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UNEECC FORUM VOLUME 7

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European Capitals of Culture*

Hosted by Umeå University

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How Do the European Capitals of Culture Contribute to the European Mobility?

Empirical Issues and Theoretical Challenges of the Cultural Institutions Renewal in the Cities Elected ECC

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Abstract: *This article argues that societal transformation in post-industrial countries may be understood through the analysis of the most recent cultural changes occurring in those societies. It uses as a relevant example the case of the Marseilles-Provence 2013 ECC event and the data derived from the case study performed on that program. In this framework, the role of the European Capitals of Culture would be to bridge the cultural gaps between European cities and facilitate cultural communication across Europe. The empiric study of institutional manifestations of culture is crucial to understanding the process of change in cultural practices all over Europe. The attractiveness of a city will thus be evaluated in the future based on its ability to produce new forms of practice and urban consumption identified with European unity in diversity.*

Keywords: *culture, ECC, cultural change, cultural institutions, cultural practices, theater.*

The fundamental thesis of Smart Specialization strategies is based on the assumption of attractiveness to higher social fractions, or the "most educated and talented people", being able to migrate and reach the most culturally attractive regions and cities. If one believes the scenarios presented, investment in cultural capital in the broadest sense should lead to a concentration of social capital itself. In turn, social capital must generate economic capital for regions practicing the implementation of this new form of cultural policy and promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in all EU regions and cities.

However, the correlation between investment in cultural capital (*ex nihilo*) and increased resources (i.e. the economic capital of cities), is, so far, not yet scientifically proven. For many economists, sociologists and geographers, this issue of the effects of art and culture on the economy is still at the stage of a "chicken and egg problem". Is it culture that generates economic growth? Or is it rather the economic activity of the European regions that generates a

concentration of cultural treasures? At the moment, it is still impossible to answer these questions in a clear and definite way without making a radical change to the analytical frameworks used.

At this stage, the concept of European mobility itself must be redefined. A schematic reductive notion can be associated with a simple defined algorithm (*i.e.* going from point A to point B). However, it does not reflect the more important concept of *trajectory* that explains modern forms of multiculturalism and the development of European cities: territorial migration phenomena, the displacements of frontier workers, the bottom-up emergence of macro-regions as new units of smart specialization and employment, durable interconnections between cities and their peripheries, etc. According to the Eckert, Grossetti et Martin Brelot study¹, among the populations of 13 European cities surveyed, low mobility in a strict sense can be observed. Nevertheless, we can identify various forms of individual trajectories, paths, or journeys, each being affected by the cultural context of these cities.

Analyzing emerging cultural changes situated in post-industrial societies is crucial for understanding societal transformations. We will indeed witness, in the next thirty years, considerable changes in the way we conceive of and understand European regions and culture. The European Capital of Culture (ECC) amenities, formally attributed to a city, accord nevertheless great importance to cultural exchanges between the elected city and its region. New cultural amenities should promote inclusive and diverse culture, dissociated from urban elitist practices. The ECC title must be: (1) profitable for all in the region, but also (2) have an impact on the entire territory, even beyond its national borders (such as, for instance, the case of the Greater Region in 2007). Thus, the ECC program should strengthen historical ties between European cities, and empower Cross-European cultural communication.

The empirical study of institutional forms of culture is essential to *understanding how societal changes will operate, and how relationships with institutions will be reconfigured in the next decades with the transformation of cultural practices*. Indeed, if the territorial attractiveness of a city is measured largely through the number and quality of its “equipment” and cultural institutions – the economy of the city, tourism development, urban development and demographic social cohesion – it will also be *evaluated based on its ability to invent new diverse forms of practice and urban consumption identified with European unity*.

At a related level, cultural practices and immersive heritage forms should also create and manage reports to the communication technologies that mediatize the emergence of new deterritorialized European identities.

¹ Denis Eckert, Michel Grossetti, Hélène Martin-Brelot, “La classe créative au secours des villes?”, Paris, La Vie des idées. fr, 28 février 2012. URL: <http://www.laviedesidees.fr/La-classe-creative-au-secours-des.html>.

