Multi-Level Cultural Policy and Politics of European Capitals of Culture

Emilia Palonen

Emilia Palonen is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Political and Economic Studies, at the University of Helsinki. The ECOC are her pet project since 2004, and she has taken part in the artistic programme of the ECOC of 2007, Luxembourg and Sibiu, as part of the Bauhaus Kolleg Dessau programme (www.eu-urbanism.de). Her design from Sibiu was selected among 12 new symbols for Europe by a Dutch think thank (http://www.designdenhaag.eu/en/node/).

Emilia.palonen@helsinki.fi

English abstract

Rather than exploring culture-led urban transformations, media representations or city-image building, this article tackles the way in which the European capitals of culture (ECOC) has been a local, regional, national or European task. The responsibility for the event and the possibility to use it to articulate political identities is transferred from one level to another. This article discusses the ECOC as multi-level policy on European, national, regional and local levels. It works on the macro-level drawing from many of the recent ECOCs and hopes to inspire more in-depth analysis of case studies.

Moreover, the article recognises the difference between explicit and implicit policies. The European Union, having been legally deprived of the chance to run explicit official policies until the Maastricht treaty in 1992, has still provided support for culture through implicit cultural policies and cultural policies of display, such as the ECOC.

The cases considered in this paper vary, as the main emphasis is the exploration of the role of the ECOCs and the multiple levels in the process. However, quite often references would be made to recent Capitals of Culture, such as Sibiu and Luxembourg in 2007, Vilnius in 2009, Ruhr 2010 and Turku 2011. They highlight particularly well the conflicts between the levels, especially local and national, as well as the role of the region in the construction of a common reference point in the ECC process.

Keywords: European capitals of culture, Implicit policy, Policy-making, Legislation, Identity, European Union, Europeanization, Universalism and particularism
Introduction

[The 'European city of Culture' event should be the expression of a culture which, in its historical emergence and contemporary development, is characterized by having both common elements and a richness born of diversity. (85/C 153/02.)]

The European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) are commonly seen as a celebration of urban Europe, a local and European mega-event. The explicit cultural policy of the EU is joined with explicit cultural and regional cultural policy related to arts and culture, private investment and sponsorship and local initiatives that fall into the categories of implicit cultural policy and urban (cultural) policy. Urban regeneration was in 1999 made an explicit part of the ECOC policy. This was due to the fact that it had been implicitly part of the policy since 1990 and Glasgow’s ECOC year. This is visible in the aim “to exploit the historic heritage, urban architecture and quality of life in the city” (1419/1999EC). In this paper, I have bracketed out the economic effects of the ECOC (e.g. Herrero et al. 2006) and the urban regeneration effects (e.g. Bailey, Miles & Stark 2004; García 2004; Németh 2009), which are quite closely tied to economic success, and have become one of the most important aims of the ECOC along with symbolic celebration, and presentation of images and articulation of identities. Yet the ECOC is also a more complex cultural policy on multiple levels: European, national, local and regional. The ECOC process is volatile to political changes on both national and local levels.

This article evaluates the role of the ECOCs in advancing European cultural aims, discussing them from the perspectives of the local, the regional, the national and the European – qua the European Union or the continent. The primary material is collected from four types of sources:

1. the European legislation and minutes of committees and the parliament (available online through Eurlex and in the databases of the CARDOC, the Archives of the European Parliament in Luxembourg in 2010),
2. the publications and reports of the ECOCs themselves,
3. anonymous¹ preliminary research interviews conducted in Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Turkey, and Romania over the period from 2005 to 2010 (much of the data referred to is ‘common knowledge’, but also the less-known information is derived from more than one source and cross-confirmed with other discussion-partners, press-cuttings or web pages),
4. participant observation regarding the ECOCs of 2007 at the Bauhaus Kolleg Dessau programme on Urbanismus 2006–07, where productions were mounted both in Sibiu and Luxembourg as part of the ECOC programme.

The case selection focuses on ECOCs in the late 2000s, yet it also makes references to Glasgow 1990 and Weimar 1999, generally considered as the “most” and “least successful” examples of ECOCs (based on the evaluative research of Palmer/Rae, 2004). Partly the selection has been motivated by the data available to the researcher who has without long-term financing been working in the above-mentioned countries.² Originally, the research focus has been on cultural identifications – local, regional, national, and European – included in the policy problem-sphere and the explicit or implicit

¹Anonymous interviews conducted by the researcher are not listed.
²The research focus has been on cultural identifications – local, regional, national, and European – included in the policy problem-sphere and the explicit or implicit.
politics or policies on culture. At the crux of the paper, however, is the role of the ECOCs as multilevel cultural policy with conflicts: local, regional, national, and European.

The methodology employed in this research is discourse theoretical (Laclau 2005; Howarth & Torfing 2005; Howarth, Norval & Stavrakakis 2000). It is problem-driven (Glynos and Howarth 2007), in its aim to investigate the research question: how does the multi-level character of the ECOC influence the process on the various levels themselves, and how is the ECOC presented as the project on each of the levels – local, regional, national and the European?

The paper shows that although the ECOC works both as a megaevent (Richards & Wilson 2005) and pan-European tool for event-led urban renewal (García 2004) homogenizing the shared experience of European culture, it also works through highlighting a multiplicity of identifications and levels. The ECOC offers a non-national urban-led European perspective to shared identity and culture, creating a certain canon of cities that will start representing Europe in a spatial-cultural way. Furthermore, the ECOC also have increasingly followed a certain pattern due to a consultation process where the power of “wise men” or consultants is great: they create a European cultural elite: the finished product is framed to the parameters of the consulting process and the measurement of the perceived “success” (e.g. hotel nights, press millimetres, and urban renewal). At the same time it deals with the unity and diversity bipolarity – this is precisely where its origins were, when it was founded in 1985: common elements and diversity.

**Cultural policy: implicit and explicit**

The concept of policy refers to the “regularizing aspects of politics” that [as an outcome of contingent action; cf. ‘politicizing’ and ‘politicking’] imply the coordination of acts and measure and regulate the inclusion and exclusion of activities’ (Pyykkönen et al., quoting Kari Palonen, 2009, p. 11). Dimensions of politics – politicising, politicking and the political – are all connected to policy. Policy is a product of politicising, making policy: as a response to a problem – a solution – it seeks to politicise an issue (although often also neutralising the political or decision-based tone). Thus, to fully investigate a policy context, one needs to reflect on all these dimensions. Cultural policy is not only a sector of set policy-proposals. It is implicit and explicit.

