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## **The European Cultural Capital Event: Strategic Weapon in the Cultural Arms Race?**

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### **Abstract**

The European Cultural Capital Event has become a much sought after distinction for cities seeking to attract cultural visitors. The event has developed beyond its mainly cultural origins to form an important part of urban economic and cultural reconstruction strategies for deindustrialising cities in Europe. This article reviews the history and development of the event, and analyses the extent to which cultural events have been successful in stimulating economic development. Although there is abundant evidence of short-term increases in visitor numbers and spending, there is inconclusive evidence for longer-term benefits.

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### **Abstract**

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## **Introduction**

The rapid growth of cultural events and festivals in recent years can at least partly be attributed to the increasing use of cultural events as a means of stimulating economic development or improving the image of cities to attract inward investment (Roche, 1992). In some cases this has even led to the adoption of event-led economic regeneration policies, in which attracting major cultural or sporting events becomes crucial for the city concerned. Just how important cultural events can be is demonstrated by the evolution of the European Cultural Capital event sponsored by the European Union (EU).

The European Cultural Capital event has developed over the years from an 'extended summer festival' to a year-long focus for artistic and economic development (Richards, 1996). The event has become so popular with policy-makers that bids to stage the event have taken on the same kind of competitive element only usually seen for the Olympic Games nomination. The contest to hold the European Cultural Capital event for the year 2000 was so strong that the Culture Ministers of the European Union couldn't decide - they awarded the event to all nine applicant cities. Even after the Millennium the desire to stage the event remains so strong that the event will be shared by two cities a year until 2004.

This paper seeks to understand why the Cultural Capital event has become such a popular element of urban cultural and economic policy. An analysis of the history of the event underlines the shifting policy emphasis of the Cultural Capital away from cultural towards economic and urban regeneration goals. This in turn has led to a change in the way in which the success of the event is evaluated in policy terms. This article assesses the extent to which the Cultural Capital event can contribute to attracting the mobile consumer.

## **The Origins and Development of the Cultural Capital Event**

The origins of the Cultural Capital event were arguably purely cultural. The idea for the event was put forward in 1983 by Melina Mercouri, the then Greek Minister for Culture. The event was designed to 'help bring the peoples of the member states closer together' through the 'expression of a culture which, in its historical emergence and contemporary development, is characterized by having both common elements and a richness born of diversity' (European Commission, 1985). Not surprisingly, in view of the fact that the proposal came from Greece, Athens was designated the first Cultural Capital in 1985. Since then, the event has rotated around the member states of the EU, with a different city being awarded the honour every year. The aims of the event were basically twofold: first to make the culture of the cities accessible to a European audience, and second to create a picture of European culture as a whole (Corijn and Van Praet, 1994). However, as the event has developed, it has been used in different ways by the cities, either to support, extend or challenge the original Cultural Capital concept. Figure 1 illustrates the development of the event from its origins as a cultural festival to an integrated cultural capital programme, at least according to the planners of the Copenhagen event (1996).

Corijn and Van Praet (1994), in their review of the history of the Cultural Capitals, highlight the way in which different cities treated the designation. Athens, for example, concentrated on big foreign names, and ignored ancient Greek art. Florence highlighted its own historic importance, while Amsterdam projected itself as a European art city. Berlin was criticized for having an elitist approach, while the event was hardly visible among the normal cultural bustle of Paris. The common feature of all these cities was that they were already established European 'Cultural Capitals', identified by Bianchini and Parkinson (1993) as having a wealth of cultural facilities.

The turning point for the Cultural Capital event came with the designation of Glasgow in 1990. Glasgow, unlike its predecessors, was not a capital city or one of the established 'cultural destinations' of Europe (Van der Borg, 1994). Glasgow won the nomination against competition from other British cities largely on the basis of promised commercial sponsorship and the fact that it planned to use the event to stimulate urban regeneration and to boost the image of Glasgow as a cultural city. This approach apparently fitted the UK government's emphasis on public-private sector partnership, although the role of the public sector was eventually more high-profile than the government cared to admit (Todd, 1988).

The Glasgow event had an impressive range of cultural activities, including big names such as Pavarotti, and an equally impressive budget. The argument for this approach was that the investment would be repaid directly through tourist expenditure, and indirectly through improvements in the image of the city and increased economic investment. The staging of an event concentrating on international, rather than local, culture aroused opposition from some local groups, who felt either that the money could have been better spent on basic services such as housing, or that the event should have been more culturally representative of Glasgow itself (Boyle and Hughes, 1990). The event was judged an economic success, however, producing a net economic benefit to the city of between £32 and £37 million (40 - 47 million EURO), mainly as a result of tourist expenditure (Myerscough, 1991).

