The Lessons of the 'European Cities (Capitals) of Culture' Programme (1985- 2008)

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Abstract: The "European Capital Culture" programme was launched by the European Council of Ministers in 1985. Each city appointed *European Capital of Culture* for a one-year period is given the chance to showcase its cultural life and cultural identity within the European Union as well as worldwide. Over the past 23 years, 37 European cities have been nominated as *European Capitals of Culture*.

The paper seeks to analyze the different missions and objectives chosen by these cities, chiefly within the framework of a sociological and marketing-oriented approach. By way of conclusion, it will highlight both the positive and critical factors to be considered within a process aimed at developing cities of culture.

Key Words: Culture, European Identity, Cultural planning, Cities of Culture, Creativity

The public urban cultural policies in Europe and the first phase (1985–1989) of the European Cities (Capitals) of Culture Programme

Until the early 1970s the public cultural policies of the States that had until 1989 represented Western Europe were characterised by a definition of culture that solely considered those works that were defined as being "high culture." The main aim of the public initiatives of those years consisted in promoting the enjoyment of these works by means of an enlargement of access to a public audience that had until then been excluded, above all for economic, cultural and social reasons.

From the mid-1970s and until the 1980s there had been a dissemination of decentralisation policies, also cultural ones, and a growth of actions addressed to increasing citizens'political and social participation in the decision-making processes. It was a period known as the 'season of participation and access' that affected many sectors of public life. Public cultural initiatives were presented in a non-homogeneous way in the various European States that contested a definition of culture, which envisaged a rigid distinction between "high" e "low" culture. The cultural policy became an aspect of public social life with the objective of reconstructing the urban social context also by way of access to the culture that is increasingly open to disadvantaged categories. The cultural initiatives in that

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period were used by the public authorities also to enhance political consensus.

In those years the interest of the European Union grew in promoting its own cultural policy with a view to developing a European conscience or sentiment. In the absence of a perception of a European identity shared by all the citizens of the States of the European Union, the latter carried forward "symbolic measures devised as means for the creation or the reawakening of European identity" (Sassatelli 2005: 10). Among these, the creation of European symbols such as the flag, the anthem, the Europe Day (9th May); the European Cities of Culture (renamed European Capitals of Culture in 2005) programme. The objectives of these European cultural policies were two-fold: spreading shared cultural symbols and, at the same time, respecting the cultural diversities.

The "European City Culture" programme was launched by the European Council of Ministers in 1985.

Each city nominated European City of Culture for a one-year period is given the opportunity to showcase its cultural life and cultural identity within the European Union. The original aim of the programme was wholly of a cultural nature (Sassatelli 2005): making the cultural production of the designated cities circulate and bringing to these cities the culture of the other European cities, thereby creating a global image of European culture through this circulation of products.

Over the last twenty-three years, thirty-seven European cities have been nominated European Cities of Capitals of Culture (ECOC).

The objectives of the ECOCs are inevitably affected by the more general characteristics of the European urban cultural policies of the period.

The cities nominated European Cities of Culture from 1985 to 1989 were: Athens (Greece); 1986: Florence (Italy); 1987: Amsterdam (Netherlands); 1988: West Berlin (West Germany); 1989: Paris (France)

These cities, already recognised throughout the world as hosting an important cultural heritage, have kept faith with the "cultural aims" indicated in the programme launching the initiative: exhibitions and shows that privileged the productions of European "high culture", with the aims of creating an image of European culture also to be promoted among an audience different from the traditional one. As can be seen, these are programmes still driven by a conception of culture that insists on the separation between *high* and *low* culture and that identifies European culture as the set of works of high culture realised in the continent over the centuries up to the present-day.

The public urban cultural policies in Europe from 1990 until today

From the end of the 1980s until the end of the 1990s objectives of economic development had prevailed along with the regeneration of the cities by means of investment policies, the use of marketing instruments and promotion of the image of the cities. The city manager was born. The definition of culture in this phase is characterised in an anthropological sense and thus comprises not only the artistic products but also costumes, traditions and ways of life that connote an whole population, or parts of it.

