whereas these developments show a clear empowerment of the 'Islamist other', they also increased the separation between the secular and the religious population.

3.3 The Istanbullu

As appears from the previous discussion, Istanbul has become a fragmented cityscape along the lines of class, religion, politics, lifestyle, ethnicity and cultural background. 'These divisions intensify the sense of insecurity among citizens, who loose any connection and communication with, and indeed, develop a kind of hostility against the 'others' with whom they (supposedly) share their city.' (Yardımcı, 2004) Constructing a common identity for such a diverse group of people is difficult, if not impossible. The real 'Istanbullu' (the Turkish name for an inhabitant of Istanbul) does not exist – it is a name created in order to differentiate between certain groups living in the city. The Istanbullu is a myth. The image of the Istanbullu is constructed, just like any identity, on the existence of an 'other'. These 'others' are no stable factors, but in the course of time they are adapted to the historical reality of a specific moment. However, one could generally say that the other in the case of Istanbul manifests itself in the form of the migrant: an excluded other often viewed as an invader, bringing along its backward culture and contaminating the modern urban culture. In other words, the term Istanbullu can at first sight also be viewed as the guard of the boundary between high- and low culture. However, we shall see that at a second glance, the circulation of the term 'Istanbullu' may secure the foundation of a different phenomenon.

Already in the 1940s, the middle classes of Istanbul were fighting a cultural battle against the tasteless over-consumption of the new rich, the migrants from Anatolia who had been able to acquire fresh capital. Today, as a result of the globalisation of the economic market and its' opening up to the lower strata of society, the same struggle takes place against the over-consumption of the lower classes.

In the 1960s, a different form of otherness was created by the entrance of arabesk culture to the Turkish stage. It was a notion of otherness that would be influential in the construction of the Istanbullu until the 1980s. Arabesk denotes a musical genre, a film genre, as well as the cultural habitus and lifestyle of those who enjoyed them. (Öncü, in Keyder 1999, pp. 104) It is a mixture of Arabic and Western influences, thus a *mélange* of the two main historical factors which seem to constitute the cultural struggle about Turkish modernism. Meral Özbek also described arabesk as the 'name to the identity problem of Turkish society'. As Istanbul opened itself more and more to the world economy, the consumer market posed a new threat to prevailing cultural hierarchies. (Öncü in Keyder 1999, pp. 112) By the middle classes, arabesk culture was viewed as banal, trashy, polluting and polluted. At first only the migrants became the victims of the arabesk lifestyle – they lost their innocence, purity and the authenticity of their traditional peasant-folk heritage (however

remained ignorant), without acquiring the urbanity of cosmopolitan life (but embracing its commercialism) (Öncü in Keyder, 1999, pp. 114) Later arabesk culture also spread to the other classes of society. Nowadays, the term ‘arabesk’ does not contain the same critical or judgmental undertone. ‘Rather, it describes a general malaise that seems to plague Turkish society such as arabesk democracy, arabesk economy, and arabesk politicians – all suffering from a neither-nor-situation of indeterminacy and degeneration.’ (Öncü in Keyder, 1999, pp. 115)

In the 1990s, Turkish society was flooded by the influences of mass media; colour television, glossy magazines, satellite TV and the (international) film industry brought the world of luxury mass consumption and even more importantly sexuality to the living rooms of the inhabitants of Istanbul. Cultural boundaries that had previously separated the world of sexuality and the public universe of gender relations ruled by strict codes of ‘untouchability’ were broken down as sexuality became a matter openly displayed to the public. In respect to identity formation, this new development became clear through the creation of the ‘maganda’, a figure created by a group of young cartoonists. Cartoons are a very popular phenomenon in Turkey, especially among the young population between 18 and 25 years old. Many cartoonist magazines are sold in the kiosks – circulating criticism, humour and Istanbul identity discourses. In the cartoons, the maganda is depicted as a male often in state of sexual arousal. He is characterized by aggression, asocial behaviour and over consumption. Later on the ‘maganda identity’ could also fit women and transgressed all layers of society. The decent and true Istanbulu would of course be everything but a maganda; he would be controlled, civilized, social and stylish.

As becomes clear from the previous three examples, the circulation of the word Istanbulu does not so much concern the securing of high culture, nor is it a struggle between the rival camps of economic and cultural elites. (Öncü in Keyder, 1999, pp. 117) One could say that it is a battle fought on two fronts; the tasteless over-consumption of the rich and the vulgarism of mass consumption in the lower classes. Thus, it is a cultural struggle to define what is in between these two worlds. It is a struggle to negotiate the middle class.

The middle class in Istanbul (or in Turkey for that matter) is growing – however, its boundaries are sharper than in most Western countries. Belonging to the middle class is still perceived as something that one should work for, one needs to deserve it. Belonging to the middle class is considered to be quite an accomplishment, something to be proud of. The Turkish middle class however is threatened by two elements. First of all, policies of liberalization undermine the economic basis of a middle class way of life. And secondly, the global cultural flows threaten to erode the symbolic basis of the reproduction of the middle

class. (Öncü in Keyder, 1999, pp. 116) There is a fear of falling in the middle classes, a phenomenon that can be viewed anywhere in the world – however with variations in intensity. As Öncü puts in her article, ‘the continuous valorisation of the myth of an Istanbullu can be interpreted as a manifestation of decline and fall from grace, but also as a part of an active process of renegotiating and re-constituting the link among commodities, morals and consumption in the era of globalism’.

3.4 Turkey and the European Union

Europe and Turkey have interacted for many centuries, even when one could not speak of ‘Turkey’ yet. The country has been under the influence of a long-lasting Westernization project which started under the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. ‘Becoming European’ has become a political project (Becerik, 2005/2006) Before Turkey signed its Association Agreement with the European Community and became an associate member with the potential for full membership in 1963, it was already a member of the OECD (1948), the Council of Europe (1949) and NATO (1952). By this time, Turkey had been through some major reforms in the attempt to get closer to Europe and the European lifestyle. In the eyes of the Turkish government and its citizens, the country could at that time thus already be seen as a fully European state participating in international politics as such. However, when Turkey was ready to apply for full EU membership in 1987 (right after the completion of the Mediterranean enlargement), it was denied because of its bad state of democracy, its relative economic backwardness, the Kurdish problem, disputes with Greece, the Cyprus issue and a lack of respect for human rights. (Müftuler-Baç, 2000)

Ever since this refusal of full Turkish membership, Turkey has been in the European Union’s waiting room, and had to desperately observe the accession of twelve new states to the Union. Meanwhile, Turkey’s progress in the process was limited and restricted by new EU rules in the form of for example the Copenhagen Criteria of 1993. In 1996 Turkey signed a Customs Union agreement with the EU, which was exceptional as it was the first country to realize a CU before actual membership. It filled the Turks with great hope, but again the country was disappointed. The decision about accession was postponed once more until October 2005, when it was finally decided that Turkey could really start its accession negotiations. Nevertheless, the EU accession of Turkey has not been less problematic since 2004. The question is why the Turkish accession appears to be more complex in comparison to other (previous) candidates. The main answer to this question is the ‘identity’ debate. The questions whether Turkey is European or not has still not been agreed upon.

Mainly due to events such as 9/11, the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, the Danish cartoon incidents and the murder of Theo van Gogh, 'Islamophobic' sentiments have moreover dramatically increased along with feelings of nationalism in European states. The question of the accession of Turkey and more importantly, whether Turkey is European or an 'other', has therefore gained increased importance. 'Turkey does not share in the Judeo-Christian cultural tradition, but neither does it belong to the predominantly Arab Islamic culture.' (Bozdaglioğlu in Becerik, 2005/2006) Apart from that the picture of Turkey is further blurred by the country's multiple and divergent identities. It is big but relatively poor, Muslim but secular, modern but traditional. (Becerik, 2005/2006) These contradictions make the country very difficult to grasp and understand.

Müftuler-Baç states that there are two definitions of Europeanness. The first stresses common intellectual heritage, religion and ethnicity; the second emphasizes the sharing of common values such as democratic principles. (2000) At the moment Europe is a period of redefining itself which will give an opportunity to Turkey to fit into this redefinition. If the above definitions are applied to the questions of Turkey's being European or not, it means that in the first case, Turkey would be excluded on the basis of its Islamic religious background. If however, Europe is redefined along the lines of liberal democracy, then Turkey might be included on the condition that it must reform its political system. Political changes have been made in the past years and are still being actively discussed. At the moment there are even debates about whether Turkey should reform its 1982 constitution. When solely considering the political system, Turkey thus stands a great chance of being included in the 'European family.'

Apart from making political changes, it is believed that Turkish scholars must become increasingly active in the Turkey-EU debate. In doing this, they must nonetheless go beyond the mere promotion of Turkey by changing the image of the country that Europeans have and they must overcome the discourse of 'authenticity' stressing that the only contribution Turkey can make to European culture is to offer to the European what could be found in Turkey but not in Europe. (Yılmaz, 2005) 'The opinions of both Europeans and Turks, pertaining to European culture and the place of the Turkish culture within it, must not be judged as proven facts, but as subjective 'narratives'. Within this context, European culture must be considered as a variable and dynamic fiction, an arena where different answers to such fundamental questions as 'Where does Europe begin, and where does it end?' and 'Who is a European' compete with one another. Embarking from these views, Turkey's contribution to European culture must be to enter this arena with 'different' narratives, and participate in the formation

of this fiction with her own 'authentic' narratives,' says Hakan Yılmaz. Nowadays, Turkey often seems desperately to be trying to be European and 'to fit in'. The adoption of European values and a European way of life is a very important discourse in the country. Being included in the 'European civilization' is viewed as an essential step forward. (Madra, 2005) However, as we have seen before, trying too hard to be 'something' while meanwhile forgetting yourself creates problems. Especially in the case of Turkey, these identity issues are crucial and therefore should be treated very carefully.

3.5 The Role of civil society

As a result of the fact that both the Ottoman and the Turkish state were strong centralized authorities, concentrating power in the hands of a small group of state elites, civil society in Turkey remained weak for a long time. Powerful classes able to use the state to serve their own interest were largely absent and also corporate power was long unable to influence society. The state thus possessed a great degree of autonomy. It is described as a body 'valued in its own right, autonomous from society and playing a tutelary and paternalistic role.' (Özbudun, 2000, pp. 128)

NGOs first started to emerge in Turkey after 1946 when a multi-party system was introduced. Until that time, the country had been under the influence of a one-party system ever since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Even though many NGOs were established in the next few decades after the inception of this new system, they still had to deal with a relatively high interference of the state and the army because they were seen as threats to the modernisation project of the country. (Ünsal, 2006) There is a fear that 'unless partitive interests are repressed, closely regulated, or prudently harmonized, divisions along such lines as class, religion and region will threaten both the unity of the nation and the authority of the state.' (Bianchi in Özbudun, 2000, pp. 129)

The main changes in the role of NGOs took place during the 1980s. Whereas the 1982 Constitution initially seemed to form a restriction on the formation of foundations, associations, trade unions and political parties, after 1985 the conditions for civil society improved. The effects of globalisation, the strengthening of the private sector, the development of the market economy and the growth of the middle classes encouraged the expansion of civil society organisations, resulting in a dramatic increase in established civil institutions. (Ünsal, 2006)

NGOs also gained importance because the Turkish state lost a large part of its power and trust. Globalisation had undermined the Turkish modernization project the state, the state had become increasingly connected with misuse of authority, unlawful action, bribery and the violation of human rights and the government did not seem to be able to effectively finance

public policy. NGOs thus formed a new interesting point of focus for people as an alternative to the state. These organisations were run by highly educated urban elites and financially/morally/symbolically supported by wealthy publics. (Yardımcı, 2004) The support of these private bodies and individuals was crucial as (financial) support was very limited. Turkish civil society thus became stronger with the help of private money.

However, while the pressure of the civil society on public life increased, the state became increasingly isolated from it. Ties between civil society organizations and political parties are very weak. Even though civil society has become stronger (especially in number) in Turkey, this does not necessarily mean that public affairs are critically evaluated by its citizens and get a response from the state. 'The weakness of Turkey's public/political sphere goes hand in hand with the isolation of the political class from the rest of society.' (Sakallıoğlu & Yeldan, 2000) The state refuses criticism from public bodies and social protest within the political space because the idea of political parties in Turkey as representative institutions embedded in society has failed. This is mainly due to the fact that there is a lack of public accountability among politicians and because no consistent vision of the government and its required responsiveness has been developed. (Sakallıoğlu & Yeldan, 2000).

