

THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL CULTURE INITIATIVE AND CULTURAL LEGACY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR IN THE AFTERMATH OF CORK 2005

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The European Cities/Capitals of Culture initiative (subsequently referred to as ECOC) was originally set up in 1985 to celebrate European cultural diversity. Conceptualized by researchers as a major cultural event, a growing academic literature on the subject now argues that the ECOC has lost sight of its original cultural aims and is being increasingly used to further city-branding, image creation and tourism revenue generation agendas. This article reports the findings of a study that examined how the regular workings of a city's permanent cultural sector can be affected by this transient, large-scale cultural event. The ECOC studied Cork 2005. The study's findings point to a number of ways in which the ECOC constituted a boost for the sector in terms of strengthening capacity, building relationships, and enhancing well-being. It further points to a number of shortcomings in how the "process" or developmental potential of the event was fostered. A number of questions for future research are raised. Core among these include investigating how the needs of the cultural sector are recognized and managed amidst competing calls from other stakeholders, and how tensions/compromises attend the competing agendas that seek to capitalize on the ECOC.

Key words: European cities of culture; European capitals of culture; Cultural sector; Cultural legacies

Introduction

The European Cities/Capitals of Culture initiative (subsequently referred to as ECOC) was originally set up to celebrate European cultural diversity in 1985. An initiative of the European Commission's Education and Culture Directorate General, it was originally an intergovernmental scheme designed to raise the profile of culture, art and creativity within European Union member states. The

idea was that each year cities designated with the title would celebrate their cultural heritage through a year-round cultural program. As Griffiths (2006) has noted, the founding principles of the initiative were connected "with the capacity of culture to act as a source of cohesion and with the distinctive role which cities have played, and continue to play, as sites of cultural exchange and innovation" (p. 417). Over time, the event has taken on broader dimensions. As Cogliandro (2001) notes, it came

to be realized that the event “gave the city a marketing opportunity to improve its image on a national and European scale, and constituted a sort of regeneration tool for the principal areas around which the main events occurred” (p. 8). In consequence, it has received increasing attention from researchers interested in the strategic role accorded to large events by urban policy-makers, and a substantial body of literature has emerged on the ECOC in recent times. The ECOC has been variously described by researchers as a major event (Richards & Wilson, 2004), a major cultural festival (Griffiths, 2006), and as a “macrofestival” (Herrero, Sanz, Devesa, Bedate, & del Barrio, 2006). More recently, Langen and Garcia (2008) have described it as a cross between a “cultural mega event” and a “major cultural festival” with the potential of being “mega” in terms of scale.

The growing literature on this major cultural event tends to be critical in tone. Ray (1998) suggested that the event has lost sight of its original aims and has been subsumed into a culture economy approach, while others point to how it is being increasingly used to further city branding, image creation, and tourism revenue generation agendas (Evans, 2003; Richards & Wilson, 2004). Richards and Wilson (2004) have further asserted that event-led strategies intended to distinguish the cultural diversity of cities, such as those involving the ECOC, can in reality lead to a “reproduction of sameness” or to a process of “serial monotony.” This leads to the paradoxical situation whereby those cities striving to create distinctive images for themselves end up being jaded imitations of earlier events.

In all of this growing research, a question still in need of further research remains: What are the cultural outcomes of the ECOC? While it may have become a mechanism for furthering “urban propaganda projects” (Balsas, 2004; Boyle, 1997), can it still further cultural agenda through celebrating the diversity and richness of European cultures, promoting creativity, and promoting interest in the practices and activities of the cultural sector in Europe? While the ECOC that takes place in various European cities every year is a cultural event, and research on the ECOC is growing, its cultural dimensions, including its cultural legacies, remain underresearched. Indeed, the question of

what constitutes cultural legacy is something that really has not been addressed until very recently. As several researchers have noted (Bailey, Miles, & Stark, 2004; García, 2005; Quinn, 2005), the task of documenting and analyzing the economic legacies of events has far outweighed the interest shown in cultural outcomes. In the context of currently prevailing paradigms that see urban policy-makers adopt an instrumental approach to culture (McCarthy, 2005), this is, perhaps, not surprising. The need to justify economic outcomes to a range of stakeholders including commercial sponsors, government bodies, cultural resource agencies, and local authorities has prompted the proliferation of research into economic outcomes. Correspondingly, economic impact methodologies, while sometimes critiqued, are well established; meanwhile, the practice of identifying and analyzing cultural impacts is less prevalent.

This article seeks to contribute to the literature on ECOCs by investigating the cultural outcomes of cultural events. It aims to do this by investigating how the regular workings of a city’s permanent cultural sector can be affected by the transient large scale cultural event that is the ECOC. Key research questions posed include: How do cultural actors in a city engage with the ECOC? How does the intervention of this once-off event affect the regular workings of an embedded cultural sector? How can an ECOC generate legacies that have a potential to sustain into the future, postevent period? Specifically, the article reports the findings of a study that examined developments in the cultural sector in the Irish city of Cork during 2005, the year when it was designated ECOC. The article begins by reviewing relevant literature. It then discusses the study’s findings and concludes by identifying a number of avenues for further research.