Since Glasgow, many of the cities nominated for the Cultural Capital designation have also been 'non-traditional' cultural centres, such as Antwerp, Thessaloniki, Bergen, Reikjavik, Rotterdam, Porto, Genoa and Lille. The entry of such deindustrialising cities into the Cultural Capital event has also tended to emphasise the economic as well as the cultural aspects of the event. This change can be linked to the growing importance of culture as a source of economic development and growth. As Table 1 shows, the economic investment in the Cultural Capital event has grown significantly since the event began, and particularly since 1990. Although as Myerscough (1991) emphasises it is difficult to compare budgets for the event between one year and the next, the overall trend is clearly upwards. Arguably this reflects the much wider role given to the event as an economic as well as a cultural policy vehicle. Larger financial investments in the event are justified largely by the economic returns it is expected to generate, rather than the cultural benefits the event may produce.

As the developed world shifts from a production-based to a consumption-based economy, cities are increasingly realising that they have to attract an increasingly mobile consuming public in order to support the local economy. Culture is beginning to play a crucial role in this process, since it is arguably culture which distinguishes one place from another, and gives the consumer a reason to visit a particular location. Thus cultural development strategies have become important not just in the established 'cultural capitals', such as London and Paris, but also in 'culturally deprived' cities such as Glasgow and Bilbao (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993). In particular such 'de-industrialising cities' are beginning to develop event-led cultural and economic policies, which usually revolve around attracting 'mega-events', such as the European Cultural Capital event (Roche, 1992). This shift towards a more economic view of cultural policy is also arguably part of a wider shift in public policy goals in the leisure arena away from welfare aims towards economic growth and the attraction of inward investment (Henry, 1993, Richards, 1995).

As Bianchini (1999) argues in the context of European cultural policy, the cultural policy orientation of cities has seen a similar change in emphasis. The post war 'age of reconstruction' (late 1940s to late 1960s) was marked by urban cultural policies aimed at expanding the traditional 'high culture' infrastructure and widening access to culture through public subsidy. The subsequent 'age of participation' (1970s and early 1980s) was marked by stimulation of 'grassroots' popular culture, often in response to the critique of reconstructionist planning and attempting to address the increasing social problems evident in European cities. In the current 'age of city marketing' (mid 1980s to present) concern shifted away from the socio-political concerns of the 1970s towards economic development and urban regeneration policies. Attention shifted back to city centres, which became backdrops for the project of attractive urban images and essential weapons in the competition for economic growth. Bianchini (1999) argues that the impact of these policies on wealth and employment creation was relatively small. 'The main contribution of cultural policies to urban regeneration was probably in the construction of urban images able to attract visitors'. This type of cultural policy orientation was most prevalent among 'declining industrial cities' which needed to shift the base of their economies from production to consumption in order to replace lost employment opportunities. This arguably explains the growing popularity of the Cultural Capital event as a policy tool in such cities, which view the event as a unique opportunity to profile themselves on the global stage.

The policy shift from reconstruction to city marketing in cultural policy can help to explain the development and diffusion of the Cultural Capital event. The question remains, however, to what extent the aims of the European Commission in creating the event, and the city leaders in bidding for the event are being met. The shift away from the high cultural ideals of the original creators of the event has been underlined by Corijn and Van Praet (1993). The question of whether the Cultural Capital event is an effective means of harnessing culture for economic goals has not been systematically addressed, however. This article first examines the theoretical relationships between 'new style' urban cultural policies and cultural production and consumption. It then goes on to analyse the effectiveness of the Cultural Capital event in the current

'age of city marketing', and the extent to which the event has been successful in harnessing the mobile postmodern consumer to support culture.

### **The Cultural Economy and the Cathedrals of Consumption**

The attempt by policy makers to '(re)valorize place through its cultural identity' in the face of increasing globalisation and economic integration is conceptualised by Ray (1998) as the 'culture economy' approach to development. The idea of a culture economy stems from three sources: the changing nature of post-industrial, consumer capitalism; economic development policies and the growth of regionalism as a global phenomenon. Culture has become a crucial resource in the post-industrial economy, as reflected in the use of cultural heritage in the development strategies of the European Union and other bodies, and culture is increasingly used by regions as a means of preserving their cultural identity and developing their 'socio-economic vibrancy' (Ray, 1998:5).

However, the attempts by regions to develop their local knowledge as a form of 'intellectual property' and cultural competitive advantage is threatened by the tendency for such local knowledge to become incorporated into global systems of value creation. The consumer society is constantly searching for signs and symbols to valorise into commodities. As George Ritzer (1999) has argued, modern consumer society is characterised by a concentration on the 'means of consumption', which are stimulated in a 'dizzying proliferation of settings' which he terms the 'cathedrals of consumption'. The cathedrals of consumption include fast food restaurants, department stores, shopping malls, casinos, theme parks and 'eatertainment'. The cathedrals of consumption

have an enchanted, sometimes even sacred, religious character for many people. In order to attract ever-larger numbers of consumers, such cathedrals of consumption need to offer, or at least appear to offer, increasingly magical, fantastic, and enchanted settings in which to consume (p8).