'All key issues in Turkey are accepted without debate. The only competition is over 'who' will implement the policies.' (Çınar, 1997: in Sakallıoğlu & Yeldan, 2000) The Turkish political class is very careful to employ sufficient democratic formula, but just enough to deserve the label 'democratic'. In the end, Sakallıoğlu & Yeldan state that: 'civil society has some latitude but no real strength just as the parliament contains oppositional forces but has no real authority; the judiciary operates with some independence at times but is by and large politically controlled; the media can uncover the dark connections between organized crime and the state security forces, ranging from unknown murders to drug smuggling, but is itself oligopolistically owned and prone to using nationalist and populist influences to sway the people. The ability of civilians to control the military is weak, but the polity is not a military regime.' The power of the people, of which civil society and thus NGOs form a part, is still limited. Even though it is relatively easy to set up an NGO in Turkey, their influence remains restricted.

Also financially there are some complications as receiving grants from abroad is difficult. Because of that reason many NGOs prefer to run their initiatives as commercial companies, stating in their statutes they will reinvest all profits in the organization. Larger NGOs can apply for the fortunate fiscal status of a foundation, but not many actually get government approval to establish themselves as such. (Klaic, 2005)

Despite existing problems, there are also more positive voices within Turkish civil society. The increase of non-governmental organizations is viewed as an important step forward, especially towards the formation of a platform for interactions between the West and

the East. 'Now we see that non-governmental organizations are thriving and their growth enriches cultural and artistic activities in this country. Now we see they contribute to the spread of cultural and artistic events throughout Turkey,'¹ says Şule Soysal. Also the government has started to increasingly cooperate with NGOs, even though their financial support remains humble, she states. 'It is an innovation for Turkey to see the government takes a back stool and supports non-governmental organizations and artistic and cultural institutions.' Even though there are many problematic issues that still have to be dealt with in respect to the development of civil society in Turkey, the position of NGOs and civil society as a whole might slowly be improving, providing more and new opportunities to the cultural sector in Istanbul that I will focus on in the next paragraph.

3.6 Istanbul and the cultural sector

The cultural sector in Istanbul does not form a coherent entity built up of a multiple cooperating private and public actors, that people are used to in 'the West'. Cultural policies formulated by either the national or local government are largely absent, and cultural subsidies are often provided on an unpredictable and random basis. Public funds are said to be distributed according to political choice: 'The state works with the artists it thinks are appropriate representatives of the country - artists who work with conventional strategies, coming from modernistic tradition, academics, state oriented sculpturers and painters who produce "beautiful art, modern art" - and that is the beginning and the end of it.' (Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin in an interview with EIPCP)

This quote illustrates a phenomenon that started with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, when the government launched its modernisation project aimed at the education and Westernisation of the Turkish population. A new civilization was to be created, based on Western values rooted in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. High culture (e.g. opera, ballet, classical music, painting) was the type of official culture that was to be embraced by the new 'modern' citizens of the Turkish Republic. While forms of high culture were strongly promoted by the state, alternative forms of culture, which actually formed the 'real' culture of the people, were censored. Until the 1980s, when Turkey started to share in the process of globalisation and warily opened its doors to the world, the official state culture was dominant. This does not mean that other 'real' forms of culture did not survive, but they were displaced to unofficial channels. The state still tends to symbolize this 'officialdom', both in its cultural preferences and the way it operates. (Aksoy & Robins, 1997)

¹ Şule Soysal, ambassador in Estonia and former DG for Promotion and Cultural Affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in her opening speech for 'Transformation in thinking, dreaming and daily life in the process of EU integration' Conference, 8 May 2004

Because of the strong stress on a 'modern Western lifestyle' and the suppression of 'local traditional lifestyle' supported by the government, the Turkish population finds itself in a state of identity crisis. Are we modern? Are we part of Europe? Are we traditional? Are we part of the Middle East? Or are we a bridge between the two, as many like to emphasize. The identity crisis is further complicated by the fact that, especially after the 9/11 events in 2001, a growing hostility towards everything Islamic has developed in the Western world. This cultural dilemma also poses a problem for the cultural scene in Istanbul. What kind of culture should be promoted? What is the function of culture and what kind of audience should be targeted?

Even though Istanbul is obviously the cultural capital of Turkey, its cultural activities are mainly geared towards the elites and the middle class residents in the city center who form a relatively small part of the city's population. The fact that cultural activities in Istanbul are often focused on the urban elites is mainly due to the fact that culture and arts activities were picked up by these elites in the 1980s. Earlier we already saw that both civil organizations and private companies started to play an important role during this time.

In the field of culture in Istanbul similar developments took place. 'Cultural foundations and associations, founded and supported by private companies or individuals became equally influential in the political arena as the administrative state (Ministry of Culture and Tourism) and the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul.' (Yardımcı, 2004). Culture and arts came to be employed by various actors in order to reach their own goals. 'Istanbul used arts to decorate its politics and economics. Artistic production was taken up as an instrument by politicians, a billboard by sponsoring companies and as sensational material by the media.' (Madra, 1992: in Yardımcı, 2004) Cultural activity was used to contribute to the image of Istanbul, reconstructed as a meeting point for diverse cultures, and as a secular, innovative and attractive cultural capital. (Yardımcı, 2001) In this respect Istanbul went through the same developments in the Western world where corporate money was increasingly used to actively participate in the cultural arena. (Wu, pp. 271, 2002) Whereas investments in art and culture were previously mainly made by public bodies, it now moved into the hands of private companies.

In this respect The Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IFCA) should be mentioned. It is the main organizer of the Istanbul festivals² and the Istanbul Biennial, together forming a substantial part of the cultural life in Istanbul, and was established in 1973 under the leadership of Nejat Eczacıbaşı, a well-known Turkish industrialist/businessman. IFCA is the most important and most powerful non-governmental organization in Istanbul,

² Several annual culture/art festivals organized since the end of the 1970s

supported by econo-cultural elites that promote the cultural globalisation of Istanbul. (Yardımcı, 2004) It aspires to become an institution such as the Art Council in the United Kingdom. The foundation greatly draws on the legacies of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stressing his focus on secularism and modernisation. Even though it is a foundation independent from the state, it thus continues on the same ideological path as the state, even so far that it has applied similar censoring measures as the state would and has given in to governmental complaints about works of art, all in order to safeguard the unitary definition of the Turkish Republic. (Yardımcı, 2004) The foundation used to get a substantial amount of state funding for its activities in its earlier years, nowadays seventy to eighty percent of its budgets for the festivals of Istanbul comes from private sponsors. This case is exemplary for the majority of the civil organisations working in the arts and culture field in Istanbul.

We can thus wonder...what is the role of the state? There is a Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism that could form an important player in the promotion of a strong and rich cultural sector in Istanbul (and the rest of Turkey), but the Ministry's focus is mainly felt to be on the latter part of their name. Culture is viewed as an element to attract tourists rather than an asset that belongs to the entire population. Most attention is therefore given to cultural heritage and historical sites, which are directly related to tourism. (Tokcan Faro, 2004)

Browsing through the website of the Ministry one therefore mainly finds links interesting for tourist purposes. The website for example includes promotional films of Turkey and all its regions, short films of specific Turkish traditions (such as whirling dervishes, henna nights and hamams) and examples of Turkish folk music.

Looking at the 2010 Tourism Vision that was published by the same Ministry in 2004, it becomes clear that the main master plan for Istanbul concerns large cultural centres, entertainment centres, commercial centres, retail, commerce and hotels and focuses greatly on those areas that are today most interesting for tourist development namely the historical peninsula, Beyoğlu, the Galata port and the Western Black Sea Region. (2010 Tourism Vision, 2004) It seems that large real estate plans are prioritised over cultural projects. Real estate deals are generally made much faster accompanied by major (promotional) publicity. (Klaic, 2005) In many cases such large-scale regeneration projects however do not take into consideration cultural heritage or cultural possibilities. In a 2006 decision text UNESCO already showed its concern about these kinds of developments by requesting 'All new large-scale development and infrastructure projects, which could threaten the visual integrity of the Historic Peninsula (including skyscraper development such as the Dubai Towers, the proposed high-rise development at Haydarpaşa), the Galataport project, and the new bridge across the Golden Horn as well as the extension project for the Four Seasons Hotel to be reviewed, impact studies according to international standards to be carried out and cooperation between District Municipalities, the Metropolitan Municipality, the Ministry of

Culture and Tourism and other stakeholders, including universities, NGOs, professional organizations, inhabitants etc. to be enhanced while establishing clear management and monitoring responsibilities, including the designation of a specific World Heritage site coordinator.’ (Decision Text, 30COM 7B.73 – State of Conservation)

However, there are also other voices that throw a different light on the involvement of the state. While interviewing Esra Nilgün Mirze, working for the IFCA as the Director of Corporate Communications, Mirze explained that ‘Turkey learnt how to do PR very recently. This is why other countries still get more cultural tourism and this is also the reason why nowadays cultural tourism is promoted so much in Turkey. It is a potentially large source of income.’ (Mirze, 2007). She also stressed that ‘The Ministry of Culture and Tourism is not only about tourism. They have very avant-garde policies. They give forty to sixty percent discounts on cultural investment (such as discounts on buildings) and tax deductions for those who sponsor cultural investments.’ (Mirze, 2007) There is a realization that the official channels of the Turkish state operating within the cultural sphere might be changing, in the sense that they are becoming more supportive of cultural activities. Because of the fact Turkey is opening itself to the world and becoming part of global interactions and flows, also the role of cultural resources in image building, local promotion, branding and wealth generation become clear. (Aksoy, CCI, 2007)

The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality also seems to show a greater interest in culture today, even when their main focus is still on traditional forms of culture. The Municipality has a Department of Culture and Social affairs which deals with culture, tourism, theatre, the city orchestra and libraries/museums in different sub-departments. They have their own monthly program and additionally support projects of NGOs, universities and individual artists. Support is mainly provided in the form of accommodation, venues, logistics or PR and marketing whereas direct financial support is rather rare. One of the main interests of the Municipality is to spread cultural activities over the city. In that respect their approach might be described as less elitist. Their activities are also more closely connected to local communities and are moreover free of charge.

Promoting the city is however also an important reason why the Municipality is increasingly involved in cultural affairs. They want tourists who visit the city to spread the ‘positive word’ about Istanbul once they come back home, so the international image can be improved. In an interview with the cultural advisor of the Deputy Secretary, Çetin Şimdi, he also stated that with the new social situation in Istanbul, entailing improvements in the economic and financial situation of many people, demands for cultural and artistic activities started to arise. In that sense the growing involvement and interest of the Municipality in culture can thus also be seen as a respond to that development. Even though the main focus of the Municipality is on rather traditional forms of culture, the new discourse of the cultural

industries has also come to influence their activities. This growing interest might for example be shown by its support of the CCI (Cities and Cultural Industries in the 21st Century) conference in June 2007. In the program booklet of this conference Istanbul's Mayor Kadir Topbaş stressed that: 'developing cultural industries will be a development dash for our country's economy which is a host to many various cultures and civilizations. Istanbul has comprehended the present and future strategic importance of cultural industries. With this in mind, Istanbul's contribution to economic gains of the sector and the socio-cultural activities enrichment cannot be far sighted.' (CCI Program Booklet, 2007) Cooperation with non-governmental organisation is said to be important for the Metropolitan Municipality because 'in nature art is non-political,' according to Iskender Pala, culture advisor of the Istanbul mayor. (Krautwald, 2005/2006). It is for that reason that the Municipality works closely with non-governmental actors.

Another example of increased official involvement in (contemporary) culture would be the opening of the prestigious 'Santral' project³, led by the private Bilgi University, where Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan gave an opening speech expressing his support for these kinds of cultural projects.

His involvement in such a project is quite remarkable as he uttered some very critical remarks ten years ago when he was the mayor of Istanbul stating that ballet was an 'indecent art' and the celebration of the New Year was a 'degenerate imitation of the Western culture. (Aksoy & Robins, 1997: in Yardımcı, 2004). Even though today's official interest might be criticized for being a 'popularity stunt' and for being mainly focused on economic returns instead of showing a real cultural interest, they might also aid the cultural sector in its development, as the state can be an important support.

What should be mentioned in this respect is that cultural involvement of the state is also rather remarkable as the country is governed by an Islamist government in the form of the AK-Party (which also won the recent elections of the 22nd of July 2007 and will thus remain a key player). Even though some in the cultural sector feared this would mean the end of certain cultural activities, the 'Islamists' also had their own economic elite in favour of Istanbul becoming a global city and thus willing to support globalizing trends of which cultural investment can be mentioned as one.