Literature Review

Writing in the context of culture-led regeneration strategies in the UK, Evans and Shaw (2004) noted that while these are now commonplace, methods to assess their cultural impact, as distinct from their economic and physical impacts, are seriously underdeveloped. Palmer/Rae Associates (2004), following an examination of ECOCs from

1995 to 2004, concluded that while cities tend to devise multiple objectives for the year, the main strategic aim has been to obtain economic benefits through tourism, image enhancement, urban revitalization, and the development of the creative industries. O'Callaghan and Linehan (2007) have levied similar claims at Cork 2005, the ECOC under consideration here. Comments such as these prompt the suggestion that in spite of much apparent rhetoric, the idea of valuing culture for culture's sake is not centrally important for host cities themselves. In the context of academic studies specifically undertaken on the ECOC, few have focused on cultural legacy. As García (2005) notes, this field has been dominated by economic and environmental impact studies, and the methodologies and even the language developed to investigate cultural impacts are very underdeveloped. The problem with cultural legacy is, of course, its purported intangibility. It is tangible outcomes (e.g., tourism revenue or job creation) that are most often sought by the stakeholders mentioned above. Yet other "softer" outcomes like capacity building, community empowerment, image enhancement, confidence boosting, and relationship building may be no less important (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004). These sorts of indicators tend not to be immediately apparent, in that they generally cannot be easily calculated and presented to an outside authority, such as a city council, by way of manifestly demonstrating that an event has made an impact. An overt manifestation of impact may only materialize some time after the cultural event or intervention has taken place. Thus, researchers like Evans and Shaw (2004) have argued that a longitudinal approach is best suited to the investigation of cultural outcomes, and this poses certain methodological difficulties.

Quinn (2006) argued that arts festivals can contribute to arts development by creating demand for the arts, enhancing venue infrastructures, encouraging local creativity, and animating local involvement. Specifically in the case of the ECOC, a number of researchers have considered how benefits accrue to cultural sectors within host cities. Sjøholt (1999), for example, concluded that the lasting value of the ECOC lay in the international contacts and networks created in the course of the year. Balsas (2004) suggested that Porto (2001)

succeeded in widening the cultural audience in the city. He further cited Santos et al. (2003), who asserted that the Porto's designation as ECOC led to the creation of new domestic and international networks for cultural programming and training. Of all the ECOCs discussed in the literature, Glasgow 1990 emerges most prominently. García (2004) writes about the "unquestionable achievements" (p. 319) associated with Glasgow, identifying them as: the balance that it struck between programming in venues beyond the city-center for social inclusion and access reasons; its inclusion of such areas as design, engineering, architecture, shipbuilding, religion, and sport in its wide definition of culture; programming flagship national companies and international stars alongside emerging local artists and grassroots organizations; and allocating funding to both temporary events and more permanent cultural infrastructures. Gold and Gold (2005), in a longitudinal review of the ECOC, attribute several cultural benefits to various host cities: "consolidation of the cultural quarter" (Antwerp, 1993, p. 233), "boost to the creation of cultural infrastructure" (Luxembourg, 1995, p. 235), and "galvanised provision for the city's arts" (Copenhagen, 1996, p. 237). More broadly, as García (2005) notes, the transformation of a city's image, as occurred in the Glasgow case, is an overarching cultural legacy, which boosts a city's cultural sector as it does other areas.

However, in the drive to measure tourism outcomes associated with the ECOC, few researchers have been inclined to investigate what Palmer/Rae Associates (2004) described as the "softer" outcomes that manifest themselves in such developments as capacity and relationship building. In the broader literature on events there is now a greater awareness of the value of examining, measuring and evaluating event outcomes in terms of social, cultural and political dimensions. Moscardo (2007), for example, discusses the importance of social capital, community capacity and community well-being in the context of regional development and highlights the potential of festivals and events to contribute to development processes. She calls for further research on the question of how festivals and events can effectively contribute to enhancing social and cultural aspects of regional community development. There is much potential to adapt this

line of inquiry to focus on the development of social capital, capacity, and well-being in the cultural sector when cultural events are being studied. The broader event literature already points to the ways in which events are implicated in network and relationship building, key components of social capital. Larson (2002), for example, analyzed the power dynamics evident in a project network of actors marketing a festival. More recently, Getz, Andersson, and Larson (2007) emphasized how events are produced not by stand-alone organizations but by networks of stakeholders that must be managed effectively by the festival organization. Understanding these so-called “softer outcomes” is clearly important, especially given that they are so influential in shaping and sustaining the longer term legacies associated with events.

The challenge of sustaining legacies after the transient event has ended and the routine workings of the cultural sector resume again has already been problematized in the literature. García (2004), for example, argues that the Glasgow experience was seriously tainted by a lack of provision to sustain cultural legacies into the longer term. The event organizers failed to establish partnerships and workforce structures that could survive the year and be applied, on a smaller scale, outside an event scenario. Critiques such as this emphasize the importance of moving beyond the identification and measurement of outcomes, to the development of a more coherent understanding of the underpinning processes that explain how and why certain outcomes materialize.

The Case of Cork 2005

Up until 1999, the European Commission selected the ECOC-designated city from a list of self-nominated candidate cities. However, under new rules introduced that year, the designation went to individual member states, which were then entrusted with the task of selecting one city from within their state to host the ECOC. Ireland had that responsibility in 2005 and four Irish cities bid against each other for the designation. Up to this point, only one Irish city, Dublin (the capital), had ever been designated as ECOC. That was in 1991. Now, beginning in the autumn of 2000, the country's next four largest cities, Cork, Limerick, Wa-

terford, and Galway, began to compete to host the 2005 ECOC. The national government's Department of Arts, Sports, and Tourism agreed that 12.7 million euro would be an appropriate expenditure for such an event and agreed to furnish 50% of this cost to the designated city. In Cork, the city's municipal authority, Cork City Council, spearheaded the bid. Following the development and submission of a draft program to the European Commission, a visit from a panel of international experts to the competing cities, and a subsequent visit to Brussels to defend the bid, Cork was awarded the designation. The final decision was formally approved by the Council of Ministers in May 2002. Cork, with a population of 127,000 and a hinterland of 250,000, became the second Irish city, and one of the smallest European cities ever to be awarded the designation.