The modern need for 'enchantment' is increasingly being met by culture, which is woven into the cathedrals of consumption through theming and storytelling – linking the local knowledge identified by Ray with the cultural needs of the global consumer (Gottdiener, 1996). The problem facing the cultural policy makers, therefore, is how to valorise the cultural value of local knowledge while at the same time protecting their intellectual property rights which give value to the specific location.

As Zukin (1996:268) points out, 'In materialistic terms, emphasizing culture is a concerted attempt to exploit the uniqueness of fixed capital - monuments, art collections, performance spaces, even shopping streets - accumulated over the past. In this sense, culture is the sum of a city's amenities that enable it to compete for investment and jobs, its "comparative advantage"'. Because such cultural capital is fixed, the consumer must be brought to the point of consumption. Attracting consumers therefore becomes one of the most important aspects of cultural development strategies. This applies even more strongly to economically deprived areas, since consumers with high spending power generally have to be attracted from elsewhere to stimulate the economy. This was very clear in the case of the Glasgow event, which specifically targeted high income consumers from the South East of England, much to the annoyance of some local people (Boyle and Hughes, 1990).

In many cities, the aim of attracting visitors appears to have been achieved. In the case of the Cultural Capital event visitor numbers have shown significant growth during the cultural year itself, with increased visitor numbers of 12% in Copenhagen (1996) and Stockholm (1998), and a claimed threefold increase in the case of Antwerp (1993). The cultural visitor, or cultural tourist has therefore become central to the success of cultural development strategies in general and to the Cultural Capital event in particular. As Bendixen (1998) points out, cultural tourism is a 'booming industry', which is thought to attract high spending, 'high quality' tourists. The number of tourists attracted is often one of the key indicators used to judge the success or otherwise of the event. But what is it that attracts tourists to particular sites in search of culture? There is a tendency for local policy makers to assume that since every city has its own unique culture, this must be attractive to tourists.

Recent research conducted by the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS), however, has indicated that cities vary considerably in their ability to attract and support cultural tourism (Richards, 1998). From a theoretical perspective, the attractiveness of cities for cultural tourism depends not only on the cultural resources of that city, but also on the cultural competence of the visitors.

Bourdieu (1984:2) argues that in order to understand or appreciate cultural products, people must attain the cultural competence, or capital, which allows them to recognize and interpret those products: 'a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded'. Cultural competence, or capital, is generated through upbringing, education and other forms of socialization. The possession of cultural capital is demonstrated through consumption, and those forms of consumption in turn act as a form of distinction, which can define both the individual and membership of a specific social group.

Harvey (1989) contends that cultural capital is not only developed by individuals, but is also an attribute of place. In order to attract investment capital and the spending power of the middle class, regions now differentiate themselves by emphasising the aesthetic qualities of material commodities and services which represent symbolic capital. Examples of this can be found in the trend toward establishing cultural facilities as part of an economic development strategy (Gratton and Richards, 1996). Extending Harvey's argument, Zukin (1991:28) regards culture as 'both the property of cultured people and a general way of life', and that while culture in the former sense is a mark of distinction, as suggested by Bourdieu, in the latter sense culture constitutes 'an inalienable product of place'. The cultural products of place are in effect a physical form of cultural capital ('real cultural capital'), which Zukin contends is just as important as symbolic forms of cultural capital. The desire for individuals to increase their own cultural capital through consumption, and the development of 'real cultural capital' by specific places are linked in what Zukin terms the 'symbolic production system'.

In the symbolic production system culture is therefore treated as a form of capital. As Bendixen (1988: 22-23) explains:

To an economist, a monetary explication of cultural capital would be considered necessary, apparently because pieces of cultural capital (castles, cathedrals, quaint sites of old towns, museums, theatres or festivals) once needed physical and monetary resources and should therefore be seen as some kind of public investment, representing capital in the economic sense of the term.

Taking the economic argument further, he suggests, an economic purist can argue that the maintenance costs of such cultural facilities should be covered by entrance fees charged to visitors. Cultural tourism rapidly emerges as the means of supporting or extending the stock of real cultural capital in different localities.