However, the policy response of the government to developments just described has so far been to 'adopt a pragmatic approach and to advocate a kind of neo-liberalism which promotes the central involvement of private capital in running cultural affairs.' (Aksoy, CCI, 2007) The Ministry thus bases itself more on the American system in the cultural sphere

³ The conversion of the old industrial buildings of the Istanbul electricity plant (=Santral) into a university campus including various museums and spaces for artists in residence

which relies more on the private sector rather than the European system which traditionally involves state subsidies and support. 'This way of operating has been a great success in the United States. Culture should be free of political influence and artists should be immune to it. Private companies should sponsor cultural events. They should realize they have social responsibilities,' Mirze (IFCA) stated. She hereby made a point which counts for a large part of the cultural sector in Istanbul (Turkey). Because of its dominant ideology dating back to its 1923 foundation, its relative inefficiency and its dominant focus on tourism and real estate – even though this may be changing - cultural actors in need of (financial) support choose to turn to other channels, namely private companies. The private sector is a much stronger player in the cultural field of Istanbul than its official counterpart. The public sector generally provides buildings and facilities while most of the financial resources are provided by the private sector. Whereas corporate sponsorship was still an unknown factor in Istanbul in the 1970s, when public involvement was still dominant, nowadays the cultural sector is mainly dependent on private funds. Private companies have come to realize that support of arts and culture can boost their image, create visibility and therefore stimulate the overall consumption of their own products. The private sphere in Istanbul came to this conclusion long before the state did. Besides being financially involved in cultural projects organized by private foundations, NGOs or independent art groups, a substantive amount of private companies also have their own cultural centres, museums and galleries. In 2005 three new museums were opened, all owned by powerful holding groups; the Istanbul Modern (Turkey's first modern art museum) by Eczacıbaşı, the Pera Museum by Kıraç and the Sabancı museum by Sabancı. Furthermore, there are several art galleries financed by Turkish banks such as the 'Garanti Platform (Garanti Bank), the Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts Centre (Yapı Kredi), the Tünel Sanat gallery (T.C. Ziraat Bank) and Akbank Sanat (Akbank).

The decreased involvement of the state is sometimes viewed with regret, but when it comes to past regulatory state actions in the field of culture, its absence is not grieved over. However, also the private companies behind cultural investments in Istanbul are known for having set censoring conditions. (Yardımcı, 2004) Nonetheless, cultural institutions seem to consider the (unwanted) influence private companies try to assert as less bothersome than that of the state. The problem that results from this preference of cultural actors to cooperate with the private sector is that creativity comes to be excluded from the public area and thus becomes isolated. (Korhan Gümüş in Working Group).

Cultural institutions in Istanbul also work together, however, until today on a small scale. Cooperation is often considered to be irrelevant or it is thought it will obstruct and complicate one's own search for resources and opportunities. (Ünsal, 2006) In his study of the cultural scene of Istanbul also Dragan Klaić observed a lack of trust among individuals,

‘which prevents them from forming compact and sustainable collectives and delivering some creative continuity.’ (Klaic, 2005) For many people in Istanbul this kind of lack of trust is nothing new though. Some even go so far as to call mistrust ‘the disease of modern Istanbul’. (Bouwman, 2007) In a survey conducted by the ARI movement (a Turkish social movement) in 2003, in which the general trust levels of people were measured, it was discovered that less than ten percent of the people surveyed trusted people in general, whereas according to the European Values Survey, the EU average for trust is forty percent. It is said that a low level of trust can be useful in explaining why financial markets cannot gain depth, why people do not deposit their money in banks, why membership to NGOs and political parties is low, and why family owned companies are preferred to larger partnerships. The answer to all these questions is the same: people do not cooperate with people whom they don’t trust. Trust is accumulated through the successful experience of cooperating with others. While low levels of trust leads to low participation, the opposite is also true: civic participation creates opportunities for successful cooperation leading to the accumulation of generalized trust. (Ünlühisarçıklı, 2006)

In conclusion the cultural sector of Istanbul can be described as a sector in which the state, the private sector and civil society try to establish their own programmes either in laborious cooperation or relatively ‘alone’. The sector is rather fragmented and would thus benefit from closer collaboration and discussion. Cultural production plays an important part in the city but is discontinuous and often takes place under a festival scheme. (Klaic, 2005).

Also when it comes to the location and audience of cultural activities there seem to be some problems. Many cultural activities are focused on the urban elites living and working in the central areas of the city, whereas the peripheries and their inhabitants are largely ignored. There is however a realization among the cultural scene that this is not a favourable situation as cultural inequality might lead to social problems and a more even spread of cultural activity with a greater focus on the peripheries is thus said to be preferred. The Istanbul cultural sphere should attempt to break down social/economic hierarchies existing in the field of culture, which nonetheless might be a difficult project considering the general forces (of globalisation, gentrification, segregation) that lie behind this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the cultural scene might at least attempt to make their activities accessible for a wider audience and thereby promote a more inclusive democratic model. Expertise and interest exists in the private companies and NGOs could be improved. At the moment there are three universities in Istanbul that provide education on cultural management, and also the European Cultural Association has shown efforts to further educate people in the cultural sphere. Despite these developments, ‘it can be said that cultural management is still carried out fumbling with an “old-school” approach in Istanbul and in Turkey.’ (Ada, 2005) Especially the state is still

lacking behind in this respect. If the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, but also especially the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the district municipalities can develop their skills, that would mean a great improvement for the cultural sector of the city. The fact that these official bodies are indeed showing an increased interest in culture and the cultural industries might indicate some progress, but their interest unfortunately remains rather one-sided until now as they are mainly focused on the economic and image dimensions of the story. If in the future a well-formulated integrated cultural policy that highlights the multiple dimensions of the cultural sphere can be established, this would also considerably aid cultural production. Such a cultural policy would however also require the different actors to build and improve connections between each other and expand interaction. International contacts, especially now within a European/EU context might stimulate increased know-how. The European Capital of Culture event that I will turn to now in the next chapter, might moreover provide further opportunities...

4. Istanbul 2010

The European Capital of Culture 2010 event is by far the biggest cultural event that will take place in Istanbul in the near future. Many different actors from various sectors are currently involved, trying to organize an attractive programme that will enrich the city in many ways. In this chapter I will describe the development of the project; how it started, how it progressed and what state it is in today. I will touch upon my two main questions which concern the cooperation between the different actors involved in the project and the goals they hope to reach through the Istanbul 2010 project.

4.1 *The beginning of Istanbul 2010*

In May 1999, in Article four of the European Parliament and Council decision 1419/1999/EC establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019, it was decided that European non-member countries may participate in the ECOC action. In the same year, this text was discovered by Cengiz Aktar, director of the European Center at Istanbul's Bahçeşehir University and a freelance journalist, who translated the document into Turkish and gathered a small group of NGOs⁴ around him to brainstorm about the possibility of hosting the ECOC event in Istanbul. The group had its first meetings early 2000 and the beginning of the European Capital of Culture project in Istanbul can thus be described as a real civil society initiative. Whereas in other previous European Capitals of Culture the initiative generally came from the municipality or the national government, Istanbul's bid was characterized by a bottom-up approach. As the project progressed, more NGOs joined the initiative group, reaching a number of around twelve members.⁵ In time more organisations requested to be part of the group but they were initially denied, mainly as it was believed that a large group at that point would slow down the process. Once the organization was more established though more NGOs were encouraged to join. A large meeting to which sixty organisations, the municipality and parliamentary representatives were invited was held, resulting in some serious arguments, but also in a larger organizational group. (Morgül in Istanbul Dergisi)

One year after the first project-meetings had started it was decided that Esra Nilgün Mirze, Director of Corporate Communications of the influential 'Istanbul Foundation for

⁴ (Açık Radyo, Bilgi University, the Human Settlements Association, the Advertisers' Association and the History Foundation)

⁵ Açık Radyo, dDF, ICOMOS, Human Settlements Association, IKSU, Istanbul Textile and Apparel Exporters' Association, Kültür A.S, Marmara Boğazlar Municipalities Union, Advertisers' Association, History Foundation, Tourism Investors' Association, Bilgi University, Intercultural Communication Association

Culture and Arts' (IFCA) would undertake the secretariat of the organisation. Soon it also became clear that in order to realize the project, official support from the central and local government was needed, most importantly because the central government is the body that must send the application for ECOC status to the European Commission. The organisation of the European Capital of Culture became an arena for power and it was for that reason somebody with media power was felt to be needed because 'once you have the media, you also have governmental power.' (Mirze, 2007) The person who was thought to be able to attract these powers was Nuri Çolakoğlu, the vice president of the Doğan Publication Holding and CEO of Turkish Daily News, who was then assigned as the head of the executive committee.

However, getting support from the official institutions was (still) not easy. 'The Ministry of Foreign affairs was approached but was not interested. Culture was not an important topic for them and it took them three years to understand what the project was about and what it could mean for Istanbul/Turkey', said Cengiz Aktar. Şule Soysal, representative of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs however denies this disinterest and states that 'culture and public diplomacy in our day has become one of the tools of foreign policy and that is why the Foreign Ministry has a big Cultural Department. We have been initiating, coordinating different large-scale projects.' The involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in culture is thus contested, and not everyone shares the same vision.

Also the Ministry of Culture and Tourism did not become involved until just before the bid was presented in Brussels in 2005 according to Özgül Özkan Yavuz, representative of that Ministry. The Istanbul Governorship had been involved in the project since 2000, but the Metropolitan Municipality only joined a few years later. 'Until very recently the mayor of Istanbul was not even interested in the project at all' (Aktar, 2007) This is an interesting detail as the Metropolitan Municipality's increased involvement in culture is partly explained by the great personal interest in culture of mayor Kadir Topbaş, according to the Municipality itself. (Şimdi, 2007)

In 2005 the bidding document that had been jointly created in order to become a European Capital of Culture in 2010 was presented in Brussels. Initially Istanbul wanted to become an ECOC in 2007, but Germany had asked the organization to postpone until 2010, so that they could create some interesting projects together drawing on the large numbers of Germans with a Turkish background living in Germany. As the Istanbul group thought this was a good idea that could result in some interesting projects, they decided to reschedule their initial plans.

However, not long before the presentation the bidding process had been endangered by the formation of a new European Parliament. One of the first questions on the agenda of

this parliament was whether to continue giving a chance to non-Member States to become a European Capital of Culture or not. Nuri Çolakoğlu therefore went to Brussels in 2005 and had meetings with the MPs dealing with this topic and asked them whether Istanbul would still have a chance, because without being sure, the organization of the ECOC event in Istanbul did not want to announce its intentions to the public. Luckily the answer from the European Parliament was positive and the bid could be presented. (Morgül in Istanbul Dergisi) The presentation of the bidding document was said to be very special because the mayor and the governor of Istanbul both came to Brussels to promote the bid. 'It was the first time in Turkish history something from civil organisations had this kind of support.' (Mirze,

In the presentation of the Istanbul bid, the city's long history of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism was stressed. It was said that Istanbul could provide an answer to growing problems between ethnic and religious communities in Europe, as the city has an extensive historical experience with these kinds of tensions. 'Istanbul will use participatory and grassroots approaches to artistic and cultural productions, thereby bringing especially disenfranchised voices and groups from across Europe to Istanbul to start a process of thinking and feeling together.' (Istanbul 2010 PowerPoint Presentation) The bid put strong emphasis on the inclusive nature of the project which should mobilize people living in all parts of the city. Also young people were mentioned as important targets for the event. Furthermore, the improved cooperation between the state, the private and the third sector was mentioned: 'The process of the preparation of the bid for ECOC Istanbul 2010 has proved that a viable working model for a new decision-making process involving NGOs, local administrations and central government can be developed. This process will be improved and enlarged before, during and after 2010.' (Istanbul 2010 Powerpoint Presentation)

In April 2006, the Selection Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2010 selected Istanbul (instead of Kiev) as one of the three Cultural Capitals for the year 2010, along with Essen and Pécs. Istanbul's bid was selected because of its innovative program building on the roots of the city. Its bottom-up process and strong involvement of civil society were applauded and its sustainable character and intention to reach out to all parts of the local population were viewed as positive endeavours. (Report of the Selection Meeting for the European Capitals of Culture 2010, 2006).

