

MEGA-EVENTS DECOUPLED FROM LONG-TERM PLANNING:
SHORTCOMINGS AND LEARNING FROM THE ISTANBUL 2010 EUROPEAN
CAPITAL OF CULTURE

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Abstract

Cities are increasingly turning to mega-events to secure much desired global and future economic investment. While events such as the Olympics or Expos are generally located on the outskirts of city centers, sometimes entirely divorced from the existing urban fabric, one event is embedded within the city itself: the European Capital of Culture. The ECoC is a program consisting of cultural events typically situated within the city itself as well as the surrounding region. One of the longest running continuous EU policy programs, it has been operated for 30 years with over 50 cities holding the much coveted title. How can we utilize this mega-event for the greatest benefit to the city?

This paper specifically focuses on Istanbul and its tenure as the 2010 European Capital of Culture. The event's use and conservation of the urban built heritage in connection with the ECoC, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality organized the Strategic Plan for the Historic Peninsula Site Management Plan. Both documents largely ignore the possibility of integration into a long-term strategy for the city. This oversight reveals a disconnect found between large-scale events and host cities. The paper investigates the root causes of these divisions, the negative outcomes of such a disconnected and short-sighted approach, and the opportunities for planning to integrate culture and complimentary economic activities such as commercialization and tourism.

Keywords: Istanbul, European Capital of Culture, Strategic Spatial Planning

1. Introduction

Over the last several decades, culture has firmly embedded itself within the planning process. Authors have promoted, debated, defined, and denounced its use and proclaimed benefits. Without a single comprehensive definition, culture has come to represent both tangible and intangible heritage ranging from traditional built heritage to community organized events, classical music, and anything found in-between. While cities such as Barcelona or Bilbao have long stood as representatives of the success of culture as a renewal strategy (Garcia, 2004; Mies van der Rohe, 2004), cities globally have now come to identify as cultural cities. Despite this abundance of success, many questions regarding the ability to determine specifically the role of culture in the city's professed positive transformations of urban areas (Miles, 2005; Evans, 2005; Pons, 2005). Regardless of what culture has or hasn't done, understanding the role of planning and the integration of planning tools within these processes is a worthwhile pursuit as this course of action has been pursued.

While many approaches to introducing culture into a city exist, the festivalization of urban space (Yeoman, 2004) has become an increasingly sought strategy, particularly when attracting immediate attention and recognition to attract both tourism and future economic investment. A series of events, can be seen as a fast-track way for a city to accomplish long-term goals.

1999), which might otherwise not be attainable. Particularly with mega-events, with investments in the urban environment are often made through infrastructure, new refurbishment projects, it has become common practice to create a legacy by incorporating works into an overall planned scheme for the city. One tool for considering and development of the city, is the strategic spatial plan.

Unfortunately, many mega-events serve as excellent examples of great planning decisions where a meaningful long-term impact on cities is not introduced. In some cases, this failure is due to event sites being located in city peripheries where installing new uses following the event can be problematic. One program remaining strongly embedded within the city itself is the European Capital of Culture (ECoC). The ECoC is a yearlong festival devoted to a broad range of cultural events, typically situated within the city itself as well as throughout the surrounding region. It is one of the longest running continuous EU policies and is the flagship cultural policy of the European Commission. Beginning in 1985, the event has operated for 30 years with several cities holding the much-coveted title of European Capital of Culture (Garcia, 2013). As a result of this program is the promotion of a distinctively European culture. With total budgets ranging from tens of millions to nearly one billion euros, these events have influenced both the economy as well as the character and dynamics of cities (Ponzini, forthcoming). With its focus on culture, this event has frequently been used to develop a new identity or renew an existing one (Bianchini, 1990). This paper questions how strategic planning incorporates a shared vision, such as the ECoC, into existing policies and long-term cultural goals of a city.

A particularly interesting example of this relationship between a culturally fueled event and strategic planning, due in part to its overall size and complexity as well as the scale of the transformations, is that of Istanbul and its tenure as European Capital of Culture in 2010. In an event focused heavily on the city's built heritage, this paper will specifically examine the strategic plans to conserve built urban heritage as part of the larger goals of the city as a global cultural hub. This paper will review two separate strategic planning documents: the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM): The Strategic Plan 2010–2014, dealing with the metropolitan region, and the Istanbul Historic Peninsula Site Management Plan, focusing on issues of conservation and promotion of the UNESCO World Heritage sites. On a broader scale, this analysis will consider the role planning plays in this process as well as how various planning tools, particularly strategic plans, were used. More specifically, this paper will account the missed opportunities regarding the 2010 ECoC and the relationship between large scale events and issues of urban preservation.