The idea of implicit and explicit dimensions of cultural policy was taken up in a recent issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. Outlining a distinction between the explicit and implicit in this context, Jeremy Ahearne (2009) conflates ‘explicit’ with ‘nominal’ cultural policy and ‘implicit’ with ‘effective’ cultural policy. Ahearne in his definition goes against sectoral thinking in the understanding of cultural policy: for much of the history of cultural policy it has been understood as “an autonomous sector of public policy action”. Ahearne (2009) argues that “we then lose the use of the term for designating more broadly the reality of political action on culture”. Implicit cultural policy – “effective impact on the nation’s culture of its action as a whole” – could be found in different fields from education and media to industrial and foreign policy. It may be in the margins, where the implicit or effectual policies could be recognised the best. For instance explicit national policies have implicit effects on the fringes.

New political orders, systems of relations and ideologies require organisation of culture. As Ahearne argues for transmission:
Cultural transmission, then is a complex political operation in its own right and will not take place without some kind of effective policy for culture. In this sense at least, cultural policies are indeed central, instrumental and substantial. (2009, p. 144.)

Yet, power policies are present whatever we may want to study in culture. The ways in which the policies are made and have their effect are related to the other dimensions – the political, politicising and politicking. These also have implicit policy-effects. By the distinction between implicit and explicit, however, Ahearne does not imply a distinction between cultural policies of display, to follow Raymond Williams’ concept, and cultural policy proper. Rather display (such as the cultural policies of opening shows) is part of cultural policy proper itself.

Other policies have cultural policy effects. This is quite clear with the ECOC. The types of expression of the capital of culture office – whether its opening ceremony or programme guides, would thus be part of the explicit cultural policy, and most definitely, cultural policy of display. What is done on the fringes or what are the unreflected effects of those policies, or other fields of policy that may be related to the capital of culture project, would fall into the category of implicit cultural policy.

The understanding of policy as a regularizing aspect of politics would take the concept of implicit cultural policy even further. Regularizing activities or practices have cultural effects, whether we think of institutional (e.g. art forms and promotion), or ideological (e.g. identities, cultural awareness and community-building) aspects. In the case of the ECOC we could take this quite far. Here, however, I have wished to focus on the institutional – and on conflicts and paradoxes in the process. I have wished to discuss the explicit and implicit precisely in evaluating the indirect effects, ownership or multiple levels of the policy.

Method – discourse theory

This article is based on the discourse theoretical approach, which starts from the assumption that any identity, meaning or definition is founded through a process of articulation. In a postfoundationalist (Marchart 2007; Glynos & Howarth 2007) vein this approach as employed here looks at the processes of the institution of the grounds of the debates and policies. It particularly investigates the way in which the ECOC is adopted as local, regional, national or European event. In the analytical terminology of discourse theory the ECOC is a ‘floating signifier’: a concept or nodal point which the different levels of policy-making are trying to adopt as part of their own policy and tool for self promotion.

Central to discourse theory as a poststructuralist framework of analysis is that concepts are co-constitutive and relational. The identity of each concept, such as “Europe” or “region” here, is informed and influenced by the way in which neighbouring or contrasting concepts are being articulated. The ECOC would imply different things as adopted into different frameworks, and it would inform in turn the meanings afforded to the “region” or “Europe” it is tied to. Although the purpose of this study is not to study in depth the processes of articulation and the meanings assigned to these terms, it is vital to consider this as the methodologico-theoretical background when discussing the issues such as the multi-level character of the ECOC and its effect on policy-making at different levels. The Laclaudian discourse theoretical approach enables one to deal with a wide range of data, across time and space. It demonstrates similarities and differences in the ways in which
the ECOC process has been conducted in localities around Europe and the varying conflicts that have resulted from it. The problem-driven ethos of discourse theory is taken seriously in this article, where the aim is not to display the discourse-theoretical tool-pack in praxis (method-driven treatment), but to look at the roles afforded to the ECOCs and the multiple conflicts emerging from that.

The European Capitals of Culture – a policy of a kick-off fund

European Capitals of Culture have been nominated since 1985 – having their roots in the “myth” of Europe that Jean Monnet launched in his insistence on culture as the basis of the European Community in the 1980s. The idea of the ECOC was put forward by Melina Mercouri, the Greek minister of culture, in 1983, and the programme was launched two years later. Cultural days and cultural months followed. The first European City of Culture in Europe was Athens and the second Florence. A whole canon of cities that had been capital cities of culture emerged. The cities are networked into a map of cultural capitals. European Spatial Development Perspective stipulates polycentricity – and as Carola Hein (2006) argues, the European Capitals of Culture are in the same game. The capital of Europe is divided between different centres: the official capitals Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg as well as Frankfurt, the site of the European Central Bank, the European agencies, and the rotating European Cultural Capitals. Together they form a new European spatiality, which for Hein defines the European capital.

Today, the ECOC is the longest running and firmly institutionalised explicit form of cultural policy in the EU, even though the funds used for that are minimal, the visibility is quite wide. Most importantly “Europe” is being rearticulated, found or expressed in one or since 2007 two cities in Europe. Whereas first Athens and Florence had been the showcases of cultural cities in Europe, the next step was for the less emblematic cities to express their Europeanness. In Sassatelli’s account…

…the programmes set up by cities are increasingly complex and ambitious, entailing initiatives that would not easily fit into a traditional definition of cultural policy and that clearly aim at a wide notion of culture. This success may arguably be linked also to the ability of the EU to maintain a low profile, thus avoiding the feeling that the programme is a top-down invasion of the delicate sphere of cultural identities. But this sphere is, of course, precisely what the ECOC is targeted at. (2006, p. 34.)

In the European Union budget, the cultural sector – that includes the ECOCs – is minimal, but policies in other sectors of the EU may have cultural effects – and thus in their part function as implicit cultural policy. Already the freedom of movement and work that most EU citizens enjoy is a policy, having secondary cultural effects. Similarly, cultural effect are in the policies on regions, bringing funding and creating institutions on various regional levels; language, promoting national culture; and agriculture, sustaining landscapes, to name just a few. Structural funds, in particular have been a tool for cultural policy (e.g. Sassatelli 2006, p. 29).

The direct economic incentive for the ECOC cities is minimal. The EU hardly invests in its capitals of culture. The union offers a minimal sum for each title-holding city (1.5 Million EUR from 2007): the premise is that this would be matched with much more local investments. As of 2007 the community subsidy must not exceed 60 percent of the total budget of the project submitted. In
actual fact, the ECOCs have been spending varying sums that massively exceed the legal requirements of the community subsidy. For operation expenditure, programme, promotion and wages etc., ECOC cities from 1995-2004 paid between circa eight million euro (Reykjavik) to 74 million (Lille), the average being 37 million (Palmer et al 2004, p. 93). The capital expenditure for the cultural and urban infrastructure associated with the ECOC varied from 8 million euro in Bologna to 233 million in Thessaloniki.