The civil society initiative had thus been successful and could now continue ahead on the road towards the organization of the 2010 cultural year. Some time has passed in the meantime and 2010 is slowly approaching. It is thus both interesting and important to see how the organization is doing now. Even though the initiative board originally intended to resign

after being selected as an ECOC and pass on their tasks to others who would then run the actual board, they are still in place. (Morgül in Istanbul Dergisi) The initiators have consequently been criticized for not making space for others. This is only one of the tensions between the different members of the organizing group (in particular between civil society and the official powers) that has developed, which, considering the fact that cooperation on such a large scale between the public, private and third sector in Istanbul is not very usual, might not be too surprising. The backgrounds of the various actors are very different and these differences are now translated into various problems underlying the 2010 project. Basically the discrepancies between the diverse actors involved concern two main issues:

1. The question of the practical organization of the ECOC year. Who should be the leader? How should the event be structured and financed? How can the distrust between the different parties involved be overcome so that an effective platform for discussion and cooperation can be discussed?
2. The question of the goals the Istanbul 2010 event should seek to reach.

In this chapter I will present these two main concerns based on the discourses of the parties involved. I will refer to the interviews I have had with various people directly involved in or related to the organisation of the 2010 project, newspaper articles and ECOC 2010 documents produced by the official organizing team. (view bibliography for further details)

4.2 The practical organization of Istanbul 2010

4.2.1 Leadership, structure & balance

One of the big questions at the start of the ECOC project in Istanbul was ‘How to do it?’ Organizing a European Capital of Culture year requires the commitment and attention of many different parties and thus forced the private, public and third sector to cooperate in one single team. Even though this was not the first time these actors were seated around the same table in Istanbul⁶, cooperation between these three sectors had previously not been very common. The ECOC project team is thus dealing with a new form of governance, but because of the fact it is new, there are issues of inexperience and hardships. ‘The NGO representatives are more used to being democratic within the organisation whereas the state institutions are used to working in hierarchies.’ (Suay Aksoy, 2007) These characteristics, the more democratic versus a more hierarchic approach, ascribed to the civil and the governmental sectors have been able to create a certain degree of polarization between the two and complicate cooperation.

According to Esra Nilgün Mirze, the fact that the local government is now one of the main financial contributors resulted in the fact that ‘the governmental bodies feel that they should have something to say if they pay for the projects.’ (Mirze, 2007) Others fear that the government will be more inclined to support projects that will promote their image and that will serve certain ends. ‘They might focus more on their electorate and how to satisfy it.’ (Suay Aksoy, 2007) Many NGOs feel that the governmental parties involved in the project want to appropriate the project and become its main leader. ‘The governmental authorities are gaining the top hand which is something a lot of people within the organisation do not support.’ (Suay Aksoy, 2007) At the moment the balance between governmental institutions and NGOs is said to be bad. ‘The group is very flexible in its composition, but it’s controlled by a smaller group. The Municipality and the governorship are influential but the ministries are not too much involved.’ (Sayar, 2007)

Problematic is also the fact that the municipality in particular keeps on sending different representatives to the ECOC meetings, which prevents a certain continuation of affairs. Supposedly there are different groups within the municipality that do not get along well and therefore compete over who is going to be involved in the Cultural Capital event. (Anonymous, 2007) The Municipality’s representatives meanwhile feel misunderstood by the

⁶ Previously such cooperation had taken place during the 1983 Anatolian Civilizations event (as part of the European Council cultural exhibition Cooperation) and the 1996 UN Habitat Conference

NGOs. They say they truly wish to make positive and good contributions, but it is said that the NGOs do not believe the Municipality actually wants what is best for Istanbul. (Acar, 2007)

The organisation has thus come to look very competitive. 'The government wants to have the upper hand, just like the business sphere. Meanwhile, the civil sphere is observing and trying to oppose this.' (Madra, 2007)

Even though there are NGOs that fear the government will come to dominate the project, there are also actors that feel that some of their civil society partners are trying to gain the top hand and for that reason attempt to restrict the participation of others. 'The people in the advisory/executive board who initiated the project are blocking input from other parties. They still want to be the power at the top. The advisory committee has been demolished. The leading NGOs, IFCA and Bilgi University, leave the others alone. This is however very understandable. It is really a matter of money for those two. For others the money is not crucial, if we don't get money we can continue like we've always done.' (Namur, 2007) 'Some NGOs prefer that the total authority of the project is in one hand, which in the hands of the NGO they are closest to.' (Anonymous, 2007) 'IFCA is acting like a company, not like a foundation. They are the biggest, so everyone is eager to reach them, which is a problem for smaller NGOs. IFCA represents all the private money (from their board) under one umbrella. The 2010 event might lead to the strengthening of the IFCA, a strengthening of their monopoly.' (Anonymous, 2007) 'If there are no unusual events, the ECOC year will become an IFCA event times twelve.' (Aktar, 2007)

Some interviewees also feel that there is a problem when it comes to the project selection committee, which consists of members who are also part of the advisory/executive boards. The committee was designed by IFCA, thus putting a lot of power in their hands. The project evaluation group also consists of people who are also submitting projects themselves, which might not be completely fair. (Suay Aksoy, 2007) People feel that 'the actors in the project should be either on the decision making side or on the side of the players (creators of projects).' (Sayar, 2007)

Apart from all the NGOs, public and private actors, one group of important players also seem to be missing, namely artists. Many people organizing previous ECOC have stressed the importance of putting artists at the core of the event (Palmer/Rae, 2004) and the development of the city. However, in the Istanbul case there is no observable participation of artists in the organization of the event. In the long term this might result in problems both for the organization and for the projects. In Stockholm for example the fact that artists were not included well enough led to great opposition against the ECOC event. (Per Svenson in Working Group)

It thus appears that on top of a fear the public institutions will gain the top hand, there are also worries over the underlying wishes of the bigger NGOs (being mainly IFCA and Bilgi University) to lead the ECOC event. Whoever may dominate the project in the end, if one player will ever come to do so, it becomes clear from the above discussion that the organisation of the ECOC project might lack a clear structure and a good balance, which is mainly triggered by the inexperience of working together and the seemingly relative unwillingness to share influence. In the current situation there could therefore indeed be a risk that one party will gain the upper hand. It is a fact that certain players, both governmental and civil, are working on their own projects, independently from each other. Cumhur Güven Taşbaşı, vice-governor of Istanbul, illustrated this independence nicely by stating that ‘sometimes the governorship works together with other actors, sometimes we do not, it depends on the situation. The governorship is the first power in the city, so we can easily operate independently.’

The fact that there is a chance that the structure of the organization and the people involved in it might still be altered as a result of the elections of July 2007, provides another difficulty. On average governing structures of ECOC were established three to four years before the cultural year took place (Palmer/Rae, 2004). In that sense time pressure might thus come to hunt the organization of Istanbul, as there are only two and a half years left until the start of the event. However, in comparison to other Cultural Capitals this organizational uncertainty is nothing special, as similar re-shuffling of the organization took place in many other Cultural Capitals.

On the positive side, there appears to be a great motivation for improvement among the Istanbul members of the organizing team, and not everyone appears to be sharing the same pessimistic opinions described above. ‘The committee works closely together and everything is discussed together. We (the NGOs) are not a block. We are independent members with our own ideologies. All parts of Istanbul should stay at the same table. The main thing is to coordinate well between the ECOC projects. We should discuss until the last moment.’ (Kayar, 2007) Or as Açık Radyo’s Gürhan Ertür states: ‘We must fight and talk a lot, but in the end we will succeed together. We have to be optimistic, otherwise, what are we doing here?’ (Ertür, 2007)

4.2.2 Finances & the ad-hoc law

Some actors involved in the ECOC project group claim that the organization is not doing very well nowadays because there are problems when it comes to the (public and private) funding of the project and the structure. For this reason, a special ad hoc law, which describes the functioning, financing, location, international relations etc of the ECOC event, was formulated. This law went through the parliamentary commissions but it has not gone through the general assembly (yet). Therefore this special law is still not enforced today, which complicates the organisation. (Aktar, 2007) At the time of conducting the interviews, Turkey was awaiting the elections of the 22nd of July 2007, after which a new parliament could be formed and the law could be further discussed.

The law gives the authority over the project to a group of ministers in Ankara. When the law passes, the government will thus have the control of the 2010 project. ‘Without the law, only the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the Istanbul Governorship will be the main official contributors, which is nice for the mayor of Istanbul because then he will be the most powerful/visible.’ (Sayar, 2007) ‘But giving the power over the distribution of funds to the central government might not be a good idea either because ‘then the money distribution of the project will be in the hands of politicians, and they may also change the content of the law.’ (Namur, 2007)

The law might however also create a more balanced situation within the structure of the organization. Some hope that the elections will bring new parties to power and will in that way change the existing balance of power. ‘After the elections all cards might be reshuffled again. Then there might be more equal forces and other forces than just the AK-Party (the ruling party in Turkey at that time). Also more critical voices such as for example the Chamber of Architects, which is not involved now because of current disputes with the government, might be able to join then. If the board is re-organized as a result of the law, more actors can join the organisation and a better balance might be reached. Now there’s only one governing force (the official bodies) plus some civil domination organizing the 2010 year.’ (Sayar, 2007) However, in the meantime, the elections have taken place and the AK-Party has won with a large majority of the votes (47% - one of the largest percentages in Turkish history⁷) It thus remains questionable whether politically anything will change for the ECOC organization, apart from the fact that it will now be possible to discuss the law in the general assembly.

It is interesting to note that apart from some NGOs, also the Metropolitan Municipality seems to be awaiting the law eagerly, even though some interviewees claimed that not having the law would benefit the Municipality. ‘There are lots of different people

⁷ CNN Türk news, July 23rd 2007

involved but there is no structure. The new law might form a solution to this problem. At the moment it is not known who gets what percent of the authority. Who is going to be the leader? Everyone wants to be the leader of the project,' says Fatih Acar, representative from the Metropolitan Municipality. Also financially the law might make things clearer. 'With the law there will be one financial pool and then it will not be important whose money it is. Moreover, then the organisation/budget will be under the control of the EU as 1.5 million Euros are coming from the EU.' (Acar, 2007)

Because the organization was, and still is, waiting for the law to be accepted, financially they were (are) in a difficult position. The governorship and the municipality made a protocol together and now finance existing daily expenses, but financial resources for projects are lacking. For that reason an association was set up so that private money can be attracted. 'At the moment Nuri Çolakoğlu is contacting all big companies, putting money in a big pool.' (Sayar, 2007) An alternative budget will be established which will mainly support NGO projects. (Acar, 2007). 'Çolakoğlu and IFCA will be the main distributors of the money, deciding which projects will be supported and which will not.' (Anonymous, 2007) From both the official and the civil side there are doubts and worries concerning this fundraising association. There should be a pool of money that is distributed fairly and one should ensure that this money is distributed in a balanced way between governmental, private and civil parties, interviewees say. However, in the current situation, with the ad-hoc law still pending, and an association, which is controlled by powerful players in the project, solely focused on private funds, many feel such a balanced approach is threatened. The law might again change this balance for the better, but until today, it remains unclear what the financial situation of the project will be.

4.2.3 Mistrust between different actors

In his much-criticized report on Istanbul's cultural sector, Dragan Klaic identified a lack of trust between actors within the cultural sphere as one of the main problems undermining its functioning. (Klaic, 2005) Today, some claim that 'this mistrust between actors was five to ten years ago. Now we're building up trust and none of the people involved in the 2010 project is complaining.' (Mirze, 2007). However, many do not support this assertion, whereas they do admit that the establishment of trust between the different actors in the project is one of the most important goals to be reached in order for the event to produce successful outcomes.

The strongest distrust is felt by the NGOs towards the official institutions involved because 'the history of NGOs is not very bright. Many of them were either inactive or anti-governmental.' (Suay Aksoy, 2007) But, with the EU accession codes, the empowerment of

NGOs has gotten a new place on the agenda. Many NGOs believe that empowerment should go along with firm cooperation, which should be transparent, fair and collaborative. However, the above-mentioned feelings of distrust towards the government are not encouraging such a form of unitarian cooperation.