The positive aspects of the public policies of those years are essentially three in number (Bianchini 1993, 1999):

a. The reuse of buildings or whole decaying or abandoned neighbourhoods. The difficult economic situation that has affected many European cities, has obliged the public administrations to rethink the use of these buildings or whole parts of the city in terms of the new objectives. In many cases these have been the objectives of cultural development: the old manufacturing economy has been replaced by a more innovative cultural economy;

b. This change has brought about the birth of new companies and new professions oriented to culture. The number of workers created and the quantity of wealth produced has generally been unable to resolve the local economic crisis, but has allowed for the more immediate difficulties to be overcome and has provided some indications as to possible future decisions;

c. The set of these urban cultural policy decisions has allowed the various European cities to achieve an international city image whose identity is characterised by a cultural renaissance.

The phase that stretches from the end of the 1990s until now has at times been characterised by the presence of true and proper 'cultural planning strategies', that have been the subject of debate since the early 1990s (McNulty 1991, 1996; Mercer 1991; Bianchini 1996). It is a phase that seeks to overcome some of the limits of the urban cultural policies of the previous period. According to Colin Mercer, cultural planning is characterised by planning and the strategic and integrated use of cultural resources for urban and community development. Planning is understood here as the organisational cornerstone that gives rise to all the other functions of the public policies. From this choice there follows the need for cooperation and integration between the urban and architectural planning with the planning carried forward by the economists, with the result of increasing the social

actors and the disciplines involved. Among the actors involved, besides the public sector, we have the private and the third sector. The interdisciplinary nature is broadened to the sociological, anthropological, ethnographic and historical approaches. The strategic role means that the cultural planning is part of a broader strategy of development of the territory with objectives that refer not only to the physical environment but also to the economic, industrial, social and tourist development. Integrated means that the possibility of a strategic use of the cultural resources must be thought of and planned right from the ideation phase of the project.

Another key concept of cultural planning is, according to Francesco Bianchini (2004: 7), a broad definition of 'cultural resources', which consists of the following elements:

"- arts and media activities and institutions;

- the youth culture, ethnic minority cultures and other 'communities of interest';

- the heritage, including archaeology, gastronomy, local dialects and rituals;

- local and external images and perceptions of a city, including the ways in which they change in the course of history and how they can be interpreted by different groups within the population -by, for example, children, particular ethnic communities, and the elderly-;

- the natural and built environment, including public and open spaces;

- the diversity and quality of leisure, cultural, eating, drinking and entertainment facilities and activities;

- local milieu and institutions for intellectual and scientific innovation, including Universities and private sector research centres;

- the repertoire of local products and skills in the crafts, manufacturing and services, including local food products, gastronomic and design traditions".

From a general standpoint, going beyond the indications of Rod Fisher (2002), we can subdivide the European public policies for culture according to seven prevalent orientations that do not mutually exclude one another:

- defensive policies: promotion of initiatives that protect and safeguard the cultural specificities of the given territory;

- social integration policies: broadening the possibilities for access to the cultural products to segments of the population that have so far been excluded, also affecting the type of cultural provision;

- policies that favour the central role of the creative professions and that

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aim at an increase in employment and the knowledge economy;

- image-making policies;

- policies for the reorganisation of the financing systems for culture in order to make the cultural initiatives more efficient and less onerous:

- marketing repositioning policies by placing the cultural resources at the heart of the development.

The city marketing and the role of cultural planning in Europe from 1990 to today

By city (territorial) marketing we mean, traditionally, the application of marketing instruments for the valorisation of a certain territorial area, with the aim of improving the settlement conditions and the appeal of a locality in the eyes of investors and current or potential users. The development of city marketing is the consequence of the increased competitiveness between cities at the local, national and international levels. The operative objectives, diversified from one another yet integrated within a single planning project, are multiple. From the external point of view: attracting new economic and productive activities by offering new public services and offering efficient public services and infrastructures, attracting new tourist flows; promoting a positive image. The specific internal objectives to be reached are the satisfaction of the needs of the citizens and the productive activities of the territory to improve the quality of life, increasing the relationship of trust with the local authorities and creating a profound sense of belonging to the territory.