Cork City Council devised what it called a twin-track approach to implementing the designation. The first part of this approach involved the city council taking direct charge of delivering 28 capital projects that crossed public infrastructure, community, transport, and information technology as well as more overtly heritage, cultural, and tourism domains. Most, if not all, of these projects were under way already, but according to the City Manager, Joe Gavin (personal interview in 2006), the ECOC designation created a certain momentum to “fast-track” the completion of some of them. The second part of the twin-track approach involved the Council establishing a limited company called Cork 2005 Ltd. to develop a cultural program, generate funding and market the ECOC Year. Adopting an “arms-length principle,” the company reported to a City Council appointed Board of Directors. The Board selected was a representative board chaired by the Lord Mayor, with two representatives elected from the city's arts sector, one from the national arts agency, the Arts Council, one each from the city's tourism, education and business sectors, and the remaining five being either elected representatives or city council employees. The city council recruited a director and two programmers for Cork 2005 Ltd. Once in place, the director, John Kennedy, recruited a third programmer and then, gradually, a team of staff across a range of functional areas.

Cork 2005 Ltd. put together a very extensive

cultural program on the theme of “Cork: City of Making.” The development of the program relied heavily on a public call for content rather than on a strongly curatorial approach. The program offered a total of 244 events/activities that were divided into “strands” that included: Architectural, design and visual arts; Festivals; Film, media and sound; Literature, conferences, and publications; Music; Residences, research, and processes; Sport; Theatre; and Dance. Two further strands, Culture and Health and Culture and Community, were also developed with the specific remit of developing access and promoting inclusion.

Methods

The research adopted a qualitative approach obtaining primary data through three main methods employed sequentially between February and May 2006. Firstly, a series of semistructured interviews was held with 21 key informants, including the Director, Programming team, and two Project Managers from Cork 2005, the current and most recent city arts officers, the city manager, and a number of representatives from the cultural sector. The latter were identified through snowballing. A personally administered, structured, mainly open-ended questionnaire was then administered to 33 cultural organizations that had worked as project partners with Cork 2005 Ltd. and had contributed to the cultural program. Finally, three focus groups involving 10 project partners participating in the Health and Community strand of the program were held. The primary data collection targeted the cultural organizations in the city and overall, the research secured the participation of 39 cultural organizations, a figure which represented all of the significant cultural organizations functioning in the city at the time (personal interview with City Arts Office Meaney in 2006). A number of individual artists as well as a number of other relevant stakeholders also participated.

Secondary research involved analyzing the Cork 2005 program, a variety of published and unpublished documents, and some statistics produced by Cork 2005 Ltd. Key research questions driving all the data collection related to the cultural sector’s expectations of the ECOC, the nature of their engagement in the ECOC, the extent to

which involvement in the ECOC had affected their capacities, capabilities, and connections, and the extent to which the intervention of the ECOC could be seen to have generated legacies that might sustain into the future. The findings are discussed in the following sections.

Findings: What the ECOC Meant for Cork’s Cultural Sector

Within the cultural sector, the decision to bid for the ECOC was one that was met with undisputed enthusiasm and support, and the bid process itself was generally perceived as having been appropriately consultative. It was apparent from all of the interview data that the awarding of the designation was hugely well received by the city at large, with designation unleashing a swell of local pride and a general sense of “working together for the ‘betterment’ of Cork.” The designation heralded an unprecedented year of investment in the arts, with the total budget, including benefit-in-kind, being 21.6 million euro. Naturally, this was seen to hold great possibilities.

At the outset, cultural actors were asked about their hopes and aspirations for the city’s designation as ECOC and expectations as to what might be achieved were found to be very high. Prior to designation, the Cork Arts Development Committee (CADC), a sectoral representation group for the arts in the city that had been in existence since 1993, had produced a brief document outlining a set of ambitious aspirations that envisaged very substantial developmental potential (personal interview with J. Hanrahan, former Chairperson, Cork Arts Development Committee in 2006). CADC foresaw the ECOC designation acting as a “catalyst for the creative renewal of Cork’s civic culture” and envisaged a series of eleven “desired achievements of Cork 2005.”

The survey data showed that cultural organization’s expectations tended to include both a set of specific organizational objectives alongside a set of more general aspirations for the sector or city as a whole. As Table 1 illustrates, the former were most likely to be either to launch a new event/project that would continue to exist on a regular basis after the year had ended, or to develop audiences. The latter were to: develop stronger net-

Table 1
Cultural Organizations' Aspirations for the ECOC ($N = 33$)

Specific Aspirations	No. of Times Mentioned	General Aspirations	No. of Times Mentioned
1. Develop audiences	5	Develop stronger networks/cross-fertilize with other arts genre	11
2. Launch new annual/biannual event	5	Increase general level of engagement in/Increase accessibility of cultural activity	9
3. Network with other organizations	3	Heighten national and international awareness of city's cultural sector	3
4. Work with new artists/projects	2	Raise quality of productions being brought into Cork & raise expectations	3
5. Opportunity to commission work	2	Build partnerships with the business community	2
6. Advance organization's development	2	Reveal more of Cork's cultures	2
7. Raise organization's profile	2		

works with other cultural subsectors; increase general levels of interest and engagement in cultural activity; and increase the accessibility of the arts.

The research participants were asked a series of questions that probed how involvement in the ECOC cultural program made a difference to their organization. As Table 2 outlines, eight questions/issues were discussed and the ensuing data were analyzed and discussed below.