‘It is problematic that the governmental power is very one-sided (only AK-Party). It seems like we are a big coalition but actually this coalition is very much controlled by one political force that rules the country. It is a pity that the opposition is not in the organisation. The municipality, also dominated by the AK-Party, has not intervened ideologically yet, but now they are forwarding some own ECOC projects through other bodies. Most of these projects are just created to satisfy the electorate. The municipality has big budgets and good venues but they are not used very well.’ (Sayar, 2007) Because of the budgetary power of the municipality it is feared that they might in the end claim the project to themselves. Already there have been some annoyances when the municipality stated that ‘they’ had managed to become the European Capital of Culture, whereas it was not the municipality alone that had achieved this. ‘They did not even come up with the idea in the first place.’ (Aktar, 2007) ‘During the UN Habitat Conference in 1996, the municipality also came with their own stuff, own work and own vision one month before the actual event. This might happen again in the case of 2010. The municipality is a partner but they might conduct their own projects in the end.’ (Sayar, 2007) There is also a worry that the official forces might have an ideological influence on the actual event. ‘For some Muslims (AK-Party) the city (Istanbul) could not be the European Capital of Culture. The implementation of the project will therefore be the most problematic. If we want to organize a project for gays for example, we might not be able to get municipal funding.’ (Aktar, 2007) The fact that political representation has such a prominent place in the organisation might not be beneficial in this respect. Ironically, some of these political representatives were chosen deliberately. The head of the advisory board, Egemen Bağış, AK-Party deputy of Istanbul and the advisor of the prime minister ‘was chosen to create a bond with the government.’ (Sayar, 2007) However, many NGOs do not agree with his being at the top of the advisory board as they think that the head of this board should have different qualities. The same counts for the head of the executive board, Nuri Çolakoğlu. ‘What can a media boss know about culture?’ asks architect Doğan Kuban in a newspaper article in relation to Çolakoğlu’s position. ‘They have no connection with culture, only with money distribution.’ (Turkish Daily News, March 2007) The fact that these two leading men are in important positions within the organisation and at the same time have close ties with respectively the government and the business world, creates a great feeling of discomfort among many members of the civil society representatives who believe the leaders of the project should have more experience in the field of arts and culture.

The official powers, especially the municipality, are also mistrusted because they have never shown a real interest in culture, which has often been considered as a second-rate activity. Investments in culture are said to be made only when large profits are to be expected and their behaviour towards cultural initiatives is considered to be rigid. Culture is not an important topic on the policy agenda at the moment. 'The municipality has to start setting up a budget/plan for culture, as it is just as important as picking up trash. The municipality should be flexible and open to creative input.' (Gümüş, 2007) The Municipality however stated to be making progress in this respect as a directorate for culture has recently been set up.

It is also said that 'we should force the government (and business world) to take their real positions. Now they're in for financial support and support for the organisational structure. They are not in for the content and concepts. They should however collaborate in promoting this event locally/internationally. That's why we should ask them to take position and not interfere in the position of the creative people involved.' (Madra, 2007) In this respect the governmental institutions might indeed have some work to do. Visions on culture and cultural policy and the reasons why one should support cultural activity are largely absent and when asked people are often not able to answer the question. Involvement in culture is dependent on individual projects or activities rather than a coherent vision.

Political interference as it is experienced in Istanbul is not something that only Istanbul is dealing with though. About half of the cities studied in the Palmer/Rae report indicated that issues surrounding political interference created substantial problems. Such 'interference' from the points of view of the organizers included incidents where politicians insisted on the inclusion of projects that were of particular interest to them or which took place in the neighbourhoods which elected them, the allocation of funds from the ECOC budget to support particular initiatives with which they were associated, personal priorities for infrastructure, the selection of images for media campaigns, or even the 'censorship' of controversial projects. (Palmer/Rae, 2004) The fears that some members of the Istanbul organization have might thus not be considered as solely belonging to the Turkish situation. However, as the relationship between the official powers and the NGOs in particular is very unstable and based on many negative experiences from the past in Istanbul, the final result of political meddling in the ECOC event there might be more severe.

Another problem relating to the political situation is that political forces are seen as fast changing and unstable. 'With the government everything can change every minute', says Gülsen Kırbaş, representative of TÜRSAB, the Turkish Travel Agencies Association. 'We are very much dependent on certain people within the political sphere.' (Kırbaş, 2007) Of course, if these people can be replaced by others or if their views can change quickly, it means that the organisations that have to cooperate with them are in a very insecure position, which is

something that might not be very desirable in the case of the 2010 project as it is a project that requires a stable vision and organization.

But mistrust is also felt by the official forces. A representative from the Istanbul municipality claimed that ‘the municipality feels opposition from the intellectual society. A problem is that only a few NGOs and universities are involved in the process and they have closed the organisation and try to keep it to themselves.’ (Acar, 2007) If this is the case, they have probably done so because of their fear of official domination of the project and therefore prefer to employ a careful approach towards the government. This is problematic in the sense that it does not stimulate the kind of cooperation that is aspired for the ECOC year, but it also undermines public trust. ‘Even though the ECOC project is an NGO project that the organizers trust in, everybody (the public) thinks that the Istanbul 2010 project is a dream that will not happen. They don’t believe that NGOs will do it because they expect the government to initiate things.’ (Kayar, 2007) The public in Istanbul is not used to this kind of civil society approach to a large scale project. Undoubtedly they have seen other large-scale cultural projects, but these were often organized either by the municipality or by large NGOs (e.g. IFCA) with the funding of mainly private sponsors.

Overall there is also a general mistrust when it comes to the financial side of the project. ‘All groups involved do not understand each other and do not know how to collaborate. Everyone just wants to get his share from the money.’ (Madra, 2007) ‘There are people in the project who only dream about money. That’s how they understand involvement.’ (Acar, 2007) The problem is that many of the actors involved are described as rivals. ‘In the field of culture they are rivals. I am afraid therefore that in some fields there will be some cooperation but in other fields there will not be any.’ (Kırbaş, 2007) When asked how to counter this mistrust most interviewees claim that the solution lies in increased intensive discussion. Especially the representatives of the NGOs feel a great need for open discussion of (potential) problems and objectives. The question is however how to discuss in a group of people which is so estranged from each other. Acknowledging the fact that relatively the situation might have improved over the years, I still view the lack of trust among members of the organization as one of the main obstacles that has to be overcome. Especially as the lack of trust results in a lack of discussion which has been translated into the overall vision of the event. In the next section of this chapter I will therefore turn to the aims of the Istanbul 2010 project.

4.3 The goals of Istanbul 2010

The Istanbul European Capital of Culture 2010 project serves different goals for different parties. ‘The goals of the Istanbul 2010 project include everything, which is kind of a world trend,’ says Mahir Namur. Looking at the official ECOC 2010 bidding document, it is indeed a wide range of goals that comes to the fore ranging from heritage management to the creation of jobs and from the branding of the city to the creation of pride among the Istanbulites. The project has been criticized for being organized around too many different goals while lacking a concrete vision and action plan to attain these goals. While talking with the different people directly involved in the project it however became clear that the main goals people have in mind are nonetheless much more limited than the ones mentioned in the bidding document. Nevertheless, the number of goals that organizers address might be more limited, a concrete vision that is shared by all members still seems to lack in my opinion. The objectives do not seem to be part of an overarching communal vision integrated into well-defined policy. After presenting the seven main goals I have defined according to the interviews I have conducted I will come back to this question.

4.3.1 World City

‘Istanbul is a world city’, Arhan Kayar states. ‘That is a good reason to be an ECOC.’ (Kayar, 2007) ‘We are already a world capital, whether we are a European Capital of Culture or not’, says Esra Nilgün Mirze. (Morgül in Istanbul Dergisi).

Many people in the 2010 project are proud of the fact that Istanbul has become the European Capital of Culture because they say it means it is now recognized as a world city. New economic investments are said to be needed in order to make Istanbul compatible to compete on the world market (of culture). Of course Istanbul went through its biggest transformation in the eighties and nineties, but also in the past few years Istanbul has been characterized by rapid change. Recently, many investments have been made in order to make (tourist) neighbourhoods more attractive. Istanbul has become a very popular city among both regular tourists and more intellectual groups. It has received a lot of attention because of cultural influences such as literature, cinema and music. Big congresses, large exhibitions and international festivals have come to have a great influence on the city. Beral Madra states that it might therefore be that ‘The ECOC project will be about Istanbul’s charismatic rise in the global culture as Istanbul is a hotspot for intellectual cultural projects nowadays.’ (Madra, 2007)

Istanbul has definitely joined the worldwide competition to become a lead city in the global network of capitalist cities. It is said that world-city status is a guarantee of enhanced

levels of prosperity in the contemporary world economy and therefore the status is something to be desired and protected. (Dieleman & Hamnett in Short & Kim, 1999, pp. 54) In order to reach such status, not only economic elements are important, but also the quality of the socio-cultural infrastructure of a city is crucial. Events such as the European Capital of Culture can greatly contribute to this infrastructure, and therefore to the position of the city as a whole. However, the phantasm of Istanbul as a 'world city' or a 'cultural capital' could also mean a levelling down of the current, complex public space and Istanbul's urban structure, resulting in a privatisation of public space and a growing attention for security in the city. (Tan, 2005) Social polarization is a problem haunting all world cities and as Istanbul already has to cope with great social divisions, being established as a world city will thus probably only intensify these existing discrepancies.

4.3.2 European integration

'The 2010 project is mainly about the EU integration process, especially in the field of cultural policy'. (Madra, 2007) The official institutions in particular seem to be most interested in the European dimension of the project which might further the EU integration project which has been rather problematic until today. 'The candidacy of Istanbul for ECOC-2010 should be regarded as a sign of our commitment to the cultural convergence of Turkish civic society with the European Union,' says Egemen Bağış, head of the advisory committee. (Turkish Daily News, 23 February 2006) In his letter in the official Istanbul 2010 bidding document presented in Brussels, Prime Minister Erdoğan states that 'Given the fact that Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the European Union, Istanbul's designation as a European Capital of Culture will further the European political project, the European values, and the sense of European belonging. Contributions Turkey can make to this project will thus be more visible and better appreciated.' (Letter Prime Minister Erdoğan, official ECOC 2010 bidding document, 2005)

The governmental institutions seem to be very aware of the fact that the EU accession project of Turkey is not progressing as planned and they clearly state that they hope the ECOC event can make positive contributions. 'Istanbul's vision for the future is ambitious in that the city has to meet the challenges entailed, and use the opportunities presented, by the European integration process,' writes the Mayor of Istanbul in his letter in the bidding document. The European elements that exist and have long existed in Istanbul have to be shown to the European public, officials say. There is a continuous stress on the fact that Istanbul/Turkey is European, but that the Europeans simply still have to come to understand this. 'Istanbul being selected as the European Culture Capital is a great opportunity for us to show the world how not just Turkish and Ottoman but the whole European joint cultural

features meet in Istanbul.’ (Letter Egemen Bağış in official bidding document). Or in Nuri Çolakoğlu’s words: ‘It (ECOC 2010) is a major culture and arts activity to last until 2010 to introduce European culture to Istanbul and Istanbul to the European culture and to try to indicate the common roots of the culture of the city and Europe. We want to use this event as a big PR instrument, a communications project not only for the people of Istanbul but also for Europe, to show when Turkey’s bid for full membership will be voted by the European voters, that Turkey is not too far away from, maybe already part of them.’ (Nuri Çolakoğlu in Working Group)

Also the NGOs do not seem to oppose this official view, even though for most of them the European integration process is a secondary interest. Cengiz Aktar mentioned that ‘even though there is knowledge of Turkey in Europe, there is no real understanding. This project might help to create understanding in that respect and teach people in Europe what Istanbul/Turkey really is.’ (Aktar, 2007) ‘In terms of our accession process to the European Union, Istanbul’s being selected as an ECOC in 2010 may have a boosting effect on our rather lagging EU affairs. Correspondingly, if accession to the EU continues without interruption, 2010 is halfway to our possible full membership date of 2014. Even if 2014 is not officially pronounced for our accession, 2010 stands as a precise date for Istanbul to be ready. This will require a practice of ‘forward thinking and getting prepared’, something we are not really accustomed to.’ (Aktar in Turkish Daily News, April 2006)

It seems that for many people involved in the 2010 project, emphasizing Istanbul’s Europeanness and creating an international awareness of its being European is of great importance. Critics nonetheless criticize this continuous stress on being European and the attempts to show that Istanbul and Turkey are part of Europe. ‘Istanbul is not a one-sided concept. It should be open to Asia, the Middle East and the Caucasus. Networking with these areas and bringing this culture into the European cultural sphere might be more important. Some initiators of the 2010 project are too much focused on the European culture and trying to be European.’ (Madra, 2007) Instead of focusing solely on ‘Europe’, it might be more fruitful for Istanbul to cooperate with its ‘Eastern’ neighbours and explore these relationships, as it is also based on a long and interesting history.