2. Strategic Spatial Planning

Since its introduction to planning in the 1980s (Bryson, 1987), strategic spatial planning has been discussed by a number of scholars within the planning field, evolving into an essential tool for the planning of cities. Many different ideas and interpretations of what constitutes strategic planning exist. While there are generally agreed upon attributes, the process, methods and final outcomes are often confined to a single correct approach. In a guest editorial of *The Planning Review*, Balducci (2013) set about clarifying the understanding of strategic planning. With the help of other scholars, they introduce several core concepts that, in their opinions, represent the essential elements of strategic plans. Four keys involve plans being: long-term with a broad vision, yet flexible; comprehensive; processes which understand and cope with the dynamic nature of development; and inclusive of diverse stakeholders and viewpoints; and adaptable to multi-level governance and changing structures. Van den Broeck (2013) embraces the original military roots of strategic planning, promoting the analogy of strategic planning as the city or region preparing for

emphasized point is the need to keep strategic planning free from institutional constraints. Kunzmann (2013) warns that strategic planning will be rendered completely ineffective if it is merely an attempt, unable to accomplish anything beyond traditional statutory plans, viewed as a mere formality and unable to cast a vision for the future of the city.

Alongside the effort to properly define strategic planning, other authors raise questions about the use of this tool. Mazza (2013) raises vital questions pertaining to their actual implementation: How are the plans formed? What are the motivations of the actors involved? What is the process of developing the plans? These crucial issues often determine the quality of the final product. The strategic process should also not be limited to just a document titled 'Strategic Plan' (Mazza, 2004; Mäntyselkä, 2013). It is the in-depth understanding of existing conditions and the development of a list of guidelines, which can lead to more informed decision making regarding the future of the city. Healey (2009) recognizes the increasing trend of the production of strategic plans that are merely to meet certain technical requirements or expected standards, but are often ineffective processes. Due to varying and sometimes vague descriptions, strategic plans risk being seen as mere rhetoric, incapable of producing action (Palermo and Ponzini, 2010). Many of the same issues can be found in the case of Istanbul.

3. Context of Istanbul

Istanbul is the largest metropolitan area in Europe with over 14 million residents (the metropolitan area range from 15–17 million) with many recent immigrants arriving from other parts of the world (Palermo, 2010). Due to this continuous expansion, Istanbul is a city in the midst of a period of rapid urban transformation while seeking to solidify its place as a global city (Soysal, 2010). With thousands of years of history and functioning as the seat for 3 separate empires, Istanbul did not truly become a recognized tourist destination until the 1990s (Gokturk et al., 2010). According to Palermo (2010), Istanbul is also a city without a history of hosting festivals, yet in the last decade it has begun to host many different events with Istanbul 2010 being the crowning achievement. The increasing trend of cultural activities in the city is recognized within the municipality management plan as part of an intentional policy to use the culture and tourism sectors as one of the main drivers of future development of the city (IBB, 2011).

For Istanbul, the primary component of the cultural strategy is the promotion of the city's built heritage. Since 1985, Istanbul has had 4 sites inscribed in UNESCO's World Heritage List, all located within the historic peninsula. They include: Sultanahmet Archeological Park; Ayasofya Mosque; Zeyrek Mosque (Pantocrator Church); and the Istanbul Land Walls along with the surrounding areas of each site (ISMD, 2011). The majority of the ECoC program was located within the historic areas of the city center (Bilsel, 2010) and these four sites, along with the entire historic peninsula, were included in the Site Management Plan prepared by the IMM for UNESCO. The development of a site management plan has been a requirement for all UNESCO World Heritage sites (UNESCO, 2005) and was also made a legal requirement for all historic sites in Turkey (ISMD, 2011). Due to the lack of a site management plan for several years, the city's reputation as a number of infrastructural and redevelopment projects located in and around these sites was considered adding the heritage sites of Istanbul to the World Heritage in Danger List (Marquart, 2014). Overcoming these prior negative associations may have been a key factor in the decision to focus so heavily on the built heritage during the ECoC. The focus on conservation and preservation projects serving as part of the year's events (Bilsel, 2010) focused on built heritage, as well as actively preserving sites, the Istanbul 2010 Culture Agency, the organization responsible for the event, was appointed the main organization responsible for funding and preparing the Site Management Plan (ISMD, 2011).