This distinction between internal marketing and external marketing is relevant from the operative standpoint; from the conceptual standpoint it is instead important to underline the integrations in order to be able to involve all of the stakeholders.

Since the mid-1980s the idea has spread in Europe that the assets and the cultural resources, understood in the broad and the anthropological sense, perform a primary function in the definition of the identity of a territory and the community which refers to that territory. The territory is not considered only to be the place where one lives, works, constructs social relations, but also the place towards which feelings of belonging can be experienced through a process of identification: the place as a territory of a choice of identity (Gelosi 2004). The territory and the cities are, however, such complex systems that the city marketing must innovate the instruments of traditional intervention taking account of those disciplines that are capable of analysing all of the different cultural dimensions. In this way it will

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be possible to identify the single local cultural resources that constitute the starting point for any cultural planning project that must in any case be realised according to a territorial and non-sectoral dimension. The traditional cultural policies are differentiated in relation to the different artistic sectors (from the theatre to dance, from literature to folklore), the most innovative ones place the cultural standpoint as the main standpoint in the definition of the development policies for the entire territory. Culture is no longer, therefore, one of the sectors of the development of a territory but the paradigm that orients the development of a territory in that even the economists agree on the fact that culture is not only a value, but also an important economic resource. Indeed, it is a resource that can perform a strategic role in the policy of city marketing because the local cultural resources are immaterial resources that offer an important competitive advantage in that they are not easily acquirable or imitable by the competing territories.

The role of the events in the construction of the (cultural) identity of a city

Once the identity of a territory has been defined it is necessary to predispose adequate instruments of communication addressed to different targets that are to be involved.

Over the last few years, the construction of an event is considered to be one of the most important instruments of communication of the identity of a territory. The relevance "at the social level of the events has increased thanks to the converge of some phenomena of a social, economic and technological order" (Grandi Miani 2006: 221).

In the first place, the free time available to the people has increased from a quantitative point of view acquiring, at the same time, new meanings, so far as to become a fully-fledged right, safeguarded by the law. Free time, in that it is time freed from working constrictions, is used to rest, to enjoy oneself and, in any case, to better fulfil oneself (Dumazedier 1967). The participation in the events constitutes, for an ever-increasing number of people, an important objective.

Ever since the end of the 1960s some scholars, anticipating subsequent events, have spoken of our society as the society of spectacle (Debord 1967) in that the logic of the spectacle has itself become the dominant and pervasive social logic. In the society in which the spectacle is not only the main product, but the one that imposes its own logic on the other products "it is not possible to produce or to sell a good being indifferent to the more global project of entertainment in

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which the consumer will place it" (Fabris 2003: 206).

The concomitant development of the mass-media technologies – starting from those of television – has made popular a particular type of event: the ones that for their spectacular characteristics are better adapted to being channelled, perhaps at the global level, by the means of mass communication. The media events are thus developed: political and sporting competitions, wars, "royal ceremonies" are the events that, owing to their character of extraordinariness, are better suited to becoming mass-mediated events (Dayan Katz 1992). The means of mass communication accentuate the spectacular nature that such ceremonies have already for themselves. This intervention is not pure channelling, but the reconstruction and narration of the event as a function of the demands and the rationales of the means of mass communication.

Set against this backdrop, marketing tends to tailor its own philosophy and its own instruments through the choices that accentuate both the experiential-emotive-individualistic component of the consumer culture and the relational, community and tribal component. The experiential marketing finds an important antecedent in the theorisation of Hirschmann and Holbrook (1982) of those "hedonic consumption" that accentuated the significance of the emotional, multi-sensorial and imaginative components of the experience of consumption.

It is, however, with Bernd Schmitt and Alex Simonson (1997) and with the increase in the research whose object is the consumers' daily experience, that the basic concepts characterising the experiential marketing are formalised: the perceptive-sensorial, emotional-sentimental, creative-cognitive, physical and relational involvement. The experience of consumption is thought of as being composed of a number of strategic experiential modules (i.e. sense, feel, think, act, relate) whose operative combination allows for the reconstruction of experiences that involve the consumers intensely and profoundly.

