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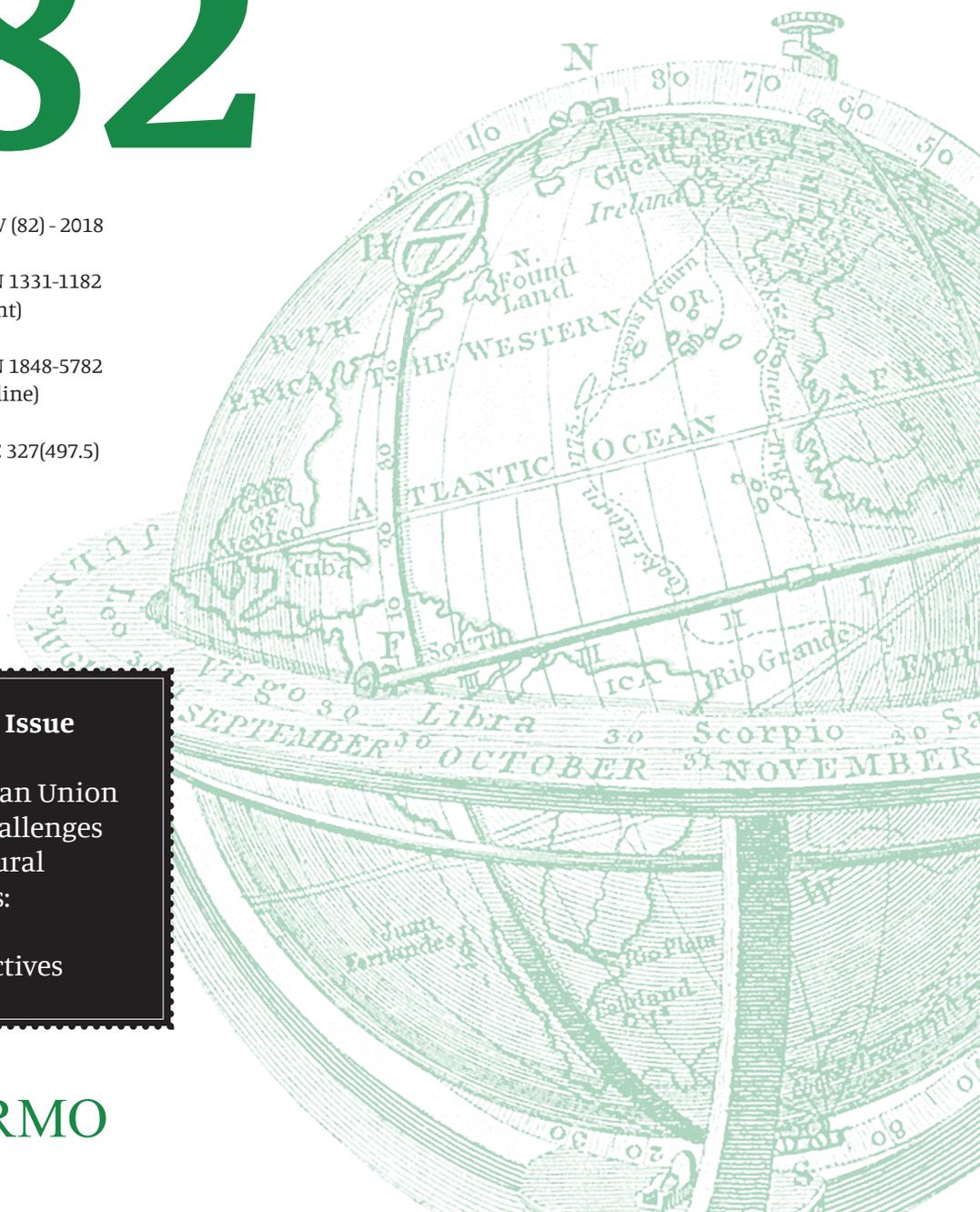
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## Special Issue

European Union  
and Challenges  
of Cultural  
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Critical  
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IRMO



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Special Issue:

**European Union and Challenges of Cultural  
Policies: Critical Perspectives**

Guest editors:

**Jaka Primorac, Aleksandra Uzelac and Paško Bilić**  
Department for Culture and Communication  
Institute for Development and International  
Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia

This special issue is the output of the biannual Jean Monnet project 'EU Competences and National Cultural Policies: Critical Dialogues-CULPOL' (September 2016 –August 2018) co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.



EU Competences  
and National  
Cultural Policies:  
Critical Dialogues



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EDITORIAL OFFICE:

CIRR, Institute for Development and International Relations - IRMO  
Ljudevita Farkaša Vukotinovića 2, HR-10000  
Zagreb, Croatia  
Phone: +385 1 48 77 460  
Fax: +385 1 48 28 361  
E-mail: [cirr@irmo.hr](mailto:cirr@irmo.hr)  
<http://cirr.irmo.hr/en/>

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# European Union and Challenges of Cultural Policies: Critical Perspectives. An Introduction

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Jaka Primorac

*Department for Culture and Communication*

*Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia  
jaka@irmo.hr, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6969-4598>*

Aleksandra Uzelac

*Department for Culture and Communication*

*Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia  
auzelac@irmo.hr, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2089-231X>*

Paško Bilić

*Department for Culture and Communication*

*Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb, Croatia  
pasko@irmo.hr, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5174-7073>*

## Abstract

**Keywords:**  
cultural policy;  
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Union; cultural  
and creative  
sectors; cultural  
development

*This introductory article contextually frames the contributions to the special issue gathering articles critically addressing the key questions and challenges that the European Union (EU) and national cultural policies are facing in the 21st century. Interdisciplinary contributions in this special issue point to the diverse understandings of culture, the complexity of the EU governance system, and the discrepancy and mismatch of the national and EU levels that regulate the field of culture. The authors detect the inconsistent development strategies on different policy levels, and point to the democratic deficits of the EU governance system and EU policies. Selected contributions address a further focal shift of EU culture policies toward an economic orientation to culture, while others address the need for a more critical approach that moves beyond predominantly positivistic and normative approaches to cultural policy research in Europe.*

The world is changing rapidly and local and global levels are no longer easily separated. In the 21st century, cultural policies have to deal with a (post) globalisation context marked by cultural, social, economic, political, and technological transformations. Cultural policies need to address numerous issues, including rapid technological change and a digital shift driven mostly by economic interests, market concentration, and the dominance of global corporations. New challenges include mobility and migration movements, rapid urbanisation, and social and financial instability, among others. The crisis in Europe and of the European governance model has implications for the cultural field as well. Today's Europe needs to reimagine itself – its aims, values, and identities – and needs to find an adequate model for its sustainable cultural development. All this impacts the conditions under which the cultural sector operates today.

In the context of European Union (EU) politics, culture has often been used as an instrument for different social, political, or economic objectives. Authors such as Vestheim (1994) and Gray (2007) have already addressed the issue of the instrumentalisation of culture for different means and ends. As evidenced by prevailing discourse used in the academic writings and EU funding programmes, the concept of culture as public value is weakening in comparison with its commodity value. Due to the subsidiarity principle engrained in the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has not been involved in formulating an explicit common cultural policy (Primorac, Obuljen Koržinek, and Uzelac 2017). Nevertheless, the EU has been indirectly contributing to the creation of common cultural policy frameworks through its soft cultural policy instruments and mechanisms. Various cultural policy issues and their related instruments, such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), the Creative Europe programme, the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC), along with EU cultural programme initiatives and other similar mechanisms represent a *de facto* policy approach. Other explicit European Union policies, such as the strategy on the Digital Single Market (DSM), also influence the field of culture and media. Yet a simple transfer of EU strategic goals and legislative measures often proves problematic as it creates unintended consequences in different national contexts (Bilić and Švob-Đokić 2016). National level cultural policies are struggling to tackle complex global problems, especially in the context where many other explicit public policies are increasingly influencing the field of culture.

This is especially evident in the case of the DSM strategy with its wide purview, which influences the cultural and media sector in different ways and on various levels. We find that these issues have not been tackled in a systematic manner in academic or policy-oriented literature.

The Special Issue entitled 'European Union and Challenges of Cultural Policies: Critical Perspectives' gathered contributions that critically addressed different issues and challenges that the European Union and national cultural policies are facing in the 21st century. The authors were invited to analyse in their contributions, including: limits of the subsidiarity principle in the field of culture and explicit and implicit cultural policies in the context of transversality and convergence of policies; impacts of EU soft policy mechanisms on national contexts such as OMC, the Structured Dialogue, Creative Europe Programme or the ECoC programme; the role of the DSM strategy for sustainable digital cultural resources; and new models for achieving sustainability in cultural development. Furthermore, the contributors were also invited to offer new theoretical perspectives on cultural policy and to provide for examples of whether, and if yes, what kinds of new models for achieving sustainability in cultural development are being developed. Although various authors dealt with certain aspect of these issues (Barnett 2001; Bruell 2013; Littoz-Monnet 2007; Psychogiopoulou 2008; Sacco 2011; Schlesinger 2015, to name a few), we wanted this special issue to provide space for a more interdisciplinary framework where different research approaches could benefit from a focused critical discussion. That is why in this special issue we gathered contributions by authors from different parts of Europe who critically address some of the current challenges of cultural policies.

In the first contribution entitled "Camouflaged Culture: The 'Discursive Journey' of the EU's Cultural Programmes" Bjarki Valtýsson provides us with the analysis of the four 'generations' of EU cultural programmes (Raphaël, Ariane, Kaleidoscope, Culture 2000, Culture 2007) as well as the current Creative Europe Programme. He outlines certain discursive shifts visible in the analysed cultural programmes, which are in line with older Pre-Maastricht Treaty discourses of the implicit cultural interventions. Valtýsson shows how cultural sector discourses were shaped by both economic and political instrumentalisations. He illustrates how a further push toward the economically induced discourses is visible in the present Creative Europe programme. Valtýsson highlights how this

shows an actual taking 'back to the roots' of the European Union project. The project was always based on the economic rationale of the Union in which 'culture from the start was camouflaged' (Valtýsson 2018: 34) or, more bluntly, marginally important.

The second contribution by Karsten Xuereb "The Impact of the European Union on Cultural Policy in Malta" contextualises Maltese cultural policy instruments and strategies within the overall European cultural policy framework. The analysis shows the divergences and convergences by comparing EU strategic documents and Maltese legislative documents, funding programmes, and artistic and cultural projects. Xuereb highlights certain drawbacks of the subsidiarity principle, including limits of effectiveness and accountability and an over-arching authority. He calls for a reframing of cultural policy toward a more inclusive, citizen-driven dialogue and cultural exchange better suited to current social development in Europe. His analysis of the European Union's impact on cultural policy in Malta also includes the examination of the European Capital of Culture Programme, Valetta 2018.

The European Capital of Culture Programme is analysed more closely in the third article "From Inconsistencies to Contingencies - Understanding Policy Complexity of Novi Sad 2021 European Capital of Culture" by Goran Tomka and Višnja Kisić. In a thorough case study analysis of the Novi Sad 2021 bidding process, Tomka and Kisić highlight how the existing EU cultural policy framework determines and restricts (local) cultural policy. In the case of transitional Serbian society, this creates 'policy confusions' (Đukić-Dojčinović 2002-2003). The authors show the need to understand the contingent nature of cultural policy making that is far from the 'rational-comprehensive policy ideal'. They recognise the limitations of the positivistic study of politics, its epistemological position, and the imagined norms of policy-making.

Changes in cultural policy research and cultural policy-making are the focus of the article entitled "Internal and External Factors in the Development of a Network Organization in the Arts: Case Study of Društvo Asociacija" by Andrej Srakar. He uses a mixed-methods approach (descriptive analysis, statistical and econometric modelling, and mediation analysis) to outline the development of Društvo Asociacija, the network of non-governmental organisations and freelancers in culture and the arts in Slovenia between 2004 and 2017. He argues that European cultural policies, if they want to have a

larger impact on the performance of network organisations, ‘should focus more on micro level initiatives and incentives for organizations and less to the broad “cuts and raises” in the public budget “story”’ (Srakar 2018: 109). Therefore, the data in the article provide evidence pointing to where future European policies in this area should be oriented. The data also show that there should be more inclusion of the individual civil society organisations and networks in the policy-making process.

Contributions in this special issue point to the diverse understandings of culture, as well as the complexity of the EU governance system and the discrepancy and mismatch of the national and EU levels that regulate the field of culture. The articles point to the democratic deficits of the EU governance system and EU policies, and detect the inconsistent development strategies on different policy levels. What is also traced in selected contributions is the further shift of the focus of EU policies for culture toward an economic approach to culture that puts cultural and creative industries at its centre. The presented articles also show the need for a more critical approach to cultural policy analysis that will move beyond predominantly positivistic and normative approaches to cultural policy research in Europe. By collecting these interdisciplinary contributions we argue for a more explicit European cultural policy that will take into account the culture as a way of life, and put citizens and their cultural life to the fore of policy goals. Furthermore, a cultural policy that takes a more bottom-up approach in addressing the diversity of European cultures with a view toward future changes is needed. We hope that these contributions, together with the additional materials presented in this special issue, will provide some starting points for further analysis and discussion on these issues, and will bring about much-needed knowledge of the EU policy impacts on the cultural and media sector, in addition to providing a catalyst for further critical analyses.

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More information about CULPOL project activities and outputs is available at the web page: [culpol.irmo.hr](http://culpol.irmo.hr)

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# Articles

# Camouflaged Culture: The 'Discursive Journey' of the EU's Cultural Programmes

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**Bjarki Valtýsson**

*Department of Arts and Cultural Studies,  
University of Copenhagen, Denmark,  
valtysson@hum.ku.dk*

**Key words:**  
*EU cultural  
policy; EU cultural  
programmes;  
Creative Europe;  
implicit cultural  
policy*

## **Abstract**

*This article inspects discursive shifts in the EU's cultural policy and how these relate to the four 'generations' of EU cultural programmes: Raphaël, Ariane, Kaleidoscope; Culture 2000; Culture 2007; and the current Creative Europe programme. This paper therefore accounts for a 'discursive journey' that started in the 1970s and culminated with Article 128 in the Maastricht Treaty, which formally constituted the EU's cultural policy. The article reveals that there can be detected certain shifts in discourses concerning the EU's cultural programmes, but these shifts are aligned to older discourses within the cultural sector which, prior to the Maastricht Treaty, applied implicit cultural interventions. These therefore represented 'camouflaged' cultural understanding and appliances, which were instrumental and promoted economically and politically induced discourses. The major shift detected in the recent Creative Europe programme is a step away from discourses that facilitate the political construction of a 'people's Europe', thereby utilising further discourses that promote aims which adhere to the Union's Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.*

## Introduction

The European Union's cultural policy was formalised in Article 128 of the Treaty of the European Union, which is commonly known as the Maastricht Treaty. However, prior to the Maastricht Treaty, the European Community was involved in various activities within the cultural realm. In 1977, the Commission presented initiatives relevant to the cultural sector, thereby starting a 'discursive journey' that culminated in Article 128 and manifested in what is referred to here as the first generation of the EU's cultural programmes. I will account for this discursive journey as it is instrumental in understanding the contours of what was to be known as Raphaël, Ariane and Kaleidoscope. Later, these programmes merged into the Culture 2000 programme, which was replaced by the Culture 2007 programme. The current programme, however, did not only change its name but also its scope, as the Creative Europe programme also includes the audiovisual sector and therefore what were previously known as the EU's Media programmes. The Creative Europe programme is thus the European Commission's framework programme within the culture *and* audiovisual sectors and represents for the first time a common framework for both sectors.

The aim of this paper is to account for the discursive journey of the EU's cultural policy and how these discourses are reflected in the EU's cultural programmes. What are the dominant discourses that can be detected in the regulations that constitute the programmes, and how do these programmes form intertextual and interdiscursive associations with the EU's formal cultural policy and the informal policy-making prior to the Maastricht Treaty?

## Method

Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is the chosen method as it is suitable for illuminating the intertextual and interdiscursive associations between different documents that constitute the framework programmes, as well as being attentive to how ideological and hegemonic factors affect systems of knowledge, thereby revealing the dominant discourses and objectives that arise from the documents. In terms of the context of this article, interdiscursivity and intertextual chains are important as they 'specify what discourse types are drawn upon in the discourse sample under

analysis' (Fairclough 1992: 232) and 'the distribution of a (type of) discourse sample by describing the intertextual chains it enters into, that is, the series of text types it is transformed into or out of' (Fairclough 1992: 232).

These concepts gain importance as the discourse sample used for this analysis is composed of the official legal documents that constitute the four generations of the EU's culture and media programmes, as well as the various opinions, recommendations and decisions that the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the Committee of Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) produced as responses to the Commission's original proposals. While the main focus is on the cultural programmes, it is important to account for the 'informal' discussions prior to the activation of the cultural article in the Maastricht Treaty. The reason for this is that these documents form intertextual and interdiscursive connections to the cultural programmes and therefore serve well to give a complete picture of how the discursive practice is formed and which effects these have on the wider social practice. This leads again to the ideology concept and how discursive shifts represent certain ideologies and how bodies of texts affect power relations, in this case between different EU institutions. According to Fairclough, it is therefore important to be attentive to the effects of texts in sustaining or changing ideologies. In his view, and in the context of this article, ideologies should be understood as 'representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation' (2001: 9).

The analytical strategy applied in this article is therefore to trace the dominant discourses from early formations within the cultural sector, to detect whether discursive shifts occur and how these relate to the proposals, resolutions, opinions and decisions of the EU's four generations of cultural programmes.<sup>1</sup>

### **Early formations**

As previously mentioned, a discursive journey can be detected as early as 1977 when the Commission presented concrete initiatives for the cultural sector. However, as the cultural

<sup>1</sup> The discussion of the informal 'pre-Maastricht' cultural negotiations and the manifestation of the first three generations of EU programmes refers to a prior study that I conducted and offers a detailed account of EU cultural and media policies (see further Valtysson 2008)

sector was not yet formally included in treaties, the Commission had to discursively circumvent specific concepts and frame its intervention in a 'non-cultural' manner: 'The Communication does not deal with the arts themselves; nor does it expound a policy. Its main emphasis is on how to improve the economic and social situation of all those who, in one way or another, are constantly engaged in artistic creation' (Bulletin of the European Communities 11/1977: 13). In a further discussion of what constitutes this 'economic and social situation', the Commission frames its intervention with regard to the help 'to overcome the difficulties besetting the people (cultural workers)' and undertakings (publishing houses, theatres, concert societies, cinema chains, etc.) engaged in producing and distributing "cultural goods and services" (13). Thus, by not talking about *artists* but *cultural workers*, and by not talking about *culture* but the *cultural sector*, the Commission sets the stage for how the initial discourses concerning culture and the EU were formed.

These discourses took shape over time, and in this context the EC Bulletin supplement from 1977, called Community Action in the Cultural Sector, is of particular importance, as it defines the community's understanding of the cultural sector: 'The cultural sector may be defined as the socio-economic whole formed by persons and undertakings dedicated to the production and distribution of cultural goods and services. Community action in the cultural sector is therefore necessarily centred on solving the economic and social problems which arise in the sector as in all others — sometimes, even in more acute form. Firstly, it aims to support culture by gradually creating a more propitious economic and social environment' (Bulletin of the European Communities — Supplement 6/1977: 5). Community action insists upon emphasising the cultural sector's role from an economic and social point of view, maintaining that '[j]ust as the 'cultural sector' is not in itself 'culture', Community action in the cultural sector does not constitute a cultural policy' (5).

Another detectable shift can be traced to 1982 with a communication called Stronger Community Action in the Cultural Sector, which continues along similar lines emphasising freedom of trade in cultural goods, improving living and working conditions of cultural workers, increasing numbers of audiences, and conservation of the architectural heritage (Bulletin of the European Communities 6/1982: 8). During this time European projects like the Community's Youth Orchestra and the European Year of Music project were

established, along with poetry projects, large art exhibition projects and the establishment of a European network of film distribution.

However, the dilemma of 'camouflaging culture' is still prevalent, as is clearly marked in the introduction to the Communication from 1977, where the President for the Commission of the European Communities, Gaston E. Thorn, maintains that the Communication does not contain a philosophy of culture, as that would indeed indicate ideological and aesthetic priorities. The same kinds of discourses therefore surface in this delicate balance of not stepping into the legal domain of the Member States and respecting the lawful treaty of the Community: '[I]nstead of speaking about "artists" we speak about "cultural workers". This is intended to show that the Community is concerned with creators (writers, composers, painters...) and performances (actors, musicians, singers and dancers...) seen in terms of their social situation as employees or self-employed people and not of their artistic personality which is their business and theirs alone' (5).

Even though the Commission intends these early formations to be free of ideology and aesthetic considerations, it is clearly not successful in these endeavours. Indeed, in these excerpts it is quite clear that in ideological terms there is focus on cultural and audiovisual industries, not only from a structural point of view but also in facilitating 'the distribution of films to be selected at a European Film Festival' (13) and to 'balance the American majors' (13). Furthermore, the re-emerging focus on cultural heritage, widening the audience and ensuring free trade in cultural goods are clear indicators of how a strategy is changing into a policy, despite the Commission maintaining otherwise: 'There is no pretension to exert a direct influence on culture itself or to launch a European cultural policy; what stronger Community action in the cultural sector means in effect is linking its four constituents — free trade in cultural goods, improving the living and working conditions of cultural workers, widening the audience and conserving the architectural heritage — more closely to the economic and social roles which the Treaty assigns to the Community, to the resources — mainly legislative — that it provides, and to the various Community policies (vocational training, social and regional policies)' (14).

What these early formations can be said to be characterised by is an instrumental cultural policy which in Vestheim's terms means '*to use cultural ventures and cultural investments as*

*a means or instrument to attain goals in other than cultural areas'* (1994: 65; italics in original), where the 'instrumental aspect lies in emphasizing culture and cultural venture as a means, not an end in itself' (65). Ahearne's distinction of explicit and implicit cultural policy is also useful; particularly in the way the Community makes use of the culture concept. According to Ahearne, the explicit version 'will often identify 'culture' quite simply with certain consecrated forms of artistic expression, thereby deflecting attention from other forms of policy action upon culture' (2009: 144). The implicit version is broader and accounts for the 'unintended cultural side effects of various kinds of policy and those deliberate courses of action intended to shape cultures but which are not expressly thematised as such' (144). Interestingly, the EU's cultural policy was born implicitly as it focused from the very start on economically induced discourses referring to 'cultural workers' and 'creators as employees'.

During the 1980s, the member states' cultural ministers initiated an intergovernmental forum that had culture under its auspices, and here there was particular focus on the audiovisual sector. This is manifested for instance in a resolution that concerns the European Cinema and Television Year for 1988. In this resolution, it is maintained that 'the audiovisual media are among the chief means of conveying information and culture to the European citizen and contribute to the strengthening of the individual European cultures, as well as the European identity' (OJ C 320, 13.12.1986: 4). Furthermore, it is maintained that 'Europe must be strongly represented in the making and distribution of audiovisual products, thus contributing to laying the foundations of an ever closer union amongst [sic] the peoples of Europe' (4). It is quite clear that the separation between ideological and aesthetic dimensions of culture and the 'four constituents' is difficult to maintain as, on an ideological level, culture is clearly meant to serve as a vehicle to provide 'the people of Europe' with a certain 'European identity' as the substance of the community's cultural policy starts to take shape. The Council in fact also adopted three other resolutions relating to Europe's architectural heritage, business sponsorship of cultural activities, and conservation of works of art and artefacts. Also prevalent are discourses that put forward economic objectives in the form of cultural tourism, or in the more indirect instrumental use of culture.

Simultaneously with the emphasis on the economic instrumental use of culture, however, political objectives are

becoming increasingly important as well: 'European culture is one of the strongest links between the States and peoples of Europe. It is part of the European identity. The promotion of the European cultural identity should be a comprehensive expression of the cultural variety and each nation's individual values which form an integral part of it' (Bulletin of the European Communities 3/1985: 106). Here the blueprint for the Union's slogan 'unity in diversity' is slowly emerging. Another interesting stepping stone is the community's acceptance of the 'single market', which pushed economic agendas further to the forefront. These can clearly be seen in the framework programme for 1988–1992 called A Fresh Boost for Culture in the European Community. Carlo Ripa di Meana's introduction states that cultural activities are political, social and economic necessities which are important to complete the internal market and for the progression from a people's Europe to a European Union. Culture is therefore clearly framed in an instrumental fashion to further economic and political objectives; the economic advantages of the single market are to infuse the European population with a sense of a shared European identity: 'Europe's cultural identity is nothing less than a shared pluralistic humanism based on democracy, justice and freedom. Expressed in the diversity of our local, regional and national cultures, it is the basis for the European Union, which has goals other than economic and social integration, important though these may be. And it is this sense of being part of a European culture which is one of the prerequisites for the solidarity which is vital if the advent of the large market – and the resulting radical changes in living conditions within the Community – is to secure the popular support it needs' (Bulletin of the European Communities – Supplement, 4/1987: 5).

However, even though di Meana's foreword opens up an alternative way of framing the EU's cultural policy, the Communication clearly promotes the same discourses as mentioned earlier: 'In discharging its economic, social and legal responsibilities, the Commission will pay particular attention to the free movement of cultural goods and services; better living and working conditions for those engaged in cultural activities, the creation of new jobs in the cultural sector in association with the expansion of tourism and regional and technological development, and the emergence of a cultural industry which will be competitive within the Community and in the world at large' (7).

## The cultural article

Prior to the Maastricht Treaty, discourses on the cultural sector were shaped by economic and political instrumentalisation, where the cultural and audiovisual sectors were primarily seen through the lens of the single market, and the emphasis was on promoting political integration and specific European values based on Europe's cultural heritage. These objectives also mirror the formal cultural article in the Treaty, as manifested in its first paragraph: 'The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore' (OJ C 191, 29.7.1992: 24). This paragraph in turn reflects the EU slogan 'unity in diversity' in a cultural context, and the common cultural heritage is seen as a means to unite peoples, at the same time respecting the principle of subsidiarity in terms of regional and national diversity. Paragraph 2 has equally strong interdiscursive connections to older documents of cultural significance, as it mirrors the areas that were regarded as favourable to cultural policy intervention: 'Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas: - improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples; - conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance; - non-commercial cultural exchanges; - artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector'.

Even though minor adjustments have been made to Article 128, which became Article 151 with the Amsterdam Treaty and later 167 with the Treaty of Lisbon, no changes were made in the two first articles where the actual content of the policy is defined. In this context, paragraph 4 in Article 167 from the Treaty of Lisbon is of considerable interest as it plays on Ahearne's distinction between implicit and explicit understandings of culture: 'The Union shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures' (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012: 122). This paragraph takes an implicit and somewhat extremely wide understanding of culture which, as Gordon maintains, causes conceptual fuzziness amongst EU Commissioners responsible for culture 'who generally merge specific and much broader

meanings of 'culture' (Gordon 2010: 110).