4.3.3 Cultural management and the cultural sector

One of the most important goals of the ECOC 2010 project mentioned by many NGO members of the organizing team, is the improvement of cultural management in Istanbul. ‘Cultural activities in Istanbul can already surpass many other European cities, but because of a lack of trust among NGOs/civil society, the local/central government and cultural investors/operators, this cannot be further developed. Istanbul has the cultural capacity and there is a lot of stuff going on, but cultural management must be formulated. It will help Istanbul to make a great leap both locally and globally in the creative arena.’ (Mirze, 2007) Cultural institutions’ management structures should be improved and the cooperation between parties (public, private & NGOs) should be strengthened so that cultural events in the future can be organized more effectively. By putting public, private and third sector actors together under one organisation, it is hoped that the 2010 project can create this new system in cultural management. ‘When we look at the Istanbul art/culture scene of today, we see that there are discrepancies and differences between these actors and that there is a lack of collaboration.’ (Madra, 2007) ‘In Istanbul there is no tradition of working together on a project. 2010 is helping to facilitate this, acting as a catalyst for future cooperation.’ (Ertür, 2007))

The improvement of the functioning of the cultural sector however also implies other changes. In order to improve the functioning of the cultural sector ‘we must reform the content of the cultural institutions. We should educate the employees and the experts for them.’ (Madra, 2007) Also increased networking, locally, nationally and internationally is hoped to be encouraged. ‘We must endow Istanbul with (cultural) institutions and organisations that will outlive the year 2010, but we should at the same time stimulate more (international) networking and linking between these cultural agencies.’ (Suay Aksoy, 2007)

The different parties involved in the ECOC project should, according to many interviewees, mutually educate each other so that the individual members of the cultural sector can function better and in a trustful relationship with each other. ‘Cooperation between different parties will educate Turkey to become a player in the international culture game. Turkey is the new player in the culture game. Many actors in Istanbul are new to this game, even the municipality and the ministries. They will be trained in ways of creating and acquiring funds and implementing projects according to the norms of the EU.’ (Aksoy, 2007) At the moment the official bodies often do not know how to apply for funds and work in partnerships. However, they realized they are far behind and the ECOC 2010 event might form an opportunity for the state bodies to learn.

Another element that was mentioned is the formation of better cultural policy. ‘A fair cultural policy which is created by the consensus of the stakeholders in the cultural sector

must be formed. (Namur, 2007) The official bodies should set up a cultural policy that can stimulate and support creative/artistic development in Istanbul. A cultural policy as such does not exist today, but it is hoped that the ECOC event might contribute to the formation of it, as this will be a time when many different actors are seated on the same table to discuss activities within the cultural sphere together.

Interviewees expressed their hope that when a new type of governance in cultural management, or the cultural sector for that matter, is established a new type of local management may also develop in Istanbul (and the rest of Turkey). A new form of management in the cultural sector ‘might transform the way Istanbul/Turkey is governed. It might improve cooperation on all fields and normalize the political process.’ (Gümüş, 2007) ‘If the cooperation within the 2010 project works, it could be the beginning (and an example) of a new type of local management in Istanbul.’ (Aktar, 2007) ‘We managed to put in place, despite the administrative culture of the country, a structure where the civil society, local government and the central government work and have an equal say. If that can be instrumental in transforming the classical local government into good governance this will be one of the most valuable benefits of the ECOC project.’ (Cengiz Aktar in Turkish Daily News, April 2006) Others go even further and state that ‘we believe this process will prove how this tripartite method can change the lives of ordinary dwellers of Istanbul.’ (Letter Nuri Çolakoğlu in official bidding document) This new form of governance could have a real impact on how things are done in Turkey, because whatever happens in Istanbul has its repercussions in Turkey. Istanbul is a microcosm of Turkey. What Europe is going through with its countries, Istanbul experiences as a city. Issues such as migration, human rights and culture are things that Istanbul has to deal with as a city.’ (Mirze, 2007) If a new method of governance can be created and become established, such urban problems might thus also benefit from such a new approach, it is felt.

4.3.4 Cultural infrastructure and facilities

‘We should renovate the cultural infrastructure of Istanbul and functionalise available architectural infrastructure for culture.’ (Madra, 2007)

‘We must create new venues, structures and festivals. While doing so, sustainability is important though. We should leave something concrete in terms of buildings and institutions.’ (Sayar, 2007)

After 2010, hopefully some physical buildings such as concert halls and the conversion of old industrial structures with new cultural functions will be realized. (Pekin, 2007)

Many actors involved in 2010 emphasize that the cultural infrastructure of Istanbul should be improved. Especially museums seem to play an important role: the establishment of Santral Istanbul (already unofficially opened in July 2007), the possible transformation of the shipyards on the Golden Horn into cultural centres/museums, the transformation of the Hasanpaşa gasworks in Karaköy, the possible establishment of a Museum of Istanbul (which is under heavy discussion) and the reorganization of the Istanbul archaeology museum are just some examples. (Official ECOC 2010 bidding document) Also investments in heritage are promoted, maybe even more today, as UNESCO has released some very critical reports about the way Turkey was managing its plentiful heritage, especially in Istanbul.⁸

A very important question is going to be what cultural infrastructure should be supported and what should not and whether investments will be made by the public or the private sector. Basically there is a lot of public cultural infrastructure in Istanbul – the fact is though that it is not sufficient for its estimated 16 million inhabitants. ‘People expect money for public cultural institutions from Ankara because they are operating under the state-umbrella. This is putting more stress on the demands from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The funding of the state museums for example is a difficult thing because almost the entire budget comes from the Ministry. This is why it is a tough job,’ says Özgül Özkan Yavuz, who works for the Ministry herself. Critics however say that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism does not and will not invest in cultural infrastructure because they are simply not interested. They are claimed only to be interested in making investments which easily bring large financial returns, thereby focusing on quantity rather than quality. (Klaic, 2005; Kilavuz, 2007 – manager of the Dolmabahçe museum)

⁸ UNESCO Decision Text, 30COM 7B.73 – State of Conservation

If we then turn to the private sector, we can also not be sure what their contribution could or will be. The private sector has produced some successful and high-quality museums such as Istanbul Modern, the Pera Museum and the Sabancı museum. However, notwithstanding the quality of these museums, they were all projects which were in their own interest. Just like the public sector, private investments are also primarily made from an economic point of view. The fact that the different parties – private and public – are sitting around the same ECOC 2010 table and will be able to discuss these kinds of investments while being pushed by NGOs, might however have a positive influence on the development of the cultural infrastructure in the end. There is a strong belief that the city of Istanbul cannot be marketed without developing its cultural infrastructure. For that reason, many will push for investments in this direction. However, it is believed that the ‘content’ of cultural institutions, although not really part of their physical infrastructure, should also be improved. ‘How can you produce a product only with a package but without the content?’, Mahir Namur rightfully asks. Cultural facilities should thus not only be developed from an infrastructure perspective, but also content-wise change is needed. Comparing with other newcomers in the European Union, it is however believed that Turkey is not doing bad at all. ‘Regardless of the fact that it is a new player, its cultural infrastructure is better than in many other countries.’ (Suay Aksoy, 2007)

4.3.5 Urban Transformation and Restoration

‘As part of the ECOC project we hope not only to renovate or restore historical relics but to turn them into instruments for understanding the past, shedding light on the modern day and developing them as learning tools for urban education.’ (Official ECOC 2010 bidding document). As part of this objective several projects have been set up such as the Sultanahmet (the neighbourhood attracting most tourists) rehabilitation project, the Beyoğlu (nightlife centre of Istanbul) rehabilitation project, the Fener-Balat Assessment/Sampling project, the revival of the historic bazaar of Kadıköy project, the Zeyrek historical houses restoration, the Zeytinburnu culture isle and the Kamondo Mausoleum and non-Moslem cemetery restoration project. (Official ECOC 2010 bidding document) Also the Golden Horn shipyards, which contain many old warehouses that are not in use anymore, are currently under discussion.

Through the transformation and restoration of the urban fabric of Istanbul it is hoped that the city can be reclaimed urbanistically. (Aktar, 2007) However, the projects that have been planned until now do not go without criticism. The different actors involved in the 2010 project have different views on the restoration of the different parts of the city. Not everyone

supports the same image of the city, which in the case of the restoration of the city walls and the plans for Suleymaniye, has already resulted in clashes between the municipality and NGOs. The municipal plans have moreover been disapproved by UNESCO which threatened to take the historical peninsula off the heritage list if they continued with their plans. (Suay Aksoy, 2007) NGOs fear that urban regeneration projects set up by the municipality and the governorship will mainly serve populist propaganda aims and in that way not consider the social structures underlying the areas to be regenerated. (Sayar, 2007; Beyazıt & Tosun, 2006) It is said that there is a big danger that the new policies can lead to further polarization in the city, which is already a big issue. The ECOC event is supposed to form a reversal of this fear or trend, as NGOs ‘want to point out that urban regeneration policies can cause further polarization unless critical reflexive energies are introduced.’ (Asu Aksoy in Working Group)

New creative ideas about transformation are needed as it is said that urban regeneration in Istanbul serves a higher goal, namely a change in mentality. ‘The physical transformation and the parallel mental reinvigoration will ensure that here, in this European Capital of Culture, new goals and perspectives for the knowledge, the security and the peace that are needed to underpin globalisation will arise, on scientific and intellectual foundations.’ (Official Istanbul 2010 bidding document) The projects of the ECOC event are to be widespread in order to radically redefine the city.

4.3.6 The Istanbul population

Many of the actors involved in the ECOC project, whether public, private or NGO, stress that the 2010-year should be organized for Istanbul and for the people who live there. ‘The ECOC event is a human project for the people who live in the city.’ (Taşbaşı, 2007)

It should be an event that does not only focus on the centre of the city, which is usually the heart of cultural initiatives, but also spreads out its activities to the more distant parts of the city. ‘Istanbul 2010 should help millions of people living away from the centre, particularly the sixty percent of its residents who were not born in the city, to feel more integrated. Getting the community involved is a main priority,’ Çakaloz, financial and administrative director of the Istanbul Initiative stated in Today’s Zaman. ‘We want to take ECOC to the periphery, to underprivileged areas. We may be involving schools. It could help the democratization of the city: intercultural dialogue through the arts.’ (Today’s Zaman, 8 March 2007)

Arts and culture are mentioned as powerful instruments of social cohesion, which the organizers hope to achieve with the 2010 event. The creation of a collective citizenship for Istanbul is an important goal, as ‘a very big portion of the Istanbul population has migrated to the city from elsewhere in Turkey. About ninety percent of Istanbul was built in the last forty

years.’ (Suay Aksoy, 2007). One element that might contribute to the establishment of such an ‘Istanbul identity’ might be the creation of a ‘Museum of Istanbul’. The History Foundation has been interested in setting up such a museum for some years, but because of insurmountable differences of opinion between this NGO and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism concerning the city’s history that should be told in this museum, it has not been established yet. Özgül Özkan Yavuz working for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism says that ‘It is expected that until 2010 there will be an exhibition which will become the core of this Istanbul museum,’ though. The difficulties of establishing the ‘Istanbul museum’ also point to another interesting phenomenon. In promotional material for Istanbul, its diverse and multicultural history is often stressed. Also the discourse on the Istanbul 2010 project often touches upon this fact. However, in the programme of the event, the ‘real’ diversity of Istanbul and Turkey which entails difficult questions such as the Kurdish and the Armenian issue are not mentioned. The fact that today’s Istanbul is far less of an international city as it used to be during the Ottoman Empire is never mentioned and also the reasons for this decrease in diversity are rarely touched upon. Istanbul, just like many other cities, has to deal with great problems concerning diversity and many of these issues are rather taboo. This in turn mainly has with the history especially the state institutions wish to promote. The view of diversity promoted in the Istanbul 2010 project is very one-dimensional and does not reflect the reality of today’s Istanbul.

