IZMIR PILOT CITY: FINAL ARTICLE

SEPTEMBER 2019

HISTORY

The Izmir Metropolitan Municipality became a member of the Pilot Cities Europe Programme following the city council's assessment of the official invitation from United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in 2015.

The Izmir Mediterranean Academy, which is a semi-autonomous branch of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, has undertaken the role as the main coordinator body of the Pilot City Izmir Programme since then. The Academy has a unique administrative structure within the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, as both a think-tank and a democratic platform for academicians, experts, members of professional chambers in the spheres of history, design, culture and arts, and ecology in Izmir. It operates as an autonomous body that consists of a scientific committee, a group of coordinators, and advisory boards in the four aforementioned fields. The Izmir Mediterranean Academy has two functions: developing the strategies to actualize the vision of the city and providing a platform where stakeholders can interact with each other and make an impact on urban cultural policies. This unique structure has enabled the Academy to be the main stakeholder in the overall programme.[1]

Another point worth mentioning in this process is the Izmir Cultural Workshop of 2009. This workshop provided the first and utmost important step towards a new cultural vision and a cultural strategy to be built in Izmir. The vision developed in this workshop with its principles and the suggestions made were scored in more comprehensive long-term works thoroughly. One of the main products of this workshop, attended by artistic and intellectual figures from Izmir alongside public opinion leaders of the city, was to create a consensus on a cultural vision for Izmir. The first element of this vision was to enable the qualification of Izmir as a city of design and innovation; the second element was to develop Izmir's international relations by transforming it into an effective node within the network of major Mediterranean cities; and the third element was the implementation of public policies that are sensitive to participatory processes. Thus, the Izmir Mediterranean Academy emerged as an outcome of the vision produced at the Izmir Cultural Workshop as well as other urban policies. In other words, these developments generated various cultural projects, which also led Izmir to become a member of the Pilot Cities Europe Programme, an initiative of the Committee on Culture of UCLG and Culture Action Europe.

Following the decision of Izmir's participation in the programme, we held the initial self-assessment workshop in March 2016, with the guidance of UCLG experts Jordi Balta, Catherine Cullen and Serhan Ada.

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1 For additional information on the Izmir Mediterranean Academy, you can also view the good practice included in the Obs database of the Agenda 21 for culture: http://obs.agenda21culture.net/en/good-practices/izmir-mediterranean-acade-my-model-governance-culture

2016 INITIAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

This activity, providing the data for the subsequent steps in the process, involved 34 actors from governmental, municipal and academic institutions besides civil society organisations. Overall it enabled us to monitor the impacts of cultural, educational and social policies, implemented in concordance with the Cultural Workshop in 2009. Furthermore, it allowed us to study the impressions and results of the ongoing projects as well as acknowledging the emergent issues and shortages in urban cultural development.

Some of the conclusions of the initial self-assessment workshop were as follows:

- Overall Cultural Rights seemed to be on a developing stage, even if not on a desired level. There were some relevant analyses and strategic planning involving the area, such as 'Izmir 2014-2023 Regional Plan' by IZKA Development Agency and 'Izmir Cultural Economy Inventory'. However, participants of the assessment workshop pointed out the lack of visibility and follow-up mechanisms.

- The self-assessment also revealed that the relationship between Culture and Education was generally perceived as unsatisfactory. However, it should be stated that due to the characteristics of the formal education system of Turkey, in which the curriculum is strictly regulated by the central government, it was not possible to address some of the questions at the local level. Simultaneously this condition stressed an urgent need for a non-formal education related to culture. Furthermore, it was not possible to mention any training opportunities with regards to cultural management or cultural policies or any education programs or training activities in the cultural sector that included cultural rights. Nevertheless, the good practices identified in this area indicated that some measures had effectively been taken. The "Izmir Lesson", a weekly course about local history and culture, was already included in the local formal curriculum in 2014.

