MEGA-EVENTS

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MEGA-EVENTS – A REGIONAL PHENOMENON AND RESEARCH NETWORK

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Mega-Events have been a perennial feature of sporting and cultural calendars for over a century with the modern Olympics, EXPOs and major cultural events such as the Edinburgh Festival and since the mid-1980’s, the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC), joined by expansive sporting competitions such as World Cups and regional games. This growth is evident both in terms of geographic spread with developing countries increasingly hosting major hallmark events, and in the scale of the events themselves. This is manifested in the capital costs involved (largely public sector funded), the levels of commercial sponsorship and branding that they attract, and the sites that they occupy – and therefore their regional impacts. Mega-events are not therefore confined to cultural and sporting spheres, they occupy a growing place in the geopolitics of regional development and attract high profile media attention, from the extravagancies of Beijing and Sochi Olympics, to the controversies surrounding Brazil’s World Cup and Olympics preparations and displacements, and Qatar’s dubious World Cup award and poor construction industry practices. Mega-events are thus a new phenomenon in regional place-branding, cultural diplomacy and city-regional development. Interest in mega-events is also reflected in a spate of new publications in recent years, which also supports growing student interest and course provision in ‘events management’ internationally. This special survey reviews the significance of mega-events for regional studies and the activity of the Research Network, with contributions from key actors in this field from the UK, Belgium, The Netherlands, Turkey and Russia.

Whilst mega-events often highlight urban development, they also punctuate and accelerate longer term urban regeneration and growth. Despite their high cost and risk – financial, social, security and environmental – cities and increasingly regions, look to major events and related infrastructure to lever inward investment, improve image and raise citizen morale, and generate a legacy of facilities, improved transport and international publicity and branding, in order to support economic development and growth. This is apparent in larger cities for example, through urban Olympics, EXPOs and Capitals of Culture, where city extensions are often developed such as in Copenhagen, Barcelona, Shanghai and London, but also in small and medium sized cities and peripheral areas, as well as regionally distributed events such as football World Cups – for example in South Africa 2010, Brazil 2014 and Russia 2018.

Mega-Events and Regional Development

Whereas 20 years ago particular attention was given to mega-events as a way to foster local development and urban regeneration, a significant change of scales is noticeable: mega-events are positioned as key catalysts for regeneration and city-regional development, encompassing major cultural, sporting and trade events from Olympics, international sporting competitions, European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) festivals, to EXPOs which combine trade, tourism and spectacular pavilions. These events increasingly take on a regional (and local-global) dimension and impact – for example over 50 cities participated in the Essen-Rhine Ruhr ECOC in 2010; London 2012 Olympics further accelerated the regeneration of an expansive sub-region of the city and Thames Gateway, whilst Marseille’s ECOC in 2013 built both on the long term regeneration of the city Marseille-Euroméditerranée and sought to represent a regional Marseilles-Provence identity, albeit with mixed success. A need has therefore been identified for collaborative research to examine and compare these ambitious event-based regional policies and developments. Despite a clear interest shown by the academic world in different disciplines, such as tourism, geography, planning, economy and sociology there is also a need for research and knowledge exchange which fills a gap in the current state of research in regional studies on this topic. There is also a need to bridge the different disciplinary analysis and reflect on what this means for future research and policy at a local, regional, national and international level.

The contributions to this Survey issue therefore provide a contemporary insight to the mega-event phenomena, based on recent projects and their regional dimension, including the ‘regional’ European Capital of Culture in Aix-en-Provence/Marseille 2013 (Andres & Gresillon). The mega-events reviewed here range from Olympics – (London 2012 – Evans); aspirational International Expositions or ‘EXPOs’ (e.g. Izmir – Edizel); to completed Capitals of Culture and unsuccessful bids. This latter issue is important since in the competitive world of mega-events, many cities and regions bid, but most are unsuccessful, e.g. Istanbul has bid five times unsuccessfully for the Olympics, and Maastricht lost out to Leeuwarden for ECOC2018 (Lawton & van Heur). Many rebid in successive rounds, but the process is generally part of a wider regional development and regeneration regime which continues even if the mega-event is not in fact held. Mega-events can therefore be situated in the ongoing era of the competitive, entrepreneurial city, with regional impacts evident over significant periods of time.

Key References
MEGA EVENTS REGIONS SURVEY

This Regional Survey has been facilitated by the Regional Studies Association Research Network on ‘Mega Events, Regional Development and Regeneration’. The Mega-Events Research Network was established in 2011, convened by Professor Graeme Evans with Dr Lauren Andres (Birmingham University) and Dr Bas van Heur (Free University Brussels), and joined by Dr Philip Lawton (Maastricht University).