Strengthening Social Capital

At the outset, respondents were asked whether they thought the ECOC had created opportunities for learning. A minority (9) answered in the negative. These respondents represented the city's oldest, most established, and institutionalized organizations. These enjoy international reputations, have established extensive contacts, and are already very adept at what they do. For the majority (23), however, the ECOC Year constituted a learning

curve. In a minority of cases, the learning involved was creative (thinking laterally about future directions for their work), artistic (in terms of understanding more about their art form or working with a new art form), or cultural (learning more about the history of city). For those involved in outreach work, engagement with new collaborators from different sectors of society introduced them to new models of working. However, in the main, the learning acquired was management related. Respondents spoke of developing a range of skills in areas that included commissioning, negotiating, managing finances, communicating, networking, project planning, organizing work placements and exchanges, hosting premieres, and negotiating with suppliers. Several respondents ventured into new areas of activity, learned about different media, had an opportunity to experiment artistically but mostly they focused on taking their operations to an unprecedented scale. For 11 re-

Table 2
Building Social Capital, Capacity, and Well-Being in the Sector ($N = 33$)

Did Your Involvement in Cork 2005:	Yes	No	NA
Constitute a learning curve for your organization	23	9	1
Change attitudes towards your organization/activity	26	6	1
Introduce you to new influences	30	2	1
Result in new productions/exhibitions (etc.) that will now tour/have a tangible life	11	22	0
Result in anything that will turn into a regular production/event	19	5	9
Result in anything that will turn into a regular production/event if funds become available	5	0	28
Increase your organization's confidence	26	5	2
Increase your operational budgets	26	7	0

spondents, new learning opportunities lay in testing their capacity to devise and deliver a project and realizing that they could achieve in unprecedented fashion. In this way organizations came to recognize both their capabilities and their limits.

The ECOC designation represented tremendous potential for the city's cultural sector to network and collaborate, dialogue and cross-fertilize both with each other, with their equivalents elsewhere in Ireland and abroad, with other interest groups and organizations, and with the private sector. It was an opportunity to experiment with new partnerships, to think laterally, and to enable the arts unfold through new and diverse relationships. When cultural organizations were asked about their aspirations for the ECOC Year at the beginning of the survey, the desire to "develop stronger networks/cross fertilise with other arts genre" was mentioned by one third of the organizations. The data showed that 28 of the organizations surveyed developed new, sometimes multiple, linkages as a result of their involvement in the ECOC cultural program. A further 5 said that existing links with other Cork-based organizations were strengthened. A majority of these links were with other artists or cultural organizations and included collaborations, links with individual artists, invitations to undertake various projects and residencies, borrowing material, and hosting exhibitions on behalf of other organizations. There was also a significant amount of cross-sector interaction, especially locally and regionally. These included new links with the Port of Cork, the army, the Southern Health Board, various government agencies, schools, and a range of community and sociocultural groups.

The ECOC also constituted an unparalleled opportunity for the cultural sector to strengthen its underdeveloped connections with the city's commercial sector. Two questions in the survey explored this issue: respondents were asked whether their organizations had established any new commercial links as a result of their involvement in the ECOC, and whether they believed that these links would be maintained. The findings show that just less than half of the sample (16) answered "yes" to the first question. For 7 of these the "yes" response was qualified by criticism of how the sponsorship issue had been handled by Cork 2005

Ltd. Of the 17 who answered "no," a further 4 were similarly critical. Some respondents commented that "Cork 2005 did not help," arguing that the company's efforts to recruit and look after sponsors was at times inefficient, even unacceptable. When asked whether they thought that sponsorship links would be maintained, only 8 organizations responded "yes." This low response indicates that a certain degree of difficulty beset the sponsorship area.

Building Capacity

While one could argue that all cultural endeavors bring constant contact with new influences, involvement in the ECOC Year was very influential for many organizations in this respect. Some 30 respondents responded "yes" when asked had their involvement introduced them to new influences. Many organizations engaged with new ideas in the course of the Year. Manifestations of this process included: developing work for new audiences (e.g., children); working in interdisciplinary modes (e.g., pizza-making and Neapolitan songs); experimenting with new sorts of venues (e.g., outdoor locations), and with new sorts of delivery (e.g., workshops and symposia); and working with new forms of media (e.g., widescreen film).

Creating infrastructural improvements, developments, and/or expansions constitute one of the areas where previous ECOCs are said to have made a difference. In Cork, as already explained, the cultural program was complemented by a capital program, although many of the 28 capital projects associated with Cork's ECOC had in fact been under way in advance of the city's designation as ECOC 2005. As Palmer/Rae Associates (2004) put it "some of (these) coincide with but are not part of Cork 2005" (p. 174). Nevertheless, there are indications that the ECOC designation acted as a catalyst in "speeding up" or otherwise strengthening the progress of the city's capital program. It was responsible, for example, for a sooner than expected implementation of the three phases of the Cork Public Museum's expansion process (personal interview with S. Cherry, Curator, Cork Public Museum, in 2006) and of the city's main street regeneration project (personal interview

with J. Gavin, Cork City Manager, in 2006). In addition, while plans for new library developments were already under way, the architectural competition held as part of the ECOC cultural program raised its profile and generated greater publicity. Several cultural organizations, including the Everyman Palace, the Granary Theatre, the Triskel Arts Centre, and the Munster Literature Centre, also received investment prior to the Year for refurbishment and acquisition of new premises. Several respondents from these organizations did not attribute the investment received to ECOC designation, insisting that the investment in question had already been in the pipeline.

Thus, while no cultural organization considered itself to have acquired major infrastructural improvements as a result of the 2005 ECOC, 15 responding organizations stated that they experienced some form of infrastructural enhancement. As Table 3 shows, these included refurbishment and acquiring new premises, but it also involved new collaborative arrangements which saw cultural organizations gain access to different venues for the first time. These involved cultural organizations cooperating with other organizations in the sector, with commercial sponsors and with the City Council.

Table 3
Infrastructural Improvements Reported ($N = 35$)

Improvements	No. of Organizations
Infrastructural improvements reported	
Some improvement reported	15
No improvement reported	20
Type of improvements	
Access to existing building for first time in 2005	4
New outdoor locations made available and equipped	3
Move to new premises partially attributed to ECOC	3
New space available through sponsorship arrangement	2
Increase staff numbers because of increased funding	2
Improvements made to existing venue	2
Access to new venues through collaboration with other arts organizations	1
Improvement in institutional status	1
Other	1

The inauguration of cultural organizations/regular cultural productions/regular cultural events is one of the most prominent cultural outcomes historically associated with ECOCs (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004). The city's local authority, Cork City Council, an important source of funding for the cultural sector in the city demonstrably understood cultural legacy in this way. In the immediate aftermath of the Year it gave "legacy" grants of 50,000 euro to each of five cultural organizations. Four of the grants were intended to sustain the organization of cultural events (Cork's St. Patrick's Festival, Cork Folk Festival's C il  M r, Munster Literature Centre's Short Story Competition, and Meithal Mara's Ocean to City race). The fifth grant went to Opera 2005 Ltd. The first and last of these organizations were launched in 2005, while the other three organizations all launched the events mentioned during that year.