However, irrespective of the problematic issue of diversity, many people involved in the ECOC project feel that it is a problem that many people living in Istanbul are not really familiar with their city. ‘A great part of the population does not know the city. Therefore there should be communication with separate municipalities⁹ to develop own regional projects.’ (Kayar, 2007) It is often stressed that ‘local people must be involved in projects towards cultural policies. Then people will understand urban and artistic transformation and not feel excluded from the ECOC project.’ (Mirze, 2007) It is intended to have many local projects that involve the local people of all 33 municipalities of Istanbul even before the 2010-year actually takes place. With the help of these projects, knowledge of the city has to be created through cultural education. (Gümüş, 2007& Kayar, 2007) In order to involve local Istanbul people in the project directly a lot of trust is also put in voluntary work. ‘The reliance on unpaid work is part of a conscious strategy to nurture a different understanding of urban governance. We have come to the conclusion that it is necessary to involve as many organizations and volunteers are possible. I believe the level of development of a country is measured by the level of volunteer activity,’ Nilgün Esra Mirze explains in Today’s Zaman. (Today’s Zaman, 8 March 2007)

⁹ The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is subdivided in 33 smaller municipalities

Young people are also an important target. Istanbul has a large young population which is unfortunately dealing with many problems, unemployment being one of the biggest. For many young people it is thus financially difficult to join cultural activities. Incorporating youth and making it possible for them to join cultural activities is thus viewed as an important goal of the 2010 project. (Boyacıgiller, 2007)

Not everyone is as optimistic about this goal of involving and empowering the Istanbul population though. Some see it as a noble attempt to include everyone in Istanbul, but many of these people have doubts about the realization of this objective. Vecdi Sayar claims that ‘active participation of the population is not always only positive. It can also be an attractive objective because of populist goals.’ He also wonders how one can work with the community and still create a creative concept. For active participation both expert knowledge and creative energy are needed, he says. ‘Therefore we must first really give something to the local administration through this project by helping the municipality with advice and knowledge.’ This however will not be an easy task as the 2010 will already take place in two years and time is passing fast. Suay Aksoy also states that she wants this project to become a project for Istanbul, but that there are already so many art and music projects of which the consumers are the well off and the educated, that she fears the 2010 might not reach the grassroots. ‘The main risk in this respect lies in the project evaluation team and IFCA which has done great work, but not necessarily for ‘the people’. IFCA is very dominant, also within the 2010 project, so it remains to be seen what will happen.’ (Suay Aksoy, 2007)

Beral Madra even takes her criticism a bit further by stating that ‘participation of the Istanbul people is too idealistic to call it a goal, because it is too utopic.’ (Madra, 2007) Many people do however agree on the fact that the ECOC process (including for example decisions on projects and money distribution) should be open to the public in order to establish a ‘power of knowledge’, both among the organizers themselves and the general public. Despite criticism, it can be said that there is a general idea that 2010 should belong to everyone in the city and should also be organized according to that belief. Whether this conviction will turn out to be a reality however remains to be seen.

4.3.7 Tourism

Even though some critics feared that the European Capital of Culture year in Istanbul might become more of a large scale tourism fest, rather than a year that celebrates culture from a wider perspective, the tourism motive is not often mentioned, and if it is, it is put in the context of cultural tourism which main function is said to be the education of people and the creation of awareness. Nonetheless, the realization that cultural tourists are an attractive type of tourist to have in your city as ‘educated, cultured tourists spend three times as much as normal tourists’ (Istanbul 2010 website) is strongly present.

Istanbul governor Muammer Güler stated in Today’s Zaman that ‘Istanbul will experience a tourist boom and all its cultural goods will be presented to the world.’ (Today’s Zaman, June 2006). Rather than attracting a large amount of visitors, a more important goal of tourism is the improvement and the promotion of the image of Turkey, already touched upon in the paragraph on European integration. ‘There will be benefits from the tourism side in the form of an increased number of visitors. However, it is not only the volume that is important, but rather an increasing awareness of European people of Istanbul. We must provide an introduction to Turkish heritage and culture for them in order to be known better in Europe and thereby gaining more interest.’ (Özkan Yavuz). ‘2010 is a very important opportunity to restore and invest in heritage.’ (Roundtable meeting July 2007)

Heritage is mentioned as an essential part of the cultural tourism goals. Basically Istanbul is dealing with two ‘types’ of heritage at the moment; heritage in the classical sense meaning the historical buildings from the Ottoman and Byzantine Empires, mainly located in the old part of the city (e.g. city walls, Sultanahmet, Zeyrek) and industrial heritage (e.g. Santral, the Golden Horn shipyards and the Karaköy depots). 2010 is seen as a good opportunity to make new investments in heritage, but whereas the public bodies seem to show a main interest in the ‘classical’ heritage, cultural actors are very interested in the industrial heritage which can potentially be turned into new venues. Disputes also arose between public, private and third sector actors about how heritage should be treated and how it can and should be restored. Of course heritage issues are never straightforward. ‘Key questions always include why a particular interpretation of heritage is promoted, whose interests are advanced or retarded, and in what milieu was it conceived and communicated?’ (Graham, 2002) The biggest problem in Istanbul is that heritage is generally used by governmental bodies to promote the nationalist/modernist ideology, thereby leaving out alternative meanings of heritage. NGOs expressed their hope that in the case of 2010 a different approach might be taken and that it will provide an opportunity to recreate history and create new realities by the

reconstruction of heritage. (Gümüş, 2007). There is a large debate in Turkey on how to live with difference and diversity. These kinds of heritage issues are directly related to this question, and might thus also contribute to the discussion. (Asu Aksoy at CCI Conference)

Even though the stress on tourism of the organization of the Capital year is moderate, the Istanbul population mainly thinks of the ECOC event as being about tourism. This is an attitude that will have to be changed by improved communication with the public. It is moreover believed that if the inhabitants of Istanbul can be made more aware of their city and come to understand it better, this will also improve tourism in the city. (Morgül in Istanbul Dergisi)

Overall, the tourism dimension, which definitely exists but is not often expressed in the relation to the attraction of high numbers of visitors, is still rather vague. Gülsen Kırbaş, representative of TÜRSAB, the Turkish Association of Travel Agencies also said that they are still waiting until 2009 before making further plans because they do not know how the tourism aspect will be organized yet, how many people will come to Istanbul and so forth. A lot of things are still unclear, she stated.

4.3.8 Overall Vision

The different actors involved in the ECOC project in Istanbul generally seem to share the same goals. However, what differs is the way they think these goals should be attained and why. Whereas for example some believe the Istanbul population should be mobilized in order to empower people in the peripheries, others talk about the local population of the city as the best PR-instrument for Istanbul. Whereas some state artistic and cultural events during Istanbul 2010 should be used in order to educate people both in Istanbul and abroad, others mention the programming of such activities as a way to attract increased numbers of tourists. Whereas some see the realization of improvements within Istanbul's cultural sector as a goal as such, others apply a more instrumental point of view and see such developments as a way to become a more successful city in global competition for resources.

The main difference in vision seems to lie in the attainment of more 'soft' and/or 'hard' objectives; soft implying for example social and cultural goals, hard meaning economic and financial improvement. These two visions appear to be most dominant and cause the most problems in the cooperation and discussion between the different parties involved in the project. In a lot of other former Capitals of Culture political and economic interests however also often dominated, which led to frustration among others who were more culturally/socially oriented. In the case of Istanbul this development is also clearly visible. The same differences in the ideas about the goals Istanbul 2010 should try to achieve are also evident when one considers differences in opinion on the future of Istanbul. There is a clash

between different discourses in this respect, which is very hard to overcome. In relation to the stability of the cooperation among the different actors involved in the project, this gap in objectives is problematic. According to the urban regime theory, full agreement on the goals of a regime is not a prerequisite, but consensus on a common direction is required. In the case of Istanbul this consensus has however not been reached yet in my opinion, causing the organization to be very instable. The lack of consensus is moreover leading to mistrust among the different actors, because they do not trust each other's motives for involvement .

The vision of the Istanbul 2010 project is blurred in another way though. The programme of the event and the projects that are supposed to be realized before and during 2010 are very weakly embedded in existing policies. When it comes to for example cultural policy, such policy does not even concretely exist for Istanbul. In the Palmer/Rae report discussed earlier on, it was reported that culture can only maintain its challenging role without only becoming a tool for city marketing when it becomes a real part of existing policy in different fields. There is thus a danger in Istanbul that the more idealist goals will be overshadowed by economic incentives exactly for the reason that it is not rooted in the city and its policy well enough.

5. Conclusion

Cities around the world are in a constant competition with each other. There is a continuous battle over a diverse range of resources that can only be drawn into the city by providing an attractive environment. Some cities are more successful attractors than others and there are several explanations as to why this may be the case. However, one of the most prevailing explanations today are found in buzzwords such as 'creativity' and 'culture'. It is believed that cities must be creative, especially in their management of urban issues, and therefore an interest in culture has become vital. In his well-known book 'The Creative City' Charles Landry states that 'culture provides insight and so has many impacts; it is the prism through which urban development should be seen.' (Landry, pp. 7, 2000) To compete in the new creative economy, cities must try to realize certain particular initiatives. 'They should encourage creative industry clusters, incubate learning and knowledge economies, maximize networks with other successful places and companies, value and reward innovation and aggressively campaign to attract the creative class as residents.' (Kong et al, 2006)

Large-scale events as the European Capital of Culture project are part of such strategies and have become appealing flagship projects for cities to attract local, national and international attention and thereby (re)position themselves in the global network of cities. Whereas this event used to be only accessible for Member States of the European Union, it is now also possible for non-EU states to apply for ECOC status – at least for a few years. The idea to apply was picked up in Istanbul by a group of NGOs and was developed into a successful bid, making Istanbul one of the three European Capitals of Culture of 2010, along with Essen and Pécs.

The fact that the initial idea to become a Cultural Capital was taken up by a group of NGOs was considered to be innovative according to the selection panel in Brussels. In most cities bids were initiated by either the local or national government and not by civil society. In the case of Istanbul however, it might nonetheless not be too surprising that the project was initially carried by non-governmental actors. Today, the organization of the Istanbul 2010 project is in the hands of the public, private and the third sector which are together attempting to cooperate. In relation to this rather unique form of cooperation for Istanbul, my main questions in this thesis were the following:

1. What is the current agenda behind the Istanbul ECOC 2010 project? Why was the project taken up? What are its goals?
2. How is the cooperation between the different parties involved being shaped?

I will now review the information provided in the previous chapters and answer these two questions concretely. We have seen that in the 1980s Istanbul quickly transformed as a result of Turkey's opening its doors and eyes to the rest of the world. The forces of globalization were strongly felt in Istanbul, creating increased social segregation with new elites at the top of the social ladder. The city quickly changed according to a postmodern framework. The image of Istanbul became increasingly important, especially for the newly established elites who were dependent on this 'new society'. Following the examples in the West which could penetrate these elite Turkish minds through increased international contacts, investment in culture became an important tool for the establishment of Istanbul as a booming and sparkling world city. After all, the richer the urban culture, the more inviting the city becomes for global wealth. In that sense culture is very appealing to invest in. NGOs, often supported by private capital, and private companies themselves became the main driving forces behind the cultural scene of Istanbul and the activities taking place in it. The state initially remained largely absent, lacking the appropriate know-how and experience to become involved. The Turkish state institutions did not apply a very broad vision on culture. Culture was viewed as a tool to educate the population and turn its citizens into modern and Western people. This view resulted in the establishment of various state institutions such as theatres, concert halls, museums, television stations and radio channels – all used to get the official state message across. Budgets for culture were low however, which seriously restricted the role of the state bodies. Nowadays however it seems that also the state institutions have slowly come to realize that cultural initiatives and investment form a crucial element for the future of the city. Also in respect to the European integration process, culture plays an essential role. In the past few years we have thus witnessed a gradually increasing involvement of the public sector in culture and art in Istanbul, however, not always without problems.

First of all, the idea of creativity central to the flourishing of culture is hard to maintain in a country where artists can be criticized, censored or taken to court by the central government. Second of all, culture is still mainly considered to be 'folklore', 'heritage' or 'culture potentially interesting for tourists.' Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that these more traditional forms of culture might also be more attractive for the local population of Istanbul, especially outside the city center. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality greatly provides for more local cultural needs of the city. State involvement in more contemporary forms of culture however remains modest; these are almost exclusively in the hands of the private sector. While the governmental institutions predominantly stay in their own 'cultural sphere', the private parties involved in Istanbul's cultural sphere mainly do the same.