Thus, the 1.5 million from the EU is only a kick-off fund. It was expected to be matched by the state and the city. The real budget depends on these institutions as well as private and semi-public sources. Having two small cities to hold the title, one in a new member-state and one in an old one was a policy to keep everyone happy. After all, the basic EU investment behind the ECOC policy is minimal. Yet the funding for holding the event must come from somewhere. This, as we see below, will cause conflicts as other levels would have to commit themselves and invest in the ECOC.

Furthermore, new rules are being adopted as of the 2010 title, through the establishment of the prize that would provide the co-financing of the EU (1.5 million euro):

*On the basis of the report issued by the monitoring and advisory panel after its second meeting as referred to in Article 10(4), a pecuniary prize in honour of Melina Mercouri shall be awarded to the designated cities by the Commission provided that they meet the criteria laid down in Article 4 and have implemented the recommendations made by the selection and the monitoring and advisory panels. The prize shall be awarded in full no later than three months before the start of the relevant year.*

Other funding from the EU can be applied for finalising the projects (1622/2006/EC). The idea is to make cities deliver what they promise in their applications. However, in terms of the length of the process, they would have to keep their sponsors and even artists for the whole duration of the event from the application phase to the end. This soon became tested: Vilnius, the Lithuanian ECOC 2009 had difficulties in getting the national government to back the programme and agree on the funding, while in the Hungarian ECOC 2010, Pécs, local and national changes in the balance of powers between the left and right parties had significantly shaken the plans for the ECOC year. Beyond the party political contestation, there are issues such as the global economic downturn that have their impact on the ECOCs, too.

However, costs are not only occurring due to the cultural programme for the ECOC year – and of course the effects of the successful year ought to be long term. The ECOCs have to finance themselves. The 1.5 million euro would be enough to house a small ECOC office for a few years. Yet it will be granted only after the final programme for the year is ready, in the previous autumn. Consequently, the funds for maintaining the office have to be gathered from the local, regional or national budget, if not from sponsors. In fact, the ECOC title is only a tool. It would equal giving literary prizes that are mainly nominal but are expected to spark success in the book-market, benefiting the publishers equally as the writer. The city gets fame, and the investment should follow in terms of the local economy being sparked by tourism, and finally the economic success should translate to the city’s budget through taxes.

The ECOC is supposed to be a local, regional, national, and European celebration with stakes at each level. Not only Europe but also 'locality', 'region' and 'nation' have been articulated in different ways. They also in different ways serve as the loci and agents of cultural policy. What is it a tool for?
The local project: branding and participation

In terms of urbanism, whereas in the 1990s focus was on the heritage of the cities, in 2005 it had moved to the cultural and social development of the cities – and active citizenship. The ECOC had become a tool – for urban renewal and local economy and identity, not only for the promotion of culture or “Europe”. Identification with Europe had been complemented with notions of progress, heritage, post-industrial culture, and local flavour.

The ECOC process from the application phase onwards formed a platform for profiling at the European and later national levels. In fact, the national competition has been vital for promoting the small cities and for building confidence – with related projects – in the local population (e.g. in Newcastle, see Bailey, Miles & Stark 2004). In the UK, a national City of Culture competition was launched for 2013. The shortlisted cities – Birmingham, Derry, Norwich and Sheffield – are all traditional second-wave ECOC cities in terms of the need for a facelift, whether in the post-Fordist development or heritage-mining. No self-respecting town would risk this opportunity to manifest its excellence and charm for potential investors. After all, it was free publicity. Nevertheless, to succeed in the competition over the title the cities would require planning done carefully and with rather expensive consults. On the other hand, if one thinks of this as a process of developing culture, winning the bid is not the most important thing: “Even in the losing cities there is talk about a “momentum” around culture built up during the bid that participants are anxious to keep going. Different, and less bureaucratic, “terms of engagement” may not in themselves have produced more “creative” outcomes” (Giffiths 2006, p. 429).

In short, the ECOC became a branding instrument. Richards and Wilson write:

_Using replicated and branded events as a means of distinguishing cities leads to a paradox whereby those cities seeking to differentiate themselves and escape routine identities tend to end up striving for similar urban and cultural landscapes._ (2004, p. 1932.)

Yet, significantly, they have found out that different groups view the cities in different ways: for example, Rotterdam was viewed a “dynamic” and “culture and art” city by Dutch people rather than visitors from abroad. On the basis of his study into three applications of the ECOC 2008 and the discussion surrounding the bid in the UK, Griffiths (2006, p. 429) claims that the ECOC bidding process managed to articulate differences between the cities, and their distance to the local and regional strategies. The claims of bland uniformity and mindless bureaucracy are hard to sustain. Yet, there is a degree of uniformity. While creating differences between cities, regions and even offering insights to Europe that differ, the ideas of culture are rather similar.4

Besides shaping mental maps and images the ECOCs have been shaping the physical environment. They have created cultural industries (e.g. Glasgow 1990), heritage sites (e.g. Weimar 1999 and Ruhr 2010), modern buildings (e.g. Graz 2003) and renovated whole urban cores (e.g. Sibiu 2007). The ECOC title became important as a tool for urban redevelopment for the cities which follow a more general trend in urban cultural policy, seeking economic and social regeneration (Bianchini 1993; Sassatelli 2006, p. 35). These are, however, clearly tied to the existing or already articulated images. As the title remained lucrative for many small cities in Europe, the new policy came to reinvigorate small towns and cities to a position of international fame. They also got, through public and private investment, a boost for new buildings or institutions to be built. In Austria, Graz 2003
became one of the cities with an eccentric new building that was built on the model of the ECOCs as the attraction to come and see in the years to come – instead of only investing money on the cultural events of the ECOC year. After the event, the building was underused – and criticised.

For many, especially at the local level, ECOCs are keys to success, which is most often seen as economic prosperity and visibility. In the evaluation process of the ECOCs different indicators of success and failure have emerged. In the 1990s, Glasgow has been noted as the prime example of an industrial city that managed to use culture to transform itself in the post-Fordist condition of escaping industry and old-fashioned urban artefacts (see also García 2005). By contrast, Weimar 1999 was the example of a city that used to be the centre of politics in Germany but ended up decaying by the former German border. A lot of money was invested which invited a peak of visitors during the year itself, but whose B&Bs and hotels now stand empty as there are only few visitors to stay for more than one night in this cultural city in the “Heart of Europe, and Germany” (see also Ehrlich 2008). The number of hotel nights spent in the city few years after the actual event indicated a failure in Weimar. The comparisons between the ECOC cities are made despite their dissimilarities – even though Glasgow is located in the centre of trade in Scotland, and Weimar in the “heart of united Germany and Europe”, but rather far from anything else. Nevertheless, the reports become part of EU policy:

> (2) A study into the results achieved by the European City of Culture event until 2004 showed that it had a positive impact in terms of media resonance, the development of culture and tourism and the recognition by inhabitants of the importance of their city having been designated; however, the action still needs to be improved, particularly with regard to its long-term effect on the cultural development of the city and region concerned. (1622/2006/EC.)