What lies at the heart of such cultural understanding is the EU's emphasis on 'unity in diversity' and how this somewhat paradoxical statement is directly written into the EU's cultural policy, bringing common cultural heritage to the fore at the same time as respecting the national and regional cultural diversity of the Member States. Sassatelli (2009), in her discussion of the narratives of European cultural identity, maintains that the 'unity' narrative resonates with federalist claims and emphasises the common European roots of a culture and identity, a European spirit strongly linked with 'the legacy of Hellenic rationality and beauty, Roman law and institutions, and Judaeo-Christian ethics' (26). The other side of the coin, the one that highlights diversity, is critical towards this idea and emphasises that there can be no European culture in the singular, but many European cultures and identities. This approach also takes into account the fact that, even though there might be general acceptance of common, wide-reaching values, such values ought to be seen as universal rather than European. Here, Sassatelli takes human rights and democratic principles as examples. However, even though Sassatelli is quite clear in her conceptualisation of the two extremes, i.e. unity and diversity, it becomes much more unclear when she tries to bring the two together.

Shore (2001), in a similar fashion, offers a critical account of this cultural policy motif, 'unity in diversity', and calls it vague and elitist, and maintains that this is epitomised in the Union's first generation of cultural programmes. According to Shore, the problem for the EU 'in its attempts to invent Europe at the level of popular consciousness by unifying people around a common heritage is how to do this without marginalising and excluding those "non-European" peoples and cultures that fall outside the European Union's somewhat selective and essentialist conception of Europe's cultural heritage' (2001: 117). Shore therefore criticizes the Union for applying a similar approach to what Smith (2001) terms 'constructionist modernism' within nationalism theories, crystalized in the imagined communities of Anderson (1991) and the invented traditions of Hobsbawn (1983). Shore goes on to claim that 'European Union discourses on culture frequently advance the idea that cultural identities operate like concentric rings and that creating a "European identity" simply entails adding a new layer of authority and belonging over and above existing local/regional/national layers, like so many Russian dolls' (2001: 117).

Finally, Shore remarks that European cultures are engaged in constant processes of negotiation and exchange from which complex formations of culture and identity emerge, and not from a static cultural vision 'confined to matters of heritage, tourism, the media and entertainment industries and the arts' (118). Shore therefore criticizes the EU's cultural policy for applying a narrative of national cultures in supra-national settings in order to create a supra-national construction of elitist art and selected cultural heritage. At the same time, Shore is attentive to the Union's emphasis on the media and cultural industries. However, as Gordon claims, the challenges the EU faces in its intersection with the cultural field is not only due to conceptual fuzziness but also to the way cultural policy is structured within the EU.

The Commission is the 'agenda-setter' as it initiates the proposals for the cultural programmes. This means that the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the CoR and the EESC all react to the Commission's proposals. As will be apparent in the analysis, this is frequently detected at the textual level (Fairclough 1992), where specific formulations are negotiated. However, it rarely happens that these textual changes lead to significant changes in discourse practice and social practice. The reason is that the discourses which the Commission initiates are dominant. Certainly, when tracing the institutional process from proposal to law, numerous changes are made all along the line, but no major ideological shifts occur.

It is not just the relevant EU institutions, however, that define the contours of the EU's cultural policy; as Dewey (2010) notes, many EU strategies, such as the Lisbon Strategy, the Bologna process, media policies, cohesion policies and Structural Funds often drive implicit cultural policies and provide more funding for the cultural sector than the cultural policies and programmes are specifically designed to do. This is of course explicitly written in paragraph 4 of the cultural article and directly affects cultural programmes like Culture 2007 and Creative Europe, particularly through Structural Funds. However, Dewey also draws attention to the cultural article's paragraph 5, which lists the decision-making procedures within the EU, as well as how the EU's cultural policy relates to the cultural policies of its Member States: 'As a policy area in the EU, culture is officially a competence shared with the member states, although EU-level competence in culture is negligible and restricted to certain actions. Member states

hold authority for their own cultural policy development, and the EU may not exert direct, active cultural policy influence on member states or dictate harmonization of cultural policy at the nation-state level' (115). Therefore, Dewey maintains that, internally, the EU's cultural policy can be perceived as 'low politics', which involves 'soft law instruments' and soft power in international relations. This view is shared by Bell and Oakley (2015) who perceive discrepancies in the rhetoric and general visions of EU cultural policy and their actual execution: 'The move from this rather selective account of Europe's past to actual policymaking is often clumsy and complicated, not least because the EU's institutional structures — the Council, Commission and Parliament — are sometimes at cross-purposes and indeed at odds with the interests of member states' (159).

Another relevant point is that culture and cultural policy have never been excessively promoted and prioritised, as Dewey's soft power notion indicates, because it is difficult to measure its effect, particularly when paragraph 4 of the cultural article is taken into account. This can also be seen when looking at how much funding is allotted to the field, but as Gordon (2010) demonstrates, at the time of the Maastricht Treaty, only 0.06% of the Community's total budget was allocated to designated cultural budgets. However, this informs quite well the point already made, that culture is used in an instrumental fashion politically, to invent European traditions and narratives based on selected readings of cultural heritage, and economically, as a means to boost the cultural and audiovisual industries.

These discourses were exemplified in two communications from the Commission leading up to the actual first generation of the Culture programme, Cultural Action in the European Community: New Orientations Envisaged and New Prospects for Community Cultural Actions. In the New Orientations, this emphasis on uniting the people and uniting the economy resurface, as it is claimed that '[a]s an essential element of the concept of citizen's Europe, this cultural dimension contributes to an awareness of a common sense of identity' (SEC 1991 2121: 3) and that this cultural dimension 'should take into account the imminent deadline of the Single Market and its implication for culture in Europe as well as arts sectors for which a Community action is envisaged' (3). Much space is therefore given to a section on the Cultural Single Market. Other sections include the development of common areas with cultural aspects and here, emphasis is on cultural heritage, books and reading. These topics are further developed in the New Prospects where

programmes supporting artistic and cultural activities with a European dimension, cultural heritage and translation of European literature and the audiovisual sector are highlighted as important areas. These were later to become the EU's first generation of cultural programmes: Kaleidoscope, Raphaël, Ariane.

### **The cultural programmes**

Kaleidoscope focused its support on artistic and cultural activities with a European dimension and particularly encouraged partnerships, network creations and large-scale European collaborative projects. Raphaël was a programme specifically tailored for the field of cultural heritage, again with an emphasis on transnational cooperation, to improve access, conservation and restoration of cultural heritage of European importance. Lastly, Ariane supported books and reading, focusing on cooperative projects, translation of literary works, training of professionals and prizes relevant to the field. In general terms, this first generation of EU cultural programmes was criticised for being bureaucratic and requiring a lot of effort for relatively scarce funding. Furthermore, the general application and evaluation process was considered opaque (see Ellmeier 1998 for an early critique). These programmes were later merged into the Culture 2000 programme, which was thereby boosted and promoted as the flagship within the EU's cultural interventions and which, as a result, deserves special attention.

When a further look is taken at the decision that establishes the Culture 2000 programme, the dominant discourses exemplified in early EU cultural sector documents are quite rampant, although culture's intrinsic values are echoed: 'Culture has an important intrinsic value to all people in Europe, is an essential element of European integration and contributes to the affirmation and vitality of the European model of society and to the Community's influence on the international scene' (OJ L 63, 10.3.2000: 1), and '[c]ulture is both an economic factor and a factor in social integration and citizenship; for that reason, it has an important role to play in meeting the new challenges facing the Community, such as globalisation, the information society, social cohesion and the creation of employment' (1).

The aim of the Culture 2000 programme is 'to promote greater cooperation with those engaged in cultural activities

by encouraging them to enter into cooperation agreements for the implementation of joint projects, to support more closely targeted measures having a high European profile, to provide support for specific and innovative measures and to encourage exchanges and dialogue on selected topics of European interest' (2). Politically and economically induced discourses surface again in the programme decision, where identity and economic politics stand side by side: 'If citizens give their full support to, and participate fully in, European integration, greater emphasis should be placed on their common cultural values and roots as a key element of their identity and their membership of a society founded on freedom, democracy, tolerance and solidarity; a better balance should be achieved between the economic and cultural aspects of the Community, so that these aspects can complement and sustain each other' (1).

The objectives of the programme are, however, quite diverse as they touch upon promoting cultural dialogue and mutual knowledge of the culture and history of the European peoples, the promotion of creativity and transnational dissemination of culture, and the movement of artists, creators and other cultural operators and professionals and their works. The cultural heritage is highlighted along with an emphasis on socio-economic developments and the 'explicit recognition of culture as an economic factor and as a factor in social integration and citizenship' (3). In the cooperation agreements, one of the criteria for receiving funding is aimed at the 'highlighting of cultural diversity and of multilingualism, promoting mutual awareness of the history, roots, common cultural values of the European peoples and their common cultural heritage' (6). This demonstrates the intertextual and interdiscursive links to prior documents and illustrates that the programme still holds on to the idea of common cultural values and a common cultural heritage. Finally, it is worth noting that the decision establishing the Culture 2000 programme states that the Commission will ensure the cultural measures within other spheres of the Union, explicitly mentioning culture and tourism; culture, education and youth; culture and employment; culture and external relations; cultural statistics; culture and the internal market; culture and research; and culture and the export of cultural goods.

Even though prioritising these topics can be seen to be in tandem with the discursive journey already accounted for, a look at the opinions and resolutions from other EU institutions is informative in detecting what kinds of discursive discrepancies

can be identified. In terms of the ideological undertone of the programme, the Parliament suggested an array of changes. It was also sceptical towards the budget and the programme's formal realisation, which it considered lacking in terms of efficiency and transparency. The Parliament proposed to increase the budget from EUR 167 million to 250 million, but in the final decision, it was the Commission's original budget that was confirmed. The Parliament did, however, succeed in pushing forward various amendments in terms of more varied forms of cultural expressions, i.e., it succeeded in making amendments on a textual level but not in terms of the budget or in making changes to the three types of cultural actions singled out for support.

The CoR is also blunt in its criticism, maintaining that more finances are needed, that the application procedures are too bureaucratic, and that the programme is too distant from the European public; finally the CoR warns that EU cultural policy should not be used to promote high impact, large-scale activities, but rather to focus on everyday cultural manifestations which relate to the general public: 'It must be remembered that citizens will not identify with Europe if Europe is not part of their daily lives. Cultural activities might be reduced to a superficial level where the spectacle and ephemeral communication is the be-all and end-all of everything and there are no positive long-term repercussions' (OJ C 51, 22.2.1999: 72).

These interventions by the CoR were, however, not taken into consideration and neither was the Parliament's second attempt to raise the budget. What this demonstrates is that in the case of Culture 2000, the Commission and the Council are manifestly allies, while the Parliament and the CoR are in the position of trying to push through amendments that will reduce the scope and bureaucracy of funding allocation processes, insert pluralism in key definitions and increase the involvement of smaller cultural actors. While particularly the Parliament was successful in implementing amendments, it is clear that these adjustments were relatively insignificant when compared to the Commission's original proposal.

Similar tendencies are perceived regarding Culture 2007, which still retains the main objectives as defined in Culture 2000. Structurally, these have slightly changed, as the aim is to make the programme more user-friendly, open and complete. However, the main objectives remain the same, emphasising transnational mobility of professionals in the cultural sector, encouraging the circulation of works of art and artistic

products beyond national borders and promoting intercultural dialogue. Older discourses re-emerge with the notable shift that the cultural industries' role is stated more explicitly: 'An active cultural policy aimed at the preservation of European cultural diversity and the promotion of its common cultural elements and cultural heritage can contribute to improving the external visibility of the European Union' (OJ L 372, 27.11.2006: 1). And: 'The cultural sector is an important employer in its own right and there is, in addition, a clear link between investment in culture and economic development, hence the importance of reinforcing cultural policies at regional, national and European level. Accordingly, the place of culture industries in the developments taking place under the Lisbon Strategy should be strengthened, as these industries are making an increasingly large contribution to the European economy' (1). Interestingly, the cultural industries are mentioned in relation to the Lisbon Strategy, which again paves the way for implicit cultural policy application.

In terms of institutional differences, the original proposal from the Commission resembles the final Decision, and interestingly, the discrepancies detected during the negotiations of the Culture 2000 programme are not found to the same extent in the Culture 2007 version. This is a sign that the discourses on EU cultural programmes have stabilised between the different EU institutions, as most of the interventions did not concern content but rather structural dimensions and execution. The updated 2007 version can therefore be seen as confirming the dominant discourses detected in the first two generations of EU cultural programmes, which again corresponds quite nicely with the 'discursive journey' already accounted for in relation to pre-Maastricht cultural interventions.

However, even though the cultural programmes are framed in this manner, another 'discursive journey' unfolded within the audiovisual sector. This was, however, as Gordon maintains, not as complex as it was much easier to argue for Community interventions in the audiovisual sector, being predominantly defined in economic terms, or as he puts it, 'as a trading block/regulator the European Community (EC), with its focus on economic integration, already had a history of direct involvement in TV, audiovisual and publishing as legitimate spheres of economic policy and promoting competitiveness' (Gordon 2010: 101). In terms of broadcasting, the Television without Frontiers directives from 1989 and 1997 are instrumental, as is the amended AVMS directive, which is

supposed to respond to converging processes concomitant to digitisation. These directives can be said to form the regulatory infrastructures for the media programmes that, like the cultural programmes, also went through a similar transition, starting with the Media I programme (1991–1995), Media II programme (1996–2000), Media Plus (2001–2006) to the Media 2007 programme.

From the very start, the Media programmes were not as ambivalent in terms of political instrumentalism, as the agenda was primarily economic. This is clear from Article 2 in the first Media programme which states that the programme's aim is 'to increase European production and distribution companies' share of world markets' (OJ L 380, 31.12.1990: 38) and 'to contribute, in particular by improving the economic and commercial management abilities of professionals in the audiovisual industry in the Community, and in conjunction with existing institutions in the Member States, to creating conditions which will enable undertakings in that sector to take full advantage of the single market dimension' (38-39). When some of the goals for the Media 2007 programme are scrutinised, it is evident that not much has changed since the establishment of the first programme, at least not on the discursive side. These goals are seen as being to: 'increase the circulation and viewership of European audiovisual works inside and outside the European Union, including through greater cooperation between players' (OJ L 327, 24.11.2006: 14) and to 'strengthen the competitiveness of the European audiovisual sector in the framework of an open and competitive European market favourable to employment, including by promoting links between audiovisual professionals' (14).

As previously mentioned, the current Creative Europe programme merges the cultural and media programmes into one. However, it is important to point out that these sectors have never been totally separate, as already from the informal pre-Maastricht cultural strivings, the cultural and audiovisual sectors were repeatedly mentioned together and later directly written into paragraph 2 of Article 128. All the same, the step taken with the new Creative Europe is decisive as it formalises the symbiosis of these two sectors. When a further look is taken at the decision establishing the programme, the general objectives remain the same: '[T]o safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and to promote Europe's cultural heritage' (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013: 226) and 'to strengthen the competitiveness of the European cultural

and creative sectors, in particular of the audiovisual sector, with a view to promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (226). These general objectives are supported by specific objectives which aim to support European cultural and creative sectors in operating internationally, to promote circulation of cultural and creative works and mobility of cultural and creative players, to strengthen financial capacity of SMEs, to reach new and enlarged audiences, and finally 'to foster policy development, innovation, creativity, audience development and new business and management models through support for transnational policy cooperation' (226). The European added value is also predominant where it is anchored clearly within the Europe 2020 Strategy and its flagships initiatives.

Otherwise, a major change from earlier programmes is of course that now they are organized as two sub-programmes, a Media sub-programme and a Culture sub-programme. Concerning the former, no major discursive shifts can be detected as the focus is still on 'facilitating the acquisition and improvement of skills and competences of audiovisual professionals and the development of networks, including the use of digital technologies to ensure adaptation to market development, testing new approaches to audience development and testing new business models' (227), as well as on encouraging business-to-business exchanges and increasing the capacity of audiovisual operators to develop European audiovisual works. What can be perceived as causing a major shift is the emphasis on digital technologies. However, this is not recent and was already a concern in the Media 2007 programme and the AVMS directive.

When the priorities of the Culture sub-programme are scrutinised, a more obvious discursive shift can be detected: '[S]upporting actions providing cultural and creative players with skills, competences and know-how that contribute to strengthening the cultural and creative sectors, including encouraging adaptation to digital technologies, testing innovative approaches to audience development and testing new business and management models' (228). While similar emphasis has certainly surfaced in earlier programmes, this distinctly carves out discourses that predominantly reside within the economic realm. Other priorities argue for supporting international cooperation amongst 'cultural and creative players' (229) and cultural and creative organizations, supporting international touring, events, exhibitions and festivals, the circulation of European literature and 'supporting

audience development as a means of stimulating interest in, and improving access to, European cultural and creative works and tangible and intangible cultural heritage' (229). It is therefore obvious that the old strands from the early pre-Maastricht documents are intertextually related to Creative Europe, and the same can be said for earlier Culture and Media programmes. On the cultural front, the emphasis is still on the circulation of books, as in the case of *Ariane*; on cultural heritage, as in the case of *Raphaël*; and on international cooperation within the cultural field, as was the case with *Kaleidoscope*. On the media front, the emphasis is still on facilitating skills and competencies of audiovisual professionals, on facilitating access to markets and business tools and on increasing the capacity of audiovisual operators to develop European audiovisual works.

However, a discursive shift can be detected regarding the framing of intrinsic values and economic objectives. In the recitals for the Culture 2000 programme, culture's intrinsic values, as previously demonstrated, are explicitly formulated and pushed forward. Significantly, this is taken up again in the actual articles of the Culture 2000 programme. The Decision for Culture 2000 also focuses more on promoting cultural dialogue, mutual knowledge of the culture and history of the European peoples, the highlighting of cultural diversity and in developing new forms for cultural expressions. These are not as prevalent in the recitals for Creative Europe, even though the 2005 UNESCO Convention's emphasis on seeing cultural activities, goods and services as having both an economic and cultural nature, is mentioned. The Commission Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalising world from 2007 is also mentioned in a recital, and even though it underlines the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, it also stresses 'culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework for growth and jobs and culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations' (221). While this ambivalence is detected in the recitals, these are not as obvious in the actual articles, even though there is mention of 'non-market-oriented' activities in the Creative Europe's definition of the cultural and creative sectors.

When a closer look is taken at the discourses used by the EU institutions, the same pattern emerges, as was the case in the Culture 2007 negotiations, i.e., it seems as if the institutions have settled their discursive discrepancies and their interventions were structural, rather than ideological. This comes, however,

with a significant exception, namely, that in the original proposal from the Commission, there was no recital on intrinsic values (COM(2011) 785 final). Indeed, it is the Parliament that adds this in its first report on the Commission's proposal: 'The Framework Programme ought to take into account the fact that culture has an intrinsic value that is separate from the economic aspects of cultural goods and services. This duality that culture has should be borne in mind when the Framework Programme is being drawn to ensure that the focus is not placed solely on economic competitiveness' (A7-0011/2013: 20). In the final decision constituting Creative Europe, recital 20 is formulated thus: 'The Programme should take into account the dual nature of culture and cultural activities, recognising, on one hand, the intrinsic and artistic value of culture and, on the other hand, the economic value of those sectors, including their broader societal contribution to creativity, innovation and social inclusion' (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013: 223). Regarding the actual articles concerning the objectives, the Parliament proposes to implement factors that relate to developing a sense of European identity among European citizens. However, this is to no avail, as the alignment between the Commission's proposal and the Decision is quite straightforward. The Parliament's suggestions are taken into account on various occasions, but as already claimed, this is usually a matter of responding to the Commission's text and does therefore not result in any major discursive shifts.

The same can be said for the opinions of CoR and the EESC. The EESC emphasises the cultural and creative sectors' prominent roles in the Europe 2020 Strategy and 'highlights the importance of the economic dimension of the Creative Europe programme and supports the idea that the programme should encourage all operators in the cultural and creative sectors to aspire to economic independence' (OJ C 181, 21.6.2012: 35). However, even though the EESC is generally favourable to discourses that encourage economic growth, it is also aware of certain discrepancies in the Commission's proposals: 'However, it seems that the programme is overly concerned with the general objective of competitiveness, while the goal of promoting European cultural and linguistic diversity is less visible' (35). Similar concern is shared by the CoR, which in particular takes up elements that concern intrinsic general values of democracy, as it 'feels that culture and art, as well as cultural media and the audiovisual sector, can trigger behavioural changes and have the power to create new social relationships motivating

people to use their creative abilities, and that at the same time culture and art can safeguard the values of democratic society' (OJ C 277, 13.9.2012: 158). However, even though the CoR pays attention to these kinds of discourses, it certainly aligns with the dominant ones, as well as acknowledging that 'by bringing culture and media together, the programme can facilitate the distribution of cultural products, create a single online market for audiovisual works and help unlock the job creation potential of the cultural and creative sectors' (157).

## Conclusion

This article has accounted for a 'discursive journey' concerning the cultural policy and the cultural programmes of the European Union. This journey started with informal talks, speeches and documents that later proved to be decisive for Article 128 in the Maastricht Treaty. The approach used in this paper is inspired by the critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough that emphasises orders of discourse, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity at textual and discourse practice levels. Other theories that touch upon EU cultural and media policy from different perspectives have informed the social practice, i.e., what the consequences of this discursive journey can be said to be. Here, Fairclough focuses on concepts such as power, hegemony and ideology, and when these are applied to the textual analysis, it becomes clear that EU cultural policy and EU cultural programmes were born implicitly, in Ahearne's sense of the concept. What this entails is that as the cultural sector was not an official part of EU policy prior to Maastricht, discourses and corresponding activities within the cultural sector had to be 'camouflaged'. The consequence of this is that from its very start, in ideological terms, there was always attention towards the economic potential of the sector. Later on, political discourses emerged, mainly focusing on a people's Europe and a common cultural heritage. These discourses colour not only EU's cultural article but also the execution of the policy as manifested in the four generations of EU cultural programmes.

The ambition of this article has been to demonstrate this over time, to account for intertextual and interdiscursive relations, as well as institutional power relations between different EU institutions in the negotiation processes of the different programmes. I asked the question as to whether a discursive shift had occurred regarding the cultural programmes, and

the answer is affirmative. There is a discursive shift from the first to the fourth generations of EU culture programmes, but this has not happened overnight. The dominant discourses of EU cultural policy have always been coloured in terms of implicit cultural policy, promoting economic and political discourses. Seen through the eyes of cultural policy, this is instrumentalism in Vestheim's sense of the word, as culture and the cultural sector are used to promote other interests. The discursive dilemma of treating culture's 'intrinsic values' is a good example of this. Indeed, in the new Creative Europe, the effects of the EU's 2020 Strategy are quite obvious. It is clear that the cultural and creative sectors have a lot to offer in terms of the creation of jobs and economic growth, and discursively these elements have taken the upper hand in the Creative Europe programme. Indeed, objectives that relate to intrinsic values, cultural diversity, common values and roots, freedom, tolerance and solidarity, which were present in Culture 2000, have been pushed to the periphery. The step taken with the Creative Europe therefore discursively moves further into the economic domain and away from the political instrumentalism that characterised earlier attempts where a people's Europe and the common cultural heritage were celebrated.

However, it would be an overstatement to maintain that the rhetoric has changed. A better way of framing it would be to maintain that the already implicit cultural policy and cultural programmes of the EU have shifted away from political towards economic instrumentalism. In some ways, the Creative Europe is, on a discursive level, more crisp and coherent than its predecessors. This is because the narrative has been simplified and taken back to its roots – to the place where culture from the start was camouflaged.

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# The Impact of the European Union on Cultural Policy in Malta

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Karsten Xuereb

*Institute of Travel, Tourism and Culture*

*University of Malta*

*kxuere02@um.edu.mt*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2759-3769>*

## Abstract

**Keywords:**  
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*This paper will address the impact of the European Union (EU) on cultural policy development in Malta. The attention paid by the EU to globalising matters through culture, particularly i) citizenship participation in relation to social integration, ii) economic revival through urban regeneration, and iii) cultural diplomacy with regard to internationalisation efforts, is acknowledged and assessed through a focus on recent Maltese cultural practice. Impact will be assessed in relation to a) policy as well as legislation, b) funding structures and incentives, and c) implementation measures through initiatives taken by Maltese public cultural institutions. Convergences and divergences in comparison with key EU strategic actions will be discussed, with reference made to major legislative documents, funding programmes, and cultural projects undertaken by Maltese authorities and other cultural stakeholders in response or in relation to European developments.*

## Introduction

The role of the European Union (EU) in addressing cultural matters on a global level is intertwined with the relationship between cultural policy at the EU level and at the Member State (MS) level, in observance of the subsidiarity principle.<sup>1</sup> The impact of the EU on cultural policy in Malta has been experienced, and may be assessed, in relation to the enlargement process of 2004. This paper will address this impact with reference to three areas closely related to policy-making, namely a) legislation, b) funding, and c) cultural initiatives that are directly related to EU membership. Furthermore, it will look at how these areas have addressed topics of importance to EU cultural policy, namely i) citizenship participation and particularly social integration, ii) urban regeneration with a special emphasis on the economic value of the enterprise in relation to heritage and tourism, and iii) efforts at engaging with an international diplomatic agenda. To conclude, the influence of the EU on Maltese policy areas that lie outside culture, yet are close to it, will be briefly addressed. These outlying yet related areas include education, social affairs, international affairs, and agricultural/fisheries concerns.

### The EU agenda on a global level

The role of the EU with regard to culture extends to policy areas that bring together neo-liberal economic priorities with social concerns. This role cuts across different territorial levels, including trans-national, national and intra-national levels, while developing a regional reality of its own. The EU adopts contrasting measures and rhetoric in favour of the free market while concerning itself with poverty and other aspects of social inequality and disaggregation. These contradictions lead to an underlying tension between EU economic and social policy.

<sup>1</sup> The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are established by Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Protocol (No 2). A detailed discussion of the relevance of these principles to cultural matters is provided below. The text of the article reads as follows:  
'Under the principle of subsidiarity, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level.  
The institutions of the Union shall apply the principle of subsidiarity as laid down in the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. National Parliaments ensure compliance with the principle of subsidiarity in accordance with the procedure set out in that Protocol.'

This tension travels across different geographic zones, both internal as well as external to the EU (Cafruny 2016: 9-27). The European political block has adopted a very hard-nosed agenda towards its economic, financial and political survival (Marsili and Varoufakis 2017: 14-17). This may be witnessed in a number of situations. These include the approach adopted by the EU to the European populations more seriously affected by the 2008 economic and financial crisis in its insistence on austerity rather than solidarity; a growing number of economic bilateral trade agreements promoting free trade with third countries,<sup>2</sup> including the scuppered Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) attempted with the US; and the drive towards securing and securitising neighbouring territories to the east and south of Europe through economic, intelligence and military means.