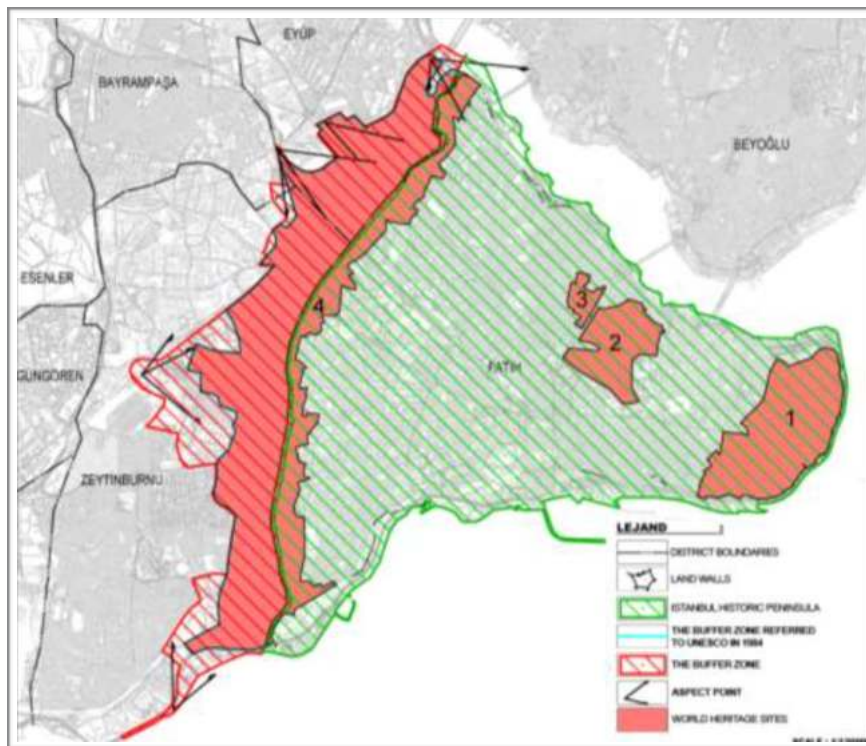


Figure 1. The Site Management Plan Area in green with the four UNESCO World Heritage Sites highlighted in red (ISMD, 2011).

While preparing the site management plan, the municipality also prepared the Strategic Plan for Istanbul 2014, covering the entire municipality and focusing on 8 core areas. The sixth area is Cultural Services Management and is devoted to: Contributing to the Protection and Promotion of the Cultural Heritage of the City and Enrichment of Cultural Life (IMM, 2014, p.12). This paper is a portion of the strategic plan. These documents accompany an existing local district-level plan along with a metropolitan scale Environmental plan.

To better understand the particular situation of Istanbul, two heavily discussed pieces of literature and the plans themselves, must be mentioned: law 5366, the Law on Protection, Renovation and Utilisation by Revitalisation of Deteriorated Historical and Cultural Sites, referred to as the urban renewal law, and law 2634, the Tourism Encouragement Law. These laws essentially allow the individual municipality districts to redefine a conserved area as an urban renewal or tourism area and approve projects to be implemented on these sites. Through this designation from a conserved area to an urban renewal or tourism area, new developments on these sites no longer need to meet the stringent preservation codes required for protected areas. In addition, an additional law passed in 2012, numbered 6306, the Law on the Transformation of Areas under High Earthquake Disaster Risk has also been used to renew areas found within the historic peninsula. These laws have allowed continued demolition and redevelopment to occur within the historic peninsula, a factor in UNESCO's consideration of adding Istanbul's world heritage sites to the list. As these particular laws are relatively recent, Aygen (2013) notes that already in

certain historic and culturally significant sites were declared as unsafe or hazardous and were legally removed. Similar tactics were used again in the 1980s to increase the size of the historic center. Therefore, these modern laws are merely the most recent urban planning technique in Istanbul. The impact of these laws is not limited to the physical changes in these historic areas, but also to their social and economic diversity as minorities. Roma and Kurds have been removed and relocated (Candan and Kolluolu, 2008).