The presence of real cultural capital will also provide opportunities for the 'new producers' or 'new cultural intermediaries' to develop products for cultural consumption. These groups generally have high levels of cultural capital, but relatively low levels of economic capital. The new producers therefore seek to improve their economic position by exploiting the real cultural capital of specific locations to generate economic gain (Zukin, 1996). Attempts by the new producers to increase the economic value of locations with high levels of real cultural capital are often at the base of the development of new cultural quarters, or the cultural development policies of whole cities or regions, as Zukin (1996) has demonstrated in New York, and O'Connor and Wynne (1993) have demonstrated in Manchester. In the UK, this type of strategy has been suggested at national level by the Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, in his plea for the development of the 'Creative Industries' (Smith, 1998).

The success of such strategies has come to rely heavily on cultural tourism to deliver the visitors required to finance the system. In the increasingly competitive struggle to attract high spending cultural tourists, high profile events such as the European Cultural Capital event have been seen as decisive weapons. The effectiveness of such event-led policies is far from clear, however (Roche, 1992; Brouwer, 1993). This article analyses the consumption and production of cultural tourism in Europe, and the effectiveness of the Cultural Capital event as a means of developing the symbolic production system of the host cities.

### **Cultural Consumers**

In line with Ray's (1998) arguments about the growth of the culture economy, cultural tourism has become one of the mainstays of European Union economic development policy and tourism policy (Richards, 1996). In order to study this development, the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) launched its Cultural Tourism Research Project in 1992. Initially funded by DGXXIII of the European Commission (now the Enterprise Directorate), the project set out to analyse the cultural tourism market in Europe, and to develop a profile of the European cultural tourist. Reports of the initial phase of the research have been published elsewhere (Richards, 1996a;1996b). A major feature of the research programme was a survey of visitors to cultural sites across Europe. Almost 6,500 visitors to 26 sites in 9 countries were interviewed in 1992, and the survey was repeated with over 8,000 visitors in 10 European countries in 1997 (Richards, 1998). A total of over 70 cultural sites across Europe have been surveyed, allowing a profile of cultural tourists to be constructed. In addition, research has been conducted on the production of cultural tourism products by those working both in the cultural sector (Goedhart, 1997) and in the tourism industry (Herrijgers, 1998). The cultural capital event has come to play an increasingly important role in this research, as more and more cities have attempted to use the event to profile themselves in the tourism market, and the tourism industry has begun to develop the event as a recognisable tourist product. The research in 1997 therefore included a question covering the attractiveness of European cities as cultural destinations, including 10 cities which had hosted the Cultural Capital event.

#### *A profile of the cultural visitors*

Tourists play an important role in the consumption of the major cultural sites surveyed by ATLAS. About two thirds of visitors interviewed could be classified as tourists, of whom around 40% were from abroad. The majority of the respondents had had some form of higher education. The proportion of visitors with a higher education is therefore much greater than the EU average of 21% of the adult population. Cultural tourists were in general even better educated, but this is partly related to the higher average age of the cultural tourists.

Cultural visitors are mainly employed in high status positions, which matches their high education level. Of those currently working, many respondents had a professional occupation (33%), and managers and directors (14%) were also well represented. Their high occupational status also relates to relatively high average incomes. Almost 45% of the 1997 respondents came from households with a gross annual income of 30,000 EURO or more. The average income lay around 22,000 EURO, over 25% higher than the EU average. A disproportionately high percentage of the respondents also indicated that they worked in the cultural sector, or had jobs related to culture (17%).

In spite of the image of cultural tourists as being predominantly older, all age groups were well represented in the survey. About 32% of visitors were aged over 50, and 27% were aged under 30. The indications are that cultural tourists are drawn predominantly from the 'new middle class', and use cultural consumption as a form of distinction, as suggested by Pierre Bourdieu. It is not surprising, therefore, that



cultural tourism is seen by many policy makers as a means of developing 'quality tourism' and attracting high-spending consumers (Kapodini-Dimitradi, 1999).

An important consideration from the point of view of cultural policy, however, is the extent to which these consumers are motivated by culture in their decision to visit specific destinations. About 36% of tourists indicated that the cultural attraction they were visiting was important in stimulating them to travel, and almost a quarter stated that they were on a cultural holiday. Tourists were just as likely to identify their motivation as a 'city break' (22%) or a 'touring holiday' (27%) as a specific cultural holiday. This underlines the fact that not all tourists are primarily attracted by the cultural attractions they may visit. In contrast to the traditional view of the cultural tourist, in addition, not all of these visitors felt that serious, 'high' culture was the only focus of cultural tourism activity. The two motives which scored most highly with cultural visitors were 'learning new things' and 'relaxation', indicating that culture has become one element of the general tourism and leisure product that visitors seek in urban centres. As Claval (1993:133) suggests: 'the meaning attributed to the traditional forms of high culture has changed. What people want is a sophisticated form of recreation and entertainment, rather than the pursuit of a personal achievement'.