The aim of the research network has been to situate mega-event led regeneration within regional studies and to theorise the concept and transfer accumulating knowledge and develop methods of planning, impact evaluation and measurement of their effects over time. The network also compares and contrasts the ambitions and impacts of mega-events as regards to previous well assessed events such as Barcelona 1992, Glasgow 1990 and identify the different patterns addressing such perspectives of regeneration and regional development. The research network has developed a regional perspective on mega-events and their regional scope and impact within both local-regional-national contexts and as a global phenomenon. The network has also engaged with researchers, policy makers and practitioners in city, events and regional planning, as well as regeneration, city/region marketing and operations.

To date, four thematic research seminars have been held (see Regions No. 289) and a panel organised at the Association of American Geographers 2012 annual conference in New York. Presentations are available at: www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/Faculties/FASoS/Theme/ResearchPortal1/ResearchOrganisation1/ResearchCentres/CUES/MegaEvents.htm.

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‘EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE’: A LEVERAGE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE? THE CASE OF MARSEILLE PROVENCE 2013

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The 2008 selection of Marseille as European Capital of Culture (ECPC), a port city desperately in need of supplementary leverages to foster its urban and economic regeneration, has been compared, unsurprisingly, with the choice of Glasgow in 1990, Lille in 2002 or Liverpool in 2008. A culture-led mega-event is considered a powerful incentive to bring stakeholders together, gather subsequent pots of funding and achieve in a relative short and fixed period of time, a range of redevelopment projects aiming to sustainably transform a declining city, renew its image and inject fresh components to its economy (Garcia, 2005).

What is interesting and perhaps unique with regard to ECOC 2013 is its regional dimension. Marseille Provence 2013 (MP13) covered 85% of the territory of the ‘Bouches-du-Rhône département’ equivalent to 92 municipalities including three major cities of Marseille, Aix en Provence and Arles.

The event was thus a catalyst for the development of cultural facilities: 20 were newly built or refurbished. Officials seem to agree that the event was a success for the region with a total of 8 million visitors, including 1.5 million in 6 months alone for the flagship Musée des civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM). Beyond this however, there is a question over the extent to which ECOC has really been a catalyst at a local and regional level. Drawing some lessons from this mega event, within such a broad territory, less than a year after its end, is a challenging task and raises several areas for discussion: first, the difficulties that characterised the years prior to 2013 and how they influenced the delivery of the event; second, the spatial and political impacts of such a rapid and intense programme, and finally the problematic legacy of the event - if a legacy really exists.

2008-2013: A complex journey affected by significant difficulties

Securing the ECOC label for Marseille and the partnered cities was relatively straightforward, though competitive. Actually delivering the programme successfully was a much more complex task, however, due to political and financial obstacles in the run up to the launch of the event. According to the final Selection Panel (2008, p.3) ‘strong political engagement on the part of the mayor of the core city and all the local authorities involved,
of the city budget compared to 20% on average in other similar sized cities), not to mention that it is severely in debt and is still highly deprived.

Throughout the entire territory covering the ECOC, €91m was invested, including €15m by private partners. Though this demonstrated a strong commitment towards the delivery of the scheme it also raised questions, particularly in the context of economic downturns. Additionally, as pointed out by U. Fuchs, Deputy Managing Director of MP13 (Conference ‘Traces, lieux et mémoires de l’événement ‘Capitale européenne de la culture, May 2014, Marseille) such an amount distributed over a territory the size of MP2013, is actually quite small. This led to some criticisms of the ECOC for spreading its actions rather than pursuing coherent cultural investments.

