

“Commodification” of Cities: Promoting Izmir (Turkiye) as a World City

In this paper the efforts of urban leaders for promoting Izmir (Turkiye) as a ‘world city’ is placed in the context of globalization. To address globalization and competition, cities have been ‘commodified’ and turned into ‘commodities for sale’ through urban branding and place promotion strategies. To do this, city governments construct a new image and employ incentives to ‘sell’ their cities to attract investors and visitors. City leaders of Izmir, as in all cities worldwide, get high aspirations for becoming a ‘world city’. Though never appearing in tables of ‘world cities’, the case of Izmir illustrates global processes at a smaller scale.

Izmir is the third largest city of Turkiye on the Mediterranean coast and the biggest city in the Aegean Region which has been labeled ‘Beautiful Izmir’ and ‘Pearl of the Aegean’. Izmir has a rich history going back 5000 years. Today home to three million inhabitants, Izmir is actually a ‘gateway’ because of its port which is the second largest after Istanbul. Almost all export of the Aegean region and 20 % of import of Turkiye take place through this port. Besides, Izmir has important institutions such as The Aegean Free Zone, Organized Industrial Regions, Chamber of Commerce, Export Union, the Aegean Region Chamber of Industry (EBSO) and the Stock Market in the region. Izmir is also the centre of tourism in the region as several beautiful coasts nearby and geothermal resources in close surroundings as well as the city and surroundings still retains traces of its ancient, Ottoman and Levantine past. Thus it is known as vacation and tourist city.

Urban leaders claim the label ‘world class’, ‘international’, or ‘global’ for their cities; even use as a title while none of the cities bear convincing objective markers of global status (Paul 2002). While Short and Kim (1999) coin the term ‘wannabe’ world cities for the “widespread mania for being or becoming a *world city*” (Paul 2004; Doel & Hubbard 2002), Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) use the term ‘*globalising cities*’ to make the point that globalization processes are to be found operating across many more cities than just a few ‘global cities’ (Taylor 2005 p.1593). Short, et al. (2000) discuss ‘gateway city’ concept, developed by Grant (1999) and Grant and Nijman (2000), to refer to the fact that almost any city can act as a gateway for the transmission of economic, political and cultural globalization, not only leading world cities.

As several urban boosters look for ways to place their city in the global marketplace of interurban competition, they misuse the concept without knowing exactly how it is described in the literature. What is implied by ‘*world city*’? It is ambiguous what makes a city to hold a world city status and whether ‘*world city*’ is any different than ‘*global city*’. There have been numerous definitions by theoreticians. In the globalization literature, the terms ‘*world city*’ and ‘*global city*’ have been used interchangeably by some critics. Nevertheless “Saskia Sassen (1991) uses the ‘*global city*’ term to distinguish contemporary leading cities from past ‘*world cities*’” (Taylor 2005, p.1593).

Markusen (1999) argues that ‘*world city*’ is a quintessential ‘fuzzy’ concept. There is little agreement among scholars on which attributes are most suitable for measurement purposes (Doel & Hubbard 2002) and there is little agreement as to what exactly constitutes a ‘*world city*’ (Paul 2004). Paul summarizes “the internal characteristics of world cities such as TNC headquarters (Hymer, 1972), banking and financial institutions (Reed, 1981), producer services (Sassen, 1991), global spectacles (Short, Kim, Kuus, & Wells, 1996) or a mix of several such variables (Friedmann, 1995; Knox & Agnew, 1994). New work has begun to shift focus to external relations and flows between world cities (Beaverstock et al., 2000; Taylor, 1997; Taylor, Catalano, & Walker, 2002). With little direction on how to combine these disparate measures, however, no wonder Ann Markusen (1999, p.875) tarred “*world city*” as “at least a thrice fuzzy concept” (Paul 2004, p.572).