1. The Potential Ability of Cultural Institutions to Become Part – or Not – of New Regional and Urban Dynamics

By closely observing *how* immersive cultural institutions experience important changes, many particular issues become visible *ex post*, beyond general views. Most descriptions that have been made about events such as Marseilles-Provence 2013 ECC, deviate from assessments made after other capital years.

For example, observers — not only journalists, but also geographers such as Boris Grésillon² — agree that the balance of cultural offerings in a city like Marseilles, would be heavily modified after the 2013 ECC year. Numerous people believe that temporary changes — to infrastructures, urban amenities, or cultural events — durably impact cultural life. The analysis we propose here is, however, quite different.

We began the development of this project faced with two choices: (1) To start with a major cultural institution such as the theatre of Marseille in order to describe how cultural geography of the city is built and conceived by amateurs and by theatre lovers. This cultural geography is not an objective view (*i.e.* an external view) of cultural places, but a *subjective* view — *eg.* a view constructed by practices or in other words, a cultural view — of the city. Our second option was (2) not to focus on new cultural venues, but on previously existing structures, which is what we propose to do³.

What is relevant for our study is the long duration of urban cultural changes, for three key reasons: (a) the strong inertia of old cultural practices, (b) significant changes in governance that impact cultural practices very slowly, (c) the presence of new institutions that requires a long time (most likely beyond a decade) to produce significant cultural change. Therefore, we can state that the long duration of urban cultural change is both a methodological and an epistemological option. The reason for this statement is that we can observe *hysteresis effects* when we observe cultural life. This inertia can be seen if we look closely at how a singular institution works over a period of five to ten years because practices are subject to resilience. That is the reason why we cannot only study an institution at a single point in time (photographically).⁴

Hence the choice of an observation from a bottom-up understanding of the oldest cultural institutions is relevant. This observation will be our starting

² Boris Grésillon, *Un enjeu «capitale» : Marseilles-Provence 2013*, Paris, Ed. de l'Aube, 2011.

³ A few hundred meters from the *La Criée National Theater* — which is located downtown Marseilles, on the *Vieux Port*, at the center of the city — in 2013 a new museum appeared that has been often discussed in the media, the MuCEM. But can this new museum be analyzed as the origin of a cultural “revolution” in Marseilles? The MuCEM which is a museum of civilization, built on an inheritance from the old museum of ATP (Arts and popular traditions) is a very intensely visited site, but it is far from certain that this museum has found a stable audience from within Marseilles and the surrounding area. Stating that MuCEM changed Marseilles and the regional cultural life is based on unfounded opinion.

⁴ By consequence, we cannot now observe what is changing cultural life in Marseilles by the description of the MuCEM. We must wait a few years to observe the effects of this museum.

point. From this, we can observe how changes are diffracted in each local cultural place. For instance, from our first survey sample of about three hundred spectators – conducted at the *La Criée National Theater* – we can see that of spectators who attended the theater, 70 percent also went to another theater. This link between theaters appears by analyzing practices. The second issue is how the balance between different existing institutions changes over time and during upheavals such as ECC. From this position, we can see that some theaters begin to occupy a more important place or start to assume new functions.

From our survey we highlight three features of this “game of musical chairs”: (a) It is not a zero-sum game, the relative position of institutions rearticulates over time. Transfers occur between related institutions. (b) New positions can also emerge: institutions that centralize offers of cultural diversity. (c) The choice of two cases for our comparative survey explores the less interconnected institutions (*La Criée National Theater* & *Theater of the Merlan*).

Two key issues hold great importance here. (a) First, transfers occur between theaters geographically and culturally close. For instance between geographically close theaters, located in the very center of the city, such as the *La Criée National Theater* and the *Theater of the Gymnase*. Both theaters are one kilometer apart. *La Criée* and *Le Gymnase* are the two main theaters located downtown Marseilles, in the very center of the city. *La Criée* has seven hundred and fifty seats available, whereas *Le Gymnase*, can seat one thousand. However, they assume different functions. (b) From our survey findings, we can observe that *La Criée* assumes a new function and becomes even more central than it was before MP-2013 ECC.