Within this context, cultural initiatives on a global, as well as a European, scale shed light on an inherent contradiction in the guiding philosophy adopted by the EU. Over the past years, the EU agenda for culture in a globalising world has attempted to portray the enlightened aspect of the Union and project a collaborative dimension based on humanity, tolerance, innovation, and creativity.<sup>3</sup> The appreciation of difference and acceptance of cultural diversity outside as well as within the EU have been presented as the keystones for all future relations within the EU. The most visible level of recognition for these efforts came in the form of the granting of the Nobel Prize for Peace to the EU in 2012 for advancing the causes of peace, reconciliation, democracy, and human rights, albeit restricted to the European territory. The promotion of a strategy for global engagement on a cultural basis, as part of a series of efforts by the EU that encompass different policy areas seeking to achieve various ends, particularly the economic ones set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and jobs, has become a mainstay of the European approach.<sup>4</sup> These include the tools of 'soft power' that are themselves means of building trust and

<sup>2</sup> For a full list of such agreements, consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/> [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>3</sup> For further detail, one may refer to the following, recent publications by the European Commission: Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations*, Brussels 8 June 2016; and Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *On a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World*, Brussels 10 May 2007. Both texts can be found at: [https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework_en) [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en) [accessed 6 October 2017].

goodwill for further economic ends (Nye 2004). The ratification of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions very soon after its publication in 2005 further cemented this global vision, adhering to the respect of cultural diversity as a means of enabling the targeted and strategic development of international trade protocols on cultural terms in ways that are advantageous to the EU (UNESCO 2015).

### **Cultural policy in Europe**

On an intra-European level, the EU has also had a tough balancing act to manage, and it did so with varying results. It is important to note that from a strictly technical perspective, the EU does not have a cultural policy, as it has in other areas where its competencies reach further into national jurisdiction.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the principle of subsidiarity prevails since 'national cultures [...] have, of course, been the primary frame of reference in which cultural policy agendas have been elaborated in modern Europe' (Meinhof and Triandafyllidou 2006: 3). In areas in which the EU does not have exclusive competence, such as culture, subsidiarity seeks to safeguard the ability of the MS to make decisions and take action. The reference to the principle in the EU Treaties (TEU) is aimed at ensuring that powers are exercised as close to the citizen as possible, in accordance with the proximity principle referred to in Article 10(3) of the TEU.

Decisions by the different EU bodies, including the Council of the EU, on cultural matters respect the competences of MS in this area on the basis of national identity and sensitivities related to national cultural expressions. When drafting, debating, and approving documents that set policy guidelines, funding cultural programmes, and promoting the engagement of citizens through particular actions, attention is given by the relevant authorities to allow the necessary leeway for MS to implement and monitor progress in ways that respect national competencies. While laudable in its intention, the subsidiarity principle is open to misuse and enables MS to shape guidelines and funding, as well as the mobilisation of resources on a national level but within an EU framework, to achieve arguably nationalistic aims. The results may thus only partially match

<sup>5</sup> One such area is the Digital Single Market. Interestingly, legal tools such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, regularly revised in light of ongoing technological developments, do regulate a key area of cultural expression and consumption, with significant economic import.

expectations established at the outset at best and justify national or nationalistic action that contradicts original aims and values through European mechanisms and funds at worst.<sup>6</sup>

On the level of initiatives, funding schemes encouraging intra-European collaboration have accompanied and supported the steps undertaken by the EU towards enlargement and integration since the late 1970s. In 1992, a supranational competence on culture was included in the TEU signed in Maastricht, then amended in Amsterdam in 1997. A specific title on culture led to the Kaleidoscope programme on cultural cooperation, Raphael on cultural heritage and Ariane on publishing and reading, while Culture 2000 effectively reorganised these programmes while establishing a new structure for new programmes (Sassatelli 2006: 28).

Creative Europe is the most recent framework programme managed by the European Commission aiming to support the culture and audio-visual sectors. This programme follows on from the Culture Programme and the MEDIA programme with a budget of €1.46 billion, or 9% higher than its predecessors.<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that further support has stemmed from outside the cultural funding programmes of the EU, chiefly structural funds.

The success of MS in making the best use of funds to date differs for various reasons. Geographical factors include centrality, contiguity with other neighbouring countries, size, and topography. Similarly important factors are the levels of infrastructure, communications, and transport within and with other MS. Related to these factors are the demographics, including the size, diversity, skill sets, and education levels of the population. Differences on the basis of membership years of the EU are not consistent: since the 2004 enlargement, central and eastern European countries, as well as Croatia most recently, have outstripped Cyprus and Malta, who suffer from further peripherality and literal isolation, and have caught up with older MS with whom they have also developed good networks and co-productions.<sup>8</sup>

Since 1985, the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) has developed into arguably the flagship cultural programme of

<sup>6</sup> An account of how the European Capital of Culture process in Malta reflects such mutations is given below.

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/about\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/about_en) [accessed 6 October 2017].

<sup>8</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/selection-results\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/selection-results_en) [accessed 24 October 2017].

the EU.<sup>9</sup> This is because it requests an ever-growing number of candidate cities to address economic and urban regeneration on the one hand, and social inclusion through civic participation on the other, thus addressing at least two of the main targets of EU Strategy 2020. As argued by several researchers studying the impact of capitals of culture throughout Europe, and as per the overall tensions experienced by the EU in trying to pursue social goals while engaging in neo-liberal economic practices as outlined above, achieving these twin goals often proves contradictory for participating cities.<sup>10</sup>

Other initiatives that have contributed to generating a greater sense of European belonging and engagement, albeit with less popular appeal than capitals of culture, include the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Prize and the European Union Prize for Literature. It is hoped that their impact on addressing the European sense of malaise and disaffection that has spread throughout the Union may become more than a token contribution. Rather than gaining visibility and funding to further the aims of the projects, they should be supported in such a way that they filter down to and help shape education systems across the MS. As discussed at the European Cultural Forum in Milan in 2017 on the occasion of the official launch of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, if tangible and intangible heritage are 'the beating heart of Europe', it may be worth paying more attention to the value of these areas of identity and how they can contribute to a better understanding of citizenship in Europe today.<sup>11</sup>

It is worth noting that being 'classified within those domains where the Community has only complementary competence', initiatives supported and funded by the EU are 'still rather limited' (Sassatelli 2006: 27-28). It may be further noted that the 'iron rule of unanimity at the same time testifies to the reticence of member states to delegate even small portions of sovereignty, and has the effect of slowing down every initiative' (Sassatelli 2006: 27). This, together with the relatively small budget directly dedicated to culture, reinforces MS efforts at keeping funding

<sup>9</sup> The relative popularity of the process has inspired similar, simplified ones in Asia, South America and among Arab countries.

<sup>10</sup> See: Immler, N. L. and Sakkers, H., 2014. (Re)Programming Europe: European Capitals of Culture: rethinking the role of culture, *Journal of European Studies*, 44 (1): 3-29; Lähdesmäki, T. 2013. Cultural activism as a counter-discourse to the European Capital of Culture programme: The case of Turku 2011, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16 (5): 598-619; O'Callaghan, C., 2012. Urban anxieties and creative tensions in the European Capital of Culture 2005: 'It couldn't just be about Cork, like', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 18 (2): 185-204.

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/culture/event/forum-2017\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/event/forum-2017_en) [accessed 6 October 2017].

for cultural initiatives separate from other funding streams and mainstream policy areas where the EU can intervene more directly, to the benefit of more national control over culture.

### **Maltese cultural relations with Europe**

The political context that has implicitly and explicitly shaped the nation's understanding of and approach towards cultural policy is a colonial one. The British colonial experience formed the civil service and government structures before and after Independence and still acts as a strong reference point. On the other hand, the longer cultural tradition lies with Italy, part of the Axis forces fighting the British in World War II, which saw Malta as a strategic Allied stronghold in the Mediterranean (Frendo 2012).

Relations between Malta and the EU preceded preparation for the accession to the *acquis communautaire* at the start of the new millennium. Throughout its years in Opposition in the early years of the 1980s, the Christian democrat, conservative *Partit Nazzjonalista* (Nationalist Party), of Italianate inspiration, set out joining the European Economic Community (EEC) as a political goal with strong cultural undertones, in opposition to the British-inspired socialist Malta Labour Party government's policy to antagonise the West and build closer links with the Gaddafi regime and other political allies distrusted by the US (The Today Public Policy Institute 2014; McFadden 2012).

Political links with Europe have been long-standing, both preceding and immediately following Independence from Great Britain in 1964. Bilateral agreements with the UK and Italy included cultural and educational provisions that assisted young professionals within particular administrations to invest in capacity-building exercises, particularly with regard to curatorship, heritage, conservation, and the performing arts (British Council Malta 2017; Cremona 2008; Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion 2017). Prior to that, the rule of the Knights of St John, also known as the Knights of Malta, and Napoleonic France between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, brought sovereignty and governance matters close to cultural development in the fields of architecture, sacred art, music, and other forms addressing cultural diplomacy and the ostentation of power.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.stjohnscocathedral.com/history-of-st-johns/> [accessed 9 October 2017].

## The cultural milieu in preparation for enlargement

A few years prior to the commencement of preparations for enlargement, the capital city of Malta, Valletta, participated in a special edition of the celebration of the cities of culture in Europe. In 1990, the Culture Ministers of the EEC created the European Cultural Month initiative, 'intended to respond to the widespread interest in the European Cities of Culture initiative, especially in cities outside the Community, taking into account the political changes in eastern and central Europe (Resolution 90/C 162/01)' (Palmer-Rae Associates 2004: 158). As will be shown, Valletta's efforts 'to develop a broad programme with wide appeal' with an emphasis on improving infrastructure, while still running into various bureaucratic and mismanagement mishaps, seems to have acted as a preview of the European Capital of Culture year in 2018 (Palmer-Rae Associates 2004: 158).

This brief yet telling episode was followed by a long series of policy, legal, and funding developments which one can argue were directly linked, and in direct response to, upcoming EU membership. While it is true that cultural matters of a national kind, like policy, belong to the practice of the state, it was a small group of inspired academics, researchers, and government officials who, over the years, realised and worked on the notion of the importance of developing the basis of a framework necessary to ensure that cultural management in Malta would comply with European practices and stand a greater chance of accessing the opportunities, including funding, to be made available. The support of European expertise in this field was sought, most notably with the guidance of Cultural Committee of the Council of Europe.<sup>13</sup>

In 2002, two key pieces of legislation were put in place. The first was the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts Act, establishing for the first time a cultural agency at arm's length from the government to set policy and manage cultural funds while developing an international agenda for cultural participation. The second was the Cultural Heritage Act, whereby the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage was set up in a way that was autonomous from government and with the ability to monitor and safeguard national heritage. Alongside the Superintendence, the national agency for the management

<sup>13</sup> The Malta entry to the *Compendium: Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*, authored by Toni Attard, formerly Director of Strategy at Arts Council Malta, provides an extensive and exhaustive review of aspects of cultural policy history and practice in Malta: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/malta.php?aid=1> [accessed 8 October 2017].

of heritage sites was created: Heritage Malta was responsible for modernising the approach previously adopted by the Museums Department, a government structure, by seeking private partnerships to augment funding, popularise and maintain its sites, and encourage local as well as international visitors to engage with them.<sup>14</sup>

### **The first steps following EU membership**

Once membership of the EU was affected and the inter-relation and exchange of best practice became a reality among a very competitive union of twenty-seven Members States, following the entry of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, Malta was in a position to engage in and contribute to the rate at which the development of policy, legislation, and funding structures accelerated. In 2006, the Creative Economy Working Group, albeit consisting only of four officials, two of whom were cultural professionals, was established within the remit of the ministry responsible for finance to effectively set up a national infrastructure with which to support the development of the private sector as a key stakeholder in cultural development. Prior to this date, most cultural activity related to heritage and tourism, and the relatively limited number of visual and performing arts expressions of an independent, innovative type, were dwarfed and out-funded by exhibitions, festivals, and concerts organised and/or funded by government or church authorities. The closing of the first decade of the twenty-first century saw, for the first time, Malta address in terms of policy, legislation, and funding its nascent cultural and creative industries.

It is no coincidence that in 2011, this drive towards a closer bond with EU policies aimed at the development of a stronger single market in relation to its cultural industries resulted in the overdue publication of Malta's first national cultural policy. While prioritising the economic value of culture and creativity, the small group of competent and experienced professionals responsible for the drafting of the policy also highlighted civic participation, access to the arts, cultural education, the professionalization of the sector and the internationalisation of arts from Malta (Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, the Environment and Culture 2011). The echoes between EU policy in this area, and that of Malta, are clear and intended.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/countries-profiles-structure.php> [accessed 6 October 2017].

In the field of funding, in 2015, the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts was rebranded as Arts Council Malta (ACM) following the election of the *Partit Laburista* (Labour Party) on the basis of a political manifesto promoting further access to culture and a strong social equality agenda. This change spearheaded further investment. This led to a shift in emphasis on the development of further funding streams for local as well as international artists engaged in artistic activity stressing quality, accessibility, professionalisation, international collaboration and export. This shift once again reflected the growing importance of culture in the EU's own internal hierarchy.

During this period, the profile of cultural matters across EU policy areas grew for a number of reasons. These included culture being recognised as a relatively new and under-utilised vector for economic regeneration, particularly in the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis of 2008. Furthermore, the cultural sector was seen to develop inherently closer links with the three key areas mentioned above, namely: i) economic growth and the development of the jobs market through digitalisation, innovation and information technology; ii) the social agenda, including the promotion of intercultural dialogue among different people within and outside the EU, the integration of migrants and the addressing of social ills such as poverty and exclusion; and iii) cultural diplomacy.

The following sections will look at these three areas of cultural interest in detail. They will attempt to draw out connections between national and European strategic objectives and assess the way they have been addressed through the three key tools of a) policy and legislation, b) strategic funding, and c) initiatives, with particular reference to the ECOC project.

### **Policy and legislation**

As noted above, Malta published its national cultural policy in 2011. The process had started in the early 1990s, and a close reading of different drafts shows a growing concern with a number of areas of importance to the EU. The main areas of concern that featured across different drafts were those reflecting an understandable concern with the protection of national cultural traits, including language and folkloristic means of expression, in the face of an increasingly globalising world (Ministry of Education 2001). However, later versions and

the policy itself reflect a will to engage with the challenges posed by globalisation and seek to place Malta on the international cultural map. In so doing, culture was intended to open other doors, particularly economic and diplomatic ones (Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport 2010).

Together with these concerns that resonate with EU priorities, one can also observe a growing realisation of the need to engage with wider, more diverse audiences for various reasons. Therefore, the priority of policy makers to increase audiences, diversify cultural content, make it accessible and encourage citizenship participation in order to justify financial investment in the cultural sector, seemed to match a larger concern at EU level. This consisted of keeping culture relevant through popular, meaningful and innovative ways, also through the more effective use of the media and technological tools (Council of the European Union 2014).

A more subtle instrumental use of cultural policy was visible in the social agenda that Maltese cultural policy, like EU efforts, aimed towards. Matters of diversity, inclusion, and even integration of migrant communities make an appearance, and funding in culture, like in other MS, including the UK which, to date, Maltese policy in various areas still follows closely, was justified less for intrinsic, artistic purposes and more for any social contribution it could provide (Hewison 2014). As with EU policy, one could start to witness the beginning of the growing tension between assessing the cultural impact by setting social goals on the one hand, and measuring economic targets through the cultural and creative industries and economic output and jobs on the other.

One more point worth mentioning is the progressive and liberal agenda adopted by the Maltese government since 2013 that has extended to cultural matters and particularly the repeal of censorship laws (Bondin 2015).<sup>15</sup> The abolishment of censorship has led to an environment that has encouraged personal expression, including artists, without the risk of running into criminal charges for the vilification of religion or other aspects of morality, which remain important in everyday cultural life. This agenda mirrors efforts elsewhere in the EU, although not everywhere, encouraging a freer form of expression and fewer restrictions on what may or may not be said. It is interesting to note that on the other hand, the financially and politically pervasive role of government in

<sup>15</sup> However, the proposed new media law somewhat reintroduces elements of censorship, as reported in Camilleri 2017.

the production of cultural and audio-visual material has effectively silenced into complacency many artists who may otherwise challenge public mores, thus creating a level of false serenity and control in the public sphere in less drastic and yet more devious ways (Leone Ganado 2017).

### **Strategy for growth**

The ACM Create 2020 Strategy is the current policy-inspired text and framework that ties in closely with the EU cultural policy strategic framework as well as the economic and social goals the EU aims to achieve in the coming years. The document outlines a very ambitious set of goals to be achieved by 2020, overlapping with a number of key cultural events in Malta, particularly the hosting of the ECoC in 2018. The cultural development aimed for in relation to this event lies at the heart of the efforts towards legacy-setting and sustainability. As will be discussed below, the severe shortcomings in the ECoC project will hamper efforts to achieve these strategic goals, which however remain part of a key document and roadmap for further development in Malta that matches aims set out at the EU level (Arts Council Malta 2015).

Firstly, the Create 2020 Strategy aims to pay a great deal of importance to matters of economic development through the fostering of strong conditions for the growth of small creative businesses in a climate of innovation and robust cultural structures. In this, although not explicitly stated, the influence of EU policies to plug the cultural and creative industries into the European economy and jobs market is clear. To achieve this, ACM envisages investing in business development and mentoring, encouraging seeking alternative sources of funding to public money, enabling closer collaboration between creatives, the public sector, and the private sector, and fostering clustering and networking through public-private partnerships. Challenges that may limit the ambitions of ACM include lack of expertise, reticence by the private sector to dedicate resources to cultural matters, lack of political will, and – in a scenario of economic downturn that may follow the current expanding boom – a realignment of priorities and resources by state and private investors (Pace 2017).

Secondly, the strategy is also in tune with EU policy aims in favour of engaging wider sectors of the population in creative activity for social interaction and well-being, with an aim towards generating economic impact. This area poses one of

the main challenges to the implementation of cultural policy as populations are not static, but changing. They are also not passively waiting for engagement, but are generally occupied with other activities with which cultural activities may need to compete, rather than complement. One drawback of the strategy that is particularly evident in this area is the relatively wide remit in relation to the areas of engagement being envisaged, making targeted success difficult to achieve.

A third aspect worth highlighting is the aim of connecting Malta to the international artistic community. While goals are outlined and strategic routes are delineated, challenges to overcoming nationalistic and at times parochial expectations by government institutions, including public cultural organisations, whose leaders are appointed by the state itself to address local agendas, remain hard to overcome. As noted in the strategy, the participation of cultural organisations and individuals in international forums and festivals has increased. However, a clear plan to lead to the identification of the necessary resources to go beyond simple participation and become an active contributor and partner remains to be seen (Xuereb 2017b).

### **Cultural initiatives**

The final section of this paper will look at how the areas of social integration, urban regeneration, and cultural diplomacy relate to the ECoC in Malta in 2018. The initiative was launched in 1985, before EU cultural competence was established, by the artist Melina Mercouri, who was Greek Minister for Culture at the time, and her French counterpart, Jack Lang (Sassatelli 2006: 33). A strong dimension of the project remains its appeal to candidates to be a 'European' city (Sassatelli 2006: 26), starting with the first phase when cities were assigned the title as a form of recognition of their cultural value, through the second phase realising the regenerative value of the initiative starting with Glasgow in 1990, and continuing with the current growing awareness of the value of exploiting ECoC as an opportunity to address citizenship and social issues. Arguably, such a vision is still a guiding principle for the European Commission, the monitoring panel appointed by the Commission, and participating cities: 'To *be* European means more than being in Europe for these cities, it means to *become* European in a more significant, auratic, and thus also less-defined sense. To be able to see and enhance one's own Europeanness is a sign

of distinction, of a high cultural capital, to put it *à la Bourdieu'* (Sassatelli 2006: 26).

Cities bidding for the title still seem to reflect this ambition at the candidacy stage, as can be witnessed by their submitted bid books. This European vision is sharpened through the materialisation of the cultural programme of cities that have succeeded in winning the title during the preparation phase, when the advice and guidance of the monitoring panel may be fundamental in defining the final steps towards implementation. However, it has been observed that certain cities do lay such ideals by the side in pursuit of more concrete, tangible, and deliverable objectives, like economic regeneration. This is particularly true in relation to the development of infrastructure, increasing growth and jobs, and attracting higher numbers of tourists (Monitoring and Advisory Panel 2017; Žilič-Fišer and Erjavec 2015).

Valletta is a case in point of this trend. A strong characteristic of the project during the preparation phase was the pursuit of the city to regain its European credentials, linked to its foundation by the Knights of St John in 1566 when it was supported and financed by various noble families and royalty across Europe until the end of the eighteenth century (Mitchell 2002). The ambition of establishing 'an environment of exchange' reflected efforts at transcending the past through the present with an eye on the future in recognising the culturally rich and diverse milieu Valletta had enjoyed, lost through years of neglect and urban growth elsewhere on the Island, and sought to regenerate through the ECOC title (Valletta 2018 Foundation, 2012; 2011).

With regard to the areas under examination here, the one area which has met, and even exceeded, expectation is the economic one (Manduca 2014). On the other hand, little has been achieved in terms of social regeneration and cultural diplomacy.<sup>16</sup> This is in large part down to the way the communication and delivery of the cultural programme has been watered down. Focus has been on appealing to existing audience segments through popular marketing techniques. This has led to an under-valuing and short-changing of

<sup>16</sup> Out of a programme which boasts more than four hundred events, community projects aiming at addressing social regeneration are less than ten: <http://valletta2018.org/cultural-programme/the-valletta-2018-cultural-programme/> [accessed 15 January 2018]. With regard to cultural diplomacy, the most notable effort consisted of exporting a Maltese nativity crib to the Vatican, and then Bethlehem, in 2016 and 2017 respectively: <http://maltawinds.com/2017/12/17/maltese-artistic-crib-inaugurated-bethlehem/> [accessed 15 January 2018].

the challenging, engaging, and European dimensions of the programme, choosing to present the opportunity for engagement not as one of citizenship participation through culture and the arts, but one of self-congratulation, praise, and celebration (Valletta 2018 Foundation 2017). A sense of achievement, of having 'made it', is pervasive and parallels the rhetoric of the party in government, who directly or indirectly appointed most of the key people in the cultural institutions in Malta. It is not surprising that they are trumpeting the current season in Malta as 'the best time ever' (*L-Aqwa Żmien ta' Pajjiżna*).

In terms of cultural diversity, little effort has been maintained to engage with different audiences and scarce residual impact on Malta's diverse population is envisaged. On the one hand, the programme itself has sustained preparatory efforts at reaching out to different sectors of society and even encouraging those not traditionally familiar with particular art forms or ways of performance to be part of creative processes and eventually attend the delivery of events, in line with the ACM strategy for a broader appeal of the arts. On the other hand, outreach to new audiences has been curtailed to an exercise in popular, broad-stroke marketing that tends to deliver what is expected to easily targeted audience segments, with little creativity going into actually mixing audiences up and encouraging different people to engage with programmes generally outside their cultural, social, or financial experiences.<sup>17</sup>

It is worth noting that at the organisational level, political and personal allegiances have encouraged particular groups of people to work on delivering the programme, while excluding others. One may speak of the maintaining of a trend in this case, as political affiliation and practice generates groups of collaborators, at the expense of true inclusion and diversity even from a professional, management, and logistical level. A country the size of Malta, at just over three hundred square kilometres, and with a population of just under half a million, handicaps itself further by hampering its main economic resource: that of humans.

As noted above, the ECoC initiative in Malta has contributed to the general economic well-being of the capital city, as well as the Island. This is true in terms of tourism as well as the upgrade of particular areas of infrastructure. The impact is particularly felt in terms of the several *palazzi* that have

<sup>17</sup> The discourse employed is traditional and conservative, relying on tropes and language common in parish celebrations of the local *festi* (feasts).

been cleaned and refitted to house boutique hotels, and key sites like the old covered market, the relocated museum of art along the lines of community-driven curatorship, and the old slaughterhouse to host an international design cluster.

However, plans for addressing the dearth of infrastructure that can deal with contemporary artistic expression, particularly visual and performing arts, remains. The lack of political and administrative will, rooted in what is a lack of understanding of contemporary cultural needs stemming from colonial short-sightedness, has weakened efforts to curate and host important contemporary exhibitions and other projects in Valletta and elsewhere in Malta. Ironically, while public authorities trumpet the regeneration of Valletta on the basis of popular attraction and an increase in tourism, the cultural offer lacks innovation in a general way, with the exception of a number of heritage and ecclesiastical events (Xuereb 2017a). On the other hand, residents and middle-to-lower class sections of the population see their capital city and areas once inhabited by popular and working classes becoming gentrified and out of reach (Zahra 2016).

A similar omission may be observed with regard to the digital agenda that is promoted by the EU and also supported on a national level.<sup>18</sup> In local terms, efforts towards integrating technological innovation into cultural expression as a means of engaging with young audiences have improved, and collaborations among entities responsible for culture and science have increased (Arts Council Malta 2017). However, in comparison to other ECoCs, efforts in Malta feel underwhelming, especially when models are repeated rather than improved upon through innovation.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, important linkages between different sectors of the creative industries, including design and technology, are not exploited enough to generate new areas of economic growth and jobs, in line with European and national agendas.

With regard to cultural diplomacy efforts in relation to the ECoC, one can note a quantitative increase in the number of European artists engaged to contribute to the local programme. The artists range from organisations with experience in spectacles that are ideal for big events to individual artists or

<sup>18</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/scoreboard/malta> [accessed 9 October 2017].

<sup>19</sup> Mons2015 and its legacy project Mons2025 and Aarhus 2017 provide interesting examples: <http://www.mons2025.eu/en/node/128>; <http://www.smartaarhus.eu/projects/aarhus-2017> [both accessed 9 October 2017].

small collectives focusing on smaller projects. However, as has happened with ECoCs preceding Valletta, efforts to accompany these interventions with sustainable collaboration and international influence through networking and exchange of best practice is left unplanned and unfunded. Following the great expectations generated between 2016 and 2017 with the hosting of the World Summit on Arts and Culture organised by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), the Med Forum by the Anna Lindh Foundation and a series of cultural events during the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU, the actual capital culture year seems not to have fulfilled its potential.

### **The impact of non-culture policy areas on culture**

As we near the conclusion of this paper and its attempt to draw out links between policy areas and tools in the field of culture, it is worth noting that a great deal of effort towards cultural development is initiated outside of its strict remit. This is true at both the EU and the MS level. As noted earlier, one key area of EU policy and the ensuing funding that addresses cultural initiatives is that of Structural Funds aimed at supporting local and regional development across Europe. While the priorities are economic and social, a significant number of projects and funds are tied in with cultural objectives that directly contribute to the EU Strategy 2020 and its goals for growth across the Union.

The same applies to Malta. A number of development projects in conjunction with Valletta 2018 and elsewhere on the Island have cultural tie-ins that address regenerative aims by addressing cultural aspects of society. The Valletta Design Cluster application for around €5M in European Regional Development Funds is an example of this, as are other small amounts applied for projects to affect local level development, intertwining economic, social, and cultural developments. It will be worth noting the future of such investment in light of the termination of the current funding programme in 2020.

There are several other areas lying outside the strict confines of culture that contribute significantly to the furthering of cultural aims. At both the EU and the MS level, education, social affairs, international affairs, and agriculture/fisheries have all drawn links with cultural affairs, given the social and relational dimensions they share.