**Spatial discrepancies and regional governance**

Reflecting on how the ECOC has been positioned and what transformations it led to, it can be argued that impacts have been limited to specific areas, i.e. the central cores of the cities, and as such have fostered discrepancies between central and peripheral spaces at local and regional levels. At local level, the ECOC has mainly been used as a complementary tool to pursue the redevelopment and regeneration of city centres. This has been the case in Aix-en-Provence, with the refurbishment of the central bus station, and significantly in Marseille, in relation to the existing regeneration programme, Euroméditerranée, launched in 1995. The main ambitions of this project were to re-position Marseille within French, European and Mediterranean cities. This 313 hectare project, extended to 483 hectares in 2007 broadly covers the city centre and its waterfront (Andres, 2011). Culture though not central in this economically-led regeneration strategy has been valorised for its economic outcomes, with the prospect of developing the creative economy. As such, Euroméditerranée and MP13 are intrinsically connected; ECOC secured the development of key cultural facilities (MuCEM but also J1). It also triggered the launch of complementary redevelopment projects including the creation of a new semi-pedestrian space on the historical waterfront (Vieux Port) and the redevelopment of the main shopping mall (Centre Bourse). All these high-profile projects complemented the various ECOC manifestations and participated in upgrading the city image further attracting additional investors and tourists (Grésillon, 2013). These outcomes testify to a coupling of a long term redevelopment vision with a yearly event. However, looking at the geography of spaces involved in ECOC and Euroméditerranée, it is very apparent that central spaces (and particularly waterfront areas) have received most of the attention and investments. With the exception of the Cité nationale des arts de la rue located in the northern part of Marseille, cultural developments have all been located in the central and waterfront areas. The creation of a 2.5km cultural waterfront composed of seven different cultural facilities has not been combined to actions or programmes aiming to reconnect centres and peripheries; as such critics have already commented on the inability of Euroméditerranée to reconnect different parts of the city and
address the severe issues of deprivation (Bertoncello, Rodrigues-Malta, 2004); this perception is reinforced when looking at the impact of ECOC on the regeneration of the city and its gentrification.

At regional level, critics are less vocal. If the core cities (Marseille and Aix-en-Provence) have been leading nodes during the event, secondary cities such as Aubagne, Vitrolles, La Ciotat, Martigues and Arles have nevertheless benefited from the scheme. They opened new cultural facilities, reshaped their cultural policies within a wider strategy of urban development and for some of them (for example Vitrolles) implemented re-branding strategies. In addition some of the cultural facilities and exhibitions developed for ECOC clearly gained a regional and even national/international visibility (e.g. the MuCEM, the Impressionist exhibition ‘Le Grand Atelier du Midi’ and the new long distance hiking trail ‘GR13’, conceived as an open-air museum). However, it can also be argued that instead of developing a programme aiming to deliver a project for a “Territory” (MP2013) it actually led to the juxtaposition of multiple projects mainly disconnected to each other. For the duration of the project, the primary attention given to Marseille remained an issue and the European and Mediterranean dimension of the event, which though being core to the application, seemed to have been partly forgotten.

Looking beyond the spatial implications of the scheme, ECOC meant that for five years a diverse range of governmental bodies sought to look beyond ongoing tensions. Unfortunately, no lessons have been drawn out of ECOC to promote a more coherent and peaceful process of regional governance. The project of creating a new metropolitan entity, covering 3149 km² and 1.8m inhabitants is currently encountering strong opposition from all the different local councils, except Marseille, the PACA region and The Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Even though voted by Parliament as a new administrative entity from 2016, as part of the willingness to decentralise and devolve more power to Paris, Lyon and Marseille, 95% of the local cities are fighting against the ‘Metropole Aix Marseille Provence’. The main areas of disagreement rest upon the importance given to Marseille and how tax resources will be shared among the different local authorities.

Reflecting on current troubles it seems that any hope of a regional governance legacy is gone. ECOC will remain an in-between event which did not overcome historic tensions between Marseille and the other cities.

What legacy?

Despite sharing the view that ECOC positively impacted on the territory and particularly Marseille, to date no legacy strategy has been put in place by decision-makers. Cultural legacy was absent in the 2014 local elections debates. As such, unlike Lille in 2002, there is no apparent political willingness to embrace the idea of consolidating the cultural strengths of the territory. The entrepreneurial regeneration vision for Marseille is back to where it was prior to 2008; anchored in a very economic regeneration approach where private investments are targeted in order to drive the redevelopment of the city centre, particularly the waterfront and the new business district. In parallel, austerity is threatening the cultural milieu; funding for cultural organisations is shrinking and questions are being raised on how new cultural facilities (museums especially) are going to be financially sustained. Cultural facilities specifically created for MP2013 are being closed down; the former industrial warehouse J1, temporarily used as a cultural venue, is now being repurposed for commercial development. The local and regional legacy of MP2013 is thus still to be found. Any follow up strategies will, as always in this region, need to be carefully positioned within political riffs and contentious leaderships.