Demirtas, the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in Izmir (ITO) describes 'world city' as follows: "... as a result of new image and brand, the city becomes an attractive center that draws people from all over the world, investors, employees/labor force, and the most importantly capital. The city that has achieved this should be considered as a world city." He adds that Izmir's aspirations for world city status can be only achieved by degree of reaching its vision and becoming a brand city. "The main goal of our board is to make Izmir into a brand city and particularly draw both national and foreign investors in tourism, commerce, fairs, congress, industrial developments in Izmir; to make Izmir an investment hub" (ITO 2005 Work Report, 2006 Work Report).

Cities adopt universal strategies for becoming a 'world city' for attracting transnational capital through an international identity. Almost every '*wannabe*' *world city* added promotional CD-ROMs and websites to old-fashioned posters and brochures with selected images to show the world (possible investors, highly skilled and well educated cosmopolitan elites) how attractive, contemporary, and vibrant their city is. "This conscious manipulation and promotion of the city, evocatively termed '*imagineering*' by Rutheiser (1996), has been subject to close examination from academics who have pointed out the ways in which city identities are sanitized, commodified and distorted in accordance with the perceived demands of the global marketplace" (Doel & Hubbard 2002 p. 360).

Local politics and strategies for 'going global'

Izmir is a '*wannabe* world city'. Understanding how the process of '*going global*' has occurred in Izmir requires looking at the structures of business and government as well as at *the lives of its citizens*. The main actors in making Izmir a 'world city' are the local government (primarily the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir. "In Turkey, metropolitan government structure has been a two-tier system with greater and district municipalities since 1984" (Erkip 2000 p.374)) and the business elites (the Chamber of Commerce (ITO)).

In many cities worldwide, alliances between the private business community and the local and state government in the form of public and private partnerships, development corporations and growth coalitions are specifically designed to attract new businesses, investment and residents to be more competitive with the other cities in the global market. However, this has not been the case in Izmir as 'city builders' from public and private sectors in Turkish cities rather act independently. The private business leaders under ITO act enthusiastically and impatiently in making things happen to quicken the process of becoming a 'world city' which usually is not congruent with the time bureaucratic procedures take with the public sector. Thus, disagreements and conflicts between the two sectors occur as in the example of regeneration of the historic castle (Kadifekale). ITO took the liberty of producing a plan which was rejected by the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir stating that this area is within 'their jurisdiction' and they will prepare and realize the restoration plans which caused complaints by ITO stating this is one of the most important locomotive regeneration projects and has to be realized immediately. Because of the Metropolitan Municipality's ban they cannot use the finances they allocated for the castle, either.

The Metropolitan Municipality take primary responsibility in developing and realizing regeneration projects to reconstruct the city's image that reinvents the city's identity through reclaiming its underinvested built heritage. However, due to scarce public fiscal sources and a lack of mechanism for formation of public and private partnerships and allocating private finances in regeneration, it is uncertain if a majority of these projects could be implemented and how long it would take. One incidence of public and private sectors acting together is Izmir's candidacy for EXPO 2015. So far public and private sectors demonstrate coherence. With Universiade 2005, the Metropolitan Municipality had the most responsibility and Tansas (local supermarket corporation originally established by the greater municipality) was the major sponsor.

City leaders actively seek global events to help highlight the city as a global arena. For competitiveness, the public sector transforms its regulating and controlling powers into promoting local development. In Izmir particularly during last two mayors' terms, a new local politics and city building has been advanced and embraced focusing more on identity construction and promotion of the city through continental and international festivals and spectacles (Universiade 2005, 2002 Off-shore Championship), trade promotion, modernization and aestheticization of the urban environment, infrastructure improvements (subway system construction and expansion), regeneration projects (regeneration of historic city square -Konak Square- and adjacent historic bazaar Kemeralti), enhancing international connections (Adnan Menderes Airport International Terminal Construction) and attracting foreign investment.