On the one hand, one may witness several in-roads being

made by non-culture policy areas into the cultural sphere which have been influenced to varying degrees. Arguably, the opposite has been lacking. At both the EU and the MS level, cultural policy-making and initiatives have had a limited impact on economic and social matters, with the exception of areas closely related to culture, such as tourism. Recent efforts to try to relate culture to other policy areas and grow closer to planning and funding in areas outside its direct remit as a way of developing more holistic and socially-progressive projects of a strategically economic nature are therefore encouraged.<sup>20</sup>

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

As was outlined earlier and discussed above, the principle of subsidiarity, established and exercised with regard to cultural policy in Europe in order to respect national cultures, has its drawbacks: these stem from limits related to effectiveness and accountability to an over-arching authority. As things stand, a system of 'direct grants to various cultural actors, operating mainly at the local level, is thus at the heart of the EU cultural policy' (Sassatelli 2006: 28). While not invoking a centralised model wherein Brussels controls the development of cultural expression in MS, is it not time to ask whether cultural policy may be 're-framed in a context in which national objectives were no longer self-evidently the 'natural' priority?' (Meinhof and Triandafyllidou 2006: 3).

A wider, more inclusive, and citizen-driven dialogue supported by intercultural appreciation and understanding may contribute significantly to greater mutuality across EU MS. Cultural proximity may in turn contribute to social development based on a humanist approach towards economic regeneration, the development of innovative capacities and technologies that address the needs of different people and support diversity as an asset to Europe, rather than allowing it to be perceived as a threat that needs to be controlled and securitised. Efforts towards this should be 'informed by a commitment to the protection of the 'common cultural heritage', together with the promotion of a better knowledge and awareness of the cultures of the European peoples [...]

<sup>20</sup> A case in point is the ongoing discussion on cultural heritage that aims to increase synergies between cultural and other matters through horizontal and cross-sectorial action as witnessed in the draft Council conclusions 'on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU' (Council of the European Union 2018) coordinated by the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first semester of 2018.

whose variety [...] is the richness of Europe' (Sassatelli 2006: 28).

In spite of the complexities inherent to matters of identity, one may draw strength from the TEU article on culture that calls for efforts to be made to draw the commonality of European heritage 'to the fore'. It is also encouraging to observe current efforts that try to go beyond addressing European heritage as a depository for past identities out of which to forge European identity today. These seem to gesture towards developing a pan-European discussion exploring elements that may contribute to a framework for common identities tomorrow (Xuereb 2017c). With regard to Malta, efforts to make use of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 to celebrate national intangible heritage expressions, such as band music and traditional *fešta* celebrations, are understandable. However, one should go beyond self-recognition and nationalistic navel-gazing and reach out to different identities that contribute to European identity today and tomorrow (The Times of Malta 2017).

A great deal of effort has gone into cultural policy at the EU level, important elements of which have inspired policy, legislation, funding, and initiatives at the MS level, as this paper has tried to argue with regard to Malta. The guiding principles of EU-level policy are readily identifiable at the national level, and their implementation in Malta is traceable to developments at the level of the Union. Membership of the EU has gone a long way in instilling a correspondence between both levels.

While significant improvements can be witnessed at these levels, shortcomings seem to mirror each other as well. Some of the issues that have contributed to this lack of achievement are related to weak political will to implement visions, limited or competing resources, including funding, and culture being open to influence from other policy areas without managing to reach out and reciprocate equally.

One of the most serious shortcomings of cultural policy when it is not allowed to fulfil its potential is the missed opportunity to influence the ever-changing and diverse European population in positive, innovative, and socially meaningful ways. An influential cultural policy across the EU's institutions and its MS may be necessary to address a number of challenges faced by the EU today. These challenges include the disaffection with mainstream politics, the seeking out of extreme parties, the disaggregation of different populations within the EU, a weak European identity which pervades the EU both within as well as outside its bloc's territorial boundaries and high levels of cynicism that have infiltrated different levels of society.

Over the past years and months, populist political agendas and short-sighted social relations have marked societal developments across Europe. In Malta, the mainstream parties and the extreme fringes drum a tune which does away with culturally-reflective and inspired modes of thinking that may encourage different approaches to the challenges society faces (Fsadni 2017). While acknowledging that the real and apparent tensions and contradictions between liberal and nationalistic agendas cannot be eased and overcome quickly, a thorough cultural reflection that prioritises dialogue and cultural exchange as a way of achieving long-term economic goals may be part of a more consistent approach towards societal development in Europe (Marsili and Varoufakis 2017: 75).

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# From Inconsistencies to Contingencies - Understanding Policy Complexity of Novi Sad 2021 European Capital of Culture

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Goran Tomka

*Faculty of sport and tourism TIMS, Novi Sad, Serbia*

*goran.tomka@tims.edu.rs*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7646-7473>*

Višnja Kisić

*Faculty of sport and tourism TIMS, Novi Sad, Serbia*

*visnja.kisic@tims.edu.rs*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8837-7229>*

## Abstract

**Keywords:**  
*contingency in  
politics; policy  
complexity;  
cultural policy  
research; ECOc  
Bidbook; EU  
cultural policies*

*The case of Novi Sad European Capital of Culture 2021 (NS2021), in which various rationales of cultural policy (local, national, supranational) thread a complex web of political interactions, brings interesting challenges to the theoretical landscape of cultural policy research. We start with the analysis of the Bidbook NS2021 as a cultural policy text, discussing its inconsistencies and ambiguities. Then we study the context and the policy process through participant observation and interviews with key authors. We find that the policy-making process is best explained as contingent - meaning that it is dependent on the historical discourses, demands of the specific policy genre, external requirements and internal pressures, and individual agencies and accidents. In the concluding section, we discuss theoretical and methodological implications that policy contingency poses to cultural policy studies.*

## Coming to terms with policy reality

The link between political speeches and policy documents, on the one hand, and the actual policy measures and actions, on the other, seems to be increasingly problematic. In what Roberts (2010) calls “post-truth politics”, political rhetoric bears no connection to policy agenda (if there is a deliberate agenda at all). While such a style of policy-making is on the rise (e.g. Davies 2016), many academics are trying to understand and explain it. This quest has not bypassed cultural policy research, and recently, several authors have noticed and tried to offer explanations of somewhat blurry and inconsistent manifestations in the cultural policy field.

Discussing the policy-making in transitional societies, Đukić-Dojčinović (2002-2003) posits that Serbian cultural policy is defined by a range of “policy confusions” which she posits are a consequence of the “transitional state” in which Serbia finds itself. In short, due to the fact that the “democratic cultural system has still not been established” (Đukić-Dojčinović 2002-2003: 382), government is not able to run a coherent and clear policy in the field of culture, but instead manifests its work through diverse “policy confusions”, i.e. deviations from the rational policy norm. However, the confusion, lack of coherence and clarity in cultural policy seem not to be unique to “transitional” societies. Gray (2015) points to the “endemic presence of ambiguity” in cultural policy-making in Britain and Western Europe (Gray 2015: 78), suggesting the specific role of vagueness, blurriness and polysemy as capable of balancing diverse opposing interests within a given policy. Selwood (2006) notices divergence from the means-ends policy norm when discussing British cultural policies during the New Labour government, visible in what she terms “conceptual inconsistencies”. She understands them as doubts and uncertainties in the relationship between aims and outcomes of the Department for Culture Media and Sport’s (DCMS) policies, in particular, those that set out to measure various impacts of the arts. By noticing conceptual inconsistencies, she points to paradoxes of evidence-based policies grounded in dubious research and evidence. A few years later, Belfiore (2009) puts forward another critique of the overly positive policy claims on the arts impact in Britain that are not backed by the rigorous research. In formulating the critique of promises and claims made by decision-makers, irrespective of the data which problematizes such claims, she relies on the

concept of “bullshit”, defined originally by Frankfurt (2005). By this definition, “bullshitting” is the act of deliberate and intended misrepresentation on the side of a “bullshitter” who misleads his or her interlocutors in order to pursue his or her own interests and aims (Frankfurt 2005: 56), while at the same time manifesting the lack of any connection with the truth as well as indifference with how things really are (Frankfurt 2005: 30-34). Belfiore notices bullshit in a number of illustrative yet distinct policy manifestations, from “statisticulation”, the performance paradox, and evidence-based policy generated research to hermetic theoretical writing, suggesting the necessity to delineate ethically the manifestations tagged as bullshit from the accurate and rigorous cultural policy-making and research.

What seems to complicate the policy-making landscape, as Belfiore and Bennet (2010) also notice, is a parallel rise of evidence-based policy-making and the rise of inconsistencies, bullshitting, discursive mishmashes, and ambiguities in policy texts and actions which stand in stark contrast to the rational-comprehensive policy ideal. However, what unites these two policy-making trends is the idea of policy-making as a politically neutral exercise - whether by factual, technocratic, or rational use of research evidence and scientific knowledge (Wells 2007), in reality practised more as “policy-based evidence-making” (Belfiore and Bennett 2007), or by the lack of policy clarity that leaves space for numerous opposing interpretations, thus saying a lot without saying anything in particular. Ahearne also points out this depoliticising trend in policy when characterising policy-making as a product of the chaotic and mixed “policy primeval soup”, where all sorts of different policy solutions float together waiting to be fished back up by “policy entrepreneurs” when the right problems come along and require fixing (Ahearne 2006: 3).

While, in the post-political manoeuvre (Mouffe 2005; Rancière 2006), public dissensus and political disagreements are successfully side-tracked through both phenomena, we seem to lack the understanding of how policy-making is really taking place and “[w]e still know relatively little about the dynamics of the policy process” (Nutley and Webb 2000: 29). As Belfiore and Bennett observe, “the policy-making process *in reality* is more complicated than the [rational-comprehensive] model presumes” (original emphasis, 2010: 135). The rationalist-comprehensive policy model (Leoveanu 2013; Saint-Martin and Rothmayr 2011; Everett 2003) represents policy as a coherent

whole created through the clear cycle of decision-making, which presupposes thorough research, deliberation of values, and diverse policy alternatives, as well as consideration of input-output effectiveness. Despite the theoretical and symbolic dominance of a rational-comprehensive model as a sort of policy-making ideal and norm, doubts have been expressed since the 1950s on the possibility of exercising this model in real-life policy processes (Lindblom 1959). In light of increased globalisation, overlapping of different policy levels and rationales (local, national, supranational, global), increased intersectoral influences and new actors in the policy-making field, the coherences of policies, as well as the straightforward relation between the policy texts and actions, seem ever harder to achieve.

How can we then give meaning to ambiguous, incoherent, inaccurate and polysemous policies? And, more importantly, how can we understand the complex, multi-layered, and even chaotic processes within cultural policy-making? This is a burdening question for the whole of cultural policy studies, that tackles not only the issue of the ethical and political position of policy-makers and researchers, but, more broadly, a range of epistemological and ontological issues. In trying to account for complexities, blurriness, inconsistencies, and diverse rationales of policy-making, we find the theorising of contingency in policy and politics particularly fruitful for cultural policy research. This is because the idea of contingency challenges the very nature of reality, as well as our ways of knowing about it, changing both the ontological and epistemological rules of the game and producing a direct clash with the positivistic study of politics (Shapiro 2007), which is at the centre of sustaining the idea of linear rational policy-making.

In defining the coordinates of contingency as a concept, Schedler (2007) treats it as a three-dimensional concept that involves indeterminacy (meaning that  $x$  could be different and that there are numerous possible worlds), uncertainty ( $x$  is unpredictable, futures are open), and conditionality (causal justifications in which  $x$  depends on  $y$ ). On a broader scale, seeing politics and policy as contingent means understanding the world as evolving and having multiple possibilities and potential realities which are not controllable even by the most established structures, procedures, and projections that the rational mind can set. In fact, apart from structures, policy texts and normative procedures, there is the whole jungle of competing discourses, messy processes, games of everyday

politics, and agencies of individual actors, as well as surprising events and occurrences that can influence the course and outcomes of policies.

In short, politics and policy is a part of, influenced by, and influences “the multifaceted plurality of contingencies that inhabit the public sphere” (Schedler 2007: 74) that should be grasped by the study of politics. Without this, there is little space for encompassing complexities of policy-making in practice. In other words, if one wants to understand the more nuanced reality of policy-making, one needs to take into account all the ways that policy diverges from the norms, as well as illogical, accidental and indeterminate policy practices.

### **Methodological considerations**

Issues that we have discussed so far are also related to methodological issues. Namely, if policy processes are always and necessarily multivocal, somewhat ambiguous, multi-layered, and contingent, taking only textual products of these processes as the only or primary source for research seems to be very problematic. Policy documents, as well as official, public speeches, are by far the most consensual, cleansed, and controlled products of policy-making. Behind and beside these outputs lays a wealth of authentic, confused, polysemic, socially unacceptable, personal, biased, interested, and partial ideas, thoughts, speeches, and texts that can inform policy research. We will go as far to say that the official policy texts as the primary object of study can even sometimes obscure the complexities of the actual messy reality of policy-making.

Nevertheless, textual analysis of policy documents and political speeches seems to be the usual choice of many researchers in policy studies. Calling for a more interpretative and complex research design, Yanow (drawing from Burke) claims that apart from *actors*, their *acts*, and their *motivations*, research needs to also take into account *agency* (“how they did what they did”), *scene* (“the setting for these acts”), and *audience* (2007: 117). Many of these are impossible to grasp without field study encompassing a range of qualitative research methods. This is why for this research, we have used a multi-method research design which encompasses textual analysis, interviewing, and participant observation.

The object of our analysis is the case of the city of Novi Sad and the policy processes that led to it winning the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) title for the year 2021

(NS2021). It was a five-year process (from 2011 to 2016) in which local, national, and European levels of policy-making overlapped and collided. It was also a case in which public, private, and civil, as well as professional and lay actors all took the decision-making stage in asymmetrical and often conflictual ways. All these complexities were finally pacified and fixed within one policy document - the application form, better known as the Bidbook. It is a document submitted by a candidate city in response to a call for ECoC, in which a city sets out its objectives, developmental vision, and artistic programme, as well as concrete action steps, management processes, financial provisions, and evaluation indicators. Not only it is an application to ECoC that has to respond to a concrete set of questions that reflect specific policy ideas and criteria set by the European Union (EU 2014), but is a four year long contract between the EU and the city that defines the visions for transforming the city via ECoC. This is a type of the strategic policy document that articulates the specific image and understanding of the city, alongside the vision, program streams, and actions to be achieved and ways of distributing material resources at their disposal in the next five or more years. Finally, it is a document which required significant financial and human resources by the public authorities and targeted work by many people, and is also the key basis on which the panel of European experts decided to give the title to the city. We take this important policy document and focus on the ways in which the document presents and projects the city's identity politics and cultural policies related to identities. In analysing this, we pay particular focus to ambiguities, conceptual inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and bullshitting existing throughout the Bidbook.

Apart from this text, we analyse NS2021 as a specific policy event (Mayhew 2007: 101) that created openings for new policies, for new accidental or deliberate relations among actors, and united or divided actors across the ideological spectrum. This is why, in trying to understand the complexities of the case of Novi Sad 2021, we applied additional research methods. After the Bidbook analysis, we conducted a set of semi-structured interviews with six key authors of the text, including the team coordinator, as well as the general manager of the ECoC and two foreign advisers who were part of the bidding process. The interviews were conducted in Serbian (or English, in the case of foreign advisers). Interviews were transcribed and coded by authors, who also did all the translations from Serbian

to English for parts of the interviews that will appear in the following text. All interviewees were promised anonymity, so their quotes will appear with aliases. Throughout the analysis, we will also offer fragments of historical background in order to understand the sedimented myths of Novi Sad, as well as the city's conflicted memories, which formed a particular "order of discourses" (Fairclough 1995) from which narratives within the Bidbook were chosen and built upon.

In addition, in analysing the whole process, we used a wealth of our personal experiences, perceptions, and memories of the candidacy process. While both of us have been following the events in Novi Sad, first co-author has been engaged by the city in the early phases of ECoC nomination (during 2014), as well as in the preparation of the cultural strategy of the city that ran in parallel to the writing of the Bidbook (in 2016). Hence, key players, events, and processes are familiar to us from the semi-insider perspective. Within the framework of the participant observation (Kawulich 2005; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011), we collected, archived, and analysed key events while they were happening, as well as *post factum*. The position of the first co-author could be best explained as "peripheral membership role" (Adler and Adler 1994: 380), while the second co-author played a more distant role, contributing to the reflexivity of the overall analysis. These personal involvements have served as additional data gathering sources. At the same time, these insights provided a way to check the credibility of the claims made by the interviewees.

All these factors helped us better understand the relations, personal positions, challenges, external pressures, and internal struggles in the process of creating the Bidbook. In addition, it also enabled us to take into account contingencies, specific events, turning points, and accidents behind such policy-making. In what follows, we first briefly introduce the case of NS2021, pinpointing the rupture that this process brought to the usual ways of conducting cultural policy in Novi Sad. We then analyse the Bidbook as a policy text, focusing on the inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and ambiguities of identity policies within the text. Then we look at the policy processes behind the Bidbook in order to understand what has influenced the creation of this text. Finally, we conclude by drawing implications of this case for the wider field of cultural policy research.

## Introducing the case of NS2021

In the autumn of 2011, after years of speculation and expectations, the parliament of Novi Sad, Serbia, declared that the city intended to become a candidate for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) title. What followed was a series of presentations, discussions, working team constitutions and dissolutions, drafting of policy proposals, and research and consultations. All together, these efforts brought the title to the city in 2016, when the European Commission declared Novi Sad to be the ECOC for the 2021 (NS2021).

The whole process has introduced many changes to the city, most of all in the sphere of cultural policy-making. Before the ECOC nomination, local cultural policy was a peripheral, highly bureaucratised, yet not transparent policy field. Decisions were made without any underlying explicit strategic document. The participation of NGOs in policy-making was very low and informal, and inter-department collaboration (e.g. with education, urban planning, economy) was weak. Then, for the first time in its recent history (and for many aspects in the wider surrounding area), the city has gone through its first long-term cultural planning that involved field research, continuous consultations, and discussions that involved numerous stakeholders, especially the local cultural NGOs and experts. Foreign experts were engaged to propose changes to the ways cultural policy is run, and the local artistic council and working groups were formed to suggest changes and new directions. Furthermore, local, provincial, and national governments have been in a rare situation of jointly supporting a single project; various departments of the local government (culture, urbanism, social care, tourism, youth, finances, etc.) were obliged to work together within a single policy process; and a panel of independent experts nominated by the EU started overlooking the city's nomination process and the Bidbook, which in various ways also influenced local strategic cultural planning.

This rupture in the habit of policy-making meant that the local cultural policy dynamics became significantly more complex - from a rather marginal field of policy run by several elected and permanent city officials, it has developed into a process that involved hundreds of actors. A particularly relevant difference is that policy-making processes at the local and national level were confronted with the EU policy-making procedures, expectations, and ideals. In many local discussions

and decisions, the idea that “the EU is now watching us” - regardless of the actual evaluation and monitoring procedures by the designated panel of experts - increased expectations and created a different policy-making environment. Similar to many other non-Western European ECoCs (Lähdesmäki 2014), this watchful eye from the West was particularly important because of Serbia’s semi-peripheral geopolitical position (Spasić 2013) and the status of candidate country for EU membership, which meant that there was a heightened need to perform as “developed”, “modern”, and “European”.

### **Reading the Bidbook**

The analytical eye, when reading just the first few introductory pages of the NS2021 Bidbook, could notice that there are diverse elements that alone, or in relation to each other, offer ambiguous, overstated, and conflicting views on the city, its motives to be the European Capital of Culture, its vision of cultural development, and related policies and means of achieving this. If we understand the application to the ECoC as a policy text that is supposed to give a certain strategic direction to the cultural policy and production of a given city, then we are faced with the rich menu of concepts, policy priorities, streams of actions, projects, measures, and indicators. This assemblage of mutually competing ideas poses challenges to any policy maker, cultural producer or researcher who would aim to follow directions suggested in the NS2021 Bidbook. At the same time, such incoherent policy text makes it challenging to hold the ECoC team and city administration responsible for the future implementation of the policy.

First of all, the document is not always *accurate*. It is teeming with overemphasised, grandiose statements. For example, the city is presented in the very opening paragraph as “a tolerant, multinational, multi-confessional and multicultural community”, that in “a time of migration and conflict, would like to offer Europe the experience of 21 ethnic communities who live here in harmony” (NS2021 2016, part 0: 2). What is absent from the text, however, is that the city has been increasingly ethnically homogenised in the course of the twentieth century. While in 1910, 41.08% of population was Serbian, a century later, in 2011, 78.68% were Serbian. Moreover, many of these 21 communities, even the largest ones, have faced very difficult times in the city over the last decades (Pavković 2001). As an illustration, while in 1961 there were 23,812 Hungarians who made up 23.24% of the

population (the second largest community after Serbs), half a century later, in 2011, there were 13,272 Hungarians, or as little as 3.88% (SZS 1994; SZS 2012). Similarly, Bidbook claims that the city is a “Sustainable Babylon on the Danube” which is a very misleading claim. Apart from the official use of four languages, it is very hard to spot any public use of other languages than Serbian and English across the city. Moreover, this multilingual character of the city is not further elaborated or backed up by any evidence in the Bidbook, like existing programmes, events, or publications. Although one could claim that in this case we see a “bullshitting act”, what we find important is also some wider, structural and contextual reasons for the deployment of this text that considerably challenge the image of deliberate manipulation and a clear responsibility of the authors - something we will deal with in the latter part of the paper.

Second, the text of the Bidbook is incoherent, meaning that it does not offer a stable and clear policy direction. The document floats between mutually exclusive and contradictory identity policies of multiculturalism, interculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and nationalism. Authors, for example, state that Novi Sad has a “spirit of cooperation and creativity permeating life that is multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-confessional” (NS2021 2016 part 0: 4), which is obviously promoting ethnic and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, despite the opening statement, nationalism appears in diverse sections of the text. The authors celebrate national unity with the statements like: “in the 19th century Novi Sad boasted the attributes of a leading institutional seat and creative wellspring of Serbian national culture” (NS2021 2016, part 0: 4). Moreover, referring to the wider geographic area included in the ECoC (“Zone 021”), we discover that Sremski Karlovci, a small neighbouring town that could easily claim as multicultural a history and presence of diverse ethnic communities as Novi Sad, is presented solely as the birthplace of the Serbian national awareness of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Finally, even though multiculturalism is presented as a proud characteristic of Novi Sad, we never find any reasonable narrative about the “21 communities” that live in Novi Sad - who they are, their social status and cultural rights, their interactions and relations, their perspectives on the city and the issues they face, or their representation in the cultural infrastructure and programing. Unlike the historic references to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Serbian national awareness, we cannot find any historical narrative that would actually present ethnicities other than Serbian in a respectful manner.

It is, of course, not problematic to mention that the city had its multicultural aspects and eras, as well as its experiences of nationalism. However, a coherent document entails that one cannot simultaneously promote nationalism and multiculturalism, or multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue. When Gray (2015) refers to *ambiguity* in cultural policy, he defines it as a text or action that is so nonspecific and vague that actors can attach different meanings to the same claim. Here, we see the different strategy of creating *too many* claims and policy actions. Still, the end result is similar: the text floats in many possible directions, making it possible for the readers of diverse backgrounds and political options to choose statements and actions that they find appropriate.

Finally, the Bidbook is inconsistent, meaning that parts of the text are not in accordance with one another. Most importantly, proposed actions and projects are not consistent with policy goals and values set out in the beginning of the text. Even though references to interculturalism abound in the conceptual chapters, proposed projects rarely fit intercultural agenda. In the section where intercultural projects are presented, we can read about residencies for artists from other European countries (NS2021 2016, part 2: 2); about project *Hakać* that aims to preserve (Serbian) Cyrillic script via Hackatons - gatherings where programmers collaboratively code in the form of the marathon (NS2021 2016, part 2: 2); or one of the flagship intercultural projects, *Moba for Heritage*, in which “a German, a Hungarian, a Slovak, a Romanian and a Serbian house would be renovated thus contributing to enhanced social cohesion and intercultural cooperation” (NS2021 2016, part 2: 3). In cultural policy literature, interculturalism is all about crossing cultural boundaries, communication, dialogue, and loosening the grip of fixed identities and strict patterns of belonging (see CoE 2008; Meer and Modood 2011). However, the projects mentioned in the Bidbook either enhance the tradition of the dominant culture, foster international relations, or, in the last case, promote the pastoral, fixed representation of equally fixed ethnic communities through vernacular heritage or theatre. Attention is not devoted to dialogue, sharing, or building intercultural competence. Moreover, other non-ethnic communities and minorities in the city are completely missing from the picture, which is very characteristic of multiculturalist discourses in opposition to interculturalism (CoE 2008). Furthermore, the actual low importance of intercultural dialogue is seen in the list of the 18 long-term impacts of the ECoC, where

only one mentions identity issues, diverse communities, and intercultural dialogue (NS2021 2016, part 1: 6). Similar is the case with the monitoring indicators, as only 4 out of 68 reflect in some way cultural identity policies, though mainly referring to the number of participants from and programmes developed with different ethnic communities (NS2021 2016, part 1: 10-12).

### **Policy dynamics beyond the Bidbook**

We have seen that the Bidbook could be characterised as problematic if we check its coherency, accuracy, and consistency. This is largely in line with already-cited analysis of numerous cultural policy texts. However, what interests us is to further explore how and why such a text evolved. Was it a deliberate choice of the authors or was it structural determinants that produced this text? Are authors aware of these inconsistencies and do they agree with this characterisation of the text? We will ground our answers to these and other questions in numerous discussions with authors of the text, as well as with experts who have knowledge of other similar texts (ECoC bids). In what follows, we look at the historical narratives, political context, external pressures, internal dynamics, challenges and events that have, according to our field research, shaped the policy-making related to ECoC Novi Sad 2021 and influenced the production of the Bidbook. In presenting these various aspects, we will discuss what each of them might mean for understanding particular policy-making processes and policy texts.

#### Existing discursive landscape

When analysing a policy text which refers to a certain history and/or the current state, we need to notice the existing discursive landscape from which authors – whether consciously or unconsciously – borrow *discursive materials* to construct their text. As many authors in discourse theory claim, discourses are more *available* within the existing “order of discourse”, and that partly determines their use (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Laclau 1990). This is similar to what Ahearne (2006: 3) suggests when characterising policy-making as a consequence of fishing from a “policy primeval soup”, where all sorts of different policy solutions (and discourses) float together, waiting to be used depending on a situation. In Novi Sad, as in any other city, different, competing and contradictory discourses about the city exist within the political field. The

question “what is Novi Sad?” is open-ended.