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Three key words are associated with London’s hosting of the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games – Regeneration, Sustainability and Legacy. London 2012 is a prime case of event-based forms of regeneration – using a mega-event to accelerate and rationalise large scale investment in infrastructure and facilities within which the actual event only marks a symbolic and ephemeral stage in the process (Evans, 2011). Events – whether sporting, trade or arts based – also have a cultural dimension, more so than other forms of regeneration such as housing, retail, and therefore issues of local and regional identity are bound up with this complex process of governance, land use development and delivery. Given the duration of the protracted bidding, award, development, construction, event and post-event phases, regime change is also common. London was no exception, with both capital city and national governments passing from Labour to Conservative/Conservative-Liberal coalition party control respectively, and the build up to the event taking place during a severe economic recession, leading to an extreme boom and bust in the construction industry which directly affected the Olympic budget and associated property development and financing.

Docklands Regeneration 2.0
No regeneration programme for London’s major Olympic site and the Lower Lea Valley (Figure 1) in the east of London can ignore the precursor regeneration scheme that lies just to the south of the Olympic zone and which has influenced both the political culture and economy surrounding London 2012 – the London Docklands, for which the symbolic and economic heart is the Canary Wharf cluster of office towers and waterfront apartments. This was carried out under the aegis of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), which was formed by the previous Conservative government in 1980 and which, until it was wound up in 1998, served to fast track physical regeneration of the declining areas of the inner docklands.

The LDDC had taken control of land-use development through the granting of planning permission in the London Docklands. Like the more recent Olympic regeneration, the viability of the docklands ‘Enterprise Zone’ relied on public investment and generous investment incentives, and only when the costly (£3.5 billion) Jubilee Line underground Extension reached Canary Wharf in 1999 (just in time for the Millennium celebrations in Greenwich), did the so-called private-led development become secure. The capital budget for London 2012 also more than doubled from the initial estimate of £3.4 billion, excluding over £6 billion in transport infrastructure investment. What is of importance here is that this model of urban development is intrinsic to preparing for London 2012. Urban Regeneration and equivalent companies are being used again to accelerate development of the London end of the Thames Gateway and wider region. Following the award of the Games to London in 2005, the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and the London Development Agency (LDA) hastily took over compulsory land purchase and strategic planning powers in place of the locally elected authorities. The LDA’s initial responsibility for land acquisition and preparation was only a transitory role however, since another unelected body, the Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC) was formed in 2009 by the Mayor, with Communities (DCLG) and Olympics Ministers, to further develop and dispose of land and facilities ‘post-event’. Furthermore, all Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) including the LDA were wound up by the new Conservative-Liberal coalition government in 2011/12. The OPLC was also replaced by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) - reporting to the Mayor - and with planning powers to develop the Olympic Park and zone in Legacy mode (Figure 2). The London 2012 event and legacy can therefore be viewed as the
'unfinished business' of the wider docklands and east London regeneration, with the Olympic opportunity the new force majeure required to remove the barriers to the exceptional levels of public sector investment and top-down land use development. Historically, this also represents the goal of readdressing the economic imbalance between west and east London through successive regeneration and creating a new ‘destination’ (Evans, 2010b). The London development policy of convergence in this sense mirrors European Regional Development criteria in targeting under-performing regions (c.70% of EU average) in order to bring them up to the average level of the city as a whole in terms of economic/employment activity and skill/education levels.

Economic convergence

Convergence has been a fundamental challenge in this poorer part of the London region with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the city and in the UK as a whole (Figure 3). This was therefore one reason for locating the Olympic Park in this area, in addition to the availability of brownfield land and existing transport extensions to rail and underground systems. The five host boroughs – with the population of Greenwich 255,000, Hackney 246,000, Newham 308,000, Tower Hamlets 254,000 and Waltham Forest 258,000 – had a combined population of 1.32 million people, which represents almost a sixth of London’s total. According to the English Indices of Deprivation 2010, three of the Host Boroughs still contained the seventh, eighth and the sixteenth most deprived wards in the country. East London also experiences significant levels of unemployment, roughly twice the English average: with Hackney 16.4%, Newham 13.5%, and Tower Hamlets at 11.8%. The area also has one of the highest proportion of ethnic minority populations in the UK. Relative income levels have also worsened for the Olympic area since the bid was submitted. However, the changes in deprivation may well start to reflect displacement (e.g. housing/ residents and firms compulsorily relocated to outside of the area), and as higher income residents move in, this ranking may well fall.
This is despite the house price and credit crunch since the banking crisis first hit during 2007. Recent house prices in these boroughs have recorded a further 5% to 20% p.a. rise in an overheating housing market. Gentrification was thus already underway in this area prior to any Olympic effects and is one reason given for the perceived benefits of London 2012 according to annual government surveys of Legacy impacts. Whilst ‘improved sports venues’ were seen as the long term benefit with most potential by those surveyed nationally, regeneration of the area scored highest amongst Londoners – particularly amongst higher income groups (who were twice as likely to mention this factor than lower income groups – DCMS, 2008), likewise improved transport. The image presented of post-event Newham ‘Olympic borough’ plays on this aspirational cosmopolitan community as Bourgeois Bohemians – according to one Masterplan proposal for Stratford town centre – using ‘vibrant’, youthful images of busy street markets from other up-market parts of London. The identity of this previously working class ‘docklands’ community which has in turn become one of the most culturally diverse in Britain, is thus changing again. A new sub-region of the city and western Thames Gateway is being ‘created’ at an accelerated pace.