Mr. Ahmet Piristina, the former Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality, who brought Izmir two significant international spectacles, Class 1 World Off-shore Championship in 2002 and the 23rd Universiade in 2005, that earned Izmir national pride and municipal greatness, played a significant role in Izmir's development. The following mayor Kocaoglu continued Piristina's projects and vision for the city after unexpected death of beloved charismatic mayor Piristina. Piristina had envisioned Izmir as a fairs and congress city. Today the city builders envisioned Izmir as tourist city, congress city, culture city, and trade city, drawing from its local resources. Demirtas, the 13-year chairman of ITO, makes clear that their tourism strategy is city tourism and thus the priority is in realizing regeneration of the Kemeralti-Agora-Kadifekale axis. Even though today the emphasis is more on tourism and trade as tourism is considered as an important element in the city's development, the municipality also designated a new large area for fairs near the Aegean Free Zone.

Enthusiastically, Demirtas clearly states the goal of the board is making Izmir a world city as they decided to bring EXPO to Izmir in the strategic plan prepared by ITO in 1992. Thus ITO come up with numerous projects that are well covered by newspapers such as the Eastern Mediterranean Tourism and Trade Project that lies on maritime transportation. Thus an East-Mediterranean Working Group Meeting took place in Izmir in April 2002 with the participation of representatives from Egypt, Greece, Libya, Lebanon, Tunisia, Syria and Turkey. ITO developed a prestigious waterfront development project on the Pasaport Breakway which consists of an aquarium, museum, galleries, hotel, restaurant and yachting marina to be connected to the shore with a tunnel in the sea that would "change the image of the city" and is "a significant project in becoming a world city" as Demirtas states. ITO established IzAir, proposed developing an archeological park in ancient Smyrna where the city was first developed to create an attraction center, a cable-car project to connect Kadifekale and agora, miniature city park project like the one in Istanbul (Miniaturk) and in Brussels (MiniEurope), and establishing a bank with American, Greek and Turkish shareholders. ITO made advances to bring cruise lines to Izmir at the expense of ITO paying for the costs of cruise-ships coming into Izmir port to bring in visitors to "see it with their own eyes", to eliminate or change foreigners' preconceptions on Turkiye and also to increase awareness of the city. Most recently, ITO chairman Demirtaş contacted the US ambassador Ross Wilson. They agreed upon cooperation in attracting investors from US and on promotion activities of Izmir. Demirtas sees an opportunity for promotion of Izmir in the pamphlet on Turkiye of the Scientific America to be published towards the end of this year.
(<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/06/29/ege>). His latest attempt is proposing a plan to the Metropolitan Municipality for setting the historic center Izmir in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Demirtas has used the title 'the Brand City Izmir' for this and he believes this would make Izmir a 12 month tourist city as well as creating an awareness of Izmir to 182 countries that are members of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention
(<http://www.yeniasir.com.tr/ya2006/07/11/>).

Although the business leaders do not want to accept, there is a belief that Izmir has been in passive state as there have not been many major investments lately. The economic crisis in Turkiye in 2000 had effects also in Izmir. Some corporations had to shut down and some scaled down. Besides, some national tax requirements make the investors invest in abroad. The business leaders also often claim that Izmir and Aegean region has been underinvested and gets insufficient funds by the national government. There have been some political or individual disagreements among the earlier local decision-makers, as well as some investments against the zoning laws which caused a few incomplete investments in Izmir. For instance, Izmir was going to have a World Trade Center (WTC) in the city center, as each '*wannabe*' world city has one. However, the struggle in building the World Trade Center still continues since 1998 due to court issues.



Pasaport Breakway Project by ITO (Konak Pier Shopping Center in the foreground)
Source: www.itzo.org.tr

Most recently the Metropolitan Municipality has developed a Strategic Plan for 2007-2017 to guide the future and "to make Izmir a world city and a world brand" as the mayor Kocaoglu states the goal of the plan. There is a new city center area also designated in the strategic plan. The Metropolitan Municipality went through a change in the New City Center Plan (or New Izmir) for creating a skyscraper zone between the port and Karsiyaka district with incentives for the developers (increase in density). The plan was prepared three years ago as a result of evaluations of an international urban design competition in 2001, however, no investment happened so far except for the construction of civic buildings by the government such as the court. Newspapers announced the related news as "Manhattan is going to rise up in the New Izmir". The change in the plan caused a conflict as some critics say that increase in density will cause less green and parking area and thus taken to the court by the local state authority. Additionally, a network of subway system has been constructed and Metro expansions are going on throughout the city as well as city center-airport connection.