The group of culturally motivated, or specific cultural tourists are disproportionately important in terms of cultural consumption, however. Specific cultural tourists were far more likely to visit cultural attractions than general cultural tourists, for whom culture is just one element of their holiday experience. Specific cultural tourists were also more likely than other visitors to be employed in the cultural industries. Almost 30% of those on a 'cultural holiday' had an occupation linked to culture.

The profile of the cultural tourist emerging from the ATLAS research indicates a well educated professionally employed individual, who travels frequently, and is often concerned with cultural production. Richards (1996) has suggested that some of these mobile 'culture vultures' may have a particularly important role to play in stimulating cultural consumption by others and influencing trends in cultural production. These individuals may be among the 'new producers' or 'new cultural intermediaries' identified by Bourdieu as being the taste-makers of the middle class.

### **The New Producers**

In order to test this hypothesis, specific research was undertaken on cultural producers and cultural tourism operators in the Netherlands, in order to establish if these people had a significant impact on cultural tourism production and consumption (Goedhart, 1997, Herrijgers, 1998).

The results of this research indicate that the 'new producers' do indeed play a significant role in shaping the cultural tourism market. The cultural tourism operators, museum professionals and journalists surveyed indicated that they were not only strong consumers of culture, but that they used their own consumption and cultural preferences as the basis for developing products for consumption by others. The new producers predominantly have an even higher level of cultural capital than the average cultural tourist, and are also likely to spend much of their □leisure time□ increasing their level of cultural knowledge and range of cultural contacts. This knowledge is in turn used to add value to the products they sell, by creating distinctive elements which appeal to the cultural tourist and add 'authenticity' to the tourism experience. For example, the ability to arrange exclusive tours of the depots of the Hermitage adds considerable value to cultural tours in Russia.

The new producers working in the cultural industries exhibit a preference for cities with a high level of classic cultural capital, such as Rome and Florence, reflecting their own largely classical cultural education. The correlation between the supply of 'real cultural capital', as measured by the European Inventory of Cultural Tourism Attractions (European Commission, 1988), and the destinations identified as being desirable for a cultural holiday was extremely high. The new producers were particularly likely to rate cities highly as cultural tourism destinations if they have a large number of international cultural attractions. The correlation between the number of international attractions and cultural tourism ranking for 9 European cities was 0.90, an almost perfect positive correlation (Table 2). The correlation between attractiveness and the presence of national (0.70) and regional attractions (0.76) was significantly lower. For cultural tourists, the level of correlation between their rating of 14 European destinations and the level of real cultural capital was also high, but tourists tended to rate cities with a large number of attractions of national significance higher (0.85) than those with internationally rated attractions (0.69). This tends to indicate that the new producers are particularly attracted by the presence of major international attractions that tend to be concentrated in the established cultural capitals of Europe.

This preference for high levels of real cultural capital among the new producers is not just restricted to Netherlands. A review of package holidays offered to a range of 100 European cities revealed that only 19 cities were featured by travel agents in all six survey countries. These cities were predominantly the □cultural capitals□ which also rate high in terms of real cultural capital (van der Borg, 1994).

Specific research among Dutch tour operators (Herrijgers, 1998) indicated that the Cultural Capital event does have an effect on the decision of major tour operators to feature the host cities in their programmes. This confirms research conducted in Antwerp, which indicated that the number of foreign tour operators featuring the city in their brochures almost doubled during the Cultural Capital year (1993). It seems, therefore that the Cultural Capital designation does have the potential to impact on the decisions of producers and consumers. The following section considers what impact this has had in different cities.

### **Effect of the Cultural Capital Designation**

The role of real cultural capital in developing cultural tourism destinations makes it difficult for new destinations to break into the league of 'cultural capitals'. As Figure 2 shows, the cities which are seen by consumers as being most desirable for a cultural holiday are the traditional 'cultural capitals', such as Paris, London and Rome. In order to challenge the popularity of established destinations, 'new' destinations must attract the attention of cultural consumers in other ways. Most often they attempt to stage cultural events which will attract attention from the new producers, the media, and the cultural tourist. The European Cultural Capital Designation is one means of attempting this, but the evidence from Figure 2 suggests that for cities such as Copenhagen, Dublin or Lisbon that this has so far had minimal effect on their image with consumers.

The new producers arguably have an important influence on the development of cities designated as European Cultural Capital for tourism. By persuading tour operators to feature their cities, for example, 'new' destinations such as Antwerp or Rotterdam can hope to overcome their comparative disadvantage in terms of the availability of real cultural capital in the city. Herrijgers (1998) indicates that such 'city marketing' strategies may have an impact in the short term. Almost all of the tour operators she interviewed indicated that they had featured European Cultural Capitals in their tour programmes during the Cultural Capital year itself. The effect of this was limited, however, as most tour operators moved on to a new Cultural Capital as soon as the event ended. The relatively short-term nature of the Cultural

Capital effect for tour operators is confirmed by research for Antwerp '93, which indicates that almost half of the increased tour brochure coverage of the city in 1993 had disappeared again in 1994 (TFPA, 1994).