4. Contents of the Site Management Plan and Strategic Plan 2010–2014

Strategic Planning is first implemented in Istanbul in the mid 2000s, becoming a requirement with updated plans to be produced every 5 years, the first being issued for 2007–2010. The subsequent Istanbul Strategic Plan 2010–2014 defines its purpose as increasing the quality of life of the citizens of Istanbul (IMM, 2011, p.7). No specific references are made to what outcomes it produced. This plan envisions cultural services, and the tourism industry growing into an important component in the city's continued development and the creation of a new cultural identity for the city. The structure of the plan begins with a current situation analysis followed by a stakeholder and SWOT analysis, leading to future outlooks and conclusions, and a system of monitoring and evaluation processes. The stakeholders addressed include both public and private institutional actors, though these parties are considered separately. Citizens are involved in ensuring the preservation of sites with continued availability and accessibility. Corporate/institutional interests focus mostly on meeting European standards of urban development and cultural activity. The SWOT analysis considers the participatory feedback, but it is not directly involved in creating the final analysis.

The stated end goal for cultural areas is the protection of assets through sustainable planning with the intent to continue to develop and disseminate future cultural events. The plan emphasizes both conservation and the continued festivalization of the city. The plan is briefly recognized as an opportunity through the SWOT analysis, it is not again mentioned in any discussion regarding future events. Though other cities, such as Lille 2004, used the ECoC to launch a long-term cultural program (Paris 2011), no strategy is suggested. A major event might be used to accomplish one of the stated goals for the city. Much of the plan regarding conservation is geared towards raising awareness of culture for tourism. Many specific numbers are given of the total square meters of protected areas or buildings to be conserved by 2014, details of exact locations or which organizations are responsible for these works are lacking entirely. Despite the apparent specificity, the plan does not explain how or even why the listed goals will be accomplished. The plan also lacks any reference to the Site Management plan, the document being developed specially to guide future conservation.

The Istanbul Historic Peninsula Site Management Plan, produced by the metropolitan municipality to comply with both Turkish law and UNESCO requirements defines itself as a stakeholder-driven strategic plan. Though not published until 2011, the work is a project of Istanbul's urban planning, one of its longest lasting legacies. Like the municipality's strategic plan, this plan involves a thorough analysis of the existing situation, followed by a SWOT analysis, informed by stakeholder input, and results in a detailed list of problems with numerous prescribed actions for each issue. The plan identifies, in total, 10,413 cultural properties located within the historic peninsula, and additional existing intangible culture such as traditional crafts, guilds, and customs. The 2010 Agency ultimately tasks BIMTAS, a private architectural consulting company, with the actual creation of the plan. As in the IMM Strategic Plan, the plan's failure to mention use of the ECoC to promote long term efforts despite the event's focus on conservation and preservation projects (ISMD, 2011). While there are a total of

Shoup and Zan (2013) point out that only 20 deal explicitly with conservation in specified sites.

5. Actors, Stakeholders, and Multi-level Governance

A complicating issue when dealing with conservation and preservation is the involved multi-level governance. In Istanbul, these layers range from the involvement of local to international government organizations. At each level are actors with varying roles, but they are often unclear, both to outside observers and the actors themselves. The history of the site is mostly within the Fatih district, which has jurisdiction for conserving cultural heritage. Related departments within the metropolitan municipality include the Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Directorate of Conservation, Application and Supervision (KUDEB); Directorate of Historic Sites; and the Directorate of Construction Affairs. Within the central government are the Ministries of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning, which oversee preservation in Turkey (Marquart 2014). UNESCO, an agency of the United Nations, also provides guidelines and standards for protected areas like those in Istanbul. The current structure and hierarchy of responsibilities is a commonly noted problem. Both the current and existing governance system as one of the main obstacles to effective preservation. There is an opportunity to establish a more straightforward structure. This negligence may be due to the direct involvement of the metropolitan municipality in the production of the plan, which has the freedom to propose needed change. As suggested by Bayraktar (2012), this complication may be an intentional design to divert power back to the central government by obscuring the process, allowing for the eventual approval of contested projects.

In the midst of this vast web are the stakeholders who are directly invested in the site of living or working as well as the many institutions that are indirectly connected to the site through involvement with issues of planning, preservation, culture and/or tourism. Within this network, stakeholders are involved, meeting the participatory planning requirement of stakeholder inclusion typically involved workshops organized for participants to lend their expertise, providing input for the SWOT analysis, resulting in objectives that informed the plan. As specified in the IMM strategic plan, the site management plan cites over 100 participatory workshops, representing the perspectives of architects, planners, preservationists, etc. However, it should be noted that these stakeholders were involved in only very superficial ways in the work and not active participants throughout its development.