Urban transformation projects have been underway recently. As many metropolitan cities, Izmir has to deal with migration from rural areas and squatters issue. Recently under an urban transformation project, people in the squatters around the Kadifekale which is a potential landslide area are being displaced and moved into new high rise apartments built by the state. The squatter houses are being demolished and the area will be forested. Another transformation project is relocation of the squatters in Uzundere, across the Universiade Athlete's Village. The Metropolitan Municipality is paying for the expenses for all

of these projects and thus it is the Metropolitan Municipality that is the highest borrower from the central government.

Urban Branding and Place Promotion

Due to the increasing competition between cities, many cities 're-package' themselves and their resources to present an attractive image. Place promotion involves the creation of a positive image for cities to draw investment and to earn a competitive edge in the global marketplace. Short et al. (2000) summarizes different definitions of 'Place promotion or place marketing' in literature as "place promotion involves the re-evaluation and re-presentation of place to create and market a new image for localities to enhance their competitive position in attracting or retaining resources" (Short et al., p 318 in Avraham 2004, p.472).

Urban branding is representing a city through the creation and selection of certain place images. In one respect, one might say that branding places in general and cities in particular is a way of inscribing a certain logic in space – both symbolically through logos, slogans and the likes, but also materially through construction of buildings, infrastructures and landmarks (Jensen 2005 p.19). The emergence of 'Urban Lifestyle Magazines' also play significant role of urban branding as being an important voice in the articulation of the city's self-perception and thus ultimately the urban brand (Jensen 2005). Since a few years, Izmir Life and Aegean Life magazines appear in the bookstores and newspaper stands pointing out 'lifestyle' options in Izmir.

The slogans are also used as a way of delivering messages about a place. The slogan was "Izmir is changing" during the previous mayor Piristina's term, used on the public buses. Now it is "Izmir is developing!" emphasizing improvement and progress in the city. The slogan is used on the official website of the Metropolitan Municipality ("Izmir gelisiyor" in Turkish as seen on Figure 2)

Izmir's specific promotional strategy draws particularly on its long forgotten and underinvested spatial heritage as representatives of its rich history. The widespread interest in the preservation and rehabilitation of Izmir's historic districts is due to the expectation that these developments would also help the tourist industry and promotes increased foreign investment in the city. Several regeneration projects have been developed by the metropolitan municipality to restructure its image and identity. These include Agora- the ancient market place-, built during the reign of Alexander the Great; the 4th century BC castle Kadifekale (the Velvet Fortress to be literal); the old fashioned shopping district Kemeralti; archeological surveys and excavations (theater, stadium, Kadifekale, Agora, Smyrna remains).

The historical urban square (Konak square) has been redesigned by major efforts of mayor Piristina. The square has been the hearth of the city historically, and today being right in front of the Metropolitan Municipality building and as an entrance to the old fashioned shopping district Kemeralti it is seen as the 'face' if Izmir. In Konak Square the famous clock tower has always been 'the symbol of the city' built in 1901 (Figure 1 and 2). Now the regenerated square acts as the symbol of the city as it is used in official websites, promotion CDs and videos, and commercials. A district municipality (Konak) has also been working on restoration, renovation and rehabilitation of several historical buildings such as khans (traditional enclosed building for merchants) and historical fountains in and around Kemeralti area. Infrastructural improvements and aesthetic of streets in the area. Near Kemeralti and within the historic center, the Hotels Street has been restored.