The duration of major area regeneration is said to be at least 25–30 years, that is, a community/economy and place becomes self-sustaining and is no longer in need of regeneration investment.
MEGA-EVENTS AS A CATALYST FOR PLACE-MARKETING: EXPLORING IZMIR EXPO 2015 CANDIDACY AND ISTANBUL ECOC 2010

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Introduction
Since the early 1990’s, mega-events have been considered as a platform for creating landmarks, generating significant media interest, encouraging tourism and improving the image of the host cities. Increasingly, developing countries have bid for hosting mega-events, believing that hosting them presents a powerful opportunity for promoting versions of citizenship, social cohesion and cultural inclusion along with international marketing and image promotion. In order to deliver these events along with different social, economic and physical agendas, cities have to constitute complex organisational structures involving national, regional and local stakeholders.

Turkey is one of the countries which has been eager to host mega-events, and different Turkish cities have bid several times to host the Summer Olympic Games, International Exposition (EXPO) and European Capital of Culture (ECoC) festivals. Istanbul tried but failed to win the rights to host the Olympic Games five times (2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2020), but the city was successful in securing the 2010 ECoC, as the first non-European city to do so. Another Turkish city, Izmir, bid to host EXPO 2015 and 2020, but failed on both occasions. Both Izmir and Istanbul sought to create networks and new levels of international public culture through these event regimes.

Turkey’s Mega-event Journey
The Istanbul and Izmir bids for hosting two different mega-events took place around the same time. In 2006, Izmir submitted its bid to host the 2015 EXPO and Istanbul submitted its application to host ECoc 2010. While Izmir failed to host the event, losing out to Milan, Istanbul was selected in 2007 to host the ECoc 2010 - along with Pécs in Hungary. The policies adopted by the stakeholders of Izmir to host EXPO 2015 and Istanbul to host ECOC 2010 are discussed further, based on interviews conducted with the stakeholders involved in these two mega-event bids.

Izmir EXPO 2015 Candidacy
Izmir is a metropolitan city located on the west coast of Turkey, and one of the major tourist destinations in the country. The city has a variety of cultural attractions coupled with its natural beauty. The city is also experienced in event organisation. Izmir has been organizing the Izmir International Fair (IIF) since 1948, which is the general trade fair of Turkey and more than 35 specialised fairs are organised in Izmir annually. The local stakeholders of Izmir believed that they could use this expertise as an advantage to move a step forward in the bidding and hosting of EXPO 2015. The main reason for their desire to host the event was improving the image of the city, region and country. Although tourism is an important sector in the regional economy, the city is hindered by an image problem and its brand needed to be repositioned in the eyes of consumers (Edizel, 2013). Interviewees agreed that the opportunity to host an EXPO was an excellent opportunity to build a good image for Izmir and increase its key markets by attracting more media interest during the candidacy period. The bidding process was also expected to help the city to develop sustainable cultural policies which would both help generate more tourism and also engage local people in cultural activities.

The EXPO 2015 Steering Board and Executive Committee adopted a regional policy to maximise the benefits of the event. Objectives were identified to achieve this goal such as maximising tourism opportunities, attracting investors and business, promoting Izmir as a “health capital” on the world stage, and an ideal destination for mega-events. These targets could only be achieved if actors worked in a collective manner.

Figure 1: Before and After the EXPO 2015 Candidacy: Network Analysis

Source: Edizel, 2013
with a well-developed strategic plan – self-interested actors in a group act collectively in order to achieve the common objective of the group if that objective would make them better off when achieved. However, no strategic plan was developed for any of these objectives and these were negotiated with the stakeholders only on a tenuous basis.

Furthermore, it is clear that no new ties were developed during the candidacy period but, according to most of the interviewees, the candidacy period served to strengthen their relationships and established the idea of working together on future projects in order to develop Izmir’s tourism and economy. Therefore, whilst the EXPO 2015 candidacy period did not create a new regime in the city, it did strengthen the ties between the existing active stakeholders (See Figure 1).