The relatively short-lived impact of the Cultural Capital designation is also reflected in the impact of the event on total tourism flows to designated cities. As Table 3 shows, the Cultural Capital year has a mixed effect on visitor numbers. Some cities have experienced significant rises in overnight visitors, but there have also been cases where the number of visitors has actually declined. The Cultural Capital event itself does not therefore necessarily lead to a long-term increase in staying visitors. The event is far more likely to produce a growth in day visitors, as recent events have shown. In Antwerp, for example, the increase in staying visitors was just over 10% in 1993, but the growth in total visitor numbers was estimated to be 218%. Although day visitors do generate economic benefits, these are far lower than for staying visitors. For example, the economic impact study for Glasgow indicated that only 20% of the economic impact of the event derived from day visitors (Myerscough, 1991).

The Antwerp impact study (TFPA, 1994) also indicates that much of the dramatic increase in visitors to Antwerp in 1993 was not attributable to cultural motivations. The figure of 10 million visitors to the city in 1993 includes almost 5 million visitors to the city centre and almost 2 million to Eurosail, an event not organised as part of the Cultural Capital event. Visitors to Antwerp 93 events numbered 2.4 million, or less than 25% of the total. This indicates that the Antwerp impact study has to be interpreted with some caution.

Research by Myerscough in Glasgow, host city in 1990, also indicates how quickly the image effects of the event can dissipate. Surveys carried out in the UK in January 1991 indicated that the perception of Glasgow as 'an increasingly important for the arts' had slipped by 3% compared with September 1990, and its rating as an 'exciting place to visit' had fallen by 5%. Even so, the overall rating of the city was much better than prior to the event. The effect in terms of visitors also dried up quickly in the case of Glasgow. Although there was a substantial increase in visitors to cultural attractions in 1990, visitor numbers fell just as rapidly in the years following the event (Figure 3). The indications are that the effect of the event on cultural visits was purely short term. Visitor numbers did not recover until 1996, when the new Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) was opened. Although GOMA was partly financed from a fund established in 1990 (Schul, 1998), this underlines one of the weaknesses of such event-led strategies – the need for continual innovation of the product in order to generate repeat visits.

The effect on employment of Glasgow 1990 was also not as dramatic in the longer term. Although it was estimated that the event itself had generated over 5000 person-years of employment (Myerscough, 1991), after 1990 unemployment in the city increased again, rising 2.3% between July 1991 and July 1992. This is better than the national average, but employment in tourism, the supposed 'job motor' of the event, declined in Glasgow after 1990 while the national trend was upwards. (van den Berg *et al*, 1994).

Of course, one of the major arguments used by policy-makers arguing for staging the Cultural Capital event is that long term cultural benefits will also be generated by the event. But here the evidence is also mixed. An assessment of the cultural effects of the Glasgow and Antwerp events by Schul (1998) indicated a strong division of opinion among those in the cultural sectors of the two cities. In Glasgow, for example, 1990 had the effect of increasing sponsorship income during the year itself, but has not been translated into structural improvements in commercial funding. At the same time, however, the market for incidental sponsorship of events has improved as a result of 1990. Although 1990 delivered more tourists and an improved profile of Glasgow as a tourist destination, the fact that cultural facilities in Glasgow were used to host external celebrities rather than developing their own programming has also limited the benefits of the event. In Antwerp, the Cultural Capital event actually had a negative effect on sponsorship. Although more incidental sponsors were found in 1993, structural sponsorship declined after the event. In both cities the cultural infrastructure improved as a result of investments related to the event, but there was no improvement in structural cultural funding from the public sector. Schul (1998) concludes that the most important determinant of success in cultural terms is whether culture acts as a goal or a medium in such event-led strategies.

The implication of these findings is that the Cultural Capital event is in itself not enough to guarantee success in the highly competitive European cultural tourism market, or to ensure structural improvements in the cultural climate. Isolated events will generate short-term benefits, but in order to ensure long-term

success the event needs to be integrated into a total cultural strategy. This can involve staging a series of events, in order to convince visitors that there is always 'something happening' in the city. This harbours the danger, however, that the city will become trapped on a treadmill of investment, requiring a constant supply of events to ensure the visitor flow. It should be much more effective to combine event based and attraction based strategies, as Glasgow has done. This can help to attract short-term attention to the city, at the same time as new cultural facilities are being developed to increase the 'real cultural capital' base of the city in the long term.