At the individual organizational level, the study found that 19 respondents planned to continue activities instigated in 2005 as regular occurrences into 2006 and beyond. A further 5 planned to do so if funding became available. Thus, were funding to become available, 24 of the 33 participating organizations planned to translate their ECOC project into regular features of the city's cultural landscape. As Table 4 illustrates, half of these organizations (12) want to continue to produce an event first hosted in 2005. Two of these are event organizations that were established in 2005. The remainder are established organizations drawn

Table 4
Continuing Activities Instigated During 2005 ECOC ($N = 24$)

Following Through on Activities	No. of Responses
Incorporate into regular activities: greater effort to commission work; a programming element launched in 2005; engage more in radio work; experiment with workshops; develop outreach programs; undertake more schools events; develop 2005 project "sideways" into another related creative area	8
Continue international collaborative relationships developed for first time in 2005	4
Continue an event(s) launched in 2005	12

from a diversity of subsectors including film, non-site-specific theater, live art, and literature. For a further 8 organizations, their ambitions entail expanding/developing their work in a number of new directions based on their experiences in 2005. The specific directions are detailed in Table 4. In terms of actual cultural production, 11 respondents said that the work that they created and produced for the ECOC cultural program would have a tangible life beyond the extent of the Year itself. In the case of 5 organizations, project work was now going to tour. A further 2 said that it would have toured, had the finances been in place to support it. Other respondents adapted the survey question to their own specific circumstances and explained that films produced would be shown again, book publishing deals had been signed, book reviews were still appearing, television documentaries/programs made had yet to appear or had the potential of being reshowed.

Enhancing a Sense of Well-Being

It was clear that the funding made available by Cork 2005 Ltd. enabled many cultural organizations to “dream” and to expand their creative horizons. Having managed to stage productions and implement projects on an unprecedented scale, many organizations spoke of now having a “track record” that should assist them in moving forward. Key informants and survey respondents spoke about the ECOC Year creating “a sense of empowerment” within the sector, and about it bringing the arts and culture more centrally into the life of the city. As one informant said, the ECOC “gives a legitimacy to talk about the arts” and this was certainly the case.

Not surprisingly, when asked whether their involvement in the Year had increased their organization’s confidence, 26 responded “yes,” while just 5 responded “no.” Again, 3 of the latter group were among the more established organizations in the city and were already confident of their own abilities. For a majority, however, successfully rising to the challenge of mounting a project of unprecedented proportions encouraged people to appreciate their own capabilities. This was a key theme. Several organizations believed that subsequent to their achievements in 2005, they now had

a proven “track record.” For some organizations like the Cork Public Museum and the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery this means that borrowing collections from leading international institutions will now be much less problematic in the future. For some arts organizations it means that forging international partnerships will be easier in the future. For others, the hope is that the case for increased funding at city and national level can now be made more successfully.

Equally important was the fact that a majority of respondents (26) thought that their involvement in the ECOC Year had changed other people’s attitudes to their work. Without exception, the change in attitudes engendered was affirmative and generally speaking it related to increased profile. Five organizations attributed a heightened status in the eyes of their international peers, and an increase in international profile to their involvement in the Year. For 7 organizations, involvement affected a positive shift in audiences’ attitudes towards their work. Respondents explained how audiences now had a better understanding of what they were about; a minority had now established a name for themselves as being associated with a specific (usually very specific) art form; 2 organizations believed that a previously negative/inaccurate public perception of their work had been corrected.

The ECOC Year also exposed the work of cultural organizations to unprecedented audiences. Representatives of Cork 2005 Ltd. contended that the ECOC drew audiences in excess of 1 million, while a study later commissioned by the city council on the tourism effects of the ECOC put the figure at 1.1 million (Maloney, 2006). Certainly, at the start of the Year there was immense public interest in participating. The opening ceremony attracted enormous interest, greater than had been anticipated, and locally based newspapers spent weeks discussing how local demand for tickets could not be accommodated. At the organizational level, it proved difficult to gather accurate audience data. Of the 33 cultural organizations surveyed, 4 respondents were not in a position to compare, as they had not been in existence prior to 2005. Of the remaining 29, all claimed to have experienced an increase in audience numbers relative to previous years. However, only 8 of these

were able to give percentage increases. These ranged from 14% to 200%. In general, organizations did not have very in-depth information on their audiences and few regularly undertook comprehensive audience analyses, or pursued strategic audience development strategies. Thus, they were not in a position to comment in any detail on the effect, if any, the ECOC had had on their audience profile.

Cork 2005: "Event" or "Process"

The findings reported here suggest that the cultural sector in Cork city benefited in a multitude of ways from engagement in the cultural program of Cork's ECOC Year. The event's emerging legacies can be seen in the strengthened social capital, heightened capacity, and the improvements in the overall sense of empowerment or well-being within the sector. However, no outstandingly obvious cultural legacies were produced (there were no new theaters, no new cultural quarters, etc.) and several of the study's participants considered this to constitute a failure on Cork's part. Indeed, several participants suggested that had the ECOC simply been replaced by an equivalent injection of financial investment, then the outcomes might have been similar. The question of postevent cultural legacy is a complicated issue that remains underresearched in the literature. Frequently, cities previously designated as ECOCs have been criticized for a failure to both build and sustain legacies into the future (Deffner & Labrianidis, 2005; García, 2005; Richards, 2000). The reasons underpinning recurring difficulties in this regard are far from clear and the following section explores this issue in the case of Cork 2005.