6. Defining Problems

Strategic planning encourages the involvement of a diverse field of actors and stakeholders to define a broad range of future goals, but also to understand and define the existing conditions. The SWOT analysis used is a rather traditional approach to defining and addressing problems. The SWOT analysis becomes the basis for the rest of the plans and focuses on very specific problems. The analysis recognizes the need for specific sites to be better preserved and the actions to be taken, but there is no further in-depth study to consider the causes of the need of restoration or how to prevent future degradation. The causes may be due to pollution, general disinterest in preservation, etc., but without seeking to understand the causes, it remains likely that these same sites will continue to face similar obstacles in the future. They fall into the category of problems Rittel and Webber (1973) famously termed wicked problems. These problems may not be immediately visible and often do not have easy or obvious solutions, if any at all, making them all the more difficult to address. The identification of site 5366 as both an opportunity and a threat within the SWOT analysis hints at some

issues by revealing the existing divide between various stakeholders. For some, build new, modern developments is considered an important economic opportunity whereas others view this action as a direct threat to preserved areas. By not the root causes of the problems facing the city's built heritage, the proposed solutions limit their ability to respond to and address issues. As previously mentioned, and repeated in strategic plans, the complex governance structure with its unclear boundaries is a major identified problem, yet none of the proposed actions attempts to deal with this problem.

Despite the failure of these plans to directly address the existing governance structure, the plan to connect Istanbul 2010 to a series of future events, a separate document titled *Strategic Vision*, a project sponsored by Istanbul 2010 to address the organizational issues surrounding the Topkapi Palace, considers these pressing issues. Produced by an architect from the UK before either the Strategic Plan 2010–2014 or the Historic Peninsula Strategic Plan, this document suggests a series of short-term interventions for Istanbul 2010's 15–20 year vision for the site. This document specifically references the need to create a catalyst for future programs and the importance of starting immediately. Additionally, it recommends alternate governance models that could be established to better ensure the continuity of the site (Metaphor, 2009). Despite the development and promotion of these external consultants working with local experts, these aspects were not transferred into the developed plans.

The process used by the two strategic plans to define problems comes from a very traditional view of strategic planning as a set of standardized international conventions. The IMM Strategic Plan it has been developed in accordance with the strategic management approach, though it ultimately determines that no single step-by-step approach exists (Albrechts and Metaphor, 2009). In the same way, the site management plan follows a standard established by UNESCO for World Heritage Sites. The production of these two plans is therefore not solely about identifying problems and proposing solutions, but also contains certain political motivations or westernized standards (Soysal 2010). In this sense, strategic planning can mean to a particular end, but also, or perhaps instead, an end in and of itself. Without preservation, plans existing just to be plans are rather useless if they lead to

7. Planning Results

Regardless of the primary intent behind these plans, it is worth noting the impact of the process in order to better understand what strategic plans are capable of producing. Both plans are updated every year with new plans to be developed every five years. The longest project cycle is a maximum of five years. This time span is a limited period in which to establish a plan. With this constraint, the plans become buried in hundreds of overly specified requirements and specific actions and projects to be conducted without considering the overarching goals. As the specific actions detailed, Shoup and Zan (2013) note that very few have any actual preservation. They describe the plan as a document filled with buzzwords, significant and specific preservation steps to be taken. Many of the plans promote the creation of more plans. The authors also point out that while general sources of funding are mentioned, the actual operational budget for any of the projects is stated nor funding promised.

At the end of 2014, the strategic plan for 2015–2019 was released. This updated plan revisited the 2010–2014 document and highlights some of the differences between the methods of the previous plans, but is silent on the outcomes of the earlier work. The stakeholder and SW

that many of the cultural goals for the city are similar if not identical to the plan (IBB, 2014). One of the main products of the site management plan was the creation of an additional governance body, the Istanbul Site Management Directorate. Despite this organization, the group's primary role is not in managing the entire site, but in coordinating other responsible groups (Shoup and Zan, 2013). Though essentially a planning body, it has a future role for this organization or how it will continue to function as it lacks the resources to carry out any projects of its own.