As we mentioned before, this is particularly true when it comes to two clashing but highly credible identity discourses that explain the city: the Serbian national discourse and the multicultural discourse. Both are built on strong factual “proof” from particular historic periods and have been called upon and rearticulated numerous times in the history of the city. Their continuous revival has to do with the way in which the political elites of Novi Sad have treated cultural diversity and have conducted identity policies, using these historic discourses to present certain political choices as obvious. Multicultural policies have therefore often been opposed by nationalist policies, only to be replaced by the former, and so on. Multicultural policies and narratives were first installed during the reign of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as for the period of Socialist Yugoslavia when Novi Sad was the poster child of multicultural policies. The national image of Novi Sad as “Serbian Athens”, formed during the nineteenth century with the rising national awareness of the Serbian population, was fostered both during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. This narrative, as well as nationalistic policies, came their prominence again during the 1990s, encouraged by the increased ethno-nationalism that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia, as well as by the large influx of Serb refugees from Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. This not only changed the demographic situation, but also pushed many minorities to the margins, discouraging them from participation in public life (Pavković 2001).

However, we often face the situation in which the same administration or political option simultaneously supports nationalist and multiculturalist, supranational (like EU) or cosmopolitan policies in various situations, as seems appropriate. In fact, the early ECoC candidacy phase was stained by such inconsistency taken to the extreme. Namely, the manager of the early candidacy team from 2013-2014, coming from a small far-right party “Third Serbia”, in another public duty of his as the director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, censored an exhibition of local arts students on the ground of defending the religious sentiments of local citizens - a move that was met with the fury of the most artistic circles in the city. This was, however, not just his personal move. His party has been known as an aggressive promoter of supposedly endangered Serbian cultural traditions and a vocal supporter of

the ECOc bid together with its cultural diversity, “Europeanness” and international aspects.

Knowing all this, the authors of the Bidbook should not be too easily credited with inventing conflicting identity discourses about the city, nor the policy inconsistency related to it. They have used and referred to available discursive and policy options both when it comes to telling the history of the city and proposing policy measures. Moreover, our interviews reveal that in many cases, this inconsistency in the Bidbook is not a manipulative rhetorical act, nor a form of deliberate ambiguity in which texts are chosen to please various audiences. In the case of this ambiguity, most of the authors understand these two proposed policy threads - nationalist and multiculturalist - as relevant and present - as something normal. The foreign member of the team (Sergei) stated in the defence of the Bidbook: “Yes, these two positions exist in Serbian society” (Interview with foreign expert, November 4, 2017), while Predrag, one of the local authors said: “we have just put in things already recognized by the people”. Hence, they see no reason for denouncing their simultaneous use. At the same time, another part of the team claims that their presence is a mere outcome of the lack of focus and time. Igor told us: “I see it as an oversight. There was simply no one who would go through the whole text [in the end] and control these aspects” (Interview with local expert, November 6, 2016). In both cases, the obvious presence of these discourses in public life prevented deeper reflection. Normalised as they are, it requires an analytic effort to see the problem in their parallel use.

If we now return to the notion of “bullshitting”, it is important to notice a problematic degree of voluntarism and individualism in this concept. While both Frankfurt (2005) and Belfiore (2009) understand the act of bullshitting primarily as the responsibility and action of a “bullshitter”, the collective, structural, and cultural component is completely left out of the picture. What we can see in this example is that inconsistencies (just like overstatements and misrepresentations) often happen unconsciously, when sedimented discourses, historical narratives, or common knowledge, are repeated and appropriated uncritically. It is these sedimented (and rarely questioned) common narratives, and not only the personal interests or political agendas, that seems to have fostered the use of overstatements, inaccuracies, and competing discourses within NS2021 Bidbook.

## Requirements by the EU

Besides the particular availability and credibility of chosen discourses, it is also policy genre - such as the ECoC nomination - that influences the choice of the discursive repertoire and structures the way policy is articulated, thus limiting the individual and group agency of policy-makers. Unlike many policy texts, ECoC Bidbooks begin as a response to the call for applications based on six criteria for the selection (EU 2014). Hence, much of their content, and consequently much of their policy directions, is defined not solely by the policy-maker, but by the EU Commission (EC), which (despite a marginal financial contribution of 1.5 million EUR out of a budget of 30 million EUR), has a serious impact on the final document and corresponding policy. Setting a list of questions for cities to answer, the EC in their guidelines for the evaluation push cities into achieving all sorts of goals, although they are sometimes unattainable and contradicting. For example, among the main criteria for evaluation, one has to devote attention both to local non-audiences (“the creation of new and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular young people, volunteers and the marginalised and disadvantaged, including minorities”, EU 2017, criteria D), as well as to international, European audiences “attract the interest of a broad European and international public” (EU 2017, criteria C). Similarly, one is expected to have “a clear and coherent artistic vision and strategy for the cultural programme” (EU 2017, criteria B) and, on the other hand, show “the involvement of the local population and civil society in the preparation of the application and the implementation of the action” (EU 2017, criteria D), implying the inclusion of heterogeneous artistic and cultural tastes and differing political stances. Thus, the contradictions in the Bidbook can be partially ascribed to the prerequisites of the title itself. This is something that authors also felt. The general manager, for example, stated that his main fear is that there are too many priorities set out by the Bidbook and that the focus of the efforts will therefore be dispersed.

The identity and diversity issues have an outstanding prominence throughout the candidacy process. The criteria for evaluation and a set of questions posed by the EC within the Bidbook (EU 2017, criteria C) suggest a high value placed on presenting cities’ “Europeanness” by showing the city to be open and culturally diverse, if not multicultural, and foreseeing

policies and actions that are intercultural. As Ivan, one of the authors, explained, they have perceived this as the rule of the game: "You know, each city that decides to be the candidate for the ECoC is a multicultural city and is proud of that, and it is usually those cities that win the candidacy", (Interview with local expert, October 26, 2017). Therefore, the authors' choice to highlight the multicultural discourse as a particular feature of Novi Sad was guided by the expectations for the candidate city, as well as previous ECoC Bidbooks.

The ECoC Bidbook should therefore be understood as a specific policy genre which sets particular expectations and calls for the search of particular available discourses. Furthermore, the existence of this genre makes it desirable for the authors to start from what is already known, written, and accepted as appropriate in other similar cases within the genre, i.e. other Bidbooks and official EU narratives on culture. The following quote from Igor is illustrative of that formative effect of the ECoC (Interview with local expert, November 6, 2017):

*I think that most Bidbooks suffer from the same affliction, and ours has suffered the same. Too much referencing on each others' Bidbooks, taking methodologies from one another... In such a short time frame, you can't manage to truly deal with the very foundations, and therefore you look at the ways to satisfy the form that Bidbook represents.*

This is further normalised by the practice of employing particular foreign experts and consultants who have worked on the previous ECoCs as guides through the dark - they know the right words, the Commission's desires, and the tricks of the trade. In this situation, there is very narrow space for starting from the scratch in rethinking the candidacy process and writing the Bidbook. The ECoC, even though it has its specificities, is not at all an exception in the mannerism of policy-making. The policy field is abundant with diverse genres within which discourses and policy options get re-appropriated, recycled, reframed, and reshaped in the production of a specific policy text.

The pressure of becoming the ECoC

In addition to being a particular policy genre, the ECoC is also a particular policy event, which ruptures habitual ways of policy-making and produces new dynamics among diverse actors.

According to what Mayhew suggests (2007) in his call for taking account of events in political science, we can understand the ECoC as a type of event which sets the stage for new reordering of meanings, values, and relations. When such events happen, they push relevant stakeholders to assume and negotiate their positions, (re)articulate their interpretations, and influence and pressure their surroundings in desired ways. It is important to understand these dynamics if we want to analyse the making of a document which is in fact at the very nexus of all these relations.

In the case of Novi Sad, the symbolic weight of becoming the ECoC was deeply entangled with the issue of the European identity of the city – an identity that is desired but troublesome for two reasons. First, as with other cities in Serbia, an EU candidate country on the margins of the “developed Europe”, there is a noticeable effort by policy-makers to claim their European status. Second, Novi Sad claims its high position in the cultural hierarchy of Serbian cities precisely on the idea of it being more European than many other (a claim that is partially based on the fact that Novi Sad, until a century ago, was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and thus, according to the symbolic geography of the Balkans, more European, civilised, and cultural than the cities in Serbia south of the Danube that belonged to the Ottoman Empire). Therefore, it was highly desirable finally to get an additional validation of being European. As Ivan, one of the authors, admitted: “It was hard to write about the European dimension of the candidacy, especially with the metaphor of bridges and 1999 [NATO alliance destroyed all bridges in the city, yet “4 new bridges is a title of the candidacy], however, we wanted to present this strong will to be a part of EU, part of the European milieu” (Interview with local expert, October 24, 2017). The pressure of the desire for the “European stamp” was silently felt all along this process.

Because of this symbolic weight of becoming the ECoC, unlike many other ECoC candidates around Europe, there was no official political opposition to the initiative. The candidacy was first mentioned by the ruling right-wing party in 2008, and then the candidacy was officially announced by the centrist party in 2011. After that, from 2012 to late 2014, it was led by the far-right party and finally, since the spring of 2015, managed and won by the centre-right party, which is the period when the work on the first version of the Bidbook began. However, the very fact that the candidacy was supported by all these regimes meant that many citizens understood it as an obvious sign that

there is something very wrong with the whole endeavour. Many saw it as a potential for corruption and a way to divert attention from more problematic social and political issues. Moreover, similar to other Eastern European cities (Lähdesmäki 2014), many citizens felt that the city simply does not deserve the title because of the infrastructural, socio-economic, and political problems in the city. This lack of trust affected the team in such a way that it became additionally important to show that it was possible to implement the bidding process for the ECoC.

Moreover, since the project was, from its start, presented and promoted by various political parties, often with dubious reputation, much opposition came from independent artistic circles. For many artists and cultural workers, the scandal with the aforementioned censorship of an exhibition by the director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad and general manager of the ECoC candidacy resulted in public protests and the boycott of not only the Cultural Centre, but also of the ECoC candidacy process. The choice of the second managing director was another tipping point for many, since he came from the top management of the EXIT festival, viewed by many in the artistic circles as the leader of the “festivalisation” and commercialisation of cultural production in the city. In the spirit of dissatisfaction, some local media even published as a headline, without any evidence, that “EXIT has taken over the ECoC candidacy” (O21.rs 2015). Finally, due to the size of the project, as well as the high expectations that it carried, many actors who should have participated were not ready to take responsibility for it. Many directors of public institutions, leaders of NGOs, and political leaders looked for ways to mitigate their role in the making of the application, especially before the first signals of possible success reached the public.

All this meant that the ECoC team, according to their own experiences, and when considered from a distance, worked in tensions with many groups who were essential for the successful bid. The distancing by many culture professionals and the suspicion of media and the wider public influenced the creation of the team itself, which further shaped the text and set limits to what could be achieved. These pressures and social dynamics underline the fact that no process of policy-making happens in a vacuum, especially in the case of policy events that shake up the usual ways of doing things and change previous positions and relations among social actors - as is the case with the ECoC. Moreover, this also implies that no policy text should be read as if it was created outside of contextual

struggles, since these pressures, expectations, and struggles shape the very production of a policy text.

#### Lack of time, competence and deliberation within the team

Talking about pressures, our interviewees all pointed to the pressures stemming from the lack of time, legitimacy, and competence. In December 2015, after the pre-selection process, Novi Sad was invited by the European Commission to submit a final application (the Bidbook) by the 9th September 2016. However, because of slow administration and lack of specific administrative knowledge, as well as the fact that the final version of the application had very little in common with the first one (due to the critique by the panel), the time left to construct the programme and the Bidbook was fairly short. It lasted from February 2016 until July of 2016, when the final editing, layout, and design of the document started.

Consequently, many decisions were made in a hurry and many solutions were justified by this deficit. Moreover, general lack of knowledge on how to run the ECoC candidacy was further aggravated by the lack of specific cultural policy and management knowledge within the team, as well as inside main cultural institutions and the city directorate for culture, who were to be the main carriers of the application. Because of the wide boycott of the ECoC expressed by many in the cultural scene, many professionals who were invited to participate refused to do so in the earlier stages of the bidding process. The general manager recalled his tough decision to join the team and said that the candidacy was a “hot potato”. Another member of the team whom we interviewed said that it was rather strange for him not to see more people with genuine knowledge of cultural policy and management in the team.

As a consequence, none of the persons from the management team and majority of the Bidbook team had formal education in fields related to culture and the arts. This is why several members of the Bidbook team mentioned that the deficiency of knowledge in running international cultural projects of that kind was felt throughout the process. While explaining one of the pivotal events for the creation of the concept, Igor, one of the interviewed authors, stated that due to the such constraints, unsatisfactory decisions had to be made (Interview with local expert, November 6, 2017):

*All that was so short, and on the other hand, I can't say that I didn't expect much bigger engagement of some people from the field of cultural policy and cultural management. [...] Now, when you are in a situation of not having experience with that kind of endeavours, many things get accepted.*

Furthermore, in the directorate, the situation was even worse, with all of the members having a legal background and having practically no knowledge of international and EU cultural projects and policies. Much of the decisions were made in the light of this lack of time and knowledge, which means that decisions were made *ad hoc* without proper planning procedures. This is what Kikaš (2017) has referred to as “cultural planning in random” in the case of the Croatian ECoC candidates.

The external pressures, in combination with the lack of time, meant that even the narrowest team, not to mention the wider community, did not deliberate enough on key concepts during the writing of the text. While being challenged with some of the inconsistencies of the text that we highlighted above, Sergei, a foreign member of the team, stated: “Well, simply no one raised the question”. Even the questions that cropped up along the way were often side-lined. This is how Jelena explained it: “We arrived at the moment when there was really not time to go deeper in developing basic concepts” (Interview with local expert, October 26, 2017). As a group that was challenged and pressured by many, the group tried to bypass conflicts within itself. The feeling was that there was no time for conflict resolutions, and hence, tensions stayed implicit. This lack of reflection and deliberation further undermined the capacity of the team to bring inconsistencies to the fore and initiate a process of thorough conceptualisation needed to make a coherent policy programme.

All the deficits mentioned by the team are not an exception to the usual policy-making process, which often happens within short time-frames, with scarce resources, with lack of competence, and marginal deliberation. As early as 1959, Lindblom put forward the idea of the “incremental” or “successive limited method” of policy-making. Unlike the ends-means policy, in which a public administrator sets out to compare a large number of alternative policy measures and their benefits, starting from the fundamental political foundations and following a strict, comprehensive, rational methods preached in the majority of the academic literature,

Lindblom notes that most policy makers compare a limited number of available alternatives following the decisions made by their predecessors, without ever discussing and agreeing upon the best process to achieve the ends. Accordingly, he notes that because the first approach is impossible to follow because of the time and vast competence it requires, the successive limited method offers the option to “smuggle through” and escape the confrontations implied in particular policies. In this situation, one instead makes a small step forward, trying to work with what already exists within the existing policy landscape.

Having that in mind, in the case of Novi Sad, it would be optimistic to expect that a small team with no previous experience of writing the Bidbook, with limited time and authority within the cultural sector, and without political decision-making power would set out to thoroughly rethink the cultural field and cultural policies of a city. The obvious option was therefore to rely on the consensus and to avoid conflicts. In doing this, the group relied on the genre of the ECoC Bidbook, the existing discourses about Novi Sad, and the multiplicity of diverse policy options inspired by both the EU, national and local policy ideals.

### Multi-authorship

A wide range of local policy priorities and the request for the wide involvement of stakeholders set by the EC panel set the stage for a very complex policy-making process. In order to solve the aforementioned problem of professional legitimacy, the team included reputable individuals from the cultural field in the Art Council and engaged foreign consultants, with a great deal of confidence. Furthermore, in the final stages of the candidacy process, a great number and range of organisations from the city contributed with their ideas and programmes to the Bidbook (in total, more than 300 projects were sent in response to the open call), which improved the overall trust towards the candidacy project. However, this diversity made work very challenging. As Jelena, one of the Bidbook authors stated, “to fit into the Bidbook all those vanities and so called experts, within such a limited timeframe and page limits - that was the biggest challenge” (Interview with local expert, October 25, 2017). All this inevitably produced a multi-authored work, and as time passed, fewer and fewer people actually knew why certain proposals ended up in the text. This problem of

multi-authorship and contradicting agendas of numerous actors has already been noticed in cultural policy research. Analysing the case of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Pyykkönen (2012) argued that policy texts are necessarily complex and potentially contradictory, because they come as a result of multi-authorship and multiple agendas. Although there are many differences between a UNESCO convention and a local ECoC application, the common points of multi-authorship guide us to the conclusion that drafting processes that involve multiple agendas and authors make simple and coherent analysis very hard, if not impossible.

#### Beyond certainty - accidents, agencies, and surprises

The reasons behind the complexity of such a text go even further and include not only complexities and multiplicities, but also a series of contingent, accidental occurrences that are difficult to explain rationally. In one of the crucial events for the creation of the main concept of the Bidbook (the one of “4 New Bridges”), foreign consultants from the Czech Republic, France, and Hungary came to the meeting with the local team (some of them for the first time). As the local team presented their idea of bicycles, consultants were not satisfied and proposed instead that the team take some symbol of the city that would be more familiar to the international community, like the symbol of bombarded and rebuilt bridges. Even though the consultants who made the proposal did so in a brainstorming manner, without much attachment to the idea, and despite the fact that the idea was considered “lame” by many local members of the team, the idea was accepted the very same day, without much discussion. The speed of acceptance surprised almost everyone. Igor, one of participants in the meeting, told us in the interview: “no one can actually explain why that happened, it just did” (Interview with local expert, November 4, 2017). Even foreign experts were surprised: “I was astonished”, John explained - “the things went for me too quick in decision-making. I think that most of these things require more time” (Interview with foreign expert, December 6, 2017). The fact is that in the whole atmosphere of rush and danger of failure, the general manager thought that decisions had to be made quickly and that opening up the complicated and lengthy debate would be a potential loss of time and would undermine the legitimacy

of the process. As he explained: “No one wanted to take the responsibility [for new solution] and the time was running. So, I had to step in and take the initiative” (Interview with general manager, October 27, 2017).

That was not the only event which participants of the process themselves felt happened in an unexpected manner. The recruitment of main team members happened in a way that is hard to understand. For most of the positions, no public call was made announcing determined selection procedures. In this situation and in the current political context of Serbia, one could expect party members and loyal people to take the places on the team; however, that was not the case as far as our knowledge extends. Some of the members simply asked someone they knew in the team if they could be part of it, while others were invited on a collegial and friendly basis. This is precisely how one of us was accepted in the early Bidbook team in 2014 with the comment “we need all the help we can get”. The same happened with the members of the artistic council and programme board. With so many questions being opened and abilities needed, pretty much anyone willing to take part was accepted. This, however, created an atmosphere in which chaos and accidents could easily take hold, because even the main participants did not share the basic ideas of what the ECoC should be about.

Here we see that some events that shape policy are logically very inaccessible: they are hard to understand both for participants of the event and for external analysts. Theorising them and framing them into simple explanatory mechanisms is thus very problematic and any such endeavour can end in reductionism and oversimplification. For policy makers, this is often not of particular relevance. The policy-making process goes on, new challenges are faced, and new decisions made with what is accessible. However, for a (cultural) policy study, these events trigger very important epistemological questions. At what cost of losing the nuances, complexities, and details should a comprehensive theory of such a messy reality be made? Can we equate textual outcome of the policy process (such as policy text or speech) with the policy process as such? Finally, can we offer normative claims about particular policy texts based on the simple analysis of the text itself and evaluate it according to the implicit policy-making norm? To answer these and similar questions would go beyond the scope of this text, however, we will deal with some of them in the concluding section.

## Dealing with complexities in cultural policy analysis

What we have suggested, while pinpointing different aspects of policy-making in Novi Sad ECoC 2021, is that practices of creating a policy are much more polysemic, negotiating, fluid, and contingent than what is often recognised by the rational policy ideal. If we analyse the policy texts in comparison to this theoretical ideal, we fail in our attempt to acknowledge the contexts, sedimented discourses, motives, and interests, reasoning and negotiations, pressures, accidental changes and compromises, and the agencies of individual actors involved, as well as structural support or limitations behind policy texts. In short, we fail to understand a policy reality in its complexity.

Recognising this, and going back to the question of textual inconsistencies, ambiguities, and “bullshitting”, we do not want to make the claim that all these phenomena are a straightforward and unavoidable outcome of actual policy processes, nor that there is no manipulative side to such claims. However, what we want to posit is that if the understanding of the political reality is the goal, one will not get far if we simply discredit and invalidate a text based on the comparison with the (often implicit) norms of the rationalist comprehensive policy-making model, which project an image of policy-making as a rational, consensual, linear, and coherent process of deliberation which ends with documents and measures of the same quality. In our view, the content of these incoherent processes is not some sort of black hole, lies, or a fake political moral, nor is it claptrap. Instead, we suggest that the inconsistencies, ambiguities, and “bullshitting” form a mirror image of dynamics, processes, and relations in the policy field, as well as the content that shapes and creates cultural policy in a particular context. As such, they help us better understand the policies we are aiming to research.

In the climate of increased complexity of globalised policy-making, in which numerous different actors, policy frameworks, contexts, and assumptions meet, we find it important for the cultural policy researchers to recognise the limitations of the positivist study of politics and question the very epistemological position, as well as the imagined norms of policy-making, on which cultural policy research relies. This goes well beyond the scope of this particular text. However, this text is an invitation to dig deeper into the manifestations in cultural policies that fall outside of the ordinary, as well as go beyond the textual analysis using other types of inquiries

that take into consideration the historical, contextual, and structural aspects, as well as the ruptures, the external and internal pressures, individual agencies, and accidents that shape the process of policy-making.

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# Internal and External Factors in the Development of a Network Organization in the Arts: Case Study of Društvo Asociacija

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Andrej Srakar

*Institute for Economic Research (IER), Ljubljana, Slovenia*

*Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia*

*srakara@ier.si*

*ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7296-6275>*

## Abstract

**Key words:**  
*network  
organizations;  
arts and culture;  
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mediation  
analysis; external  
and internal  
factors*

*Network organizations in the arts have recently received substantial discussion in cultural policy research. Yet, very seldom have they been empirically modeled. We analyze development of Društvo Asociacija, the umbrella network of nongovernmental organizations and freelancers in culture and the arts in Slovenia between 2004–2017. Using mediation analysis, we observe two breakpoint periods in the development of the network and explore if they were the effects of internal, organizationally related factors or the mere response to external, macroeconomic changes. Our findings demonstrate the importance of internal decisions of the organization which have a self-standing, but not a mediating effect to the consequences of external factors like financial crises. This has an important consequence for European cultural policies as it shows to which extent network organizations in the arts should be supported directly and to which manner their condition is just a consequence of the changes in their external environment.*

## Introduction

Network organizations, are defined as »a group of legally independent companies or subsidiary business units that use various methods of coordinating and controlling their interaction in order to appear like a larger entity« (Baker 1993), have become an important topic in research on cultural policy and management. A behavioral view on the topic is that a network is a pattern of social relations over a set of persons, positions, groups, or organizations (Sailer 1978; Biggart and Hamilton 1993; Jarvenpaa and Ives 1994), a definition which emphasizes structure and different levels of analysis. On the other hand, a strategic view of networks considers them as »long term purposeful arrangements among distinct but related organizations that allow those firms in them to gain or sustain competitive advantage« (Jarillo 1988: 32; see also Nolan et al. 1988; Nohria and Eccles 1993; Perrow 1993; Jarvenpaa and Ives 1994). Finally, a third definition incorporates organic adaptation and flexibility, suggesting they are:

*... adapted to unstable conditions, when problems and requirements for action arise which cannot be broken down and distributed among specialists' roles within a hierarchy. ... Jobs lose much of their formal definition ... Interaction runs laterally as much as vertically. Communication between people of different ranks tends to resemble lateral consultation rather than vertical command [and] omniscience can no longer be imputed to the head of the concern (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967: 188).*

Generally, network organizations are defined by elements of structure, process, and purpose (Van Alstyne 1997). First, related to structure, a network organization combines co-specialized and often intangible, assets under shared control (Eccles and Crane 1987; Gerlach 1992; Baker 1993; Biggart and Hamilton 1993). »Joint ownership« is essential and must produce an integration of assets, communication, and command in an efficient and flexible manner. Second, related to process, a network organization constrains participating agents' actions via their roles and positions within the organization while allowing agents' influence to emerge or fade with the development or dissolution of ties to others (Galbraith 1974; Jarillo 1988; Malone and Rockart 1991). As decision-making members, agents intervene and

extend their influence through association; they alter the resource landscape for themselves, their networks, and their competitors and in the process can change the structure of the network itself. Finally, a network as an organization presupposes a unifying purpose and thus the need for a sense of identity useful in bounding and marshaling the resources, agents, and actions necessary for concluding the strategy and goals of purpose (Snow et al. 1992; Nohria and Eccles 1993).

Three main types of network organization are typically seen in practice: (a) internal where a large company has separate units acting as profit centers, (b) stable where a central company outsources some work to others, and (c) dynamic where a network integrator outsources heavily to other companies (Van Alstyne 1997).

The literature on networks as a method and approach for understanding structures and processes of society and organizations is large (for some of the best known works see Granovetter 1973, 1983; Wellman and Berkowitz 1988; White 1992; Burt 1995; Castells 1999, 2007; Scott 2005). While the previously noted literature largely refers to network organizations in business, according to Kirchberg (2014) the application of explaining and analyzing real world arts organization networks is not as comprehensive, although there are a few substantial contributions to the understanding of arts organizations by networks (Thurn 1983; DiMaggio 1987; Anheier and Gerhards 1991; Gerhards 1997; Friedrichs 1998; Albertsen and Diken 2004). On the other hand, Kirchberg does not mention several units of literature on the topic, related to network organizations in cultural policy. Staines (1995) examines the needs of cultural networks and shows how their ability to operate effectively is weakened by a lack of structural support and insufficient recognition of their real potential. Stadler (1998) examines the expectations, experiences and problems of Central and Eastern European members of European networks on the basis of a series of interviews, while Minichbauer and Mitterdorfer (2000) extend their analysis and analyze the participation of Central and Eastern European members in European/global networks and examine, document and perform individual analysis of regional and national networks in Central and Eastern Europe. In an edited volume, Cvjetičanin (2006) identifies the new tasks and changing roles of cultural policies related to cultural diversity and the newly emerging digital cultures, and calls attention to the phenomenon of new ways and

new actors in communication — all of which announces a restructuring of the global cultural space. Specifically, Uzelac (2006) explores the role of virtual and internet networks and provides an overview of structural aspects of networks on the internet, following the social network theory. In a special compendium, edited by Cvjetičanin (2011) the authors explore what the new perspectives of cultural networking are in the 21st century. Specifically, Švob-Đokić (2011) explores the link between cultural networks and cultural policies and Uzelac (2011) explores cultural networks and the cultural sector in digital space. Some other notable works are Hieropolitanska and Rola (2013) who explore the european cooperation networks in practice; Steinkamp and Pascual (2015), who explore global cultural networks and local cultural development; and IFACCA (2016). Finally, the debate has also come to the fore with the publication of edited volumes of Innocenti (2014) and Imperiale and Vecco (2017). Both contain an overview of research work on the topic, in particular related to the network organizations in cultural heritage. In this manner, Watson and Paulissen (2014) present Remapping Europe — a Remix as a case study in international and inter-institutional collaboration and networking. Macdonald (2014) presents the concept of »migrating heritage« as an example of networks and networking in the case of Europe and Islamic heritage. Arquez Roth (2014) presents the project Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration as another example of networking on a national level. Edelman and Coy (2017) present emerging international networks in arts and culture research and education. Finally, Cerquetti (2017) presents the approach of building bottom-up networks for the integrated enhancement of cultural heritage in inner areas.