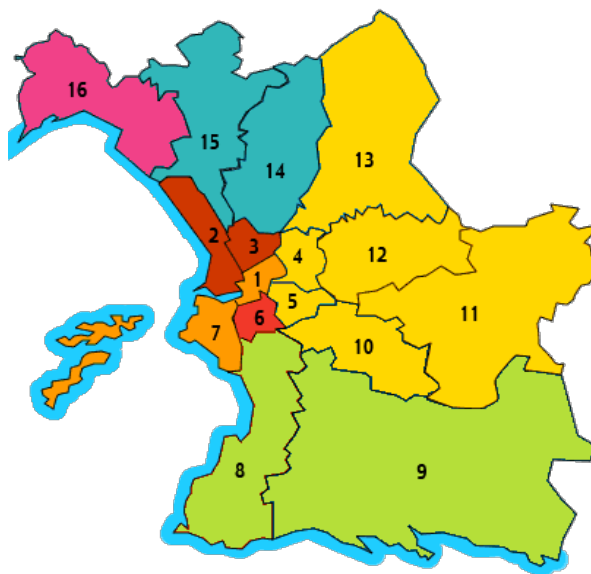
This new dynamic function of regional cultural centralization is gradually being implemented in the center of the city. From our first statistical survey sample (survey conducted on 15th and 18th January 2014 on audiences of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, directed by Georges Lavaudant, N= 393), the response to question number 15 of our questionnaire (what are the main missions of the *La Criée National Theater*?) was “becoming a place of scenic and creative expression open to other theaters and disciplines”⁵ at 60%.

In the same spirit, the answer to question 5 (horizons of expectation from the theater) gives weight to the hypothesis that the *La Criée National Theater* position is opening its disciplinary fields — namely, that the theater can be a place of disciplinary exchange and a passageway to other cultural institutions.

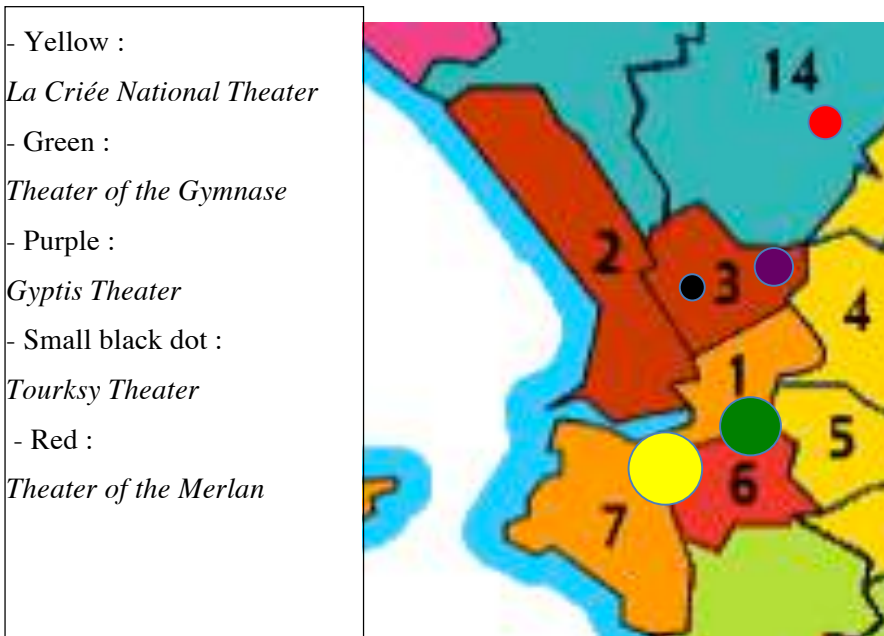
⁵ The question number 15 of our questionnaire proposed 8 responses: 1 - Present the great texts and great authors of French theater; 2 - Present the great texts and great authors of French and international theater; 3 - Repeat the readings and stagings of French and international theater; 4 - Tell directors of currently renewed theaters in France; 5 - Tell directors of currently renewed theaters in France and abroad; 6 - Make experimental theater available to the largest number of spectators; 7 - Make amateur theater available to the largest number of spectators; 8 - Become a place of scenic and creative expression open to other theaters and disciplines.