With the completion of the site management plan in 2011, UNESCO decided to remove the Istanbul sites from consideration for the warning list. Yet, a 2014 report reveals that the activities related to law 5366 have not ceased and subsequent calls are made for the government to reconsider adding the Istanbul sites to the World Heritage in Danger List. The amount of ongoing demolition, reconstruction, and damage caused in the areas around the walls as well as to the walls themselves (Örökcü et al., 2014). The laws used to allow development within the historic peninsula have essentially rendered the site management plan defenseless and reveal an insight into the understanding of heritage and its conservation. Through these laws, the historic value of a structure or of a place is a quality that is unchangeable, but flexible and open to interpretation. Planners, historians or even the public are not the actors ultimately determining what is or isn't historic, the decision is made by metropolitan municipal officials. These dynamic definitions create an additional challenge when attempting to define the actual borders and boundaries that the plans apply to. The strategic plans produced are ineffective in ensuring the proper conservation and management of many historic sites identified within their jurisdiction.

8. Review of Strategic-ness

In considering these two plans, which present themselves as strategic documents, one might ask: Are they actually strategic plans? Despite the warning provided in the report, the institutionalization of strategic planning is precisely what has occurred in Istanbul. This approach has become legally required for both plans with the metropolitan municipal approval. A general lack of innovation and creativity can be observed with both plans. The traditional analysis methods to reach standard solutions. The heavily relied upon the 2010 ECoC event as the basis for the work, yet from this analysis no clearly defined vision emerged from the many proposed actions. Nor does it attempt to utilize the 2010 ECoC event as a means of establishing a long-term cultural focus within the city, despite explicit intent to support cultural events.

The example of Istanbul reveals clearly that following a step by step process can stifle innovation and creativity. In this instance, many contributing factors share responsibility for the lack of strategic-ness within the plans. Through her research, Marquart (2014) identified that the voices of academics and professionals involved in the development of the site management plan were ignored in the final document as well as others who were removed from the process for disagreeing with the official vision. A host of cultural, political, historic, social, and economic factors, some of which have been discussed in this paper, contribute to this particular case of the production of these un-strategic plans.

While further research can lead to better understanding how actual strategic plans are implemented, Healey (2013) raises another valuable question in seeking to understand the mechanisms through which planning ideas transfer between nations. Though not specifically about strategic planning, this tool serves as a relevant example of how ideas spread from one country to another.

Originally a radical idea developed from corporate strategies in the US, strategic planning over the course of decades became a standardized document for cities and organizations in the world. One liable party is METREX, the Network of European Metropolitan Regions (Levend, 2011). METREX actively promotes the use of strategic planning in metropolitan Europe as one of the necessary tools for European cities. Strategic planning is a clearly defined western or at least European system. While producing the strategic plan with the rest of Turkey, was actively seeking accession to the European Union (Savcı et al., 2010). These sentiments are strongly emphasized in the opening ceremony of the speech given by the mayor of the city. He makes very clear the purpose of the plan that Istanbul is an inherently European city (Gokturk et al., 2010). Strategic planning for mega-events, and their subsequent use of heritage and culture (Aygen 2013), can be seen not only as elements relating to issues of planning, but also exist as political devices.

9. Conclusions

The example of Istanbul well illustrates that though a document might be called a strategic plan, it may not necessarily meet the theoretical ideals for a strategic plan. In a central city in Turkey, producing a document reflecting the key aspects as described in the literature is as possible as possible. It is therefore paramount for continued discussion to understand how ideas are applied in practice, as espoused by Balducci and Bertolini (2007) and Beauregard (2007). The literature should consider how planning ideas and tools are implemented within a city to understand if they are indeed capable of accomplishing what they have been promised. The situation in Istanbul also highlights one of the fundamental contradictions of strategic spatial planning. When the municipal government produced the strategic plans, they cast an unrestrained vision for the future that could consider all options. Yet, when an alternative plan containing more innovative solutions was produced, but lacked government support, they were never implemented and eventually disappear in future works. Perhaps in other cases the results may have differed, but in the case of Istanbul strategic planning alone is not a method of realizing conservation and preservation projects or integrating a mega-event into a long-term strategy. At the same time, it is worth noting the weight strategic plans carry in the international community. By removing Istanbul from consideration for the warning of a strategic plan to the production of a strategic plan and not the observable change in negligent practice reveals the institutional value placed in such planning documents. In this respect, the plan does not concretely secure the protection of built heritage against threats of renewal and it has been successful in retaining at least the official recognition of the urban form.

This paper is part of a larger research project, which will continue to pursue the research in this article. First, how have other ECoC host cities approached the incorporation of a long-term policy and how does their experience compare to that of Istanbul? Second, in other cities, what are the specific factors that cause the breakdown between planning and practice? Finally, how do existing cultural and preservation policies adapt to the introduction of a mega-event and what lasting changes do these events have on urban form?

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