Subsequently, Pine and Gilmore (2000) tried to quantify the experience of the consumer credibly from the economic standpoint, starting from the awareness that the economy has by now entered the fourth era, characterised by enacting some 'experiences' in which the seller is the one 'who enacts' and the buyer is the 'guest'. The construction of the events perceived by the public addressees as unique and memorable experiences capable of mediating the relationship with the company or the institution is one of the ways for implementing existential marketing.

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The phase of maturity of the European Cities (Capitals) of Culture Programme (1990 – 2008): the key mission

The European cities of culture in this period have been: Glasgow (United Kingdom): 1991: Dublin (Ireland): 1992: Madrid (Spain): 1993: Antwerp (Belgium): 1994: Lisbon (Portugal): 1995: Luxembourg (Luxembourg): 1996: Copenhagen (Denmark): 1997: Thessaloniki (Greece); 1998: Stockholm (Sweden): 1999: Weimar (Germany): 2000: Reykjavík (Iceland). Bergen (Norway), Helsinki (Finland), Brussels (Belgium). Prague (Czech Republic), Krakow (Poland), Santiago de Compostela (Galicia, Spain), Avignon (France), Bologna (Italy): 2001: Rotterdam (Netherlands), Porto (Portugal): 2002: Bruges (Belgium), Salamanca (Spain); 2003: Graz (Austria); 2004: Genoa (Italy), Lille (France); 2005: Cork (Ireland): 2006: Patras (Greece): 2007: Luxembourg (Luxembourg), Sibiu (Romania): 2008: Liverpool (United Kingdom), Stavanger (Norway).

Starting from the nomination of Glasgow, the objectives of the ECOC have got closer and closer to the objectives that have characterised the European urban cultural policies of the 1990s (D'Angelo Vespérini 1998, 2000; Muldy 1997, 2000; Ruffolo 2001; European Cultural Foundation 2004). On the one hand, the public cultural policies that are understood as instruments for economic growth: processes of regeneration of the cities are being promoted through strong investments. On the other hand, instruments of marketing are being used more and more along with the promotion of the image of cities in a context of the affirmation of city marketing. In some cases, there have been attempts that can be called 'cultural planning strategies' characterised by a centrality from the cultural point of view that is capable of orienting the whole of territorial planning.

More and more often the European cities have considered the nomination as European Cities of Culture as the chance to build a fully-fledged mega-cultural event.

The importance of the events as effective instruments for city marketing has been stated by many scholars, amongst whom Philip Kotler (2005), who has identified the events as one of the three instruments devoted to the communication and construction of the city image.

At the beginning of the 1990s Maurice Roche identified a close correlation between mega-events (characterised by a broad international fame obtained by means of the mass media) and the urban policies in their community dimension: "to be successful they need to involve as broad a spectrum of the community as

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possible. The process of deciding on mega-events (*via* local politics), staffing them (as volunteers), supporting them (as paying spectators) and reaping whatever rewards are to be had are "whole community' matters' both in principle and in many respects in practice also" (Roche 1992: 580).

The construction of the mega-events and the events of special interest has increased greatly over the past few years, to the extent that it has been possible to define a typology in relation to the targets they are addressed to and the mass media that amplify their effects. Among the mega-events we should recall large-scale sports events (Olympics); the mega exhibition event (Expo). Among the special events: sporting events (Auto GP, America's Cup, finals of international sports events); cultural (European Capital of Culture, Festival cinematographic); political (international summits, such as G8).

The cultural events perform a central role above all in the public policies for the culture that privilege the process of construction of the image of a territory or decide to reposition it as a function of the centrality of culture.

The abandonment on the part of the ECOCs of the original cultural key mission in favour of the plurality of other objectives that were peculiar to the European cities of the period has led to some crying out to betrayal (Richards 2000) in favour of the more instrumental objectives fostering a local city development that overlooks the symbolic European dimension. These charges can be answered by stating that the broadening of the concept of culture to an anthropological dimension allows us to transcend the idea of a European cultural identity that overlaps with the works of high culture in order to show the diversities and the specificities of all the aspects of the European cultural resources.