- The inclusion of history and culture in guidelines on the promotion of the production and consumption of local products and recognition of local gastronomy provided the highlights in the field of Culture and Environment, which were assessed as being in the most advanced stages. Many practices like Gourmet Cities Agreement, Slow Food Organisation and Alaçatı Herb Festival were mentioned as good and exciting practices during the course of the workshop.

- In general, the evaluation provided that the Culture and Economy section was on a developing stage. Overall there is some mention of the role of culture in local economic development strategies but the mechanisms to assess cultural

actors' contribution to the local economy were considered to be weak. Likewise, there were very few public or mixed economic programs to increase donations. Therefore, the need for private sponsorship and matchmaking mechanisms as well as the importance of tax incentives on sponsorship were mentioned as some potential pilot measures in the future.

- For the most part equality and social inclusion was observed to be in the early stages of development. The local social policies of health, employment, welfare and inclusion had some references to culture as a relevant factor influencing their effectiveness, but the actual implementation could be improved. Some steps have already been taken to ensure that cultural facilities and spaces are accessible to people with disabilities. The 'Accessible Izmir Project' provided an important good practice example in these measures. Likewise, there are some programmes that aim to foster inter-generational cooperation such as 'Youngsters and the elderly hand in hand' project and 'Brothers and Sisters Project'.

- Local urban planning was seen to acknowledge the importance of cultural issues and resources, paying attention to their protection, use and accessibility. Similarly, the local government had an inventory of the city's natural and cultural heritage, sites and assets, covering both tangible and intangible items, and has established some mechanisms for its preservation and conservation according to international standards and it has already elaborated a master plan for the renovation of the historic city centre. TARKEM, Izmir History Project, and History and Design Project, and existing Development Plans for Preservation, among others, were cited as good examples.

- Pilot measures identified for culture, information and knowledge indicated that the Izmir Mediterranean Academy should be better organised and autonomous, and the local administration should provide assistance for production and visibility.

- Finally, examples of cultural plans, which have been adopted at metropolitan level, and practices for citizen participation in decision-making processes about local cultural policies have been identified as relevant examples in the implementation of local cultural governance. Independent civil society platforms like Izmir Design Platform and Izmir Culture Platform Initiative, as well as the Izmir Mediterranean Academy, proved that important progression for a participatory policy had been made.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Following the initial workshop, a team of interlocutors, representing the various stakeholders taking part in the self-assessment practice, was established in order to evaluate the results and design the necessary steps for a work plan. This team of interlocutors involved representatives, particularly, from the Academy of Fine Arts, the Izmir Development Agency, TARKEM (Kemeraltı Historical District Investment Corporation), the Faculty of Urban Planning, the Izmir Mediterranean Academy and the Local Directorate of Culture and Arts.

After a series of meetings, the group of interlocutors listed the priorities as follows: encouraging the cultural institutions (such as museums, theatres and art centres) to design and implement non-formal education activities; a feasibility study for education on cultural management, cultural policies and other areas of sustainable development; setting up an 'innovation fund' or a mechanism that can provide access to finance for innovative cultural projects; enhancing the cultural involvement and visibility of deprived groups; promoting diversity and creativity as an important part of local cultural policies; extending the information channels for cultural activities and actors in addition to improving the possibilities of international cooperation.

This clarification enabled the interlocutor team to research further and analyse the given conditions as well as the prospects of the listed priorities. During our analysis, we researched the needs and possibilities for a working action plan; made interviews with local non-governmental finance organizations such as Izmir Chamber of Commerce, EGIAD (The Association of the Young Aegean Business Persons) and ESIAD (Association of Aegean Industrialists and Business Persons) regarding the importance of the relationship between culture and economy and its role in sustainable development; made meetings with the local government bodies and discussed possible ways to create incubator spaces for the creative sectors; reviewed existing projects of the local government's departments for social works and historical environment; studied the present culture and education projects and facilities run by the local government as well as by civil society.