Use of public places and public art is used to promote place image and enhance local identity. Izmir aestheticizes its landscape with public art (near Konak Square, Gundogdu Square, waterfront area in the city center), lighting the historic buildings, infrastructure improvements, and greenery (Inciralti forest area rehabilitation and expansion) as part of

urban boosterism. ITO's project of the Pasaport Breakwave is introduced by Demirtas as "It is going to look as nice as to be included in the Izmir pictures when it is completed ... Istanbul has Galataport, Izmir has Pasaport" referring to the controversial Galataport Regeneration Project in Istanbul.



Figure 1 View of Konak Square, Source: Ege Mimarlik 2004/2-50 p.52

Images are presented to the world in TV advertisements geared towards potential tourists, in trade or industry magazines promoting business parks, or, increasingly, on web sites intended for travelers, possible new residents or potential investors. The official website for the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir and the Provincial Government website are informational about Izmir and both use selected images from Izmir such as renewed Konak Square scene but they also need to prepare English version of the website.



Figure 2 Night View of the Renewed Konak Square used as banner on The Official Website of the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir, Source: <http://www.izmir.bel.tr>

Global Connectivity

Although never included in the tables of world class cities, and Istanbul dominating the world relations of Turkiye the most, Izmir has always been a significant port city. Today Izmir region is open to the world with many national and international banks and financial institutions. The Aegean Free Zone (AFZ, ESBAS in Turkish) is located in Izmir that would convey the message that Izmir is a legitimate international market and a '*gateway city*' to the global economy. According to AFZ records "The Zone generates more foreign direct investment than any of the other 20 Free Zones in Turkey and employs more than 12,500 workers (over 30% of Turkey's total Free Zone employment). "A Zone is broadly defined as "an area enclosed by a fence with supervised entry and exit points, where certain economic or fiscal advantages are granted to facilitate manufacturing and world market trade" (www.esbas.com.tr).

Today the international airport serves as a city's primary point of access as well as a privileged focus of world city projects. In Izmir, Adnan Menderes Airport is going through an expansion and a brand new International Terminal is being constructed. Izmir had few international flights, many with connections in Istanbul and a small insignificant airport building. In world cities literature, direct international flights to leading world cities such as London is considered especially significant for 'wannabe' world cities. British Airways has started flights between Izmir-London's as of March 2006. Additionally, ITO established IzAir (Izmir Airlines) to provide direct international flights from and to Izmir. The Chairman Demirtas states that with the establishment of IzAir many foreign and domestic airlines which used to ignore Izmir, started to include Izmir-centered flights to their destinations. Demirtas also states that now, Izmir becomes the second city that has the most international flights after Istanbul in Turkey. (www.gozlemgazetesi.com/20060414)

According to Demirtas they plan international flights to Athens, London, Paris, Frankfurt, München, Berlin, Hamburg, Moscov, Milan, Vienna, Tel Aviv, Amsterdam, Düsseldorf, Brussels and Zürich. With the start of Izmir Airlines' flights, Aegean businessmen won't need to have a connection at Istanbul to go to Europe. Izmir Airport will be the second biggest hub of Turkey after Istanbul Ataturk Airport. They plan domestic flights that would have connecting international flights in Izmir. He sees the direct international flights as requirements and adds that "Otherwise we cannot draw investments to Izmir and make it a world city" (www.turob.org).

The city also has Sister-City Program that forms ties with other cities in the region and abroad. It helps to establish not only economic but also cultural links between cities. According to the Metropolitan Municipality records Izmir had 45 sister-city (to name a few Long Beach, CA in USA, Bremen in Germany, Thessalonica in Greece, Sousse in Tunisia) in 2001.