### **The Future of Cultural Capitals**

If the current patterns of cultural tourism in Europe make it difficult for policy makers to achieve their aims of attracting high spending cultural tourists, what future is there for the 'new' cultural destinations of Europe and the European Cultural Capital Event?

The most important point to emerge from our analysis of the European cultural tourism market is that the market is changing fairly rapidly. In particular, the role of 'atmosphere' and 'popular culture' are becoming more important as the definition of 'culture' broadens. This has two important implications for the development of cultural tourism in cities, and particularly in those 'new' destinations trying to overcome the dominance of the existing cultural capitals. First, having 'culture' is not enough. It is important to understand the needs of the cultural tourist, particularly in terms of the growing need to mix different cultural forms, 'high' and 'popular' culture, and 'learning' and 'fun'. It is unwise to open new cultural facilities if these are not embedded in a vibrant local culture, and if there is an insufficient 'critical mass' of cultural elements to act as a sufficient counterweight to competing centres. Secondly, the need to blend elements of 'high' and 'popular' culture, of formal cultural products and living culture, or atmosphere, means that attention needs to be paid to the cultural production process. As Zukin has emphasised, 'a culture capital cannot just function as an entrepôt of the arts. It must be a place where art is actually produced as well as sold and consumed' (Zukin, 1996:150). In addition, 'the really basic requirement of a culture capital is to have a large concentration of cultural producers' (151). Without such a combination of cultural facilities and creative faculties, new cultural destinations are unlikely to be able to generate sufficient new cultural capital to be able to compete in an increasingly competitive cultural tourism market.

To some extent this is being realised by the cities which are staging the cultural capital event, as the far broader basis of the Copenhagen event indicates, and the multifaceted approach of the Cultural Capitals for 2000 suggests. There seems to be a growing realisation that cultural creativity provides the basis for the cultural economy and not the other way around. This is reflected in the growing number of local creative industries policies (Landry and Bianchini, 1995) and the cultural industries policies of the European Commission (1998).

What is needed to ensure the success of such policies, however, is a more dynamic view of culture in these policies. There is a danger in the emerging production side view of culture as an industry and cultural institutions as 'factories' churning out cultural products, that the creativity necessary for the 'enchantment' of the cathedrals of consumption will be lacking. As Rooijakkers (1999) points out, museums and other cultural attractions are often 'factories' in which authorised meanings are constantly produced. There is plenty of creation, but relatively little creativity. The tendency to emphasise the development of cultural factories over cultural creativity is also underlined by funding mechanisms. As more funds for capital projects become available from lottery funds and local authorities seeking to improve their global profile through building new temples to culture, there is a growing imbalance between the supply of facilities and cultural production (Dodd, 1999).

The need to animate the cultural landscape with new events and festivals for the mobile consumer means that cities may be left with an investment millstone around their necks. The Glasgow experience already indicates the relatively short-term effect of major events, and this impression is strengthened by research with the new producers, which indicates that they also view the effects of the cultural capital event as largely temporary. Cities should also guard against the development of 'festivalisation' which threatens their cultural sustainability through the commercialisation of everyday life. Local inhabitants may end up feeling that they are part of an extravagant 'show' being staged primarily for the benefit of tourists.

Policy-makers often try to circumvent this problem by arguing that cultural events are designed primarily for local consumption. This is also evident in many of the Cultural Capital events, as Hilde Teuchies of the Association of European Cities of Culture 2000 (AECC) remarked: 'the event is for the local population and it is in principle not meant for tourists' (quoted in Schoemaker, 1999, p.49). This view is however difficult to reconcile with a city such as Weimar, with a population of 60,000 hoping to attract 5 million visitors in 1999. It also does not chime with the presence of the AECC at major tourism trade fairs, actively promoting the nine cities to potential tourists and tour operators.

Staging the Cultural Capital event therefore seems to be an increasingly difficult juggling act for local policy-makers. They must balance the conflicting demands of culture and economy, of locals and tourists, of creation and creativity and short-term impacts with long-term benefits. In judging the 'success' of the event, however, clear decisions also need to be made about the aims – has culture become an extension of city marketing, or is attracting visitors a means of stimulating the creative resources of the city itself?

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Table 1: Budgets of European Cities of Culture, 1985 - 2001

Year	City	Country	Budget (MECU)
1985	Athens	Greece	7.7
1986	Florence	Italy	24.4
1987	Amsterdam	Netherlands	3.3
1988	Berlin	Germany	27.0
1989	Paris	France	0.6
1990	Glasgow	UK	60.0
1991	Dublin	Ireland	8.6
1992	Madrid	Spain	57.9
1993	Antwerp	Belgium	17.6
1994	Lisbon	Portugal	55.0
1995	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	24.0
1996	Copenhagen	Denmark	100.0
1997	Thessaloniki	Greece	295.0
1998	Stockholm	Sweden	50.0
1999	Weimar	Germany	32.0
2000	Brussels	Belgium	25.0
2000	Compostella	Spain	37.6
2001	Rotterdam	Netherlands	24.0
	Porto	Portugal	
2002	Brugge	Belgium	
	Salamanca	Spain	
2003	Graz	Austria	
2004	Lille	France	
	Genoa	Italy	

Source: After Myerscough, 1995, with additional data.