The incentive was more profitable to the “second” national cities or cities in a post-Fordist phase of development. Tourism and culture were to replace mass-production. Glasgow became an example for all the successive ECOC cities to aim for, with serious urban rejuvenation projects and city-marketing gains. Weimar in 1999 became the notorious example where money was spent “in vain” – as the number of hotel nights never came to match the expectations of the local enterprise or international evaluators, and the cultural investment and tourist attractions by far extended the need.

The city itself is in the limelight of attention in the ECOC year. However, the brand cannot be fully managed by the city, as it is not the only actor building up the ECOC image. The office or foundation of the ECOC, of course, keeps all the threads together by maintaining an overall control over the cultural events. The over-all image would be theirs, nominally at least, as well as it would be the city’s – though much of the power lies in the hands of the investors. Of the non-ECOC-entities, audiences, citizens, private actors and the fringes – such as alternative or anti-ECOC programmes – also contribute to the ECOC process. Sponsors vary from one ECOC to another: in Liverpool, for instance, all sponsors had a strong link to Liverpool (O’Brien 2008).

The ECOC also came to symbolise the emergence of a cultural elite. One criterion in the success stories of the ECOCs according to Palmer is that the same people would still hold top positions in the cultural life of the same city years or even decades after the event itself. Well, this holds true for Helsinki, for instance. It was the same people who were coordinating the ECOC year of 2000 still holding positions in the management of culture, especially key cultural events such as the Eurovision Song Contest in Helsinki 2007. The lack of changes in the officially sponsored cultural management may result in difficulties for new names, ideas, perspectives or art forms to emerge, especially if after
the ECOC year investments have been drained out. However, the professional machinery with its lobbying power and rhetoric is well in place, as is demonstrated by Helsinki which was chosen as the World Design Capital for 2012.

Furthermore, the ECOC could be seen as a threat to the status quo at the locality, for instance by the exhaustion of funds on the local level — at least where resources are few (e.g. in Sibiu compared with Luxembourg in 2007). In Turku, the flagship project and landmark has been the main municipal library, which has been removing funding from the local libraries, and the library network has been reduced. In the citizen’s forum for Turku as Cultural Capital “Haloo, kuuleecko Turku” “Hullo, does Turku hear us”, questions were raised about the opening hours of district and main libraries, and the planned enclosure. Similarly, discussed in the event were the removal of artists’ studios and workspaces from the city provisions, and the city-owned properties in the centre of Turku, as well as the provision of culture in the local districts and suburbs, which the closing down of district libraries does not promote. Among the worries was also the question of the information about the ECOC year: when would the people get to know what would happen? (Live Turku 2008) Turku consulted Robert Palmer’s office in their bid and invested on the ECOC year, but the question remains: would there be money for culture prior to the event and after, even up to the usual amounts?

To contest the concern of parachuting a branding-package, the policy was changed. The concern about the activation of the local population in the ECOC event has been felt since the 1990s and the policy on the ECOC in 2005 was transformed to call explicitly for participation of citizens and people living in the surroundings as well as for the sustainability and long-term effects of cultural and social developments in the city. The criteria in the cultural programme from 2006 are themed under ‘the European Dimension’ and ‘City and Citizens’:

2. As regards ‘City and Citizens’ the programme shall: (a) foster the participation of the citizens living in the city and its surroundings and raise their interest as well as the interest of citizens from abroad; (b) be sustainable and be an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city. (1622/2006/EC.)

The issue was raised in Liverpool 2008. The independent evaluation stated that there was provision for local artists and cultural organisations (some 10,000 were supported) and it “from the outset sought to improve access to culture, through building community enthusiasm, creativity and participation” and the cultural programme covered each district. However, there are lessons to be learned from combining both art specialist and populist interests, from making sure that the city and the region’s major cultural organizations are engaged from early on and that the cultural programme is published well in advance (ECOTEC 2009, pp. 66, 68, 73-73). The participation aspect was clearly articulated already in the Liverpool bid. The ECOCs are in the double-bind which is analogous to culture-led urban regeneration: they would bring both social and economic effects. “That the prevailing rhetoric of the ECOC bid documents is deeply infused with the language of social inclusion and social capital can be taken as evidence that official discourses of culture and the city have, in some ways, become more sophisticated. […] It does not necessarily mean that the earlier logic of narrow economic instrumentalism has now given way to a contrasting “social” logic”, Griffiths argues (2006, p. 428).

The first few months of Istanbul 2010 have not convinced all locals or local artists of investments in the cultural programme of the ECOC: though there are some concerts, they worry that the focus is on the raising of the touristic image of the city abroad rather than on the local community. In
fact, in many cases, the ECOC builds a countermovement within the locality (as in Weimar 1999, see Frank & Roth 2000; Frank 2003). The project Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 has been providing an alternative space since 2007 for the culture, action, community-building and critique. It is in touch with a whole movement (or a collection of movements) of alternative cultural actors nation-wide. Is this included in the ECOC promotion of the active citizenship – and the local value of the event?

However, the case of Luxembourg the ECOC year of 1995 saw the creation of the local cultural elite, which in the small yet multicultural country had been fragmented or dormant. Cultural institutions and connections created in 1995 had been active up to the 2007 ECOC year of the Greater Region. The research-informing interviews in 2007 suggest that only some of the 1995 generation were active in the 2007 event: they had their families and new worries to sort out, and locally-speaking the 2007 was an event to engage Luxembourgian youth. Yet even the 2007 event has spill-over effects: the location at the former Paul Wurth workshop that was one of the alternative bases of the ECOC 2007 year hosts the alternative cultural venue CarréRotondes while one of the main venues of the ECOC year, the Rotonde engine workshop is being renovated.

Rarely, however, would the ECOC be seen as a form of cultural emancipation locally. Griffiths points out:

There is little sign, in any of the bids of culture being viewed as a medium for collective emancipation; of culture as a field of struggle and resistance; of culture as a source of oppositional identities; of a more fundamental politics of culture. (Griffiths 2006, p. 430.)