Previous cities of culture have adopted a variety of approaches to treating the ECOC as an "event," or as a "vehicle for process" (i.e., for stimulating developments that will continue to have an effect beyond the life time of the event itself). According to Palmer/Rae Associates (2004), the former is typically characterized by a breadth of scale in terms of the number of projects, sectors, and interests represented. The latter, meanwhile, is preoccupied with thinking beyond the time boundaries of the event itself to ways of developing creative ideas, synergies, linkages, net-

works, etc., into the future. It can be argued that the idea of cultivating process was central to the original concept of the ECOC. As Cogliandro (2001) explained, "a Cultural Capital year was not supposed to be viewed exclusively as a festival. Instead, dialogues, discussions, seminars and public participation were essential elements for broadening debate and knowledge of cultural life and of the culture of Europe" (p. 12).

In Cork, it appears that some attempt was made to adopt both "event" and "process" approaches simultaneously. The organizers of the 2005 ECOC certainly aimed to create an "event": Cork 2005 Ltd. developed a cultural program that was extensive in scale (244 events), in breadth (from live art to historical paintings, boat races to architecture), in length (January 8, 2005–March 2006), and in diversity (e.g., public fireworks, knitting, community film-making, intellectual, cutting-edge practitioner-only forums). At the same time, it claimed a preoccupation with creating outcomes that would foster development in the cultural sector long after 2005. The theme selected for the Year, "Cork: City of Making" implicitly infers legacy. A key statement from Cork 2005's Director John Kennedy, (Cork 2005 Ltd., 2005) clearly pointed to the importance attached to process: "We have developed a programme that not only entertains and challenges but also lays the foundations for future collaborations and new friendships leading to new networks. 2006, 2007, 2008 and the years beyond are as important to us as 2005" (p. vii). Later, in August 2005, an Interim Report produced by Cork 2005 for the EU made the following bold assertion: "All objective criteria will prove that the Designation has had a huge effect on the cultural, social and tourist life of Cork. As a result of this Designation, the City of Cork is in a different place, both in terms of culture and in terms of ambition" (p. xx).

The study identified some specific instances of practice where process work was clearly prioritized. In several programming areas (e.g., film-making and poetry) and in the Culture and Community strand, there was much evidence of "building blocks" being laid in discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary endeavors. These included new work placement schemes, artist-in-residence schemes, new collaborations and connections that led to

subsequent invitations to partner and collaborate, training workshops, and learning forum. These processes were led by individual cultural actors or organizations, often working with the support of a project manager and often in partnership with other cultural actors from elsewhere in Ireland or abroad. These resulted in a strengthening and development of cultural practices in a myriad of ways for individual cultural organizations.

One particularly important, and generally very effective, form of support came in the guise of the Project Manager role. Each program strand developed by the Cork 2005 Ltd. programming team was managed by a Project Manager with an expertise in the arts genre concerned. The Project Manager was a consistent source of expert advice, support, and back up for individual project partners (i.e., cultural actors/organizations). While the remit of the project manager may initially have been to provide expert advice in the specific art form, the reality was that they often supported project partners in numerous ways that far exceeded artistic advice. In general, the Project Manager was viewed as an excellent resource by the arts organizations and artists studied. In terms of strengthening capabilities, this was a key intervention into the cultural sector. While all of these positions were disbanded at the close of the year, the Project Manager for the Culture and Health strand of the program assumed a new position, that of Arts and Health Coordinator for the Public Health Authority in the Cork area [Health Services Executive (HSE) Southern Area]. In 2006, the Arts and Health Coordinator organized a Culture and Health Forum in the city and developed a database of artists that work in the health area. The link between Cork 2005 Ltd. and the HSE had been strong throughout the event. The budget for the Culture and Health strand was sourced differently to that for the remainder of the Cork 2005 program, coming directly from the Irish Government's Department of Health, and the strand had been delivered in partnership by the HSE and Cork 2005. The former had been exploring the idea of developing culture in the context of health settings prior to 2005 and the advent of the Year represented an opportunity to advance this work (White, 2006).

However, while an emphasis on process was

apparent in the vision documented in Cork 2005 Ltd.'s publications, and its operationalization in practice was evident in the ways discussed above, overall, Cork's ECOC was primarily an event rather than a vehicle for process. Early in the data collection process, interviews with the Director and programming team produced assertions that demphasized the importance of process so prominent in the Cork 2005 Ltd.'s publications. In effect, their comments relegated process into second place behind "allowing things to happen" and "putting an event together." Subsequently, the survey findings repeatedly showed participants critiquing Cork 2005 Ltd., for inadequately shaping a creative vision for the Year and for failing to develop a coherent artistic framework to guide individual artistic contributions (from individuals and organizations). Survey respondents repeatedly spoke of operating within a context devoid of any overarching vision. Several spoke of having little sense that their work was contributing, in a planned way, to a bigger whole. This absence of vision was reiterated by members of Cork 2005 Ltd.'s programming team and Board of Directors during the course of key informant interviews. Several participants also argued that the efforts of individual contributors could have been harnessed more effectively by Cork 2005 Ltd. Some respondents argued that their organization's existing resources could have been put to better use by what was, after all, a new and temporary organization. For example, some cultural organizations claimed to have more extensive databases than Cork 2005 Ltd. and argued that these could have been better used. Others had diverse additional resources (e.g., expertise, mailing lists, access to contacts, knowledge of EU affairs, etc.) that could have been placed at the disposal of Cork 2005 Ltd. Furthermore, it was clear that the program planning process had not sought to make direct links with the city's existing arts plan. The City Arts Officer sat on the Board of Directors yet, according to both the Director (personal interview with J. Kennedy in 2006) and the City Arts Officer (personal interview with L. Meaney in 2006), the existing arts plan was not explored as a means of identifying targets towards which the intervention of Cork 2005 might work to achieve.