Evidently the main challenge for most of the listed measures emerged from the anticipation that the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality should take the leading financial role in urban cultural development. The testimonies proved that most of the non-governmental finance institutions were unwilling to take initiative in establishing a mechanism for the creative sectors, rather leaving this area to the local government. Another complication emanated from the relationship within local governmental bodies and with non-governmental organisations, who testified as not being able to either coordinate their activities or not having the visibility or support from the local government. Nonetheless these challenges

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

proved that it is necessary to increase the visibility of the existing projects in the field of education and culture and realising them in a more coordinated way. The necessity of incubator spaces for creative sectors and support for cultural vitality, as mentioned by many of the stakeholders, the need for information channels with a better coordination and a comprehensive approach were amongst the other emergent issues.

WORK PROGRAMME

Our topics addressed in the **work programme** were based on the thematic areas raised in the self-assessment workshop, good cases and some measures identified by the stakeholders and the feasibility study done by the group of interlocutors.

In this manner a work programme was designed on four thematic areas; Culture and Education, Culture and Economy, Culture and Social Inclusion, and Culture and Information. The main means to address these topics were listed as follows:

- Designing pilot educational programs for children and young people with the collaboration of the local government, civil society and private institutions; Combining existing programs under a suitable framework;
- Organizing seminars and training programmes to enhance the capacity of staff working in cultural departments, adoption of contemporary approaches;
- Studying the establishment of a cultural management programme with the local state and private universities for enhancing cultural educational capacities and developments.
- Setting up a mechanism in order to bring innovative projects and creative actors together with the investors;
- Emphasizing the design sector's role in the economy.
- Supporting awareness and multiculturalism through projects that will create cultural vitality and social inclusion in deprived areas
- Mapping registered and unregistered cultural institutions, actors and initiatives in the central and peripheral districts of the city in order to establish cultural routes and coordinated events.

PROJECTS²

Following the measures described in the work programme, the project team agreed to accommodate four projects in concordance with the four thematic areas. As for the methodology, we decided to include some of the existing projects, which were consistent with the action plan, according to proposals of our stakeholders; namely Good Design Izmir and Basmane Urban Design projects were already on the planning and implementation phases. Meanwhile, the Cultural Mapping and kültürLab projects were developed by the self-assessment stakeholders thereafter.

GOOD DESIGN IZMIR

Good Design Izmir, which is an annual design days event, has been initiated by the Design Committee of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy. Its main goals, briefly, involve rendering design a distinctive feature of the city and increasing the sector's competitive capacity by bringing designers, producers, non-governmental organizations and investors together. It has been carried out three times between 2016 and 2018, and the fourth is scheduled to take place in October 2019.

Good Design Izmir is both planned and implemented with the collaboration of design associations, universities, professional designers and scholars as well as some of the district municipalities and different departments of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The last three years have proven that the event has been endorsed by the design communities in Izmir. Furthermore, Good Design Izmir has promoted the cultural importance of Kültürpark³ by utilising it as a contemporary cultural venue.

BASMANE URBAN DESIGN

The Basmane Urban Design project has been generated with the collaboration of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy, designers and design associations. The region, which is in close proximity to the historical centre of Izmir, has long been neglected and deprived of infrastructure and public attention. Nowadays home to the new settlers, mostly refugees from Syria, Basmane has a rich and diverse history as one of the important gateways to the city.

The project's aims were contributing to the revival of the region, creating a triggering effect, raising awareness by drawing attention to the region's social and historic values and positively supporting the interaction within. The main targets can be listed as developing culture-oriented forms of communication in the region, revitalizing the area and transforming it into a multicultural centre of attraction, for international and local tourists, providing a healthier visual perception, and emphasising cultural diversity. The designers have produced urban design elements – such as multilingual signposts, recreational and leisure urban equipment, improvement of the building surfaces- by

2 For additional details on Izmir's pilot measures in the context of the Pilot Cities programme, you can also view the publication Izmir Governance of Culture and Pilot Projects, available at http://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/cities/content/izmir-pilot_low_1.pdf
3 The main central park in Izmir, with cultural and environmental importance.