Despite several detailed contributions to this topic, the structure, process and purpose of the network organizations in the arts have very seldom been modelled. The contribution which should be noted is Kirchberg (2014), who models local arts network organizations in a North German town and uses centrality measures and cluster separation for network analysis. In particular, very few efforts have been posed to separate analysis of internal and external factors, influencing an arts organization. Related to an organization, we define internal factors, following an elaboration in Cirikovic (2011) as those which have an internal impact on the organization, inside the organization, and the organization can have an influence on them. This group of factors includes: goal,

strategy, technology, size, human resources, product and location. External factors of organizational structures come from outside the organization and the company can not influence them. These include: institutional environment, integration processes, market and application of scientific achievements. The basic characteristics of the listed factors are their variability and flexibility over time, and their intertwined, interdependent relationship and impact on organizational structure.

In this article, we use data on membership of Društvo Asociacija, the largest network organization in the arts and cultural sector in Slovenia, representing nongovernmental organizations and freelancers in culture and the arts. We use these data to model the development of Asociacija's network membership and explore the relevant changes between 2004-2017. Two clear breakpoints emerge in the data, related to financial support to the organization's structure that comes for the European Structural Funds (ESF) and the broad effects of financial crisis in Slovenia. Such funds (ESF) support the thesis that the funds and their role in cultural policies can be very important for the development of network organization, as well as any organization in the arts. We are able to explore to which extent they were the consequence of either of the two and demonstrate the importance of their own, internal organizational dynamics which did not only follow the changes in the macroeconomic and social environment. By this, we aim to contribute firstly, to the knowledge on network organizations in the arts, and secondly to the knowledge on management of art organizations in general in the wider EU policy framework.

The article is structured in the following way. In the next section, we briefly present the case study, dataset and methods used. We also elaborate on the key hypotheses and provide their justification. In the following section, we present the basic data analysis, demonstrating in a descriptive sense the dynamics of the observed phenomena. Following this, we present a more detailed statistical analysis, using mediating variables and regression methods. Finally, we conclude by reflecting on the findings for the research on European cultural policies that significantly open paths for future research and some policy recommendations, following the context of the case study.

## Data, methods and main hypotheses

Društvo Asociacija is an association »Društvo«<sup>1</sup>, attempting to ensure sustainable conditions for the professional working in nongovernmental organizations and independent artists (freelancers) active in culture and the arts, seeking to improve their material, social and legal position. The network began informally in 1992, and today it is a professionally coordinated modern advocacy and service organization. It is also the main, and perhaps the only, large network of nonprofit organizations in the arts in Slovenia. The art sectors in Slovenia are mainly represented by sectorial organizations which in principle used to be formally joined in a Cultural Chamber, a fictitious state supported cover organization, founded by the Slovenian legislation, but factually never operational and which seized the work in 2017. The first stage of Asociacija's development lasted until 2009, when it operated largely on a voluntary basis. Main changes in the professional development of the network came in 2009, with accepting to carry the project "Mreženje in krepitev kapacitet NVO v kulturi" [Networking and capacity building of NGO's in culture], co-financed from the European Structural Funds. This lasted until 2012, when the public funds from almost all sources had been cut to the association (the financing from the above project and related ones ended), leaving the organization in severe financial problems, leading them to search for the possibilities of different local, national and international tenders and fundraising options which corresponds with the third stage of the development of the organization. Finally, in 2014, the public funds, based on European Structural Funds have been secured again, being ensured until 2019, which describes the present stage of the organization<sup>2</sup>.

The mission of Asociacija is "attempting to ensure sustainable conditions for the professional functioning of nongovernmental organizations and independent artists active in art and culture and seeking to improve their systemic position" (Asociacija 2018). Its vision is described in the following:

<sup>1</sup> Slovenian legal corporate framework knows of two most common legal forms of nongovernmental organizations (but foundations and cooperatives are possible to found as well): »Društvo«, a membership organization with the aim of the benefit of its members, and »Zavod«, an »ownership« organization, set by few founders, performing activities, monitored by the founders and other legal bodies.

<sup>2</sup> In all cases, Asociacija had to apply to the ministry to get access to the funds from this tender.

*with careful and professional development and operation, effective and successful advocacy work and the provision of quality support services, we want to be a credible partner in placing culture and art among the promoters of the development of society, doing this by modernizing a cultural political system that will promote cultural and artistic diversity and create the conditions for equal access to a diverse cultural content (Asociacija 2018).*

Its program priorities can be captured in the following, i.e. the organization fulfills its mission (Asociacija 2018):

1. by linking, articulating and representing the common interests of network members to different stakeholders;
2. with continuous and structured advocacy and policy-making (local, national, Western-Balkan and European);
3. promoting the sector through information, organizing public events and researching various aspects of cultural policy;
4. networking with actors with similar interests at European, national and local level;
5. by linking with strategic partners and internationalization;
6. by promoting partnerships within and outside the NGO sector in culture;
7. by strengthening the capacity of NGOs in culture through training, counseling and mentoring.

Although membership of Asociacija has spread to over 100 institutional members (2012–2015), the provided data encompasses only the current institutional members, which are 40 in number<sup>3</sup>, and are classified in six main sectorial fields (Društvo Asociacija 2017):

- *Intermedia arts: 9 organizations;*
- *Performing arts: 13 organizations;*
- *Film: 2 organizations;*
- *Music: 8 organizations;*
- *Visual arts: 4 organizations;*
- *Literature and publishing: 4 organizations;*

<sup>3</sup> We only observe the current institutional members due to limitations in the accessibility of data – the organization was unwilling to provide the data on organizations which exited the network for whatever reason which of course limits the generalizability of the findings.

The data were provided by the organization for the years 2004–2017 (the provided data encompassed the name of the organization and date the organization became a member). The original data were complemented by the accessible data for the organizational characteristics, accessible in national and online registries<sup>4</sup>. In our analysis, it was possible to include the following control variables:

- *Geographic location*: the city where the organization is based in (in our analysis, we use the binary classification whether the organization is located in the capital, Ljubljana, or not, being justified by the evidence on large centralization of Slovenian cultural scene, in particular in the NGO sector, see e.g. Srakar 2017)
- *Legal status*: whether the member organization is »Društvo« or »Zavod«, see footnote 1;
- *Size of the organization*: whether the member organization has less than 5 employees, or more than 5;
- *Age of the organization*: whether the organization is less than 20 years old (time since its founding) or 20 years old or more;
- *Art sector of the member organization*: as before, in six categories — Intermedia arts; Performing arts; Film; Music; Visual arts; Literature and publishing.

This analysis explores in more detail the dynamics of the membership in the problematic years 2012–2014, as well as the reasons for significant breakpoints in the membership throughout the period.

Managing the internal environment is usually connected to the degree of performance achievement of a business entity (Stegall, Steinmetz and Kline 1976; Albert 1981). However, rare are studies that examine the impact of an internal environment as a whole (combination of all/most of the internal factors) on business strategy and performance (Daft and Weick 1984; Cyert and March 1992), which holds also for the studies of external environment. Since the latter primarily affects the survival and the growth of business entities (Covin and Slevin 1989), other studies deal with the issue of efficiency of certain business orientations/strategies in a particular environment, i.e. how the external environment affects the strategy and performance

<sup>4</sup> We mainly used the online database on legal subjects in Slovenia, [bizi.si](http://bizi.si).

of the businesses (Levitt 1960; Hambrick 1983; Porter 1985; Day 1990; Kotler 1991; Diamantopoulos and Hart 1993; Avlonitis and Gounaris 1999; Pelham 1999; Slater and Narver 2000; Ellis 2006; Ward and Lewandowska 2008). However, very few studies compare the effects of internal and external environment on strategy and performance.

With this in mind we form three main hypotheses to test.

H1: The effects of internal decisions in Asociacija on organizational performance were not merely a consequence of the external factors in organizational environment.

H2: Reaction of Asociacija to the crisis in its external environment had an independent, mediating influence on the performance of an organization.

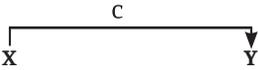
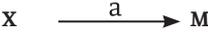
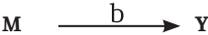
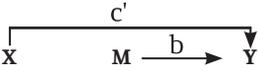
H3: The effect of internal organizational decisions in Asociacija as response to changes in their environment to their performance depended on the type of the changes.

The methods we use are a combination of descriptive analysis and statistical and econometric modeling. For the former, we explore the dynamics in the growth of the network (we stress that we only observe the current institutional members due to limitations in the accessibility of data, see footnote 2), in total and separated in categories by individual covariates/controls. For the second (statistical modelling) we use network analysis to visualize the development of the network. Finally, we use the basic algorithm described in Bai and Perron (2003) for simultaneous estimation of multiple breakpoints (following Hansen (2001), we say that a structural break has occurred if at least one of the parameters in time series analysis has changed at the chosen level of statistical significance at some date, the breakdate, in the sample period). The distribution function used for the confidence intervals for the breakpoints is given in Bai (1997a, 1997b) while the ideas behind this implementation are described in Zeileis et al. (2003). For the estimation we use statistical package R.

Finally, the mediation analysis used, where the level of budget of the organization (Asociacija) serves as a mediating variable for the effects of general macroeconomic conditions (proxied by the level of ministry budget for culture) on the performance of the organization (proxied by the number of institutional members at each given point in time — measured in months since the beginning of the observed period, January 2004). Mediation analysis is a statistical approach used to understand how a predictor produces an indirect effect on an outcome through an intervening variable (mediator). For

example, a diet programme might be hypothesized to reduce food intake, which, in turn, is hypothesized to reduce the participant's body mass index. An indirect (mediated) effect is defined conceptually as the effect of the programme on the outcome that is transmitted through the mediator. Mediation analysis, therefore, aims to uncover causal pathways along which changes are transmitted from causes to effects. Interest in mediation analysis stems from both scientific and practical considerations. Scientifically, mediation tells us about more complex interactions between phenomena in natural and social spheres, and practically, it enables us to predict behavior under a rich variety of conditions and policy interventions. There are two essential ingredients of modern mediation analysis. First, the indirect effect is not merely a modeling artifact formed by suggestive combinations of parameters but an intrinsic property of reality that has tangible policy implications. In an example analyzed in a reference article by Pearl (2014), reducing employers' prejudices and launching educational reforms are two contending policy options that involve costly investments and different implementation efforts. Knowing in advance which of the two, if successful, has a greater impact on reducing hiring disparity is essential for planning and depends critically on mediation analysis for resolution. Second, the policy decisions in this example concern the enabling and disabling of processes (hiring vs. education) rather than lowering or raising values of specific variables. These two considerations lead to the analysis of natural direct and indirect effects (Pearl 2014: 459).

For the estimation of mediator effects we use a simple algorithm by Baron and Kenny (1986) which proposed a four step approach in which several regression analyses are conducted and significance of the coefficients is examined at each step (Y is the response, in our case the size of the network; X is the predictor, in our case the level of ministry budget for culture; and M is the mediator variable, in our case the level of Asociacija's budget). The detailed scheme of the approach is provided in Figure 1.

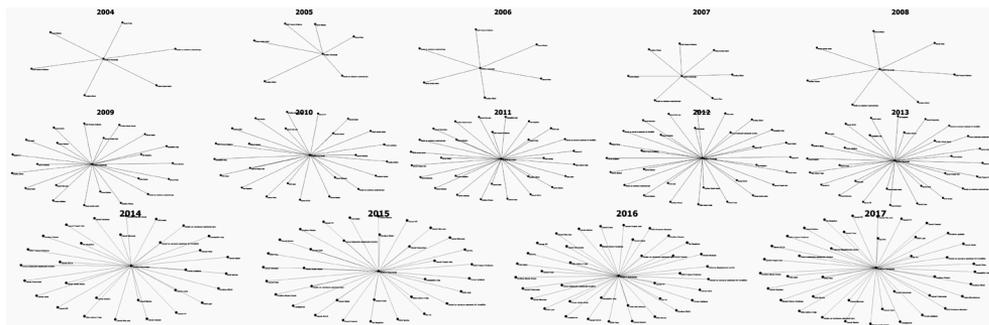
	Analysis	Visual Depiction
<b>Step 1</b>	Conduct a simple regression analysis with X predicting Y to test for path c alone, $Y = B_0 + B_1X + e$	
<b>Step 2</b>	Conduct a simple regression analysis with X predicting M to test for path a, $M = B_0 + B_1X + e$	
<b>Step 3</b>	Conduct a simple regression analysis with M predicting Y to test the significance of path b alone, $Y = B_0 + B_1M + e$	
<b>Step 4</b>	Conduct a multiple regression analysis with X and M predicting Y, $Y = B_0 + B_1X + B_2M + e$	

**Figure 1:** Basic diagram of Baron and Kenny's approach  
Source: Newsom, 2012.

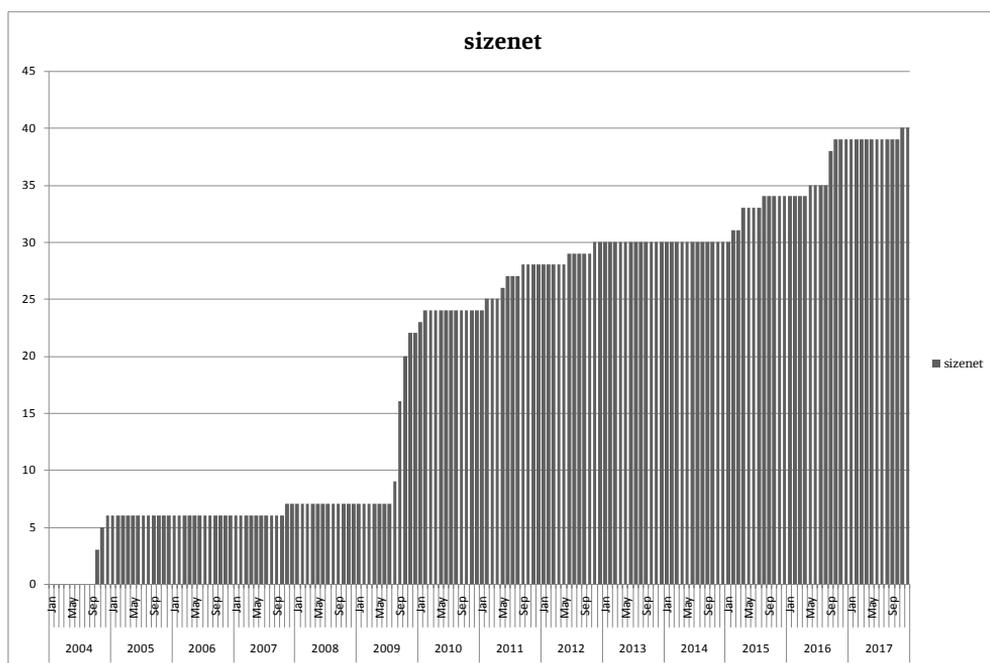
### Dynamics of membership over the years and by individual variables

Below we provide descriptive data and visualizations of the growth of the Asociacija's network. In Figure 2, we present a network visualization, using basic commands of one of the best known packages for network analysis, Pajek (see De Nooy, Mrvar and Batagelj 2005). Already from this visualization it is apparent that a significant break happened in 2009, where the network more than doubled. Surely this is a consequence of the formalization of the network and its financing (the financial crisis started to take its effects in Slovenia only in 2012, for more see Verbič et al. 2016). Also, it can be seen that only after 2015 the network again started to grow a bit more, being largely stagnant in the period between 2009 and 2015.

**Figure 2:** Development of the network of Asociacija, 2004-2017  
Source: Own calculations, based on data of Asociacija.



These effects are even more apparent in Figure 3 which presents another graphical visualization of the growth of the network. Clearly, a large breakpoint was in the second half of 2009, followed by another smaller rise in 2011, and then became largely stagnant until 2015, when it again began to rise. But, clearly, in 2012 (at least) two significant reasons could be observed which could have the decisive influence to the stagnancy: cutting the public funds of the organization because of the ending of the funding cycle of the ESF funds, leaving it largely stranded of finances (“internal” reason, which had its consequences inside the organization), and, secondly, the pronounced effects of the financial crisis, which took its large effects in Slovenia only in 2012 and after (Verbič et al. 2016), being reflected also in the levels of state public budget for culture (Srakar 2015)<sup>5</sup>.

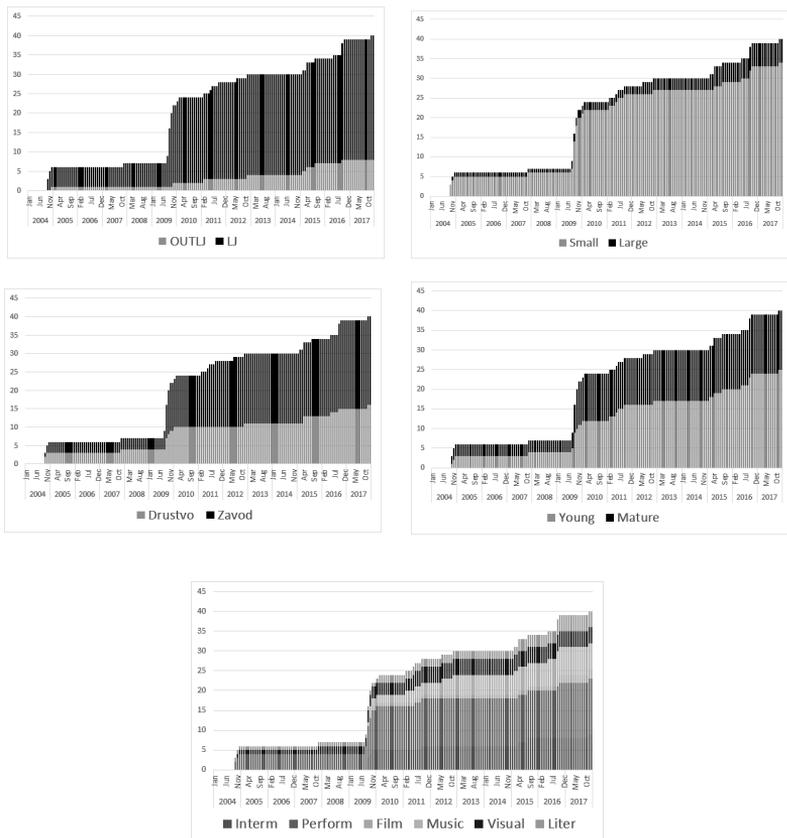


**Figure 3:** Growth in the size of the Asociacija’s network, 2004—2017  
Source: own calculation, based on data of Asociacija.

First, one could ask whether the dynamics was caused (or reflected) by differences in organizational characteristics: their geographical location, size, age, legal status and/or art

<sup>5</sup> Third possible reason in 2012 could be related to European Capital of Culture Maribor 2012, but more than 80% of the institutional members of Asociacija come from Ljubljana and more serious activities, related to local representation, started in 2015, so we eliminated this reason as a possible cause of the stagnancy.

sector. In Figure 4, we present the visualization of the growth of the network by differences in those covariates. First, clearly the changes in the number of members were reflected until 2015 almost exclusively for the institutional members from Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital. Second, the changes were also significantly more visible for smaller organizations, which are also largely predominant in the membership of Asociacija. Third, the break in 2009 was visible for both young and “mature” organizations which shows that the profesionalization/formalization of the network was really needed for all NGO organizations in culture, more mature and larger ones as well as the emergent. Next, there are also no particularly visible differences between the two legal statuses, as both organizations with the status of Društvo, as well as of Zavod experienced similar changes in memberships. Finally, it seems that the changes were more visible for performing arts organizations (being predominant in the membership of Asociacija in any case) and, in particular, intermedia arts



**Figure 4:** Growth in the size of the Asociacija’s network by individual covariates  
Notes: Top left: by geographic location; top middle: by organizational size; top right: by organizational age; bottom left: by legal status; bottom right: by the main art sector the organization is involved in.  
Source: Own calculations, based on data of Asociacija.

organizations, which only emerged at the “scene” (in Asociacija) with the break in 2009 and are today well represented in its membership, as compared to other art sectors.

Table 1 presents also the detailed budgetary figures of the Ministry of Culture and Asociacija. We can clearly observe the disparity between the figures and the periods in the development of Asociacija: before 2009, with a very low budget; 2009–2012 with a high budget; 2013–2015 with another period of low resources; and, finally, the period after 2015 regaining a high level of budget due to receiving public support on continuous basis.

Year	BudgetMKcult	BudgetASO
2004	136.034.648,00	10.132,00
2005	146.677.838,00	13.000,00
2006	154.232.177,00	11.600,00
2007	164.660.599,00	12.312,00
2008	178.120.982,00	14.695,84
2009	204.040.642,00	49.785,28
2010	191.308.915,00	58.880,25
2011	192.863.333,00	57.636,24
2012	172.156.681,00	56.461,00
2013	157.343.635,00	21.504,29
2014	161.124.250,00	31.734,00
2015	159.440.307,00	81.254,68
2016	146.825.867,00	80.572,57
2017	155.222.162,00	92.330,42

**Table 1:** Budgets of Ministry of Culture and Asociacija, 2004–2017  
Source: Ministry of Culture RS; Asociacija; AJPES.

### Verification of the hypotheses

To verify the hypotheses, we perform the Bai and Perron (2003) structural break test, described in brief above. We perform it, first, for the complete (»total«) time series of all institutional members, and then for each separate series by covariates, as visualized in Figure 4. The presentation of the results is in Table 2, and, where possible<sup>6</sup>, we computed also 95% confidence intervals using the above noted procedure of Bai (1997a, 1997b).

The results confirm the visualizations in Figures 2–4. Four apparent breaks appear in the data, common to almost all series analyzed. The first one apparently appeared at the start of 2006, but we do not study it specifically as the organization was not “professionalized” yet at that time. Yet, this break is not present

<sup>6</sup> The problems in the impossibility of estimaton lie in the small sample size, see Bai (1997a, 1997b).

for several of the series, and for certain of them has a “wrong” date (for Visual Arts, July 2007) or extremely wide confidence interval (Total series, Ljubljana, Zavod). For this reason, we have chosen to disregard it as a special break in the time series. Second, for one series (young organizations) there should be a break in 2013, but, clearly, this break does not appear for any other series, so we disregard it in the following analysis as well.

Finally, we are left with three clear breakpoints, which also fits the explanations above: the first, which happened in the second half of 2009 (in the analysis, we date its start in August 2009), the second, which started in 2012 (again, we use as the “exact” start date August 2012), and, finally, the third one (end of stagnancy), which happened in accordance with what previously happened in 2015 (we use as exact start date July 2015)

**Table 2:** Structural breakpoints with 95% confidence intervals  
 Note: In parentheses: 95% confidence interval (where possible to compute).  
 Source: Own calculations, based on data of Asociacija.

	<b>Break1</b>	<b>Break2</b>	<b>Break3</b>	<b>Break4</b>	<b>Break5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	Jan06 [Dec05-Jan07]	Aug09 [Jul09-Sep09]	Sep12 [Aug12-Nov12]		Jul15 [May15-Aug15]
<b>OutLj</b>	Jan06	Oct09	Oct12		Mar15
<b>Lj</b>	Jan06 [Dec05-Jan07]	Aug09 [Jul09-Sep09]	Sep12 [Aug12-Dec12]		Nov15 [Aug15-Dec15]
<b>Društvo</b>	Jan06	Aug09	Oct12		Mar15
<b>Zavod</b>	Jan06 [Dec05-May07]	Aug09 [Jul09-Sep09]	Sep12 [Aug12-Nov12]		Jul15 [May15-Aug15]
<b>Small</b>	Jan06	Aug09	Sep12		Nov15
<b>Large</b>	Jan06	Jul09	May12		Mar15
<b>Young</b>	Jan06 [Dec05-Sep06]	Aug09 [Jul09-Sep09]	Sep12 [Aug12-Nov12]	Oct13 [Jan13-Nov13]	Nov15 [Sep15-Dec15]
<b>Mature</b>	Jan06	Sep09	May12		Mar15
<b>IntermArts</b>		Aug09	Sep11		Jul15
<b>PerfArts</b>	Jan06	Aug09	Sep12		Nov15
<b>Film</b>		Sep09			Nov15
<b>Music</b>		Sep09 [Aug09-Oct09]	May12 [Apr12-Jul12]		Jan15 [Dec14-Feb15]
<b>VisArts</b>	Jul07	Aug09	Sep12		
<b>Literature</b>	Jan06	Jan10			Mar15

To explore the reasons for the breakpoints, we perform the mediation analysis, as described above and in Figure 1. To this end we perform four regressions, using the robust ordinary least squares (OLS) method, in order to make the results

comparable among the regressions<sup>7</sup>. Surely, with this decision, the time dimension of the series is left unexploited, and should in further analysis be modelled using models from times series econometrics (in particular, the mixed data sampling methods like mixed-data sampling (MIDAS), as the series are of different frequency: the budgetary variables are on a yearly basis, while the network development is on a monthly basis) and, possibly, also the network structure (in our case, we are dealing with so-called egocentric network, based on only one, central organization, Asociacija, see, e.g. Halgin and Dejordy 2008).

Nevertheless, the results from Table 3 provide sufficient information for the verification of most of our hypotheses. We will closely follow the Baron and Kenny (1986) four step approach, presented in Figure 1.

In the first step, we perform the reduced model regression, with X (ministry budget for culture – in logarithm transformation, for the usual distributional reasons) predicting Y (size of the network, a count variable). Clearly, taken independently, the budget of the ministry does not predict the size of the network, i.e. organizational performance (the coefficient on the variable *LogBudgMoC* is insignificant in the regression of the first, left part). In all of the regressions, we include also the three breaks, established above, and the interactions of the breaks with the two budgetary variables, to take into account what interests us most – what was the effect of internal (Asociacija's budget) and external (ministry budget for culture) factors on organizational performance during the breakpoints, using proxies as variables of course (the information here does not describe the problem completely, but provides important information, sufficient for the basic verification of the above hypotheses).

In the second part (»Mediator model«) we use Step 2 of Baron and Kenny's approach – modeling the effect of predictor X (ministry budget for culture) on the mediator *M* (budget of Asociacija). Interestingly, no effect of the ministry budget for culture to Asociacija's budget could be observed, and even a negative effect of the ministry budget during the break of 2009, only confirming that the change at the time was »endogenous« – it was caused by the professionalization of the network based on European funds and not by some external factor.

Step 3 of Baron and Kenny's approach consists of regressing Y on *M* and is presented in Table 2 as »Mediator to Response

<sup>7</sup> Using OLS, all the coefficients represent marginal effects and can be compared among the used regressions. This would not be so plain when using any type of nonlinear modelling.

model«. Clearly, the budget of Asociacija is strongly and positively related to the size of the network, which is logical. Also, this effect is the most pronounced for the period 2015 onwards (after the third breakpoint, i.e. after the strongest professionalization of the network).