The European Cities (Capitals) of Culture Program: from the key mission to the major objectives

The objectives pursued by the ECOCs in these past thirty years are many and vary from city to city, as a function of the different situations in each territory and the vaster urban planning objectives.

Robert Palmer (2004: 44) subdivided them into objectives of high, medium and low priority.

The objectives that have been shared as having the highest priority by a large number of cities:

"- raising the international profile of the city and its region;

- running a program of cultural activities and arts events;

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- long-term cultural development of the city/region;

- attracting visitors and enhancing feelings of pride and self-confidence;

- growing and expanding the local audience for culture;

- creative a festive atmosphere".

Objectives that have been judged to be of a medium priority:

"- making improvements to cultural infrastructure;

- developing relationships with other European cities/regions and promoting European cultural cooperation;;

- promoting creativity and innovations;

- developing the careers/talents of local artists".

Objectives considered by the majority of cities to be a lower priority:

"- Building social cohesion/community development;

- economic development;

- encouraging artistic and philosophical debate;

- improvements to non-cultural infrastructure;

- celebrating an anniversary or history of the city."

In view of the objectives of this paper, I think it is useful to pause to reflect on some problematic aspects of the ECOC programmes, above all in relation to the impact that the urban cultural policies have had in the past and in the medium to long-term period.

Cultural Programme

All the cities have promoted, during their nomination year, cultural programmes that have developed by means of setting up a large number of cultural events.

Problems relating to the setting up of the cultural programme

The characteristics that differentiate the various events refer to the following variables:

- **duration**: The duration goes from programmes that start after the start of the year and that therefore last less than twelve months, to programmes that start well before the year of nomination. Bologna (2000) had planned cultural events starting from 1998 with the logo *Bologna 2000*. Liverpool (2008) constructed an approach to 2008 which started with the planning of annual events that harked back to a final theme ("The World in One City") capable of framing each sub-theme: 2004, "Year of the Faith in One City"; 2005, "Sea Liverpool"; 2006, "Liverpool Performs"; 2007, "Year of Heritage";

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- the role of the **local cultural and artistic organisations** in the choice and setting up of the cultural programme: it has not been easy to find a balance between the established cultural institutions and the independent groups and associations;

- the relationship between **artistic vision** and **the political interests** of the institutions that are in charge of the event. The problems or conflicts involved in this relationship often depend on the type of **governance** of the event. This ranges from autonomous bodies to bodies tied to the municipality, but what is critical is the weight that the political representations have in such bodies;

- the concept of **culture** adopted: usually an anthropological and interdisciplinary approach has been privileged;

- the **public targets** to whom the events are addressed: the city public, the surrounding territory, the national public, the international public. The city marketing actions and the tourism marketing adopted are also defined in regard to the reference target.

European Cities of Culture that have above all focussed on setting up cultural activities and artistic events.

The reasons for this choice have been of two kinds.

On the one hand, the cities that already had a recognised perception of cultural cities and that sought to reinforce that image by involving other audiences, with the aim of increasing the tourist inflow.

In 1992 the city of Madrid used this occasion to reinforce its image as an art city and to manage to reached those sectors of the public that at the time were already visiting Spain, but would only go to the seaside resorts situated in the islands and continental Spain. In 1993 Antwerp embarked upon a path for its international positioning as a city of culture: after about ten years it was internationally recognised as an important creative city. In 1999 Weimar, and Krakow and Prague in 2000 -the first cities of the ex-Soviet bloc nominated ECOC- used this occasion to reinforce their image at the international level as cultural cities and to reshape their own autonomous cultural identity as distinct from 40 years' Soviet influence.

On the other hand, those cities that in the European imaginary were not considered to be interesting cities from the cultural standpoint – or were only partially so – and that were promoting themselves as such through the events organised in the year of appointment as European Cities.

