

Prologue

The concept of inventory has quickly become widespread in our cultural life. The question of which cultural assets we have in this land, in Anatolia, which is said to be the source of so many civilisations, surely has an answer to the increased importance given to the subject. We have to accept that a cultural inventory is at least indispensable to determine and evaluate this valuable area. The “Inventory of Istanbul’s Cultural Heritage and Cultural Economy” project was realised by the Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate of Istanbul as the beneficiary and also in cooperation with the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Turkish Academy of Sciences, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the French Research Institute for Anatolian Studies sustained through the framework of the Istanbul European Capital of Culture 2010, as an answer to the question of cultural assets we own. With this exemplary project, the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Turkish Academy of Sciences and the technical assistance provided by TÜBA developed inventory software for Istanbul with which data can be downloaded and submitted from the same source. Nearly fifty public institutions, municipalities, NGOs, universities and the private sector also worked in cooperation for the project. The gathered data have been collected in one main database, the data is up-to-date and can be furthermore developed and remain accessible. This database system has also become a pilot project for Turkey as well. With the project, all the archives of the Preservation Board were digitalised. All the work completed until this day were gathered in one system. 500,000 documents were scanned and 28,000 of the 38,292 registered inventory in 39 towns were categorised and uploaded with the fiche system. The Sea Walls of Istanbul were registered for the first time. 60,000 photos were embedded in 150,000 web pages and added to the inventory.

Such a system is surely scientific and necessary for the Cultural Economy and Cultural Tourism. Undoubtedly the biggest contribution of such a project will be to the economy of Istanbul based on culture. With the project it is now possible to calculate the economic value of the cultural sector in Istanbul. This was the first time that Turkey was evaluated according to the Compendium system of the European Commission, specifically for Istanbul.

Forty years of immovable archives from 1970-2010 at the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul were digitalised.

The folk culture, information on the public, living and city culture of Istanbul from yesterday to today, from birth to death are now available for the users.

Moreover 800 maps made for Istanbul in the years between 1776-2010 were digitalised and added to the system. With these maps, a unique database was established for the use of architects, city planners, art historians, archaeologists, historians and demographers. In this way, a vanishing building or the changes in a district and the fading historical fabric can be monitored. The maps of aqueducts that have been used throughout history were also digitalised. All the books and theses about Istanbul written since 1923 were recorded. In conclusion, this project is an ideal example not only of a source for information but also for institutional cooperation. It is an important and valuable part of an assertive and comprehensive project as Istanbul European Capital of Culture 2010.

We are delighted to thank all the people of science, the technical teams from the universities, the officials of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Turkish Academy of Sciences, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the French Research Institute for Anatolian Studies. It must be always remembered that cultural assets belong to all humanity. This exemplary project was exhibited for humanity also as a model of cooperation.

The main goal of this work was to understand Istanbul, to be able to plan its future and sustain this city that is so valuable for the world and this geographical region for eternity.

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In this book, Asu Aksoy and Zeynep Enlil introduce a comprehensive evaluation of the cultural field of Istanbul. Taking culture as an economic asset, this compendium covers detailed accounts of the administration, infrastructure, legislation, and politics of culture. Comprised of the entire cultural economy of Istanbul, the inventory became a prominent study on Turkey.

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