Izmir has embraced the notions of global capitalism. McDonalds, PizzaHut, KFC, Burger King, and Domino's Pizza already located themselves in Izmir for decades. Lately, IKEA and Starbucks, Body Shop, Gloria Coffee arrived. UK based TESCO bought out a regional establishment of KIPA supermarkets. Izmir also has Praktiker, Metro, and Carrefour. A new concept of enclosed shopping malls with world brand stores have taken place in the city which are claimed by the academics as emergent public spaces in Turkish cities (Erkip, 2003; Erkip, 2005; Yilmaz-Saygin, 2004 ; Helvacioglu, 2000). All these 'sell' a lifestyle to the local and change the lifestyle of the local as the new shopping malls are called lifestyle centers. There are around 10 large scale shopping centers in Izmir (Yilmaz-Saygin, 2004). A brand new one, Forum Bornova, is about to open doors in September 2006 built by Multi Turkmall Company with foreign shareholder. Both the global and local exist together in Izmir in the example of enclosed shopping centers with international brands and Kemeralti historical bazaar with small scale merchants. Local residents enthusiastically occupy new

upscale shopping centers with world brand stores whereas boosters take tourists and visitors to the traditional Kemeralti bazaar.

Global spectacles

Some of the most important global spectacles are sports mega-events such as the Olympic Games which reach a worldwide television audience and offer perhaps the best stage upon which a city can make the claim to global status. Presenting the host city with a unique opportunity to display itself to the world, such events, particularly the Olympics, provide an unsurpassed media spectacle focused on a distinct urban setting. (Short, et al. 2000 p.320).

International events are not foreign to Izmir as Izmir already has a tradition of holding an International Fair that takes place from late August to early September since 1932 and which became a member of the United Fairs International (UFI) in 1948. The annual Izmir International (Trade) Fair's roots are based on the first countrywide Economic Congress which was established by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, took place in Izmir in 1923 that influenced the whole country. This International Fair has been the highlight of the summer season in Izmir with a popular festival of music and stage events in the Culture Park. Izmir also hosts European Jazz Festival, International Summer Music Festival mostly held in ancient Ephesus amphitheater. Additionally, Alacati-Cesme, an hour from Izmir, is famous for World and European Slalom Windsurf Championships.

In addition to the annual mega events, Izmir became the host to the Class 1 World Off-shore Championship in September 2002 which was broadcasted to the world by many international TV channels and attracted visitors around the world. In 2005, the 23rd Universiade Games took place in Izmir in August, both events as a result of the efforts of the mayor Piristina. The Universiade, second in importance to the Olympic Games, is an international sporting and cultural festival which is staged every two years in a different city. The word "Universiade" comes from "university" and "Olympiad", and means Olympic Games for students. For this event, Izmir has been announced as "the youth capital of the world" since around 30,000 spectators and 7,805 students from 131 countries (FISU records) were in town for the Universiade 2005 Games which broke the Universiade records. 1, 213 Turkish and 180 foreign press members from 31 countries followed the Games and 22 stations broadcasted the Games worldwide (www.fisu.net/site/page_807.php). According to Short, et al "The promise of worldwide exposure and economic gain has made hosting these major and regularly scheduled sporting affairs a lucrative goal for aspiring cities around the world" (2000 p.320).

Cities that host international spotlight events such as the Olympics or the World Expo undergo substantial changes in the urban landscape, the result of large-scale investments in the private and public sectors. The resulting development and renewal of municipal space and upgrading of city infrastructures strengthen the cities' competitive edge and raise their rating in the global hierachal system (Avraham 2004 p. 475). In Izmir the preparations for the Games, strongly supported by the State, included construction of two major sports arenas and maintenance and extensive upgrade of existing sports facilities, construction of an athletes' village similar to the Olympic village with thousands of new homes which became homes of Izmir residents after the games, several infrastructural improvements and aestheticization of the city's appearance where unpleasant views existed. Rehabilitation of streets and some historic buildings in the traditional bazaar Kemeralti were completed just for the Universiade crowd.

The total cost for the games was around 260 million USD. The opening ceremony of the Universiade 2005 was the most magnificent one ever in Turkiye that cost 5 million Euros. It was considered as an opportunity for the promotion of the country not only Izmir. Thus scenes from Izmir, Aegean region and all over the country were broadcasted to the world as

well as well prepared shows and performances. The mayor Kocaoğlu declares that the Universiade 2005 has effects on developing Izmir as tourism and trade city.