Finally, Step 4 of Baron and Kenny is the estimation of the full model, regressing  $Y$  on both  $X$  and  $M$ . This provides us with the final information on the validity of initial observations from previous sections. First, the effect of the external factors (proxied by the ministry budget for culture) is now extremely strong and significant. Also, the effect of the internal factor (Asociacija's own budget) remains positive and strongly significant. The effects of the three breaks appear logical: the effect of the first (2009) to the size of the network is positive and strongly significant, as expected, the effect of the second (2012) is negative, as expected, and the effect of third is, surprisingly at first, negative and significant, but this goes hand-in-hand with clear positive effects of the external and internal factors in this breakpoint (the coefficients in the final fourth part on the variables *LogBudgMOC\_Break3* and *LogBudgAso\_Break3*).

As controls, we used four variables: the share of Ljubljana-based institutional members at each time point (*ShareLJ*); the share of institutional members with »Zavod« legal status (*ShareZavod*; again, at each time point, which is the unit of our analysis); and average age (*AvgAge*) and size (*AvgSize*) of current institutional members at each time point of the analysis. The effects of those controls also appear clear: the effect of the share of Ljubljana-based organizations and »Zavod«s is positive and strongly significant — but at least for the first, geographically-based variable, it would be interesting to see if there was any change in 2015 and after, as one would expect a nonlinear trajectory here (as noted before, in 2015 Asociacija started with more pronounced »local« activities and now even has a special person-vice president, assigned with this task). But, interestingly, when controlling for legal status and location, the average age and size of the organization are negatively related to the size of the network: apparently, the growth of the network has been more related to including younger and smaller NGO's. This again seems logical: from the history of the Asociacija, it is known that the founding members have been some of the largest NGO's in the so-called independent sector and, only later, the smaller organizations joined.

	Reduced model, dep.var.:SizeNet			Mediator model, dep.var.: LogBudgAso			Mediator to Response model, dep.var.: SizeNet			Full model, dep.var.: SizeNet		
	Coeff.	t stat	Sig.	Coeff.	t stat	Sig.	Coeff.	t stat	Sig.	Coeff.	t stat	Sig.
Constant	-0.39	-0.34		383766	1850	*	0.58	0.67		-18.38	-2.60	**
ShareLJ	335413	17.66	***	0.23	1.46		368998	20.41	***	300551	18.79	***
ShareZavod	363832	15.75	***	-0.19	-1.33		375202	22.69	***	319860	16.86	***
AvgAge	-1.59	-11.00	***	-0.01	-0.83		-1.79	-17.02	***	-1.43	-16.32	***
AvgSize	-4.94	-13.25	***	0.01	0.17		-3.98	-5.70	***	-3.61	-10.06	***
LogBudgMoC	0.05	0.34		0.11	0.42					237507	2554	**
LogBudgAso							2.12	4.67	***	3.20	5.56	***
Break1	126462	2244	**	830850	2691	***	-6.28	-0.11		652148	5459	***
Break2	105063	0.98		-89.40	-32.21	***	361831	0.6		-410.25	-2.08	**
Break3	-605.70	-3.70	***	-20.34	-0.59		-19.65	-3.79	***	-573.21	-3.36	***
LogBudgMoC_Break1	-14.05	-2.08	**	-0.93	-2.50	**				-49.34	-7.59	***
LogBudgMoC_Break2	-12.30	-0.94		108549	32.25	***				217461	1042	
LogBudgMoC_Break3	752938	3763	***	261070	0.61					689928	3207	***
LogBudgAso_Break1							0.36	0.26		-5.34	-2.74	***
LogBudgAso_Break2							-0.74	-0.54		535691	2730	***
LogBudgAso_Break3							0.71	5585	***	0.38	2.04	**
Nr. Obs.	168			168			168			168		
F stat	16754.4		***	4319519		***	71707.47		***	68578.1		***
(Adj.) R squared	0.9991			0.9965			0.9998			0.9998		
Log Likelihood	-185.7289			-192.1389			-191.1383			-200.4149		
AIC	3954578			4082777			4062766			4328297		
BIC	4329454			4457653			4437642			4828132		
D-W statistic	0.8377			0.2819			0.8325			0.8368		
Rho	0.5819			0.8649			0.5839			0.5818		

**Table 3:** Results of mediation analysis

Notes: The asterisks denote statistical significance: \*\*\* – 1%; \*\* – 5%; \* – 10%.

Source: Own calculations, based on data of Asociacija.

## Discussion and conclusion

Finally, we can list the findings, as related to the verification of our initial hypotheses:

H1: The effects of internal decisions in organizations on organizational performance are not merely a consequence of the external factors in organizational environment.

The hypothesis is clearly confirmed. If it would be otherwise, the coefficient of the ministry budget on the budget of Asociacija would already be significant, which was not the case. Also, the effect of an external factor (the ministry budget) should be significant in the first regression (step 1, the reduced model) which was also not the case.

H2: Reactions of organizations to the crisis in their external environment have a self-standing, mediating influence on the performance of an organization.

This hypothesis is not completely confirmed. Namely, it consists of two parts: that the reactions should have both a self-standing (which is true) and mediating influence on the performance. If the effect of the internal factor would be a mediator in this case, two things should be satisfied here which are not: first, the effect of the external factor in the reduced model (i.e. the »raw« effect of the external factor) should be significant, but it is not. Secondly, the effect of the external factor should be reduced when also including the internal factor in the regression (Step 4). Again, exactly the opposite is the case – the effect of the external factor is significant *only after* including the »mediator« (internal factor) in the analysis.

This, therefore, means that the internal factors surely have self-standing effects, but do not act as mediators in this case – there is no causal path leading from ministry budget to the budget of Asociacija and, finally, to the performance of the organization. Said in a more simple manner, the ministry budget does not act as an important factor which would also have a separate effect on, first the organizational budget, and, then, to the performance of the organization. Quite the opposite, the internal factor is by far (in statistical sense) the more important here.

H3: The effect of internal organizational decisions as response to changes in their environment to their performance depends on the type of the changes.

The hypothesis is verified. The behaviour of the coefficients in the three breaks (in particular, for the two breaks which at first point seem similar – those in 2009 and 2015) is completely different. We could say that reaction to the first break in 2009 was followed by large growth in the size of the network but not such an effect (or even acting in the opposite direction) as related to the budgetary variables. On the other hand, the reaction to the second break was not reflected so much in the »direct« growth in the membership, but is more related to the budgetary variables, to the contextual factors, therefore, be they internal or external. In particular, the funds of ESF, which were of course externally assigned, were important (their provider was external from Asociacija), but their presence and/or absence conditioned the internal decisions in Asociacija in accordance with the above.

What are the consequences of the findings for the topic of this special issue entitled European Union and Challenges of Cultural Policies? Although it might seem that we analyzed a particular issue, related mainly to a narrow topic in arts

management, this is not so — the consequences could be large. First, the article explores in more detail the role of civil society and networks in formulating cultural policies, by exploring the relationship of the development of civil society network organizations and macro-level factors, cultural policies. As networks are becoming more and more important, sometimes even a predominant form of organizations in the arts, their behavior is of large consequence and relevance to the cultural policies in Europe. We demonstrated that (at least) sometimes the internal factors in organizations could have a more important role in the performance of the organization than the policy level factors, e.g. raises and cuts in the public budgets. This shows that European cultural policies, if they would want to stir the development of network organizations, should focus more on micro level initiatives and incentives for organizations and less on the broad »cuts and raises« in the public budgets »story«. This seems of great importance and steers the path for future policies in this area — on how to stimulate civil society organizations and networks in the arts in future by policy means.

Furthermore, as stated by Cvjetičanin (2011: 4), »networks have been gradually substituting traditional diasporas in supporting the mobility of artists and other cultural actors; they link like-minded organizations and individuals over large distances into an interactive and cooperative association, facilitating participative and transformational art, as well as the exchange, promotion and distribution of cultural production«.

The consequences of the findings in our article could be generalized not just to networks of organizations, but also to networks of people, even communities and diasporas. There are numerous ways in which a network can *represent* in today's society. In this light, our findings show that for all those forms of organization, internal dynamic can be significantly more important than external — the decision by the staff can outpace the effects of the organizational environment which again denote the importance of stimulating organizations in their internal dynamics and not influencing them. Although the findings relate to nonprofit context, we could easily transfer them also to networked entrepreneurship or even networked cultures, described by Cvjetičanin (2011). Surely, also to the virtual networks described by Uzelac (2006, 2011), although in this case internal and external would have a different meaning, definition and connotation.

But even larger consequences seem on the side of future research. The article is located on the border of four large disciplines, related to cultural »policies«: »direct« cultural policy research, research in arts management, and even arts entrepreneurship, and cultural economics. For future work, more developed empirical research should be applied to arts management, not to say, cultural policies. Issues such as causality and causal inference should be the core of future research on arts management, to finally get more detailed (and, if possible, practical) insights to help the organizations in their different stages of development. This does not mean that the specific nature of arts organizations should not be taken into account — it is possible also to develop the causality research, following, for example, insights from social and cultural anthropology and sociology of culture, demonstrating also the multisided nature of perceiving causality. But, for an organization, acting in a concrete context, decisions should be made with solid evidence. Many organizations, in the arts and in general, are asking and demanding today the information on the basis of which they could act. Empirical insights with a solid theoretical basis should also be developed with this purpose in mind.

Future research should also be broadened in terms of research on network organizations. First, at this point, the research still appears unsystematic. Large areas of network organizations, apart from cultural heritage, appear underresearched. It would be important to know whether the findings such as presented in this article could be transferred to organizations in individual arts sectors (Asociacija is, of course, a »cover« organization, encompassing organizations from several art sectors): to the networks in performing arts, in music, in visual arts, in literature, etc. It would also be interesting to analyze the network organizations on the international level, like ENCATC or similar. Sometimes, the term network of networks has been used in the arts as well (for example, in relation to the Anna Lindh Foundation) which would be good to define and contextualize. Finally, it would be highly interesting to compare the characteristics of network organizations with other (non-network) organizations in the arts — what are their differences, what does their performance depend upon, how do they grow, develop, respond to changes in their environments and crises. A lot of large open paths remain »to walk« for both arts management and cultural policy research, indeed, for all the four broad disciplines mentioned

above. But we will see which path the development in those areas will follow in the future.

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Conference  
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# Reflections on the International Conference “Perspectives of National Cultural Policies Development in the EU Context: Critical Dialogues” Zagreb, 17th — 19th May 2017

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Matea Senkić

*Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Croatia,  
matea@irmo.hr*

The current political situation and challenges facing today's Europe have a strong impact on cultural policy domain and on the conditions under which cultural sector operates today. Although the European Union has not been involved in formulating an explicit common cultural policy, it has been indirectly contributing to the creation of common cultural policy frameworks through its soft cultural policy instruments and mechanisms (e.g. Open Method of Coordination — OMC, the Creative Europe programme, the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) and others). The question is whether such an approach is still adequate for today's cultural and social challenges, and whether national level cultural policies can tackle complex global problems, especially in the context where many other public policies are increasingly influencing the field of culture.

These issues motivated researchers from the Department for Culture and Communication of the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) to organize the international conference “Perspectives of national cultural policies development in the EU context: critical dialogues”, which was held in Zagreb from 17th to 19th May 2017. The conference was organized as a part of a two-year

Jean Monnet project entitled 'EU Competences and National Cultural Policies: Critical Dialogues' (CULPOL), co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, and it gathered prominent cultural policy researchers, cultural professionals, cultural civil society representatives, policymakers, and young professionals in arts and culture from Europe and Croatia. The main aim of the conference was to foster the dialogue between different cultural-policy stakeholders, putting into the spotlight the issue of the need for sustainability of culture, as well as the fact that there is no sustainable development without culture.

As an introduction to the main conference programme that took place on 18th and 19th May 2017, on 17th May, two pre-conference activities were organized: the workshop "CAE Croatian Hub – reflection exercise on the future of Europe", co-organized with the European network Culture Action Europe, and a pre-conference lecture "The missing links between cultural administration and the functioning of cultural systems today – study case of a one year's mandate as Minister of Culture in Romania" by Ms Corina Şuteu, cultural consultant, president of FilmETC and former Minister of Culture of Romania, organized in cooperation with the Academy of Dramatic Art. The main programme of the conference consisted of two keynote lectures and four working sessions, focused on the following themes:

- Cultural policies and the crisis in/of the European Union – how to achieve sustainable cultural development?;
- Strategies and tendencies of local cultural development in Europe: the role and impact of the European Capital of Culture project;
- What kind of European comparative cultural policy research is needed today?;
- National cultural policies in need of vision, innovation and leadership.

The main programme of the conference started with the interesting keynote lecture ***Making cultural policy matter in the EU agenda: key topics and perspectives*** by Professor Pier Luigi Sacco from the IULM University in Milan, on the changes culture is undergoing in the context of convergence, from Culture 1.0 to Culture 3.0, and the issues cultural policies are facing in trying to catch up with the related changes. What characterizes the current culture 3.0 scenario we are living in is, according to Professor Sacco, "a blurred distinction between producers and users of cultural and creative contents (accelerated with

the expansion of digital platforms where communities of practice self-organize around the production and sharing of certain types of contents) and active cultural participation". Professor Sacco highlighted that culture may and should be a key policy in the future EU agenda due to the capacity of culture to establish powerful synergies with basically all of the other policy fields.

The first panel discussion – ***The crisis in/of European Union and cultural policies – how to achieve sustainable cultural development?*** was moderated by Dr Aleksandar Brkić, from the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship, Goldsmiths, University of London. This panel discussion gathered some prominent experts in culture: Dr Marcin Poprawski, Deputy Dean for International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences; Adam Mickiewicz, University in Poznan; Ms Catherine Cullen, Special Advisor on Culture in Sustainable Cities, Committee on Culture, UCLG; Dr Ole Marius Hylland, Senior Researcher, TRI – Telemark Research Institute; Mr Teodor Celakoski, cultural worker and activist, Right to the City/Pravo na grad; and Mr Robert Manchin, former president of Culture Action Europe. Speakers focused on finding the answers and approaches, as well as innovative cultural policy models, that would be adequate for today's cultural and social challenges and sustainable cultural development. Furthermore, the session focused on the limits of the European subsidiarity principle for culture and whether the current approach of implicit cultural policies on the European level can bring adequate positive changes through soft policy mechanisms. The discussion that followed highlighted the importance of building new policy models that are based on active citizens' participation and collaboration between public, private and civil society actors.

The second working session – Round Table discussion I – ***Strategies and tendencies of local cultural development in Europe: the role and impact of the European Capital of Culture project***, moderated by Ana Žuvela, IRMO, aimed to discuss culture as a driving force for transformation of the city and to see to what extent does the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) scheme enable the space for a bottom-up response to essentially top-down project provisions. In this line, some of the main experts that are involved in the ECOC process, such as Dr Herman Bashiron Mendolicchio, Researcher, University of Barcelona, Valletta 2018; Mr Chris Torch, Intercult CEO, Timișoara 2021 – European Capital of Culture, Artistic Director; and Ms Emina

Višnić, Rijeka 2020, CEO, were invited to talk about the new approaches to cultural governance on local levels, on new models of synergies between the local and international cultural actors and the levels of sustainability and accountability in cultural planning. Panellists stressed the importance of better cooperation between policymakers, cultural workers and citizens, and expressed their disappointment with the fact that ECoC — such a large and all-inclusive European project in culture — has not contributed to the changes of the cultural policies at the national levels.

The second day of the conference started with the keynote lecture entitled ***Croatian cultural policy: purviews of the key strategic documents and a view of the future*** by Professor Vjeran Katunarić from the University of Zadar and Dr Biserka Cvjetičanin, a Scientific Advisor Emerita at the Department for Culture and Communication, IRMO. Speakers reflected on two, still important and relevant, Croatian cultural policy documents from the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000: “Cultural policy in Croatia — the national report” and “Croatia in the 21st century: strategy of cultural development”. Professor Katunarić pointed out that both documents have addressed the issues that are still relevant today for both Croatia and the EU — the processes of democratization, digitalization and decentralization, among others. Referring to significant policy documents in the field of culture, Dr Cvjetičanin stressed the importance of strengthening dialogue between citizens and EU institutions, the importance of participation and access to culture for all, the need for stronger cross-sectoral links (with education, science, technology), the important role of culture in international cooperation and global partnership in achieving developmental goals, as well as its role and strong influence in the promotion of open, inclusive and pluralist societies and intercultural dialogue.

The following working session – Round Table discussion II — ***Cultural policies are being transformed across the world: what kind of European comparative cultural policy research is needed?***, moderated by Dr Jaka Primorac, IRMO, focused on the evident ‘missing link’ between the cultural policy research and cultural policy decision-making at a local, national and European level. By gathering cultural policy experts, university lecturers in cultural policy, members of foundations and cultural networks executing cultural policy research, as well as independent cultural experts, this session tried to answer what kind of research approach to cultural policy is necessary

in contemporary changing environments in Europe. The contributors of this session were: Dr Nada Švob-Đokić, IRMO; Mr Davor Mišković, Director of the non-profit organization Drugo More; Dr Tsveta Andreeva, Researcher and person responsible for research activities of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF); Dr Bjarki Valtýsson, Associate Professor in Modern Culture, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen; and Dr Kate Oakley, Professor of Cultural Policy at the School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds. The discussion showed that in a new changing cultural landscape, what is important is to return to critical policy research and to ask new questions on the role of culture in creating and diminishing inequalities, on the change of the monopolies of soft power, and on the role of algorithmic power and control of social media platforms that influence the changing cultural dynamics.

The last panel discussion was Panel discussion II — ***National cultural policies in need of vision, innovation and leadership***. The moderator of the panel discussion, Robert Manchin, discussed pressing issues with two current and one former minister of culture that attended the conference: Dr Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia; Mr Janko Ljumović, Prof, MSc, Minister of Culture of Montenegro; and Ms Corina Şuteu, cultural consultant and president of FilmETC, former Minister of Culture of Romania. This was an opportunity to hear speakers' experiences and to discuss challenges they encounter(ed) in their work both as researchers advocating 'evidence-based policymaking' and as policymakers in need of swift decision-making. Numerous problems were detected, such as the marginal position of cultural policy on government agendas, the weak legitimacy of the cultural administrators, the volatility of culture ministers and the design of administration that does not allow capitalization of acquired knowledge from one administration to another etc.

In conclusion, it can be said that, by bringing into dialogue past experiences with present and future challenges, the conference opened interesting discussions among cultural policy researchers, cultural professionals, cultural civil society representatives, policymakers, and young professionals in arts and culture from Europe and Croatia. It provided critical insights of concepts such as soft power, sustainability and subsidiarity, discussed the issue of the ECOC and showed the need for new directions in cultural policy research and leadership. In recent years, the role of culture in sustainable

development has been discussed, highlighting the importance of culture and its contribution to the local, national and global development. At the same time, today, more than ever, culture finds itself under increasing commercial and economic pressures. As the entire cultural and creative industries (CCIs) have shifted culture towards neoliberal economic models, the fact is that, every attempt to make culture a priority in public policy domain actually means its instrumentalization. Today, CCIs are increasingly being used as drivers of urban development, stimulating cultural entrepreneurship, urban regeneration, city branding, tourism etc. Furthermore, former underground cultural practices have now become a major part of commercial popular culture in the newly imagined "creative city", which searches for distinctive cultural practices and alternative tourism experiences. Is this sustainable and what kind of sustainable approach do we need? The answer to this question, stressed several times during the conference, is that we have to apply critical analysis and evaluation to issues in cultural policy (soft cultural policy instruments and mechanisms), the restructuring of public funding for culture, and to critically examine social, political, economic and digital transformations and their implications for a sustainable culture of the future.

# The Position of Culture in “Digitization of Everything”: Reflections on the International Round Table “Digital Single Market and Its Impact on Culture and Media in Croatia” 19–20 April 2018, Zagreb, Croatia

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**Barbara Lovrinić**

*Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Croatia,  
barbara@irmo.hr*

Digitization, as one of today’s key factors of social transformation, has profoundly affected many industries. However, the full capacity of using, sharing and running digital technologies is best seen in businesses and economies. In the context of the European Union, the Digital Single Market (DSM) is largely tailored to the requirements of this sector, with an overall aim of using DSM’s potential to stimulate economic growth. Since the Strategy was adopted in 2015, the DSM has been envisaged as a single EU regulatory space with an established legal framework for the digital trade of goods and services. Two years after its implementation, the EU calls for new actions, identifying three areas that need further improvement: data economy, cybersecurity, and online platforms. The DSM is the first pillar of the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Commission’s agenda for growth and jobs. Although the EU had already proclaimed culture to be at the heart of European external relations in 2016, it seems that the digital culture is (still) not placed at the centre of the EU’s digital agenda. And this is the question that needs to be

challenged in the EU (cultural) policy debate.

One such rare opportunity to discuss the implications of the Strategy in the context of culture was provided in Zagreb, Croatia, within the framework of activities of the Jean Monnet's biannual project 'EU Competences and National Cultural Policies: Critical Dialogues' (September 2016 –August 2018). From 19 to 20 April 2018, Croatian and European researchers, cultural professionals and policymakers were gathered at the **international round table "Digital Single Market and Its Impact on Culture and Media in Croatia"**, organized by the Department for Culture and Communication of the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) in Zagreb.

The challenges for cultural and media sectors in Europe are many, but the question which especially worries cultural and media professionals is, how does the DSM strategy influence the movement of "creative content" within the European Union's market? Two important dimensions are linked to this issue. The first is related to the existing gap between the supranational market principle, on which the DSM is built upon, and the territorial principles, within which the instruments of national cultural policies operate. The second is the position (and the benefit) of small Member States and their role in the DSM reform process. These were the key problems addressed during the two-days of panel discussions, which further placed emphasis on the multilayered issues of DSM's institutional and regulatory aspects, online platforms and media sustainability, copyright, authors' and users' interests, as well as the role of heritage in balancing culture and economy.

After the welcome notes delivered by Nina Tepeš, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb; Aleksandra Uzelac, CULPOL coordinator; and Ivica Poljičak, State Secretary, Ministry of Culture, the introductory panel "Digital Single Market and its Impact on Culture and Media: Institutional and Regulatory Aspects" started with the video address by Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society. The commissioner firmly stated that DSM needs a clear strategy, modernized rules and financial support. In addition, her address touched upon the role of Europeana, the European Commission's digital platform for cultural heritage, in the implementation of the DSM Strategy, which was also the central theme in one of the presentations held on the second day of the event. The introductory panel, moderated by Aleksandra Uzelac, IRMO, brought together two Croatian experts from the policymaking side: Anja Jelavić, Head of International Cultural

Cooperation and European Affairs Sector, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia and Božo Zeba, Acting Deputy Secretary of State, Central State Office for Development of Digital Society. The panel thus served as a great introduction to the topic of DSM, focusing on the legal aspects and situation in Croatia with regard to diverse initiatives and programmes that have been developed by Croatian policymakers within the DSM framework.

After this introductory panel, the first thematic panel “Online Platforms and Media Sustainability in Democratic Societies” gathered Damir Hajduk, Electronic Media Council; Božidar Abramović, Omnicom Media Grupa and Croatian Association of Communications Agencies (HURA); Dr Paško Bilić, IRMO; Ante Pavić, Forum TM, non-profit media; Saša Leković, Croatian Journalists’ Association; and moderator Jaka Primorac, IRMO. The panel explored how online platforms influence local media and communication industries in a political, cultural and economic sense. It raised a number of important issues such as: the consequences of the regulation of audio-visual media services and amendments to the audio-visual media services directive in Croatia; the sustainability of non-profit media; the role of online platforms in the rise of the digital advertising gap, etc. Particular attention was paid to the matter of finding possible ways of encouraging media pluralism in a digital age, and on the need to find systemic solutions for it. There is a critical turning point when new communication technologies destabilize the existing communication system and one must find new ways to fight for the creation of high-quality media content and journalistic independence. However, the burning question during the panel was that of the non-existence of media strategy in Croatia, which only encouraged further discussion among the public, and in this way concluded the first day of the round table.

The second day started with the keynote lecture, which captured most aspects of the challenges posed by the DSM framework, and provided a sort of systematic review of the key issues tackled at the round table. The lecture entitled “Culture and the (New) Single Market: Reproducing Regimes of Dominance or Rebooting the New Europe?” was held by Professor Katharine Sarikakis from the Department of Communication, University of Vienna, and moderated by Paško Bilić, IRMO. Professor Sarikakis also acts as chair of the administrative board of the Hellenic Public Service Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) in Greece. Having both a political science and media

background, in her lecture she skilfully linked discourses of academia and practice. She opened her lecture by drawing attention to the underlying context when speaking about the DSM framework. She emphasized that if we want to understand the DSM we need to look at the history of the construction of Europe itself, which has always been predominantly economic. The visions of what Europe should be have always clashed, and any form of political and cultural unity would require a public sphere, meaning citizens. Historically, the area of culture is seen as an area that strengthens European citizenship and identity, and is not constituting a core of any political action. Cultural governance (rather than governance of culture) is a complex system, and as such refers to arts, education, media, production, but also to the economics of cultural industries. The Europe of today is witnessing not crisis but crises, a sort of permanent state, which only leads to the constant shift of policy goals.

According to Professor Sarikakis, the normalization and regulation of this state is much needed, despite the level of (un)successfulness of the undertaken action. Society needs to achieve media liberalization, have richer media spheres, richer public spheres, open political dialogue, access to more jobs, etc. At the same time, we are faced with major cuts in cultural funding due to the globalization of markets; the real question is, therefore, how to discuss the concept of the Digital Single Market, which is tailored to the economies of larger states. It seems that, in this sense, the EU is continuing with the defragmentation of culture. As was the case in the late 80s, when the Television without Frontiers Directive was adopted, which was the foundation of the European Union's audio-visual policy, the DSM Strategy is once again putting the emphasis on employment, enhancement of skills, and, most importantly, the place of the European Union in the world. For this reason, culture continues to be a luxury item, and not a human right. Instead of a conclusion, Professor Sarikakis underlined three areas that are neglected in the debates in terms of the creation of a new single market. The first is the role of archives, which have a renewed role in encountering so-called 'fake news' and political apathy, as well as the shrinkage of public spaces. The second area is that of children and youth, and the importance of developing "democratic informational digital skills". The third and final area is the issue of media ownership and media control, which are important for any discussion on the development of media pluralism in Europe in the future.

The second panel titled “Copyright, Authors’ and Users’ Interests: How to Foster Creativity?” questioned the limitations of the creativity and dissemination of online content and observed different business models required in a digital environment today. This panel brought together Croatian and European experts: Maja Bogataj Jančić, Intellectual Property Institute; Simone Schroff, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam; Antun Tomislav Šaban, Croatian Composers’ Society; and Hrvoje Hribar, Federation of European Directors (FERA); and moderator Romana Matanovac Vučković, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. The speakers first discussed the new proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on copyright in the Digital Single Market, and underlined its possible negative side effects on education, science and research. The question of rights under collective management, so-called collective management organizations (CMOs) and their ability to develop pan-European repertoires in order to minimize the costs of the users and right holders, has been discussed within the EU copyright policy that tackles CMO policies from the view of competition. This panel also tackled the issue of the music and audio-visual copyright, which takes up the biggest share in the global copyright system, while the question of the adequacy of copyright in the context of the authors’ rights tradition in the European Union still remains. These are just some of the issues tackled in this panel, which showed how there are many shades of grey when talking of the relationship of culture, media and copyright.