The apparent contradiction between the rhetoric

of process and the reality of staging the event is further evident in the ways in which Cork 2005 Ltd. supported individual artists and cultural organizations. From the outset it insisted that it was not a funding agency. This was clear from both its published material and from interview data. When the company announced its public call for program submissions in April 2003 it stated that it could “offer project proposers promotion and marketing, networking and creative partnerships, financial investment, advice and project management as well as technical management.” It was therefore surprising that when asked to explain what support they ultimately received, all study participants acknowledged receiving funding, but 19 claimed to have received only funding. The financial support of Cork 2005 Ltd. was critical: it meant increased operational budgets for 26 survey respondents, leading a number of respondents to argue that the main achievement of Cork’s ECOC was to go some way towards redressing years of inadequate subvention for the cultural sector in the city. However, the range of other supports initially intended to compliment the financial investments were found to be much less in evidence than might have been expected.

According to the data gathered, supports from Cork 2005 Ltd., with the exception of funding, were either modestly or problematically acknowledged by respondents. Only four organizations spontaneously acknowledged valuable support received in areas including project management, “back up support,” “advice,” “sharing resources,” and “brokering deals” with venue/collaborating partners. Beyond this, the nature of support received was critiqued. The supports made available to develop collaboration and networking was a case in point. Building networks and collaborating with new partners had been a core aspiration among cultural actors at the outset of the ECOC Year. However, the ways in which collaboration was proactively fostered by Cork 2005 Ltd. were critiqued with some respondents pointing to a lack of funding to maintain the links during the course of the ECOC Year and others suggesting that the allocation of funding could have been more carefully structured so as to actively encourage greater collaboration between individuals and organizations. Marketing and communication supports

were found to be equally problematic. Just six respondents acknowledged receiving marketing and communication support in terms of advertising on Cork 2005 Ltd.’s website, using the Cork 2005 logo and securing press coverage. Of these six, four respondents critiqued the support received for being either insufficient or ineffective.

Sustaining Legacies Into the Future?

All of the above evidence points to Cork’s ECOC being more about staging an event than about functioning as a vehicle for process. The study’s data identified as problematic the absence of a clear vision and the lack of a strategic framework setting out a coherent rationale for engagement in the cultural program. Respondents suggested that there had been an inadequate harnessing of existing cultural resources. In addition, there was a general lack of referencing to the city’s existing arts plan in terms of conceiving of the ECOC as a vehicle for tackling existing challenges and furthering existing goals. Equally, despite an initial insistence that it would not be a funding agency, Cork 2005 Ltd. appears to have been largely that. Given that Cork 2005 Ltd., the organization established to direct and manage the ECOC Year was disbanded in 2006, the question of what agency would now assume responsibility for continuing to support those developments begun and bolstered during the ECOC year was prominent in respondents’ thoughts.

Discussions with study participants in Cork about potential ways of sustaining cultural production into the future always focused on funding. Furthermore, funding was overwhelmingly equated with the public sector. This is not surprising, given that the cultural sector in Cork, as in Ireland generally, is heavily dependent on public subvention for its survival. When respondents were asked for their views as to which agencies were responsible for following through on the legacy of the ECOC, they were very likely to attribute responsibility to the public sector. Nineteen respondents mentioned Cork City Council in this regard, 10 mentioned the Arts Council, or the national government’s Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, while a further 4 mentioned public tourism agencies. In contrast, the phrase “the private sector” was men-

tioned only once. Cork City Chamber of Commerce/the Enterprise Board/Cork City Challenge (all organizations representing/comprising private sector interests) were mentioned three times, while a further three respondents mentioned “all sectors in the city.”

These findings show that there is much scope for raising the cultural sector’s awareness of the possibilities and potentials involved in developing relationships with the private sector. To some extent, the ECOC Year had the positive effect of bolstering links between the two. A number of major sponsors emerged and commercial sponsorship of the arts was unprecedented in the city in 2005. One notable example of public–private partnership that has continued beyond 2005 involved a privately owned, prime location space becoming available to the city’s pivotal arts center. However, cultivating public–private partnerships like this is a difficult task, especially given that the commercial sector does not feature very significantly in the mindset of a sizeable minority of the cultural organizations studied. The study found that ten of the organizations surveyed either don’t engage with commercial sponsors or do so only on a very modest basis. Undoubtedly also, some opportunities were lost in the course of the Year. A small number of respondents argued that Cork 2005 Ltd. did not look after its sponsors as well as it might have done. In consequence, they reported either not being able to approach companies or being refused sponsorship in 2006. Further critique was leveled at the way in which Cork 2005 Ltd. had a policy of controlling the process of recruiting sponsors. Several respondents argued that this represented a wasted opportunity, having the effect of impeding individual organizations from developing what might have been fruitful, long-term relationships.

Given these findings, the critical task of sustaining the legacies that were identified beyond the duration of the Year remains a substantial challenge. In general, the ECOC constituted an undoubted boost for the cultural sector in Cork, although the boost was not as spectacular as the cultural actors studied had initially hoped. Cork City Council, which established Cork 2005 Ltd, remains a critical public funder of the arts in the city. As already mentioned, it allocated “legacy

grants” to five cultural organizations as a specific contribution to sustaining legacy. Four of these grants went to the hosting of events in the city. The fifth company, Opera 2005, cancelled all productions in 2009 because the National Arts Council ceased to fund it (www.independent.ie). Some commentators (e.g., Kilroy, the Arts Editor of the city’s main newspaper, the *Cork Examiner*) were critical that the Council had not seen fit to invest more substantially in the city’s cultural infrastructure to mark the ECOC Year. However, as is argued elsewhere, the strongly contested agendas that regularly get played out in ECOC designated cities (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004) were strongly in evidence in Cork in 2005 (O’Callaghan & Lenihan, 2007). It seems reasonable to argue that while the city’s cultural sector welcomed the event with enthusiasm because they saw the potential contribution it could make to furthering arts and cultural agendas in the city, other driving interests in the city prized it for its place promotional value. The unambiguous prioritization of events, as distinct from other cultural organizations with regular, year-round cultural programs, in the allocation of post ECOC “legacy grants” by Cork City Council supports this argument.