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considering both the historical and current diversity of Basmane.

Presently the project designs are completed and presented to the public via open air exhibitions and publications. The implementation is on the mandate of the Department of Historical Environment and Cultural Assets, though some of the graphic and urban designs have been used in conjunction with other projects.

KÜLTÜRLAB

As mentioned above, kültürLab is an initiative to establish an educational platform amongst the cultural institutions and organisations in Izmir. It carries out the main goals of establishing a multi-stakeholder network for educational facilities, cooperation and advocacy for the importance of the next generations as cultural stakeholders.

kültürLab started with a forum including the participation of representatives from 17 cultural institutions and organisations in central Izmir, in 2017. These institutions consisted of the state, municipal and private museums, non-governmental cultural organisations, cultural associations and cultural departments of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The aim of this practice was to introduce the cultural institutions and acknowledge the present measures in culture-oriented education, besides enabling networking, cooperation and capacity development.

The forum led to establish some priorities in this thematic area, as follows:

- Rendering cultural education part of formal education and life-long learning in a way to cover individuals of all ages and all segments of society.
- Extending awareness on city culture, history and legacy.
- Introducing the creative industries to future producers of culture and art.
- Ensuring cultural rights, inter-cultural interaction and diversity.
- Adopting a comprehensive approach to culture considering local history and cultural diversity.

So far, the platform has been able to involve the stakeholders positively, in terms of considering their role in cultural education and employing various measures. Additionally, we have observed that some of the platform members have started to make an extra effort and programming for their educational programming and visibility. However, the current state of the platform is in need of a better, inclusive programming for measurable results, besides support from the local government.

MAPPING THE CULTURE AND ART VENUES OF IZMIR – 2017

As a result of a series of preliminary meetings conducted in March 2016, IKPG[4] (Izmir

4 Izmir Culture Platform Initiative (IKPG) is an autonomous branch of Izmir Mediterranean Academy, consisting of cultural actors in the city.

PROJECTS

Culture Platform Initiative) identified the criteria determining the scope of content for this mapping exercise and its coverage of the city and started its work with an editorial team of four. The geographical coverage for the first issue was limited to the areas of settlement characterized as the "central districts," which surround the Gulf of Izmir from the northwest to the east, and from the east to the south: data regarding Çiğli, Karşıyaka, Bayraklı, Bornova, Buca, Karabağlar, Gaziemir, Konak, Balçova, Narlıdere and Güzelbahçe – representing 70% of the urban population- were gathered under five categories identified as "public venues," "venues belonging to the local government," "venues belonging to the private sector," "independent venues," and "public areas." In the following stage, the editorial team observed the district boundaries and the neighborhoods in which they were concentrated, listed the venues, and marked them on regional maps.

This study has been particularly important in numerous aspects: it provided cultural routes within the diverse districts of the city, was able to raise cultural attendance overall; and inspired various other projects influenced by Izmir's urban culture.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Building on these experiences, here are some final reflections on what has been achieved, and what could be accomplished in the near future:

- Good Design Izmir has been adopted by the design circles in the city. However, some stakeholders mentioned that there is a need to emphasize its role as an economic forerunner by further including creative industries.

- Our peer-learning visit to Lisbon proved that a special emphasis and effort was given to social inclusion and culture. This feature was made significant by the facilities and events such as Todos Festival, Library of Marvila, Refugee Center and the works of GAU (Urban Art Gallery). This insight has provided a better approach and acknowledgement to local cultural initiatives on deprived zones, such as Darağaç. In addition, a mural festival was organized in the city center last year.

- Another positive outcome is a possible artists' support mechanism which is presently being studied by the Arts and Culture Department of the Metropolitan Municipality in coordination with the Izmir Culture Platform Initiative (IKPG).

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