The local perception should matter, nevertheless. Analyzing the actual success of the praised Glasgow event García (2005) calls for attention to media and personal narratives in describing the event and its successes and failures, rather than simple measures of visitor influx.

In sum, in the locality the ECOC could be a branding-instrument in the national, European and international competition over tourism and investment, as well as a tool for civic pride or participation. The EU’s policy was to have European capitals taking the title, but this seemed not as tentative for the capital cities themselves – who were not in the need of such marketing. What was at stake was not only the making of Europe, but the making of the locality. It was rather lucrative for the second and aspiring cities. The ECOC could become synonymous with a cultural elite or lack as well as a source of investment in local cultural institutions, and it could foster a countermovement. Finally, the ECOC could become a grassroots mobilisation tool, creating potential for conflict over the direction of urban development and the use of resources for culture. As the discussion shows, there could be different forces in the localities seeking to direct the ECOC to these different directions or name its roles, assign the floating signifier with specific function and content.

Regional project: cultural power and identity

3.2.3. Emphasis must also be placed on the ability for cities that are not national capitals to take on the task of flying the flag of European culture, as Thessaloniki has successfully done, making it a benchmark for future events. 3.2.6. The COR would propose that, for future cities of culture, the aim should be to provide timely and punctual support. 4.2. The COR would emphasize the regional

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The Committee of the Regions (COR) in the European Parliament called for chances for second cities, timely and punctual support, and regional and local diversity of European culture, when the official policy and legislation for the ECOC was rewritten. In fact, regional funds have traditionally been the main source for European Community/Union funding for culture – and thus to raise the profile of the EU in the regions. As Evans and Foord (1999) argue, this has been accomplished partly through policies favouring culture, partly as cities and art institutes apply successfully for non-culture earmarked funds for projects highlighting employment and enterprise instead of culture, and partly as museums and others had to be presented as economic beneficiaries as they cannot get funds profiled as cultural. In short, the implicit cultural policy effect of the regional and cohesion funds have traditionally been very large. Similarly the implicit economic policy effect of cultural policy has been such. However, crucially, Evans and Foord (1999, p. 79) argue: “funding culture through European grant-aid has had two purposes: fostering a common European cultural experience and promoting urban based regional development.” Here, one can revisit the normative ideal of the European city, expanded to the region. Rather than the countryside, it is the networked cities (within or fostering regions) that make up Europe (see also Hein 2006). The ECOC from the 1990s were highlighting “secondary cities”, which would also emphasise the region.

In 2007, the regional element was very strong: Luxembourg hosted the ECOC with its capital and the Greater Region – ranging from Germany and France to Belgium. It sought to create a sense of common identity for this region, enhance cross-border collaboration between actors in the cultural fields and political collaboration, “put the Grand region on the European map”, and promote it as a tourist destination. The identity, region and the ECOC was marked with the common logo, the blue stag, which popped up in places related to the ECOC across the region. In fact, a phenomenon of “stagflation” was recognised: the blue stag was everywhere, and the press stopped using the symbol after a while. (Luxembourg and Greater Region 2008, pp. 10, 65) In terms of regional cultural unification the year still has a legacy: information of cultural events in the whole region, especially the German city of Trier and regional cities in Luxembourg are still being gathered in 2010 for tourists visiting and locals residing in Luxembourg.

Sibiu, in turn, emphasised its Transylvanian Saxon regional character in the application phase, but in the end turned into a model city for the new EU member Romania, who joined EU as the ECOC year started. The Saxony affinity to Luxembourg and the “German” character of the town that were to be celebrated – in the 1-2 percent Hungarian and German town, lead by a German mayor – was turned into a celebration of Romania’s new role in the unified Europe. Also, as Transylvania – Siebenbürgen or seven castles in Saxon German – is a multi-polar region itself, there was no cross-Transylvanian movement to back the Sibiu ECOC. Sibiu was the most German among all the Transylvanian cities. The Roma tradition – gypsy music and culture – was put on display in the programme exported to Luxembourg rather than being celebrated in Sibiu.

In 2010 the German Ruhr area is turning a whole region – practically urban habitation throughout – into one ECOC. The Ruhr 2010 is all about regional effort: although applied for by the city of Essen, the open secret was that in the event of being actually awarded with the ECOC, it would be a whole regional effort. For 2010, the Ruhr museum has opened with a permanent exhibition telling the history of the region and its industry in the UNESCO World Heritage site (since 2001) of

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Zollverein, formerly the one of the largest coal mine and coking plant in Europe and the “most beautiful coal mine in the world“, according to the European Route of Industrial Heritage (EHIR). What Glasgow did in terms of seeking a new post-industrialist identity through culture and heritage-mining is what Ruhr 2010 is trying to do for the whole region by drawing from its heritage of mining.

Regional difference is articulated as difference between regions but also as a difference to the nation state. The EU funding and the cultural policies – explicit and implicit – tied to that benefit the region-centred revival. This is also visible in the ECOCs, although regions on which the ECOC process relies on and which it contributes in defining are a choice from many different possibilities – which the second ECOC year of Luxembourg showed.

For the regions, the ECOC was a tool to create coherence and raise their value. This was inline with other investment on culture that in the EU is largely distributed to the regions. The ECOC could be used to foster, recognise, direct or (re)create a regional identity. It also offered a tool to contest the nation-state and invest regional pride in their major city on the international scale.

Nation: responsibility, pride and prejudice

Originally, the body responsible for organising and financing of the ECOC would be chosen by the member state. In 1997, the Commission argued that:

_Up to now, the "of Culture" has been an intergovernmental initiative, the choice of city being a political decision taken by the representatives of the Member States. Every year, the Community has made a contribution to the "of" […] The cultural competence assigned to the Community by the Treaty on European Union now requires that this event be placed in the Community framework._

(COM(97) 549 final 97/0290 (COD).)

The responsibility of the ECOC was on the nation, and as there is little funding coming from the EU the nation state has been taking the largest share of the ECOC funding; on average 57 percent (Palmer et al 2004, p. 98). This has meant that the local governments had to be backing the project from the application phase to the evaluation. Long-term commitment and political will has been attributed as one of the keys to success of the ECOCs, by Robert Palmer in his influential report on the successes and failures of the ECOCs (Palmer et al 2004).

In practice, the change in 1999 delegated the power to nominate ECOCs for each year from the EU to the nation states. What emerged as a worry in 2002 in the EU was that member states were not putting forward more than one candidate: no need for a European committee on the matter. This was blamed on the lack of competition: “Since Decision 1419/1999 came into force, the Member States, except for Ireland, have never put forward more than one nomination each year. Almost without exception they have chosen cities which were very important to them for electoral reasons, mostly to consolidate recent victories in municipal elections. In this way, the European dimension of the project became secondary. There is a temptation to hold festivals of local folklore.”