The final panel entitled “Striking the Balance Between Culture and Economy: What Role for Heritage?” gathered Harry Verwayen, Europeana Foundation; Goranka Horjan, Ethnographic Museum; Vlatka Lemić, Croatian State Archives; Marianne Ping Huang, Aarhus University; and moderator Koraljka Kuzman Šlogar, Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research. The panel focused on the implications for the intermediary institutions, in this case heritage institutions, in the EU’s attempts to harmonize the copyright reform. Apart from the cultural heritage sector and its role within the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) reform, one of the problems tackled in this panel was insufficient use of digital contents in communicating cultural heritage – only 10% of cultural heritage has been digitized. Even though during the discussions it was stated that Europeana has not managed to be the driving force behind national institutions, nevertheless this platform undoubtedly has the most important role in the dissemination

of cultural content throughout the EU. During the panel, Croatian cultural professionals discussed the changing role of archives in relation to digital records management and e-government, but also the position of museums, especially in regard to the audience whose expectations are nowadays very high. The notion of digital cultural democracy and co-creation was the final topic discussed in the panel, which underlined the importance of creating knowledge and the need for digital social innovation, thus giving the audience food for thought and successfully rounding up the discussion.

After listening to the two days of discussions at this round table the conclusion we can draw is that the idea of culture has been pushed to the edge of the public and policy discourse, like many times before, only the context has changed and the EU discourse has become rather technical. The European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker recently stated that both citizens and economy have gone digital. This has indeed already been done, but whether the DSM reform will bring benefits for the entire cultural sector or only for the 'big players' in the field of creative economy, depends on the continuing and joint effort of cultural professionals to make policymakers and politicians aware of the cultural contribution to the DSM and the broader Digital Agenda. The round table offered a rich and dynamic programme, very fruitful debates, and most importantly, served as a great platform for many interconnected researchers, policymakers and cultural professionals to express their thoughts on this complex issue, to which the answers are still not clear. In this round table, they jointly represented (at least temporarily) the voice of small EU countries such as Croatia. The event also affirmed the need and desire to promote such dialogue. For all the above reasons, hopefully the issue of cultural and media policies in the digital age will become the focus of many future debates on DSM reform, which will certainly arise within the EU.

More information about the round table programme can be found on the following link: <http://culpol.irmo.hr/round-table-programme-and-reader-are-available-online/>

# Culture in Sustainability: Towards a Transdisciplinary Approach

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Edited by Sari Asikainen, Claudia Brites, Katarzyna Plebańczyk, Ljiljana Rogač Mijatović, and Katriina Soini

2017. University of Jyväskylä. Department of Social Sciences and  
Philosophy. Pages: 143. ISBN 978-951-39-7267-7

Culture and sustainability are two complex concepts which have been defined across many disciplines. Still, in both cases, no common definition has been accepted, nor can we say that the studies of these issues have been complete. On the contrary, culture and sustainability will always be relevant issues for analysis, because they strongly affect our daily lives. To determine the ways in which culture and sustainability are interconnected in this rapidly changing world is, obviously, a difficult task to undertake. Even though the editors argue that culture has rarely been central to discussions around sustainability, this ends up being less relevant. The reason is that the book is primarily about new models of transdisciplinary thinking in sustainable development.

Edited by Sari Asikainen, Claudia Brites, Katarzyna Plebańczyk, Ljiljana Rogač Mijatović, and Katriina Soini, *Culture in Sustainability* is a collection of papers presented at the final conference of the COST Action entitled 'Investigating Cultural Sustainability' that was held in May 2015 in Helsinki. The four-year COST Action started in 2011 with an overall aim 'to increase understanding of and determine the role of culture in sustainable development based on multidisciplinary principles and approaches'. The 2005 World Summit on Social Development identified three pillars of sustainability: economic development, social development, and environmental protection (United Nations General Assembly 2005). The main idea behind the COST Action was to consider a fourth pillar, culture, which would have three different roles: culture *in* sustainable development,

culture *for* sustainable development, and culture *as* sustainable development. While culture as sustainable development is more fundamental and exerts the greatest influence on sustainability, the first role of culture is more supportive, trying to expand the conventional discourse on sustainability. The title of the book *Culture in Sustainability* therefore suggests that the emphasis is on the maintenance of cultural capital for future generations (Soini and Dessein 2016). As noted, the transdisciplinary approach advocated in the book deals with transcending intellectual boundaries among disciplines and engaging both the academy and civil society (McGregor 2012). Thus, the book questions how integrated knowledge in the field of culture can solve complex problems such as sustainability.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to key concepts important for understanding the relationship between culture and sustainability. The second deals with policies and practices, and the third tackles approaches in aesthetics and the arts. The first part contains three chapters, starting with Hans Dieleman, who skilfully combines science, culture, and spirituality, thereby provoking what would Gadamer call the *fusion of horizons* (Nicolescu 2014). Right from the beginning, Dieleman's article opens a new paradigm of reality to the reader where s/he sees the culture of sustainability as a narrative of 'embodiment and planetary consciousness'. The authors of the chapter entitled 'Understanding cultural sustainability: Connecting sustainability and culture' take a somewhat more down-to-earth approach; they explain the basic distinctions between transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity and offer insights into the concept of interculturality, as well as the background of the missing fourth pillar in sustainability. The following chapter by Philippe Vandebroeck provides an overview of the complex change that the concept of culture has undergone over time and analyses how culture has been all — 'embodied resource and immanent repository, enabler and constrainer, homogenizer and differentiator'. However, he leaves his conclusions to the other authors who close this section of the book.

The second part of the book provides the most interesting and engaging materials. Following the conceptual thinking of the first part of the book, this part deals with policies and practices, but in a manner that is concrete, clear, and inspiring. Urban sustainability is dealt with in two articles. In the first, Ferreira and Duxbury open the question of citizen participation and dimensions of local sustainability by presenting fieldwork

conducted in a small town named Palmela in Portugal. In the second article, Veldpaus and Roders analyze urban heritage management. In the following chapter, Mari Kivitalo presents Bourdieu's concept of embodied cultural capital as an intermediary between humans and nature in a rural municipality of Keuruu in Central Finland. The last chapter in this section deals with the so-called photovoice research method employed to investigate how marginalized people, in this case the Baka communities in Eastern Cameroon, identify themselves and view their daily problems. 'Life told in pictures' would be a simplified description of the result of this engaging method, which sometimes provided disturbing insights into various social problems, and, consequently, led to critical awareness among people and helped generate the process of change. Overall, this section successfully illustrates some very inspirational examples of the research on culture and sustainability across a range of communities – urban, rural, and marginalized – and shows us their reality, but not from the outside; on the contrary, their stories demonstrate that everything and everybody are interconnected.

Although, in general, the academic language stays unambiguous and clear throughout the book, the third and final part of the book may require more effort and prior knowledge on the reader's part, especially when it comes to understanding the aesthetic dimension of environmental and sustainability ethics. In the articles in part three, the environmental aesthetic of the American philosopher Arnold Berleant has been dealt with in detail. The limits of the aesthetic valuation of landscape and the issue of translating aesthetic values into economic ones are addressed as well. The last two articles are focused on agency in cultural sustainability. The article, written by Lummina Horlings, stands out in this section because it reflects on the role of artists and researchers in sustainable place-shaping. Horlings highlights the importance of 'place' which has indeed been neglected in the context of sustainability and arts. The last article, Jan van Boeckel, inspired by the Goethean approach in the interpretation of nature, discusses a four-stage transdisciplinary process of artful empiricism.

In conclusion, one could say that the message of this collection of papers is clear— sustainability is a cultural issue. In general, the authors argue for the differentiation of 'culture' from the 'social', both of which have connected, yet separate roles in the context of sustainability. Culture needed the fourth pillar to stand out from the label of social sustainability. Yet,

the question is how culture can be a distinct reference point. In this sense, I would agree with Nunes, Söderström, and Hipke when they say that cultural policies should be considered as specific tools to achieve sustainable development (p. 32).

This book is a valuable resource not only for the scientific community, policy-makers, and practitioners, but for anyone who is interested in the vast field of culture and sustainability and is willing to expand his or her horizon and help develop 'new organs of perception' (p. 154). The only critique one might level at the editors is that they should have provided more information on the authors in the book. That would have certainly helped the reader to understand the authors' positions and their points of view, especially considering the transdisciplinary approach to the theme. The book is available for download at the following link.

**Barbara Lovrinić<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Research assistant, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), barbara@irmo.hr

# UNESCO Global Report Re|Shaping Cultural Policies. Advancing Creativity for Development

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Organization (UNESCO). Pages: 252. ISBN 978-92-3-100256-4*

The new UNESCO Global Report *Re|Shaping Cultural Policies* is the second report in a series that is designed to monitor the implementation of the *2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* that was ratified by 146 Parties, including the European Union. The purpose of this series is to provide evidence of how this implementation process contributes to attaining the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all, which are quite ambitious targets to be achieved over the next 15 years.

Looking at the UNESCO report, what can one discern regarding what governments and non-governmental actors have done to implement the 2005 Convention? Cultural professionals are still searching for answers they base on quadrennial periodic reporting. These two publications – the 2015 report entitled *A Decade Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for Development*, and its follow-up entitled *Advancing Creativity for Development* – form a resourceful piece of information when it comes to the progress made in policy making related to the diversity of cultural expressions. For those not well versed in the UNESCO terminology, according to the 2005 Convention (UNESCO 2015: 7) the diversity of cultural expressions ‘refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies’. The report itself provides us with a plethora of instruments that different governments and non-governmental actors designed in order to address this, and it provides an important step in evaluating these efforts.

The UNESCO Report brought together a diverse group of independent experts in order to analyse the quadrennial periodic reports submitted by Parties since 2015. From the time the report was first published in 2015, the methodological framework for monitoring and evaluation has consisted of the following four goals: 1. Support sustainable systems of governance for culture; 2. Achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and the mobility of artists and cultural professionals; 3. Integrate culture into sustainable development frameworks; and 4. Promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The report consists of ten chapters divided into four sections titled according to these UNESCO goals.

The first goal, which concerns supporting sustainable systems of governance for culture, contributes to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 16, and 17. In other words, it deals with policies that promote local cultural products and production. It also deals with decision-making in public institutions and participatory processes that involve civil society in policy design and implementation and with capacity-building support to developing countries. The first chapter 'Towards more collaborative cultural governance', written by Jordi Baltà Portolés in collaboration with Milena Dragičević Šešić, highlights the influence of the Convention on cultural policies, collaborative governance, and multi-stakeholder policy making, especially with regard to developing countries. There has been a change in policy discourse, and cultural aspects have been integrated into policy documents that cover related domains, which in turn creates environments conducive to diversity of cultural expressions. However, the authors insist that collaborative frameworks for the governance of culture need to be created and that they need to involve multiple stakeholder groups such as government ministries, state and local government, and nongovernmental actors. The second chapter, 'Enlarging choices: Cultural content and public service media', is written by Christine M. Merkel, who identifies many improvements in the legislative base for media freedom and diversity. However, her research revealed some unexpected trends; for example, the state of media freedom worsened in 66% of countries, and only 19% of countries have developed specific gender awareness programmes for publicly-owned media organizations. The next chapter, 'Cultural policies in the age of platforms', by Octavio Kulesz, addresses the challenge of the technological revolution, which had a huge impact on the governance of the media and the cultural value

chain. According to Kulesz, transforming the cultural value chain from a pipeline-like configuration to a network model is fundamental; in other words, a digital model requiring countries to design new strategies for the implementation of cultural policies is necessary. The fourth chapter, 'Engaging civil society in cultural governance' by Andrew Firmin, covers civil society participation in supporting sustainable systems of governance for culture. As expected, current laws in most countries do not enable the participation of civil society. This last chapter also brings two interesting cases of successful advocacy in Chile and a new civil society vision for culture in Burkina Faso. The first section, therefore, focuses on the most compelling governance challenges of today's society, which is the primary concern of this Global Report.

The authors of the chapters in the next three sections deal with the variety of issues: mobility of artists and other cultural professionals, flows of cultural goods and services, international legal treaties and agreements, sustainable development, gender equality, and artistic freedom. In the chapter 'Surviving the paradoxes of mobility', author Khadija El Bennaoui addresses mobility challenges facing artists in the global south. Unfortunately, the imbalanced mobility between the global north and the global south is still highly present, and several factors such as visa regulations continue to hinder the artists' access to the market. The only chapter which concerns the third goal of the SDGs, 'The integration of culture in sustainable development' by Avril Joffe, deals with the cultural dimension of national development plans and programmes and explores the innovative ways of fostering sustainable development through culture. The 2005 Convention would not be properly implemented without calls for the integration of a gender perspective into cultural policies and measures. In this regard, some of the key findings are presented by Ammu Joseph in the chapter 'Gender equality: missing in action'.

The implementation of the 2005 Convention is an ambitious project, but the data provided by the Global Report suggests that progress has been made in implementing the 2005 Convention since the publication of the first Global Report in 2015. The evaluation of data showed that new approaches to strategic issues have emerged, particularly on the issues of artistic freedom, the mobility of artists, gender equality, public service media, and digital creativity. However, what is evident from the 2017 report is that cultural policy-making is still far from being *reshaped*, for it takes a serious amount of time to yield valuable results.

There is a risk that many people will not dwell on the 2005 Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals unless they are already somewhat familiar with the topic. Unfortunately, where UNESCO is concerned, there is a lack of promotion in the media in general. In the long term, the report could have a positive impact on these issues, which would be enhanced if the public were made more aware of such work. I recommend the report first and foremost to students and young researchers of various professions (not restricted to culture) to become acquainted with the cultural policy transformations on a global level. The third edition of the global report is scheduled for December 2020.

This publication and a short summary are freely accessible in English and French on the website of the Global Report.

**Barbara Lovrinić<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Research assistant, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), barbara@irmo.hr

# Cultural Diplomacy: Arts, Festivals and Geopolitics

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Edited by Milena Dragičević Šešić,  
with Ljiljana Rogač Mijatović and  
Nina Mihaljinac

2017. *Culture Desk Serbia*. Pages: 411. ISBN 978-86-85033-34-6

A new comprehensive book, *Cultural Diplomacy: Arts, Festivals and Geopolitics* edited by Milena Dragičević Šešić in collaboration with Ljiljana Rogač Mijatović and Nina Mihaljinac, brings together results from two separate projects — the conference 'BITEF and Cultural Diplomacy: Theatre and Geopolitics', and the research project about the state of the art in international and regional cultural collaboration in Serbia funded by the Creative Europe Desk Serbia. Divided into five chapters, *Cultural Diplomacy* contains a selection of texts written by prominent international scholars, practitioners, and activists in the field of culture today. The authors are dealing with the current key questions in the field of cultural diplomacy challenging its conceptual boundaries, discussing the role of the actors and, ultimately, addressing the need for its reformulation.

The concept 'cultural diplomacy' may open some questions to the reader, especially if one is familiar with the term 'international cultural cooperation' or with the recent proliferation of the EU's documents on culture in external relations. A reader who is an outsider to the world of cultural policies might expect that the opening chapter of the book would give an overview of the basic theoretical background of cultural diplomacy research and its conceptualisation, especially taking into consideration the book's size (400 pages). However, due to a certain shift in the understanding of this concept, as a number of authors in the first part of the book stress, this is not the case. Cultural diplomacy was originally labelled as 'government business' (p. 53), but is now considered as operating 'beyond the national interest' (Ang et al. 2015). Nevertheless, several authors in the book's first chapter, 'Cultural diplomacy: Soft power or fair cooperation', have defined cultural diplomacy within the context of globalisation and the new geopolitical situation. For example, Melissa

Nisbett analyses the concepts which are close to the concept of cultural diplomacy, such as soft power, cultural relations, and propaganda. She argues that it is better to answer the question of what cultural diplomacy *isn't* rather than to try to define what it is. The EU discourse is not mentioned in this first chapter, even though the elaboration of EU framework would provide a better, current insight into this subject. Serhan Ada looks back at the history of cultural diplomacy and highlights the role of the USA and Russia in the Cold War, while Jonathan Vickery analyses some of the most important UNESCO's programmes and conventions that tackled the question of international political agency for culture. Throughout the book, the reader is continually reminded how slippery the term cultural diplomacy remains. However, aside from a discussion of proper terminology, the more valuable thing this book offers is a plethora of examples of the so-called 'cultural diplomacy from below'. In the first section of the book, several authors provide examples of unconventional cultural diplomacy that highlight the role of civil society. For example, Monika Mokre examines state politics towards refugees and migrants in Austria. Similarly, Anika Hampel discusses partnership-based cooperation in cultural policy and cultural management using five case studies of German-Indian cooperation in the arts, and she uses this discussion to make recommendations for the future realisation of equal partnerships ("fair cooperation") in international exchanges. In an interesting article on the link between populism and culture, Raphaela Henze also advocates for community-based projects. This time they are seen as a way of overcoming elitism in the arts and enabling the increase in democratisation of the artistic process.

The second chapter deals with festivals and addresses them as both art platforms and important instruments in cultural diplomacy. In this way, BITEF (Belgrade International Theatre Festival) as an important theatre festival articulates good practices of bottom-up cultural diplomacy. The conference 'BITEF and Cultural Diplomacy: Theatre and Geopolitics' held in Belgrade in 2016 produced respectful material which is summarised in the first part of the chapter. It highlights the role of cultural leaders such as Mira Trailović, re-examines the cultural policy of socialist Yugoslavia (Ksenija Radulović), and focuses on the functioning of BITEF in the contemporary period (Anja Suša). On the other hand, the broader framework of festivals is covered by Darko Lukić. In his essay on inclusive practices at the international performing arts festivals, he

contends that the new agenda should be based on knowledge transfer. New idioms and frameworks in cultural diplomacy are advocated by Ana Žuvela by using the example of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, while Mike van Gran addresses the issue of cultural diplomacy taking place in the 'deeply unequal economic, political, military, and cultural relations'. Thus, this chapter argues for a future, trans-disciplinary approach that will pave a new way towards a better understanding of cultural diplomacy, one which reflects on values and makes solidarity a primary issue.

The third chapter of the book complements the first one, as it focuses on the shifting trends and new actors and forms in cultural diplomacy. The chapter starts with the contribution of the book's co-editor, Ljiljana Rogač Mijatović. In her essay based on the findings of her book *Cultural Diplomacy and Identity of Serbia*, she explores the possibility of Serbia's repositioning through culture. Some of the main concepts from the first chapter (such as cultural relations and nation branding) are again present in this chapter, although within a different context. In her article on cities and regions in the context of "paradiplomacy" or decentralised diplomatic actions, Leda Laggiard distinguishes between cultural relations and cultural diplomacy. A somewhat unusual niche of diplomacy – gastrodiplomacy – and nation branding in Serbia is covered by Tanja Strugar. Along the same line comes the final text of this chapter written by Mina Popović, who explores the link between fashion and nation branding.

The last chapter of the book deals with the issue of cultural diplomacy from the perspective of Serbian authors. The research project of Creative Europe Desk Serbia has explored cooperation practices within different cultural sectors. The results are presented through the work of eight different authors in this chapter who offer analyses of research results from the audio-visual sector, from the visual arts, the performing arts, and literature, from creative industries, cultural heritage, science and from the theory of art. The comparative analysis of results showed that diverse fields of culture have the same strengths and weaknesses; consequently, similar recommendations for the development of international cooperation in Serbia can be made. At the end, a statistical appendix presents data collected from the survey of European and international cultural cooperation in Serbia. The appendix presents the successful achievements of Serbia during the first three years of the

Creative Europe programme.

Due to the impact of globalisation, diplomacy is a rapidly evolving field (L'Etang 2009). However, the dynamics of international relations have created a problematic relationship between the nation state and other actors in the arena. In addition, culture, as a tool of soft power, is used to influence other dimensions of the country, in most cases, the economic one. Unarguably, tackling the question of cultural diplomacy will always be quite an ambitious move. Certainly, the reader will have an impression that the book could easily be twice this size. At the same time, the book will serve as an inspiring source for further research. It is easy to conclude that this collection of articles, written by prominent researchers in the field, works perfectly both as relevant literature for scholars and as a resourceful guide for practitioners. There is lack of literature on the subject of cultural diplomacy internationally, but it is especially lacking with respect to Southeast Europe. This lack not only concerns the lack of literature on conventional theoretical approaches to cultural diplomacy but also on practices and bottom-up approaches that contribute towards new concepts and new definitions of cultural diplomacy. Thus, the book, generously offered free for download, comes as a valuable inspirational piece, which fits perfectly into a puzzle called cultural diplomacy.

**Barbara Lovrinić<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Research assistant, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), barbara@irmo.hr

# Social Media and Everyday Politics

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Tim Highfield

2016. *Polity, Cambridge and Malden. Pages: 211.*

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The notion that the online and the offline are deeply interlinked is so widespread nowadays that very few people ever give it a second thought, even though this entanglement has happened in many spheres of the social and the political. Living one's life in an online environment has become the new normal. Posting everyday personal experiences in visual form on Instagram, maintaining social connections through Facebook, and commenting and obtaining information on Twitter are integral to everyday life. In such a mediascape, Tim Highfield ventured to explore the practices of the political in social media in an everyday context.

Highfield makes a strong point at the very beginning of the book. On the second page he puts the selfie that he took as he cast his vote in the Australian election in 2015. The simple fact that one clicked photos and posted on social media while performing one's civic duty is highly illustrative of combining the personal and political, Highfield argues. This is one of many examples that familiarizes the reader and draws her/him to this book. It is quite easy and enjoyable to go through the seven chapters that constitute *Social Media and Everyday Politics*. The opening chapter 'Personal/Political' explores just that: the relationship between the personal and political, connections between different issues such as race and Twitter, LGBTQ expressions on visual media, callout culture and the practices of doxxing and shaming. When it comes to callout culture and the male gaze, in 2017 we saw the rise of the Instagram account @dearcattallers, as 20-year old Noa Jansma, a student from Amsterdam, began taking selfies with men who whistled and commented after her in the streets. The month-long project had Jansma documenting her own harassment, and it quickly spread globally. Thus, a single, personal act of online activism resonated on social media. As Jansma noted, 'this Instagram has the aim to create awareness about the objectification of

women in daily life', and she has since passed the account to other women around the planet, letting them share their own stories. This anecdote, although it happened after the book was published, serves to anchor the book's importance as it illustrates the entanglement between personal and political, which Highfield often mentions.

Perhaps the key notion in this book is the fact that the author does not claim a single narrative when it comes to dealing with the political in the online sphere. Tim Highfield emphasises and allows multiple, parallel narratives early on in the book, writing of political rituals on social media in the second chapter, entitled 'Political Rituals of Social Media', and 'Media Politics' in the third chapter, focusing on the impact the mainstream media produce on social media, particularly in politically related content. Another distinction that makes this book stand out is a clear and witty writing style that is laced with references to popular culture and participatory online engagement. For instance, the second chapter on political rituals of social media explores memes as participatory politics. For instance, the author has decided to use the subtitle *Can haz politiks? LOLCat framings*, which references a popular internet phenomenon that he investigates. In addition, he has cleverly incorporated the popular 'doge' meme vernacular into his own writing style (cf. p45), which often makes the book relatable and easier to understand.

This intertextuality is exactly what makes the book appealing not only to social scientists and media studies students, but also to anyone and everyone who cares to comment on politics in the online environment. The third chapter entitled 'Media Politics', deals with the different ways media politics is presented and shaped in/through the online environment. The author draws heavily on examples from popular culture - mainly series and sitcoms. Highfield mentions HBO's political satire *Veep*, in which comedian Julia Louis-Dreyfus portrays fictional Vice President of the United States Selina Meyer and the blunders that she is constantly getting into. Meyer is photoshopped into various memes while looking at her phone, obviously referencing the popular Hillary Clinton memes involving her BlackBerry ('Texts from Hillary') that arose during her e-mail scandal. When elaborating on the power of media and politics and social media users, first and foremost, the author employs useful and innovative, newer concepts such as Benkler's networked public sphere (Benkler 2006) and boyd's networked publics (boyd, 2011) in order to give

a wider academic perspective on users and content creators that have risen from traditional audiences. He emphasizes the social media user's potential for reshaping/steering agendas, both at the individual and group level.

Chapter four, entitled 'Breaking News, Scandals and Crises', tackles crisis communication. Here, Highfield focuses on hashtags, which he describes as 'unstructured and automated aggregator(s) of information' (p.91). In such contexts, social media can bring forward content that is not featured in the mainstream media. An obvious example is the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing and forum users' crowdsourcing information, which the author describes in detail. It serves as a good bridge to the next chapter 'Collective and Connective Action'. In that chapter, Highfield describes various collective actions on social media, such as Kony2012 and the hashtag activism, such as tweeting during the Arab Spring. The author here shows the example of the uprisings in Egypt where people tweeted 'personal takes on the revolution, mixing information with individual experiences and sentiments...' (p.110-11). Highfield again emphasises that online connective actions are not insular, but rather part of a more complex media and political system.

The final two chapters of the book, 'Partisan Politics and Politicians on Social Media' and 'The Everyday of Elections', although intriguing, are not as exciting as the previous chapters. Politicians on social media and partisan politics are the central topic of the sixth chapter, which includes a brief but interesting section on the extreme politics that find its users/supporters online. Such extreme discourses and policy initiatives are normally shunned by the traditional media. The closing chapter deals with elections and social media practices. Elections are understood within the 'permanent campaign' setting, and Highfield describes political marketing and campaign practices, mostly referring to the case of Australian elections.

Even though many scholars' works are lauded by their reviewers as a 'good', 'interesting', or an 'easy' read, not only for experts in the given field but also for the general public, such claims are often exaggerated. In *Social Media and Everyday Life*, this is not the case at all. Highfield's intelligent writing style, rich with puns and laced with pop culture references, makes this an enjoyable read while still maintaining a strong scientific standard. Perhaps this book's best quality is that it does not attempt to encapsulate and explain everything related

to politics online. Instead, it allows multiple narratives and counter-narratives around a given topic, while maintaining the awareness that these narratives take place across platforms, media formats, forums, cafes, dinners and other places. 'A single tweet might not change policy', writes Highfield in the book's conclusion, 'but combined with other factors, it might bring about change'. Through *Social Media and Everyday Politics*, his first book, Tim Highfield has shown himself to be an interesting, promising author with a distinctive writing style.

**Emil Čančar<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Trainee, European Parliament Liaison Office in Croatia, e.cancar@outlook.com

# Submission

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**Contact** Croatian International Relations Review  
Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO)  
Ljudevita Farkaša Vukotinovića 2, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia  
T +385 1 48 77 460  
F +385 1 48 28 361  
E [cirr@irmo.hr](mailto:cirr@irmo.hr)  
W [cirr.irmo.hr](http://cirr.irmo.hr)

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