Stakeholders had various expectations from hosting the EXPO 2015 in Izmir. Public institutions mostly thought that this would lead to strengthening international relationships, whereas NGOs and Chambers of Commerce focused on the economic development that would arise through hosting the event. Some institutions also thought that EXPO could be a useful tool for cultural exchange between different nations that visit the EXPO and local residents. However, no further policies were followed to strengthen cultural ties after the EXPO 2015 candidacy period ended.

**Istanbul ECoC 2010**

While Izmir was in the bidding process for hosting EXPO 2015, another Turkish city, Istanbul, was also bidding for a different international high profile event, ECoC 2010, with similar ambitions. Although being the financial, media and cultural centre of Turkey with a population of over 12 million people, it is only in the last two decades that Istanbul has truly developed a vibrant modern and contemporary cultural scene. While the state continues to have a major role in the provision of cultural activities, the private and third sectors have started to take an active part in recent years.

The main idea that triggered the ECOC in Istanbul was to use culture not for commercial or economic development, but rather as a tool for generating ideas, as a strategy for transformation. From the early-1990’s, a number of independent cultural operators and NGOs came together to discuss the possibility of developing a sustainable cultural policy in the city and sharing this with the world. This idea met the expectations of ECoC and Istanbul was formally announced as European Capital of Culture for 2010 in November 2006. An executive body ‘Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency’ was set up in 2007 to implement the ECoC programme. The Istanbul 2010 ECOC Agency targeted unique features of Istanbul, and introduced projects for the preservation of cultural heritage, improving infrastructure and participation in culture and arts, promoting Istanbul through arts and culture, increasing Istanbul’s share of cultural tourism, and encouraging residents of Istanbul to participate in decision-making processes. A bottom-up model for the agency, which would liaise with NGOs contributing ideas for the regeneration of the city and cultural strategies, was anticipated. The intention was to create a body to coordinate Istanbul’s numerous decision-making authorities, which would empower and make them more effective. The result, however, was that the agency turned into yet another authority which has in the end caused further fragmentation in the

Figure 2: Snapshots of the Inventory of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Economy in Istanbul

Source: http://www.envanter.gov.tr/
decision-making process. There was lack of experience in organising a mega-event and the collaboration between institutions was a challenge which led to state authorities taking the majority of the decisions without seeking the advice of local or regional actors.

In addition to different scales of renewal and cultural projects, an Inventory of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Economy was undertaken through a ‘cultural mapping’ of Istanbul. This was designed to support all cultural actors and operators in the city; reinforce international connections; and develop recommendations for policies that Istanbul should follow as one of the world’s Capitals of Culture. The project also sought to help to promote Turkey on an international stage, as well as increasing the tourism potential of the city. However, as the ECoC funding stopped, the project slowed down and could not achieve these goals. The cultural heritage information from the project website (see Figure 2) also needs to be translated in order to reach an international audience, and needs to be analysed more systematically in order to develop a sustainable cultural policy for the city which can contribute to the place-marketing strategies of the city in the long-term.

**Conclusion**

Some researchers suggest that considering mega-events as part of a cultural planning process can lead to more equitable, sustainable outcomes and urban forms (Getz, 2009, Evans & Foord, 2008). Cultural interventions, it is claimed, can better promote distinctiveness and diversity and protect the vernacular in this scenario. While mega-events like ECoC are directly targeted to engage with cultural activities and policies, other mega-events also have significant influence in establishing new links between different cultures via sport (e.g. Olympics, FIFA World Cup) or exhibitions (e.g. EXPO, Biennales), as well as showcasing the culture of the host city and region. Developing a cultural strategy with the use of mega-events can create better place-marketing in the long-term for the host and candidate cities, but the governance structures adopted need to encourage the sustainability of these policies.

Istanbul ECoC 2010 showed that the cultural scene was vibrant during the year, but there was no specific plan for the continuation of the activities initiated by the ECoC. Many initiatives started with the ECoC did not continue or were not completed afterwards. The end of the title year and the demise of the agency represent a missed opportunity in terms of changing the model of governance in the city – although progress has helped develop and strengthen informal networks between stakeholders. Similarly, Izmir’s EXPO 2015 candidacy period helped to strengthen the existing ties between local stakeholders. Activities organized by both cities took place in very exclusive areas where the majority of the citizens could not easily get involved. However, bidding for EXPO and hosting the ECoC provided an important experience which can be used for future event planning and strategies, with Izmir optimistically planning again to bid for hosting an EXPO, and likewise Istanbul for the Olympics in the future.