However, the main question here is how this cultural proposal impacts the way (*how*) spectators represent themselves within the cultural geography of the city. In other words, we must determine the dynamic function that crosses the new program of the theater as well as *the vision* of the new director who took control of the theater in 2011 (Macha Makeieff who is the director is a well-known French actress). But in order to capture these changes, we must be able to describe the *subjective cultural geography* of spectators from the very center of the city.

Map of Marseilles's Districts



The Map of the very centered theaters of the city can be built from the point of view of the *La Criée National Theater* spectators. This geography, which is only partially connected to the physical geography, determines an inclusive scope. It thus draws an inclusive scope and a cultural periphery.



Very centered theaters of the city, from the point of view of La Criée spectators⁶

To conclude this first analysis, we would like to highlight four points: (1) Our research aims to bring a focus on *the potential ability of cultural institutions to become part – or not – of new regional and urban dynamics and embrace the cultural changes that generate them*, (2) we strive to favor a “low angle shot” and bottom-up approach to the cultural audience territorial mobility, and, indirectly, on the local smart specialization predispositions and regional development abilities. The bottom-up approach includes a grounded approach emphasizing the interplay between different social, cultural and economic conditions. It should not be confused with just a new subjective urban vision of the city. (3) We will not focus on new cultural venues, but on older ones. We want to highlight the importance of understanding how European political changes are diffracted by cultural institutions like theaters, museums, operas, etc., and (4) to understand how older institutions invent new adaptive strategies.

In order to reach these goals, two theoretical objectives are required: (1) To establish a “subjective” cultural geography, built from the point of view and

⁶ The *Merlan* is a northern theater of Marseille, located in the same part of the city as the *Toursky* and *Gyptis* Theaters (a “blue collar” working class neighborhood). The *Merlan* Theater is not much farther from the center than the *Toursky* or the *Gyptis*. However, the *Toursky* is linked to *La Criée*, from the point of view of the *La Criée* Spectators, while the *Merlan* is not. *La Criée – Le Merlan* are not within a walking distance – 9 km separate the two theaters –and it requires a metro connection, or a bus/car transportation to reach one from the other.

ordinary practices of spectators; and (2) to highlight how ordinary spectators "think" and perceive the impacts of the ECC policies on the interplay between the cultural life of the city and the connected territories. We aim to select institutions for cultural reasons and not for an "administrative" or political vision of the city.

2. Mobility and Attractiveness: The Limits of a Paradigm

Review of the Problem and Preliminary Results

Can the “creative classes” be a resource for cities? Contemporary political thought has extensively developed the issue of culture as an economic tool for post-industrial cities. Many scientific studies have suggested that new urban dynamics focused on culture could have a significant impact on the economic growth of cities, human capital, tourism, and mobility, ranging from residential choice strategies to the location of economic activities. One of the most famous, is supported by Richard Florida in his best-selling book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. According to Richard Florida, the “creative class” is characterized by three values: high-tech, talent, and tolerance. However, the exact scope of these values is still defined without great precision: indeed, we do not know exactly how to define technological *philoneism*, talent and tolerance.

A Challenged Theory: Theoretical Objections

Working as expert-consultant for numerous cities in the US and abroad, Richard Florida is currently not only a political activist, but also praised by renowned researchers (he is the first reference in *Portrait d'un artiste en travailleur*, by Pierre-Michel Menger). In the wake of his research, scholars such as Terry Nichols Clark, University of Chicago, or Edward Glaeser, Harvard University, have also pursued important academic research. Their theories have a resonance today that goes well beyond activist circles. They give a new formulation to human capital theories in many countries in the world, from North America to Asia as well as in Europe.