Could the “European added value” be assessed, as the committee on Culture, Youth, the Media and Sport had hoped? (COM(2003) 700 – C50548/2003 – 2003/0274(COD).)

The ECOCs became not only showcases of Europe, but of the nation-state too. The above mentioned consultants hired for the bidding process by the cities are not enough, as a political game...
of positions can influence the choice of the national jury. Often indeed, national governments wanted to target resources to one of the promising applicant cities. In the light of recent ECOCs a working relationship between the city and the government was essential for the success in the years leading up to the celebrations. However, the politicized relationship of targeting resources for a specific city and for culture is not useful when power relations change in cities and governments.

Arguably, a key problem in the political funding crises is that the ECOC does not bring much direct investment from the EU to the city. Three examples of the recent ECOCs demonstrate this problematic from different perspectives: In Hungary, Pécs 2010 was ultimately seen, at least on the political Right, as a political decision by the government to back an innovative mayor from the Socialist party, which was also the senior government party. He later suffered a heart attack and power-balance changed in Pécs from left to right, similarly as it has been changing all around Hungary for the latter part of 2000s. The commitment and resources were put in doubt on many occasions since the nomination of Pécs as the ECOC 2010.

In Lithuania, Vilnius ECOC 2009 experienced trouble due to the change in government. The winners of the election The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats had been rallying against the ECOC, so also their cultural policy was different from the previous one. The Ministry of Culture adopted a rather populist perspective to culture in comparison to the ECOC office in Vilnius, which favoured high arts. For them it was the chance for Vilnius and Lithuania to upgrade in terms of the arts: provide something for the international audience and of international standards. The ECOC year was also not their project, but one of the previous government. Still in March 2009, the ECOC office had not received a binding funding decision from the national government and could not sign contracts with the artists. Thus, one did not know what would be on the ECOC programme.

In Romania, Sibiu had been chosen as the ECOC 2007 through the back-door. Their application had been backed and encouraged by Luxembourg, which was looking forward to getting another ECOC year after a successful ECOC 1995. As their previous application failed, they turned towards their Saxon cousins. Having achieved the nomination, the East European provincial town of Sibiu was faced with a boom of tourists, but they lacked infrastructure and investment. The Old Town was to be the heart of activity. But, as there had been no repairs to it in the 50 years of communism and almost none in the post-1989 era, it was in ruins. After years of applications they finally received funding from the Romanian government to improve the infrastructure, piping, roads and roofs and facades, only a year before the event for a quick-fix. The central government was rather suspicious of the Transylvanian town – after all it was regional and local pride that was celebrated in Sibiu – but as Romania joined the EU in 2007, the ECOC town was used as its shop-window for foreign journalists and visitors.

While Weimar was the city of the newly united Germany, the borderland was transformed into the heart of Germany and Europe. The case of Istanbul is a curious one as this is the chance to celebrate the Turkish metropolitan city as a European one. Across Europe there would be a campaign for Istanbul as a cultural and touristic attraction. Simultaneously, there are discussions over the European character of Turkey and its emigrant population around Europe. Here, there are attempts to contest the common bipolar opposition of the Turkish and the European, and to demonstrate that Istanbul could be valuable as European cultural capital not just as European Capital of Culture.
The nation-state could regard the ECOC either as a chance to promote one’s country or promote the renewal of urban centres through investment in culture and infrastructure. As the proposals from the European member states only include one candidate they also can make the decision about which city to invest in when it is their turn to host the title. Only Germany has made the exception of leaving it to the EU to decide whether to nominate the western Essen (Ruhr) or eastern border city Görlitz for the 2010 title. Yet, as the ECOC process is a long one, power-balance may change in the countries and the favoured cities of one government might not be those of the next one, which might result in a conflict over resources and funding of urban renovations, flag-ship buildings or indeed the cultural programme.

Making “Europe”

The ECOCs were for a long time an implicit cultural policy in the sense that they could not be called explicit cultural policies: only the article 151 in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) gave a legal basis for cultural actions and policies of the European Union. It nevertheless still maintained the nation-state as the main actor (Sassatelli 2006, p. 27). Currently, the Union hosts a Culture programme (2007-2013), which has a “budget of €400 million for projects and initiatives to celebrate Europe’s cultural diversity and enhance our shared cultural heritage through the development of cross-border co-operation between cultural operators and institutions” (Culture Programme 2009).

Sassatelli has argued that the Council of Europe has worked as the de facto think-tank for EU policies on culture:

[The] COE’s European Cultural Convention rhetoric has been progressively embodied in the EU’s emerging cultural discourse – much as the flag used by the COE since 1955 was appropriated by the EC in 1986, and since then has become a very common part of our everyday symbolic landscape. (Sassatelli, 2006, p. 26.)

Also UNESCO has been influential in the ECOCs process as many monumental sites have been awarded a World Heritage status during the ECOC year – Luxembourg 1995 is one of the examples. The applications for the ECOC status have also included references to a UNESCO status (e.g. Luxembourg gained in time for 1995, and Sibiu applied in 2006).

The need for a European identity was articulated very carefully in the European Community since the 1970s: “community action in the cultural sector is not cultural policy” (CEC 1977, cited in Sassatelli 2006, p. 26). The European Capitals of Culture programme is one of the only policies of culture by the European Union – which in themselves are scarce as, in fact, the explicit European Cultural Policy is really in the hands of the Council of Europe. And what is at stake with the ECOCs is the symbolic landscape in each capital of culture and in the tourist and cultural landscapes of Europe.

The of Culture (ECOC) programme can be considered representative of EU interventions in culture and more generally of the particular policy style described above. The programme has in fact a complex history and a hybrid character that characterizes community cultural action. (Sassatelli 2006, p. 33.)

Mercouri’s idea was to contribute to more interaction between Europeans and to enhance the European project that until then had no cultural content but was heavily based on economic values.
and preserving peace through common trade area. From the 1970s the connection of education and peace had emerged as important. Culture could become a tool for Europeans and for creating Europeans. These cities have been networking in yearly meetings of the ECOCs, and they create targeted tourism.

1. As regards ‘the European Dimension’, the programme shall: (a) foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from the relevant Member States and other Member States in any cultural sector; (b) highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe; (c) bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore. (1622/2006/EC.)