Lately, Izmir has become a candidate for World EXPO 2015. Urban leaders believe that 'the EXPO 2015 will put the city on the map internationally' and position the city in the global economy. It has widespread support from businessman, citizens, local newspapers as well as the state. The theme for Izmir EXPO is determined as 'health' (New Ways for a Healthier World and Health for Everybody), again drawing from the local resources. Urban leaders say that there will be symposiums and meetings related to health issues with participation of professionals known worldwide. (www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/07/04/ege/ege01.html)

The general secretary of International Exhibitions Bureau or (BIE-Bureau International des Expositions) Vicente Gonzales Loscertales who visited Izmir in December 2005 stated that "It is an important step in terms of Izmir becoming a word city if EXPO 2015 takes place in Izmir... It is significant to brand a city and a country. It contributes to the future of the city or the country. The success brings new accomplishments and initiates a ground for other international events as well". (www.haberekspres.com.tr/2005/12/14)

The Metropolitan Municipality mayor Kocaoglu states that the location for the EXPO 2015 would be the Cesme-Karaburun Peninsula to the west of Izmir with magnificent coasts, geothermal water, and archeological area. He thinks that they can 'sell' and 'market' the peninsula easily since it would match well with the EXPO theme 'health'. It will carry Izmir to the goal of becoming a '*world city*' (<http://worldsfair2015.com>).

To conclude...

Until a few years ago, Izmir was more local oriented and was not interested in promoting and marketing itself. According to Avraham (2004), cities with 'weak or poor images', which are known very little about, need campaigns that focus first on raising awareness of the city, and only then on constructing the desired image. The business group in Izmir taking more conscious steps now in 'going global'. Lately a group of journalists from the European Union countries were invited to Izmir, which is significant because media can be very beneficial for improving the city's image and effects image transformation as Avraham (2004) suggests.

Izmir's branding and marketing strategies sound grounded because it is not only painting a pretty picture for creating 'picture perfect views' for the promotion activities but the urban leaders, particularly the local government, acting for "changing the city's image while changing its actual reality" (Beriatos & Gospodini 2004). "It should be stressed that prior to a city beginning to market itself, local authorities should make sure that the city does in fact supply basic services and that regular maintenance of the existing infrastructure takes place and fulfills the needs of residents, visitors, business people and local companies. If no improvement in basic services is evident, it can be very difficult to succeed in a marketing campaign, and in fact, in most cases it will be rendered useless" (Avraham 2004 p.473). So far the Metropolitan Municipality is trying to do both with urban transformation projects and relocation of the squatters, infrastructure improvements, metro expansion, international airport construction, and regeneration projects in the city center as well as basic services taken care of primarily by the district municipalities.

There so many things to do and a long way to go for Izmir to become a '*world city*'. For example, Izmir wants to become a congress and fairs city but it has to compete first with Istanbul. Several large national and international conferences, festivals and fairs take place in Istanbul since there are quality meetings facilities and luxurious hotels. It is obvious that the local governmental authorities want to hold on to the controlling powers but also obvious is that the scarce financial resources is a big handicap in realizing all world city projects. For example, Izmir falls short in meetings facilities and hotel capacity as well. To reach the goal of becoming a '*world class city*', the lack of mechanism for cooperation between public and

private sectors should be overcome and the private and public sectors should act in coherence. To attract investment some incentives should be considered such as "tax benefits for companies and factories that are willing to relocate to the city within a specified time frame, various sales and property tax exemptions, reduced prices in local hotels, free training for workers in relocating companies, inexpensive land for investors" (Avraham 2004 p.474). Turkish cities can hardly allocate finances from their scarce resources for marketing campaigns. Usually business groups or Chamber of Commerce does this in the west. ITO states to employ a marketing agency for Izmir's 'world city project' in its 2006 Work Report. "Good luck Izmir on your long journey!..."

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