Nevertheless, The European Capital of Culture project might form a milestone within the history of the cultural sector in Istanbul and provide an opportunity for a new type of governance that could improve the overall cooperation between the public, private and third sector. The collaboration between these different sectors has long been problematic, complicating effective management of both the cultural sphere and wider urban issues. In today's capitalist societies, cooperation between these three sectors has however become a vital need as urban issues have become increasingly multidimensional and complex. An ideal form of power in the city would thus enable interests to combine their capacities to achieve common purpose. (Stoker, pp. 270)

Also in Istanbul there is a realization that increased cooperation and a combining of interests is required in order to improve the performance of the city. Whereas the cultural sphere used to be dominated by the private sector, state institutions are now aimed to be part of it too. However, the growing involvement of the state in a previously dominantly private arena does not go without problems. Whereas the state used to be viewed as a restrictive force, today forces have to be joined on the basis of a more trustful relationship. As Stoker stated in his work: 'cooperation is obtained and subsequently sustained, through the establishment of relations premised on solidarity, loyalty, trust and mutual support rather than through hierarchy or bargaining. (Stoker, 1995, pp. 272) The establishment of such a relationship is nonetheless problematic, as the European Capital of Culture organization in Istanbul illustrates.

Cooperation is further complicated by competition on the private/non-governmental side. The Istanbul cultural sector has some very strong and influential actors being in charge of the more 'high-end' forms of culture which the ECOC project also seems to be part of. It is for that reason that cultural activity is often mainly restricted to the central areas of the city while neglecting the peripheries, which are now often mainly served by the cultural programme of the Municipality. In that sense culture and arts play an important role in the increasing polarization between different people and places. The cultural elite is still very much connected with the Kemalist ideals of modernisation, while at the same time it is dependent on private money. It is for this reason that cultural activities are frequently forced into a rather safe approach which excludes divergent or marginal positions. Culture must be as attractive and prestigious as possible so that private sponsors become interested in supporting it. (Yardımcı, 2004). These conditions put a considerable restriction on the cultural sphere, excluding many voices in Istanbul. The cultural richness of Istanbul is attractive for global wealth, but the fact that the city becomes more and more controlled by globalised market forces also means that income from this source is distributed unequally, expanding social segregation in the city.

The European Capital of Culture event is interesting in this respect. It is a yearlong festival which is supposed to involve all the different parts of Istanbul and mobilize all citizens. The general discourse about the event goes very much against the view of targeting only a select (elite) group of people living in a small central area. The actors within the organization seem to be very determined to open up the event to the wider population. Bringing the city to its citizens and vice versa, and creating a higher degree of social integration are viewed as important targets of the ECOC event in Istanbul.

The great interest in the creation of an Istanbul identity might be explained by the fact that the establishment of a cultural identity is 'crucial as celebrating distinctiveness in a homogenizing world marks out one place from the next.' (Landry, 2000, pp. 118) The creation of civic pride and community spirit in Istanbul are often mentioned by ECOC organizers. It is believed that if the inhabitants of the city feel more closely connected to Istanbul it will help the city to develop. Members of the organizing team sometimes characterized the citizens of Istanbul as the best PR tool for the attraction of (foreign) tourists.

The question remains however in how far it will be possible to actually create such an overarching Istanbul identity and establish stronger bonds between people and the city. This is a very complex and rigid territory in which changes are slow and gradual. An important question would also be what this identity should look like, a question to which no single answer can be found among the public, private and third sector. The case of the foundation of an Istanbul museum, an effort which has not been realized until today because of differences in opinion between civil society and the government about the history of Istanbul that should be displayed in this museum, illustrates this division in opinions very well.

When we consider the traditional roles of the actors involved, doubts about the attainability of this goal thus arise. The Turkish state institutions are still strongly characterized by their officialdom. Today's government might be less focused on the Kemalist issue of modernization, as it is ruled by an Islamic party which has over the years shown a rather more open approach to cultural diversity. However, even when the traditional influence of the Kemalist discourse might decrease, another problem could arise as certain cultural activities may not be considered fit for an 'Islamic city'. In that sense the European Capital of Culture may come to be dominated by appropriate and decent events and be restricted in its scope and activity. This government has also shown a great interest in European integration, which might mean that they would like to push the event more into an international direction stressing its European dimension. The ECOC year might be dominated by activities stimulating cultural tourism and the image of Istanbul as a European city worthy of EU membership.

The private sphere could exert the same kind of influence as the state, promoting forms of culture that are economically viable. Even when they might not intervene ideologically, the cultural agenda of the ECOC year might thus be influenced by corporate capital. Grassroots activities targeting the outskirts of Istanbul are not very likely to produce economic returns, so for the private sphere these kinds of events might thus not be of great interest.

A grand responsibility therefore lies in the hands of the non-governmental organizations. However, their influence has always been limited and also the NGOs are frequently part of a more elitist approach towards the city. The cultural elites often cling to the Kemalist views of modernizing and educating the public. In that sense they might apply these same official state methods to the ECOC event. Moreover, civil society in Turkey is still gaining strength and developing and in the case of the ECOC event might thus not be strong enough to face the private and governmental forces successfully. They are rather dependent on these spheres for their existence, so countering their unwanted forces might prove to be difficult.

Equal cooperation in which all three voices have a say would be most beneficial – especially for the NGOs. However, considering the balance of power is not equal, such cooperation might not be easy. There is a great belief though among the ECOC actors that the event can form the beginning of a new era characterized by a new type of governance. People show a real interest in novel approaches towards this governance issue. Problematic is however the fact that the way towards such a new type of governance is unknown and some very important basic elements that could secure it are relatively ignored. The fact that the organization of Istanbul 2010 has not been able to agree on a communal vision for the event is bound to lead to problems of instability and mistrust. It is often stressed that for the three different spheres to cooperate successfully, increased discussion is needed, but it is exactly this state of increased debate that is difficult to establish, as dialogue has always been limited. There is a growing realization among the different actors that they are mutually dependent on each other, but there also seems to be a lack of will to give up power and share it with others. The European Capital of Culture event will thus be a test for all parties involved to see if they can manage to attain the goal of improved cooperation. If people can join the discussion with an open mind, letting go of their ‘traditional’ views and positions and showing a trustful attitude, a new situation might be reached. Trust is crucial, along with a higher degree of openness and transparency. I personally believe such an approach starts with the individual. Before blaming others for defects within the organization, the people involved should question themselves whether they are applying such an open and trustful approach.

Also when it comes to the relationship with the Istanbul population, the ECOC organization should openly communicate with their ‘audience’, especially because the

population does not seem to be too convinced of the event yet. The ECOC project is thought to be only about tourism, thus having little to do with the inhabitants of the city. The promotion of the event which is currently visible in Istanbul (and was distributed by the Municipality) also spreads this view, possibly without being aware of the message that is being sent out to the public. An important task thus lies in the hands of the Communications Committee, bringing together members of the advertising, PR and communication sectors in Turkey.

Moreover, it is said that the people do not believe that NGOs will actually take the lead in this civil initiative. Involving the people will thus be another important element that should be given attention in the time remaining until the 2010 event year. As described in chapter three there are several ways in which the general public is supposed to be included in the process, but until now the influence of such ideas is not felt much yet. It therefore remains to be seen whether the organization will be able to mobilize the Istanbulites before the event actually starts in January 2010.

Another group of actors that might have to be increasingly activated is artists. The organization of the ECOC project consists mainly of cultural elites in the form of rather established NGOs. Smaller cultural/artistic groups are largely absent and the individuals in the art world that have been approached have only been involved temporarily and are today not active anymore. It is in that sense that the ECOC organization might have to seriously reconsider its composition and put into operation a more inclusive and diverse organizing team.

Istanbul is becoming a city in which global influences are very clearly visible and felt. It is becoming increasingly international, turning into a hotspot for those who want to get a glimpse of the East in a Western setting. In the upcoming years it might regain its position as a centre on the Eastern borders of Europe. For many actors involved in the ECOC project, the establishment of the city as a new economic and cultural centre is an important goal. The transformation of Istanbul into a world city of high standards is a great aspiration. Being a modern city is stressed as an important prerequisite. Modernizing the city is viewed as transforming the urban fabric, improving the cultural infrastructure of the city and applying new modes of governance. Also the education of the Istanbul citizens is considered as an important modernizing objective.

It is thus interesting to see that even if the Kemalist conception of modernization as such might have become less influential, there is still an enormous stress on 'being modern'. The West, and especially Europe is still set as a great example that should be followed. The possible future accession to the European Union also plays an important role in this respect. The fact that the ECOC event has been picked up in Istanbul can be seen as part of this modernizing wish, this attempt to be European and to show the world that Istanbul is worth

the 'world city label'. Of course, possessing a 'world city' grandeur also means that increased capital can be attracted which will mainly benefit the elites now at the top of society in Istanbul (Turkey).

Istanbul is not the only European Capital of Culture that intended to raise its (international) profile through the event. The overall improvement of the city, its cultural activities or events and the resulting enhancement of pride and confidence among citizens, were mentioned as the most important goals in most former ECOCs. Comparing Istanbul to the situations in other Capital of Culture as described by the Palmer/Rae report shows that what is happening in Istanbul is not unique from a practical perspective. In most previous Cultural Capitals it was difficult to set the objectives of the event because there were so many different views and opinions involved. Cities thus had problems when it came to the well-functioning of their organizing teams. Reaching a balanced cooperation in a team in which many different interests are represented is not easy. Keeping the balance between economic and social/cultural goals and gains always turns out to provide great dilemmas and the integrated planning of the event within existing policies in the city is important but hard. From a practical perspective, the organization of the European Capital of Culture event in Istanbul might thus not be too different from that in other cities. Istanbul, with its estimated population of sixteen million, is of course much bigger than the average ECOC and most Cultural Capitals might have had a longer and more stable experience with public-private cooperation, but apart from that, the practical side also shows many similarities.

The biggest difference between Istanbul and previous Capitals of Culture may thus lie in a different area. In my opinion, the main difference concerns the state the city is in. Istanbul has transformed very rapidly since the 1980s, and still the city is undergoing many changes every year. Personally I believe that the city has come to a very crucial point in its history where important questions have to be answered and decisions have to be made. These questions are mostly of an ideological nature and are therefore greatly problematic.

At the moment Istanbul is trying hard to follow international developments, to keep up its standards and its image of a tolerant yet diverse city, partly as part of the EU accession procedure. Hosting the ECOC event can be seen as one of these attempts to follow the 'modern path.' I believe though, that the content of such modernizing attempts should first be critically evaluated, before anything is followed. The organization of the European Capital of Culture, consisting of many important individuals and organisations within the city, might want to discuss more basic questions first. What is the 'modern' image Istanbul should attempt to attain and what will the city gain from that? What kind of city should Istanbul become? Should it be turned into the consumption Walhalla which it is slowly becoming as (luxury) shopping malls seem to pop out of the ground everywhere around the city, or might other issues be of more importance? What will be the role of the people in Istanbul? How will

their lives be influenced by the growing stress on 'modern lifestyles' and what does 'being modern' entail anyway? Could there be a Turkish version of the modern life?

For any large-scale event to be successful and for any public-private cooperation to be fruitful, both now and in the future, these questions are of great importance. Before being able to move forward, a common vision on the future of Istanbul as a whole is needed. It is in that sense that Istanbul 2010 might be a perfect opportunity to publicly and openly address these kinds of issues. If that can be achieved along with increased contacts between the public, private and third sector, it would mean a major step ahead for the city. The event could then form the beginning of possible new developments in the city that might aid it on its way to a more prosperous future for the Istanbulites.

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2. Cumhuri Güven Taşbaşı, Vice-governor at the Istanbul Governorship, public, 22 June 2007
3. Esra Nilgün Mirze, IFCA, non-governmental, 25 June 2007
4. Faruk Pekin, Cultural Awareness Foundation & Festtravel, non-gov & private, 25 June 2007
5. Suay Aksoy, History Foundation, non-governmental 26 June 2007
6. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Representatives, public, 26 June 2007
7. Vecdi Sayar, Intercultural Communications Association & PPR, non-gov, 27 June 2007
8. Gülsen Kırbaş, TÜRSAB, private, 27 June 2007
9. Arhan Kayar, dDF, private, 28 June 2007
10. Özgül Özkan Yavuz, Turkish Ministry of Culture & Tourism, public, 3 July 2007
11. Korhan Gümüş, Human Settlements Association, non-governmental, 3 July 2007
12. Mahir Namur, European Cultural Association, non-governmental, 9 July 2007
13. Gürhan Ertür, Açık Radyo, private/non-gov, 9 July 2007
14. Beral Madra, AICA & European Cultural Association, non-governmental, 11 July 2007
15. Belkis Boyacıgiller, Pozitif, private, 13 August 2007
16. Şule Soysal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, public, 22 August 2007 (email)
17. Department of Culture, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, public, 17 August 2007
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