In 1991 the city of Dublin used the nomination to reposition itself: from being a city that was recognised solely for its musical and literary tradition to a city

that aimed to be characterised as being open to contemporary cultural forms. In 1994 Lisbon took advantage of the nomination to implement an international repositioning operation concerning its own image which after long decades of dictatorship and isolation should place it within the collective imaginary of the art cities.

Infrastructures

In nearly all of the cities the setting up of cultural programmes has been joined by infrastructure projects. "The most common projects were improvements to public space and lighting, and improvements to cultural infrastructure, including refurbishments and restorations facilities and monuments, as well as the construction of new cultural buildings such as concert halls and museums." (Palmer 2004:16). In many cases, however, these were infrastructures that were started before the year of appointment but that, thanks to this appointment, obtained extra funding. Often the most important infrastructures were not completed during the year of appointment: the Contemporary Art Gallery - known as 'Mambo' – of the city of Bologna was inaugurated seven years afterwards.

European Cities of Culture that have focussed on infrastructures and new urban development

According to Palmer (2004: 16): "About a quarter of ECOC invested in minor capital improvements, while similar proportion carried out major programmes of urban development, such as developing cultural districts and parks".

Cities like Glasgow in 1990, Liverpool in 2008 and, with a lesser emphasis, Rotterdam in 2001, Porto in 2002 and Genoa in 2004, have carried through important infrastructural works within the scope of more comprehensive processes of urban restructuring with culture at the heart. Both Glasgow and Liverpool have gone through a deep-seated industrial crisis that has forced them to decide for sweeping urban transformations driven by planning that has put them at the heart of the development of the culture and creativity industry. For Glasgow the year of European City of Culture was the start of this repositioning, while for Liverpool it is an important moment to communicate at the international level a repositioning that had already started a number of years ago.

The European Dimension

The European dimension of the cultural programme has been variously interpreted by the different cities and has always represented more of a background

element that a foreground factor. At times, exhibitions have been held of the cultural products coming from the whole of Europe; at times, European artists have been invited; at times, tourist promotion projects have been set up involving several cities. Even the year 2000, when the European cities nominated as ECOCs were actually as many as nine, the network that had been created between these nine cities did not bring about any important common initiative that were capable of surviving after the end had drawn to a close.

Local creativity

The shift from a marketing perspective to one of cultural planning is determined by privileging the territorial, non-sectoral dimension of culture, putting the cultural resources at the heart of policy-making. The fostering of creativity and the innovation of the cultural production has mainly been achieved through the commissioning of new works or the organisation of residential spaces for local or international artists. In some cases the official cultural activities have been supported by other (off) cultural activities, that are even more deeply-rooted in the territory. These initiatives fostering creativity have been chiefly addressed to the cultural productions rather than to the development of the local management competences that allow the less structured contexts to develop autonomously.

Long-terms effects and cooperation

It is hard to define the long-term effects in that it would be necessary to refer to research that, by using the same methodology, sets as its objective the medium and long-term implications of the ECOCs.
Event vs. Process

In the first place, we must consider that in relation to the devising and realisation of the year's initiatives, some cities have thought of them as a special event (comprising many subsidiary events) with a pre-established beginning and end, in order to attain specific objectives that will be exhausted by the year's end, even though they could have consequences also for the future, above all in relation to the repositioning of the city's image. Other cities have thought of this occasion as a process that often begins before the designated year and continuing well after its conclusion. In the former case the organisation of the initiatives has adopted its own marketing indications for the events, while in the latter case there has mainly been a move in the direction of a cultural urban planning rationale that involves many more institutions.

Long-term effects

From the research directed by Robert Palmer (2004: 133-134) three major impacts and six lesser impacts emerge.

The impact that I consider to be the most important is the one that involves the cities that have carried through important infrastructural works which are inserted within a project of urban renewal. The positive implications of this choice not only refer to the existence of new buildings or neighbourhoods, but also to the by-products that accrue: new opportunities for the creative professions and urban development hinging on culture.

Another important consequence is the international repositioning of the city and the surrounding territory with the ensuing increase in the tourist flow, also interested in the cultural resources.