For the EU, the ECOCs have been producing Europe, but “Europe” comes across in many forms. What does the policy imply by “European”? Essentialised Europe? As the common European values and history are just a master narrative that is being forced to create “a common root”, is the ECOC the tool to highlight such a narrative? There can of course be universalizing narratives, but they are only a political strategy, where differences and dissonances – that may actually be worth a focus – will be eroded (cf. Laclau 1995). Would this policy by the EU really narrate a common European history or create an image of the European city, or will it create a range of differences and different perceptions of Europe and through that a narrative of its own? In many ways, the policy strengthens both unity and diversity in Europe. The European city as normative ideal – a normative ideal, a place of freedom, a place for ideas and coming-together – is similar to the ideals of “Europe” as articulated for instance in the Lisbon treaty. It has been claimed that Europe is still on the colonial track trying to claim all that it holds as good as its own exclusive property. As it universalises, it marginalizes others.

According to the Decision Number 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019:

The nomination must include a cultural project of European dimension, based principally on cultural cooperation in accordance with the objectives and action provided for by Article 151 of the Treaty (formerly Article 128). The project may be organised in association with other European cities.

Sassatelli argues,

...the ECOC is, often explicitly, a means for a reconceptualization of both space and time in European terms. Such a conclusion can be intuited in the very formulation of the programme, in particular with regard to the reconceptualization of space. Greek, Italian and French cities are now called European (as once they were nationalized). (2006, p. 37.)

Yet, the definition of Europe works also vice versa – what is considered as European is articulated from the local perspective: space and time of the particular ECOC city are influential in choosing and naming what is Europe and the European.

The Decision also states:

The application must specify how, within the scope allowed by the theme, the applicant city intends (Article 3):

to highlight artistic movements and styles shared by Europeans which it has inspired or to which it has made a significant contribution;

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to promote events involving people active in culture from other cities in Member States of the European Union and leading to lasting cultural cooperation, and to foster their movement within the European Union;

to ensure the mobilisation and participation of large sections of the population;

to encourage the reception of citizens of the European Union and reach as wide an audience as possible by employing a multimedia, multilingual approach;

to promote dialogue between European cultures and those from other parts of the world;

to exploit the historic heritage, urban architecture and quality of life in the city. (1419/1999EC.)

Crucially, according to the Decision there existed something “European” and things that could be regarded as “shared by Europeans” – what these would be would be part of the negotiation process, in the application phase between the applicant (the prospective ECOC city) and the nominating body (national and/or European). It also recognised how people engaged in culture should meet and form cooperation in long term. The Decision, however, also raises up European cultures in plural – and their interaction with cultures outside of Europe. The ECOC would also contribute to the shared movements and styles. It talks about mobilisation and participation of “large sections” and reception of EU citizens. Years later the ECOCs were targeted for citizens living in the area and abroad. In 2005, the criteria for the cultural programme were divided into two sub-categories: “the European Dimension” and “City and Citizens”.

The European Parliament voted on the ECOC legislation to de-essentialize the grounds on which the European is argued in the process. Amendments 5 and 11 work as examples:

(Amendment 5) Whereas, in compliance with the principles for action laid down by Article European City of Culture is to be selected each year to organize a cultural project [on a specific, European theme, possibly in association with other European cities] (designed to lend effective support to cultural creativity on a theme based on its own identity, specific characteristics, history and future, supported by its own living economic, social and cultural forces and geared to the desire to contribute to European cultural development in all its diversity);

(Amendment 11) The application must present a [European] cultural project focusing on a specific European theme and based principally on cultural cooperation, in accordance with the objectives and measures provided for by Article 128 of the EC Treaty. The project may be organized in association with other European cities (to be chosen by the proposing city, which shall lead the project throughout). 5

They also amended the document with measures for participation:

- to ensure the mobilization and participation of large sections of the population and, as a consequence, the social impact of the action and its continuity beyond the year of the festivities;

and with dimensions related to urban design and heritage:

- to optimize the historic heritage, urban design and the quality of urban life, which are indissociable from the cultural dimension of cities, and, in particular, to highlight the relationship between using the existing heritage and contemporary creative work. (COM(97)0549 C4-0580/97 97/0290(COD).)

Especially in the application phase, each ECOC also seeks to develop or adopt a “European” brand. Each ECOC brands itself as “more European” than others. For example, Sibiu ECOC 2007 would
highlight its Saxon roots as European heritage: the Hungarian king had invited Saxon settlers to Transylvania, where they established seven cities – the German name for the region is still Siebenbürgen. Sibiu would then be more European than the Romanian towns and villages around it, and Transylvania more European than Romania. Luxembourg ECOC 2007 would be European: a trans-border region, French, German, Belgium and Luxembourgish. Turku ECOC 2011, a port-town in Finland and the former capital would in its bid – as a Hanseatic town – present itself as more European than the capital city, Helsinki. Unity and diversity – the bipolar distinction that is in the heart of European projects is also the key item in the discussion on the effects of the ECOCs.

For example the authors of the Liverpool bid, among the applicants to the 2008 title in the UK, were particularly skillful in representing the city as a European one.

*The distinctive cultural resources it has developed over a very long period to cope with the pressures of economic decline, long range population movement and the mixing of cultures make the city an “excellent role model” for today’s and thus perfectly fitted for the role as European Capital of Culture.* (Griffiths 2006.)

Yet, an evaluation report on the ECOCs 2007 and 2008 states that while the four cities ‘were effective in implementing a wide range of activities with a European dimension, the nature of that dimension and the extent of effectiveness varied in sum, ‘all ECOC gave only modest attention to the development of European themes and issues’ (ECOTEC 2009). For instance, there were co-productions and exchanges across Europe in the three other cities, in Sibiu collaboration with other Europeans ‘was peripheral to the main cultural programme and primarily took place only with the other title holder’, whereas Luxembourg was the one out of four for whom attracting artists of European significance was not a prominent objective (ECOTEC, 2009, vi).

The ECOC is a Pan-European project, where the idea of cultural entrepreneurs is influential. Importantly, cultural entrepreneurs advise on capitals of culture projects in the application phase and during the city. A pan-European elite of consultants and administrators have a strong impact on the selection process and success. Research is done for policy purposes and for legitimizing the importance of the ECOC year: why it should be invested in and what should be done throughout the year. Much of the research is highly policy-informing, as whatever key reports would find out would be the truth for the ECOCs to follow and the criteria along the lines of the reports. As the perceptions of success and failure, and perceptions of what the cities should achieve during the year, also started having an effect on how they should be focusing their programmes, there has been a great danger of turning the ECOCs into rather similar celebrations of the “European added value”. This is reinforced through the flow of top-consultants who would give guidance on the planning of the application and the prospective year. What one recognises from the winning applications is the concept of the ECOC – the “real” ECOC spirit. Besides directing state, firm-donations and foundation money to certain kinds of activities, the process is also directing funds to the ECOC elite. Each ECOC also create their own network of cultural producers and actors while taking part in European ones and the official network of the ECOCs. The surveys and studies by Robert Palmer’s office have been the most influential.