In the immediate aftermath of the Year, the question of sustaining processes and emerging legacies was foremost in the minds of many of the study’s participants. However, for some, there was also the sense that the intervention of the ECOC into the regular workings of the cultural sector had amounted to disruption and had created a certain amount of strain and pressure. Two of the organizations surveyed admitted to being in debt in the aftermath of the year and a further one admitted to being in crisis and unsure of which direction to take in the future. Several others admitted to being “exhausted” and “burned out” after a year in which cultural organizations had worked extremely hard and had experienced a certain amount of stress and tension. These were now trying to recover and to reharvest energies.

All of the research participants, without exception, had aired critical views on some aspects of the 2005 ECOC. In many ways this was inevitable. Palmer/Rae Associates (2004) spoke about the “controversies that plagued almost every ECOC in relation to its cultural programme” (p. 71). They

went on to say that all ECOC designated cities experienced resistance from groups (e.g., artists, cultural organizations, subcultures) that had difficulty identifying with the choices made. Cork 2005 was no exception. In the Cork context, one of the programmers (personal interview with T. McCarthy in 2006) astutely distinguished between “the permanent city” that had bid for the designation and “the interim and contrived city” that had delivered it. The Cork 2005 organization was a temporary entity central to this interim city. Its composition, its way of working, and its decision-making were perhaps always going to be open to criticism from the city’s deeply embedded, established cultural sector. Thus, there is an extent to which a city must be able to survive the hosting of an ECOC.

Conclusion

The study reported here focuses on furthering understandings of what constitutes cultural legacy in the context of the major cultural event that is the ECOC. It suggests that legacies can be identified in terms of contributions to social capital, capacity building and the enhancement of well-being within a city’s cultural sector. The empirical findings reported here suggest that the ECOC had a role to play in boosting the cultural sector in all of these ways, although the overall outcomes manifest were relatively modest. They further emphasize that in the absence of a clearly thought-out and effectively operationalized approach to developing the “process” potential of the ECOC, the overall experience may result in what Deffner and Labrianidis (2005) describe as “missed opportunities.” The experience of Cork 2005 falls into this category. García (2004) argues that “most urban regeneration processes linked to major events, even with significant arts elements, do not provide a proper basis for the development of sustainable arts programming” (p. 103). Elsewhere García (2005) argues that “it is misleading to suggest that the ECOC offers a good strategic and operational basis for culture-led regeneration” (p. 863), while Richards (2000) argued that it often fails to consider ways of sustaining developments initiated in the course of the year. The empirical data presented here strongly support these points.

At this stage it seems obvious to conclude that in the midst of competing calls for broader urban regeneration outcomes, the relative weighting attached to achieving cultural outcomes (e.g., developing cultural infrastructures, strengthening capacities and capabilities within the cultural sector) is clearly problematic. However, there are other issues: while tremendous media hype can accompany the competition for designation and the hosting of the ECOC Year itself, general expectations as to what an ECOC can deliver can be overly ambitious. It is often forgotten, for example, in the oft cited case of Glasgow, ECOC 1990, that the city’s involvement in the ECOC was but one of a series of cultural event-related investments that had been ongoing since the early 1980s (Quinn, 2005). Thus, there had already been a certain amount of preparatory work underpinning the construction of this event. In the Cork case, the Culture and Health strand was deemed by research participants to have been particularly successful. As already explained, this area of programming was in effect the continuation of a series of inter-agency collaborations that had been on-going for some time prior to the ECOC Year. This fact contributed in no small measure to the strand’s success in 2005.

Another issue of note is the fact that the cities open to designation as ECOCs are not Europe’s leading cities in terms of either size or cultural resources (Labrianidis & Deffner, 2000). Rather, the initiative is intended to reveal and celebrate the cultural riches of cities with relatively lower international profiles. In the case of Cork, the designation went to a small city with a relatively under-endowed cultural sector. While the ECOC benefited many of the cultural organizations in the city it simultaneously revealed many of their shortcomings. Evident, for example, was a lack of knowledge about audience bases, unfamiliarity with the opportunities afforded by the tourism potential of the event, a lack of experience and even of openness to the idea working with the private sector, a lack of resources in terms of staffing, income sources, and infrastructural resources more generally. This was the less than perfect reality in which the 2005 ECOC event made its temporary home. In such cases, it may be that generating a multitude of small-scale legacies is more benefi-

cial than achieving fewer, grandiose outcomes. The relative merits of different outcomes in different city contexts, remains a question for further research.

The difficulties discussed here are by no means unique to the Irish case. The ECOC has been in existence for more than 20 years now, and while its longevity attests to its popularity it has generated controversy in recent years. To no small extent the controversy it engenders is related to the spectacular aspirations that ECOC designation inspires for cultural sectors that can be insufficiently supported, in a variety of ways, to realize. Located within the contested ECOC agendas that other researchers have emphasized, the needs of the cultural sector can be ill-thought through or even overlooked by the powerful interest groups behind the event. This is clear from the extent to which host cities often rush to garner data on tourism arrivals to measure the success of the event. Researchers interested in examining the ECOC from a cultural sector perspective have many issues to explore. Core among these include: investigating how the needs of the cultural sector might be more clearly acknowledged and managed amidst competing calls from other stakeholders and; how tensions/compromises attend the competing agendas that seek to capitalize on the ECOC's process/event potential.

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