**References**


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**AFTER THE EVENT: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN EUREGIO MEUSE-RHINE**

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In its bid to host the European Capital of Culture (ECoC, ‘VIA 2018’), Maastricht brought together the wider Euregio Meuse-Rhine, encompassing Maastricht, Sittard, Heerlen (Netherlands), Liege (Wallonia), Genk, Hasselt (Belgium, Flemish Region), Eupen (German Speaking Belgium) and Aachen (Germany). This was a unique challenge – to present a transborder ECoC strategy in cultural/event terms, against a backdrop of problematic ‘regional’ ECoC’s which had struggled to maintain a shared identity, governance structure and budget (see Andres & Grésillon on Marseilles Provence in this issue). While officially designated in the 1970’s, the Euregion was, through the bidding for the ECoC 2018, given a new purpose in being infused with ideals of ‘culture’ and ‘creativity’ with the ultimate aim of reimagining its identity and future trajectory. While the endeavour ultimately failed in its bid, it is indicative of a shift in the ideals of culture and creativity from notions often associated with city
centre locations to ideals that are representative of the region, albeit in a slightly fragmented manner.

Central to the rhetoric of the VIA2018 was the notion of projecting the Euregio as a microcosm of Europe through slogans such as ‘Europe in Miniature’. Throughout the various editions of the VIA2018 bidbook, the explicit aim was to promote the future of Europe through ‘culture’. As is befitting of the mantra of culture and creativity, playful ideals of the region formed a direct element of this approach. This included drawing upon the imaginary of the post-industrial past in a manner which sought to project the future. Pointedly, throughout this time, both through the official VIA208 approach and within the wider discourse within Maastricht and the Euregon, this involved the coining of a number of catch-phrases and neologisms, each of which sought to promote the ideal of the region in a playful and colourful manner. This included, for example, the ‘New or No Tropolis’ debates, which were organized by Schunck*.

These discussed the various challenges and opportunities facing the region in the future. Over two months, separate debates took place in Heerlen - The Netherlands, Aachen - Germany and Hasselt - Belgium. Each included talks by practitioners such as architects and planners as well as academics working in related fields. Central to the discussion was the notion of a united region, albeit one facing a myriad of challenges, such as transport and employment.

Another example of the promotion of the region during this period was the notion of the ‘Eutropolis’, which was celebrated through the publication of a one-off newspaper entitled *The Eutropolitan* (Newspaper for a Non-Existing Polis). The ideal of the Eutropolitan is expressive of the playful manner in which the region was celebrated:

The area between Maastricht, Aachen and Liege with its 3.9 million inhabitants, three different nationalities, many more languages and dialects, a high density in cultural heritage, cultural institutions and universities forms the historical heart of Europe. What we call ‘The Eutropolis’. Exactly twenty years after the Maastricht Treaty was signed. We declare Utopia for real” (*The Eutropolitan*, 2012, p.1).

Here, we see a perspective on the region as an entity which exists and which points the way to the future of Europe in a manner that is unproblematic and explicitly ‘utopian’. Furthermore, during the VIA2018 bidding process, the rendering of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine revolved largely around a cultural reimagining of space. Here, the notion of the ‘creative city’ – and its associated iconography – is rendered to a regional profile. The key elements of this are that of mobility and cross-cultural exchange,
with the Euregion celebrated as a distinct entity with a specific past and distinctive cultures, national identities and languages (Figure 2) which should be celebrated and promoted.

Again, picking up on the promotion of the region in a colourful manner, the architects Maurer United adapted the schematic map of the London Underground to the Euregio\(^1\). The transformation of the map was described by Marc Maurer of Maurer United Architects as follows:

And this is the Eutropolis. And then you see that when you are in London you think you are in one city and one metropolis, here you are in different cities. So you have Maastricht, Liège, Aachen, Heerlen, Sittard Geleen, Duren, Hasselt, it’s all on the same scale as the city of London. Also, if you see this map then you might think maybe it’s even more interesting than London. Here they speak German, they speak French, you have waffles there; you have this there. Lots of institutions; this is truly a European metropolis, and this is the Eutropolis. Maastricht together with these cities wants to achieve the cultural capital of Europe, but I think it’s even more than that. This is really the heart of Europe. That’s why we call it Eutropolis\(^4\).

In rendering the region through the use of the London Underground map, the region becomes simultaneously compressed and expanded. It was compressed in that people are asked to think about the close proximity of places to each other in a border region, and expanded in that it served as a reminder of the challenges of public transport in the region in achieving actual connectivity. In so doing, the Euregio becomes something that, while remaining abstract, can be grasped in a creative manner.