The overall aim of the European Economic Community was ensuring peace and economic prosperity through commitment. Originally this sense of commitment was to help political and economic elites, and migrants in the coal and mining industry. Over time, with the freedom of movement and other cross-border cooperation this has been extended to the larger population. The
same charge of elite against popular culture is commonly made in the European Capitals of Culture: is it only for the cultural and economic elites, and cultural workers and entrepreneurs? In the same way as the unifying Europe, the scheme has experienced different discursive stages from the “nation-statist” demos building to the intercultural vision emphasising diversity and finally to the participatory civic-culture. In their applications to the status of the ECOC as in the carrying out of Europe, they make themselves Europeans par excellence. Europe and the European become articulated time and time again with different contents.

For the European Union, the ECOC work as a efficient and inexpensive tool for forming, rearticulating a European identity, celebrating “European added value” and “unity in diversity”. It also facilitates the creation of European cultural elites and industries, as well as bridges the citizens with the Union.

Conclusions

If democracy is possible, it is because the universal has no necessary body and no necessary content; different groups, instead, compete between themselves to temporarily give their particularisms a function of universal representation. (Laclau 1995, 106.)

To sum up, for the EU, the ECOC process is a cheap tool for marketing, creating a sense of shared space and a polycentric capital. For the nation states, the ECOC process offers a tool for renewal of urban centres through culture: investments can be made in the bid-winning cities – and ultimately have to be if the country is to hold their title as the new legislation requires funding for the programme before the title is ultimately awarded. For the regions, the ECOC offers a tool to escape – to an extent – the national framework and get their own moment of pride through the regional city. Finally, for the localities, the ECOC presents the chance for urban regeneration and image-building, but at the same time a potential source of conflict over the direction of change and the use of resources.

Each of the levels with their actors and institutions has their stakes in the reproduction of the ECOC process. This is equally indicative of the far-reaching ethos of the European Union – already indicated by the “think-tank” European Council – about the cultural add-value that any politics of integration would need. Furthermore, it shows how the thesis of the unity in diversity has gained strength and how the idea of a “multi-polar” Europe with a diverse heritage has been promoted and adopted. It is significant that at each of the levels the ECOC would take different meanings and be afforded different roles. Policies would seek to ground some of them as the most important.

While in many ways still a homogenising process, the ECOCs also highlight the multilevel character of this cultural policy in implicit and explicit dimensions. On each level there are different conflicts with their gains and losses at stake. The EU policy is changing over time, which is a challenge for the ECOC processes. Yet, the key issue for the diversity and for the conflicts of the ECOC is financing. These ought to be secured or the legitimacy of this project – as something of added European, as well as local, national or regional, and cultural value to other festivals and events – will vary between the ECOC cities. It has been demonstrated by the earlier ECOCs that political situations may transform rapidly and so may the viability or the function of the ECOC project. For instance, Sibiu as the Transylvanian Saxon ECOC emerged as the perfect partner for Saxon Luxembourg, but she also was transformed into the shop-window of the new EU member state.
Romania. Also, as the funding of the ECOC is so dependent on national, local, regional and private sources, rather than the EU, it will remain susceptible to changes outside the reach of the Union. The 1.5-million-euro investment offers the EU little authority and ownership over the ECOCs.

Yet, it is precisely this dependence of the investment from all levels, which makes the ECOC a multi-level policy and an object of shared commitment. Not only has the EU managed to create a policy that is cost-effective for itself but one that ties different levels to the common cause – and the simultaneous promotion of both Europe, the EU, the nation-state, the region and the city itself (with possible emphasis on specific districts). The EU-policy is handed over as the responsibility of the regions, cities and local communities, to celebrate European cultures, evoke implicit cultural policies that on a micro-level could be observed and identified – in their similar and varied characters. Some of them take place on the local and regional level others take place in the creation of a pan-European cultural elite of the artists, entrepreneurs and consultants. At each level they would be fixing meanings of what the ECOC would be about – for them.

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Legislation


(85/C 153/02). Resolution of the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs, meeting within the Council of 13 June 1985 concerning the annual event ‘European City of Culture’.


1 Unfortunately but also obviously, I cannot disclose the dates, positions or names of the interviewees, as that would compromise their identities. It would be enough to say that they have been sitting in the selection panels of the ECOCs, working for them at the ECOC offices and local cultural industries. Some of them have been participants at the ECOCs, journalists and ordinary citizens. For the macro level and scale of the study, actually trying to make a larger point about the ECOC process and phenomenon over time and space, this level of specificity should be accurate enough. It would be different had I focused on say, the ECOCs of 2007 as specific cases.

2 I would like to thank the Körber Foundation Hamburg for a five-month Junior Fellowship “History and Memory in Europe” at the IWM, Vienna, during which I initiated this research but finally finished my PhD thesis for the University of Essex on another topic, and the DAAD, for a Junior Scholarship at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and the two-month stay at the Institute for European Ethnology. Especially I thank the whole team of the Bauhaus Kolleg Dessau, and in the case of this article especially Regina Bittner for the year studying the ECOCs of 2007 from the perspective of urbanism as well as the ECOC. I also thank for the anonymous interviewees across Europe, with whom I have been holding the initial conversations in waiting (in vain) for a proper research project.

3 In an article in the same issue David Throsby (2009) points out that "some economic policies have a hidden cultural purpose and therefore qualify as implicit cultural policy". Some of them are deliberate, Throsby points out: "some policies in non-cultural areas could be labelled as implicitly cultural if they are simply conditioned by what the policy-maker believes to be prevailing cultural norms".

4 While brands, as the ECOC itself, have the advantage of consumer familiarity, they also have the disadvantage of losing original distinctiveness, as Richards and Wilson (2005, p. 1201) have argued in their paper investigating ‘consequences of increasing serial reproduction of culture for tourism’. ECOCs tend to create similar strategies as Richards and Wilson (2005, pp. 1210-1212) enumerate: landmarks; megaevents (ECOC is a megaevent itself); thematisation (during the year each city seeks to develop its own theme which is not limited to Europe but range from migration, water, Saxon roots to Grande Region); and heritage-mining.

5 The text within [ ] was removed and replaced by the text within ( ).

6 The participant observation from the Bauhaus Kolleg, Dessau, in both ECOCs would comment that the Sibiu had a locally closely guarded programme while Luxembourg was uninterested in megastars that would visit the city and the region independent of the ECOC events.