Other important consequences have been:

- a greater identification and sharing by the citizens of a cultural identity of their own city;

- a greater competence in the organisation of cultural events by the local bodies.

These consequences, inherently positive, have ended up having to face an insurmountable problem: the non-continuity of the operative body and the funding the year after the appointment. Only in the cities where there has been a certain continuity have these consequences had an effective influence on the development of the territory and the credibility of its international repositioning.

Cooperation between the ECOC

The greater level of cooperation emerged in 2000, when owing to the year's exceptional nature, nine ECOCs were nominated. In this case a network starting in 1997 was set up, co-producing and promoting events capable of circulating between the nine cities and providing a coordinated image of the cultures of Europe. Albeit existing since 1990, the ECOC network (www.eccm-cultural-capitals.org/) is not considered to be effective, in particular because the people who had led the culture in the various cities over the years are not present and because the interests driving these cities were too different. What works best are the informal relations that constitute, from one time to the next, among the people in charge of the new ECOCs and some of the people in charge of the programmes of the cities that had been ECOCs in the previous years. What is lacking is a network that preserves the knowledge built up in order to be transferred to the other cities. In December 2006 was created the University Network of European

Capitals of Culture (UNeECC) which comprises over 40 members from 18 countries (www.uneecc.org). UNeECC is a unique academic network since its member universities are all located in cities which have been. are or will be ECOC. As such, UNeECC not only aspires to stimulate regular academic cooperation, i.e. education and research, among its members, but also aims at developing and reshaping the Universities' regional position. UNeECC seeks to foster collaboration between cities and Universities and is convinced that together 'town' and 'gown' will contribute to the success of the European Capitals of Culture. UNeECC is a network that is still too recent for us to be able to assess its efficacy properly.

The European Cities (Capitals) of Culture Program: lessons for the future

The lessons that can be drawn from the experience of the ECOCs in the past twenty-three years can be ranked on different levels. Some refer to issues internal to the European programme itself, while others can also be extended to profoundly different contexts.

European cultural identity

The original aim of the ECOCs of having the European identity emerge through the circulation of European cultural productions has been fulfilled. even if with results differing from those expected. What has emerged is indeed an identity that is made up of a multiplicity of cultural expressions differing from one another. European cultural unity is characterised by its own internal diversity and plurality.

Temporal dimension

Only the long-term temporal dimension guarantees the efficacy of the programme. This dimension presupposes:

- a planning of the event that starts years beforehand and that equips itself with funding and operative bodies suited to lasting into the future;

- an involvement of the territory's institutions that is not dependent upon the results of the election campaigns;

- an involvement of the local institutions. organisations and associations in the decision-making processes.

Knowledge society, creativity and cultural planning

The best results were obtained by those cities that have added the nomination as ECOC within an urban design that identifies creativity and the culture industry as the engines of the territory's development. Indeed. if we want to go ahead with the construction of cities that put creativity at the heart of the

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development, then the territory's planning in all its dimensions must recognise its pivotal importance from the cultural standpoint. All the urban, economic, social, city marketing and tourism project decisions must spin off from such a pivotal role.

The global involvement of the territory and the citizens

A development of the territory driven by creativity and the culture industry must pervade all the forms of a city's life and involve both the educational and the cultural institutions and the daily lives of the individual citizens. This social sharing of the territory's development objectives is fundamental for starting up decision-making processes having a participative nature.

Balancing

It is necessary to strike a balance between:

- the constraints set by the city administration and the demands for artistic autonomy;

- the desire and the right to have a leading role on the part of the local institutions and the cultural forces and the circulation of the transnational cultural products;

- the need to stimulate the territory's public and the promotion of initiatives towards national and international audiences.

Knowledge transfer

It is urgent to create (or reinforce if already existing) city networks that can:

- pool together instances of best practices;

- agree on the definition of the professional profiles needed in the artistic creation activities, the development of the cultural resources and cultural planning;

- organise, together with the local Universities, training courses that can foster the different skills required;

- contribute to creating virtual communities of competence within which the people operating in such sectors have the opportunity to freely and autonomously exchange ideas and opinions through the network.

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