One of the key challenges to emerge throughout the process was how such a large scale of engagement would actually be managed. Indeed, if nothing else, the legacy of the VIA2018 bid process has been to continue the promotion of interaction at the cultural level within the region. Challenges, such as that of transport, were raised, but there was little in the way of seeking wider challenges such as that of socio-economic class divides. The ideals of the bid seemed to dominate over how they could actually be implemented. This was reflected in the final decision by the jury, where the panel acknowledged the European dimension through a transborder collaboration, but felt that:

…the project as a whole lacked a clear, concrete and well-constructed artistic vision about how culture may help making Europe a better place to live in, and especially in creating employment for the youth. Therefore it remained also unclear how the various elements of the programme would be shaped to a common European perspective.

The panel also went on to question the overall unity of projects within the context of notions of ‘Europe in Miniature’. Moreover, they questioned the extent to which minorities were included within the overall project, in a manner that represented contemporary European society. The divides between rhetoric and reality within the bid were therefore deemed as a key question-mark for the jury.

**The Legacy that Wasn’t…**

While in the end the bid failed (with Leewarden the winning city), there are nevertheless some outcomes which might be worth reflecting upon for the future of the Meuse-Rhine Euregio. A striking factor during the bidding process was the relative strength of interaction between the cultural and creative industries within the region, including a desire to promote interaction across borders. This included Fashion Across Borders (FAB), which seeks to promote the fashion industry on a Euregional level. Directly connected to this, the annual Fashion Clash Maastricht brings together international designers, but also focuses upon the Euregional dimension\(^3\). Furthermore, groups such as Design Metropole Aachen have indicated a desire to promote sectoral interaction on a Euregional level.

A number of key challenges remain around the regional dynamics of the Meuse-Rhine Euregio. Of key importance is the extent to which the current approach, which draws upon a wide-ranging notion of culture, can promote regional integration. While evidence would suggest that the cultural and creative industries are already pushing for more regional cooperation, there remain challenges as to how this might be broadened out, and in what form. A key challenge for the future must therefore be to problematize the notion of the region. This might include asking questions about *why* integrate and for *whom* does it *benefit*? (Van Heur & Peters, 2010).

At its centre, such an approach needs to be mindful of the fragmented nature of the region at various levels, and seek to approach challenges such as inequality and unemployment within and beyond the creative sectors.

**Endnotes**

1 Schunck* is an organization based in Heerlen, The Netherlands which aims to connect various forms of artistic encounter with pressing contemporary issues. See: [http://www.schunck.nl/](http://www.schunck.nl/)
3 [http://www.zuiderlicht.nl/blog/cultuur/tour-deutropolis/](http://www.zuiderlicht.nl/blog/cultuur/tour-deutropolis/)
4 Excerpt from Marc Maurer, ‘Eutropolis’, TEDxEutropolis, Heerlen, September 2010 [Downloaded from: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKkBTZBEPNc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKkBTZBEPNc)]

**References**


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The Regional Survey in this issue is provided by Guest Editor Graeme Evans (Middlesex University, UK). The topic is Mega Events and Regional Development, based on the Regional Studies Association Mega Events Research Network. Prime examples of mega events include Olympics, World Cups, World EXPOs and European Capitals of Culture where major facilities and sites are created. Increasingly the spatial scope of these mega-events has taken on a regional dimension, with collaboration between cities and regions in order to generate a wide impact area and regional identity. The mega-event phenomenon has also spread to developing countries, with Brazil hosting the 2014 World Cup and summer Olympics in Rio 2016. Middle Eastern states also pursue these events with Qatar’s controversial award of the 2022 World Cup. Despite their high cost to the public purse, the political and security risks they entail, and the high chances of failure in the bidding process, cities continue to bid for the prestige and leverage attaching to these events. A particular aspect of the hosting of mega events is their ‘legacy’, however, as the articles highlight, the governance of these event regimes is seldom transparent and often struggles to deliver legacy promises and social benefits during and after the event. Creating partnerships across regions is also fraught with political and financial difficulties and can be hard to maintain. As the authors argue therefore, Mega Events have to be approached from both a sustainable development perspective and integrate with wider urban and regional policy objectives in order to deliver the regeneration benefits they promise.

Brazil is also the theme of our In Depth, Research Notes and Association News. Carlos Azzoni discusses regional disparities in Brazil; Marco Crocco, Fabiana Santos, Anderson Cavalcante and Mara Nogueira assess the degree of spatial financialisation in Brazil and Michael Steiner reports on the RSA conference at Fortaleza.