**Table 2:** Correlation between real cultural capital and ranking as a cultural tourism destination by new producers (9 cities) and cultural tourists (14 cities). Real cultural capital is measured according to the number of attractions listed in the European Inventory of Cultural Resources (European Commission, 1988).

	new producers	cultural tourists
Number of Cultural Resources		
International significance	0.90	0.69
National significance	0.70	0.85
Regional significance	0.76	0.58
Total	0.84	0.79

*Figures are Pearson correlation coefficients (+1.0 = perfect positive correlation).*

*Cities in the dataset: Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Florence, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Munich, Paris, Rome.*

Table 3: Million visitor overnights per year, before, during and after the Cultural Capital event (CC)

Year	City	CC – 1 year	CC year	CC + 1 year
1989	Paris	24.1	29.6	31.1
1990	Glasgow	6.3	6.6	5.3
1991	Dublin	10.3	9.9	11.0
1992	Madrid	8.7	7.7	6.6
1993	Antwerp	0.9	1.0	-

*Figure 1*

*Level 1: a summer festival (Athens 1985, Florence 1986, Paris 1989)*

A number of artistic events, primarily based on heritage. No international marketing. Short planning period, no long-term investment and few sponsors.

*Level 2: an all-year festival (Amsterdam 1987, Dublin 1991, Madrid, 1992)*

Focus still on fine arts, with national performances supplemented with a few international events. Fairly good quality, but lack of penetration because of planning gaps and lack of international marketing. Little investment, financial base primarily local.

*Level 3: an art city (Berlin 1988, Antwerp 1993)*

Well planned and managed international artistic programme running over a whole year. Strategies to stimulate artistic production. Professional, centralized management, with finance from the city, supplemented by substantial sponsorship.

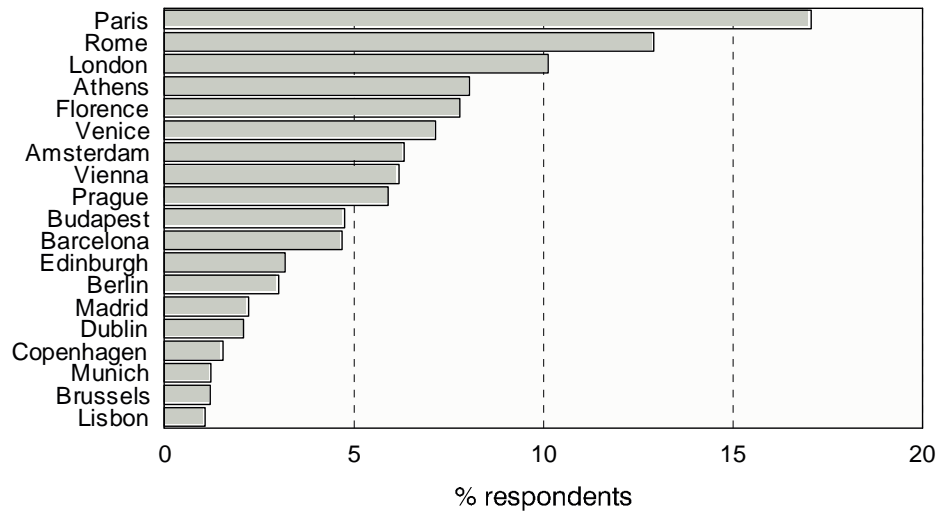
*Level 4: a cultural capital year (Glasgow 1990)*

A more comprehensive programme based on a broader concept of culture. Many international highlights. Social, popular and economic structures included in the concept, with a view to creating long-lasting improvement in the image of the city. Long-term planning and management with participation of local groups. Financing from a broad spectrum of private and public sources.

*Level 5: a cultural capital (Copenhagen 1996)*

Development of a long-term strategy for the development of a cultural capital and improvement of the image of the city. Planning horizons extend beyond the year itself. The involvement of the local population and the business community is crucial, as is the stimulation of educational initiatives and cultural networks. The cultural capital concept involves the whole metropolitan region, with a separate environmental strategy and new infrastructure. Funding from a wide range of sources.

Figure 2: Cities Ranked by Consumers as Most Desirable for A  
European Cultural Holiday, 1997



Source: ATLAS Surveys

Figure 3: Visits to Cultural Attractions in Glasgow