However, these theories have been also heavily challenged by economists and sociologists, in two main ways: (1) by showing inaccuracies in the argumentation, (2) by starting from case studies, that show the great difficulty of empirically demonstrating the general processes involved in Richard Florida's argumentation, especially when the author is arguing about the virtuous circles thanks to which a “creative class” would lead automatically to economic growth and development. How to demonstrate that this virtuous circle – the “creative class” – really does exist? And how to show that growth is correlated to the dynamic of a “virtuous group”?

Economists and sociologists have multiple objections to this theory. In their opinion, *the Rise of the Creative Class* is a crucial issue that is poorly formulated. Consequently, criticism has been made about two main issues: (a) criticism of the paradigm, (b) questions about collective dynamics and logic of actors.

A critical review judiciously formulated by Eckert, Grossetti et Martin Brelot⁷ clearly shows the sociological limits of the Florida's theory. According to Florida, "It may seem easier to attract people than entire companies or, even more expensive, to generate endogenous development by promoting teaching and research"⁸. Offering a miraculous solution to a particularly thorny problem, Florida was hired by several cities, including Toronto and Milwaukee. But fifteen years later, he has obtained no results despite significant investments.⁹

In France, Nice, a medium-sized city, has embarked on the same path. In the same way, the European Cultural Capitals attach importance to Richard Florida's theory. Thus words like "creative districts" or "creative neighborhoods" have joined the team in charge of the European Cultural Capitals organization's lexicon.

Indeed, "a part of Florida's thesis is that members of the creative class choose the cities in which they will settle on the basis of qualities such as urban atmosphere, the openness to minorities, or the vitality of cultural activities, so on soft urban factors, rather than traditional hard factors such as employment, wages, or infrastructures"¹⁰. This argument has been challenged by obvious evidence showing that there is an inversion of causality. According to Eckert, Grossetti and Martin-Brelot, "there is indeed a creative class, it is present in larger quantities in growing cities [...] these cities also have better indexes about the soft factors", however, it is the "economic development that creates both jobs and attract creatives (creative people) and urban amenities that capture the indexes in question"¹¹. These authors have also raised objections about Richard Florida's theory in terms of collective dynamics and actors. Currently, there is a good amount of probability that the "creative class" might be all just an illusion.

A Challenged Theory: Empirical Objections

Empirically, the purpose of the Eckert, Grossetti and Martin-Brelot paper was to test the validity of Richard Florida's thesis through a European survey covering 13 cities. The authors do not implement an analysis of spatial correlations (e.g. between a capital and its surrounding provinces) whose causality is difficult to

⁷ Cf. Eckert, Grossetti, Martin-Brelot, "La classe créative".

⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁹ Jeffrey Zimmermann, "From brew town to cool town: Neoliberalism and the creative city development strategy in Milwaukee," *Cities*, 25, p. 230–242.

¹⁰ Eckert, Grossetti, Martin-Brelot, "La classe créative", p. 2.

¹¹ Ibid. Florida's data would be correct, but the interpretation would be wrong according to Richard Shearmur (2007) and Alan Scott (2005).

interpret, but use direct questionnaires on trajectories and lifestyles. The survey focuses on members supposed to belong to the “creative class”¹².

The survey highlights an important result: “Creatives” are much less mobile than what was previously believed. Therefore mobility is a problematic concept. According to the geographical origin of respondents (place of birth), 53% of respondents were born in the community where they currently live. Furthermore, mobility only concerns 12% of foreigners.

Nevertheless, this does not mean a sedentary path for this population. Respondents have made shorter or longer stays in other cities than where they were born and/or where they have completed their studies.

The second result concerns the places for obtaining the highest degree. It is even more striking: 63.6% have completed their studies in the community where they currently live, or in its immediate environment¹³.

In addition, the results could be refined, which weakens even further the thesis of Florida. The survey was not designed to be analyzed by the three authors Eckert, Grossetti, Martin-Brelot (who performed the secondary analysis of these data). But, if this had been the case, the results would have been even more "regional" (the European survey was focused on cities). According to the authors, a regional investigation would have produced even stronger results.

For the question, “why respondents came to the city where they currently live?” the responses were received in the following order¹⁴:

1. I have family here	40,2 %
2. Proximity to friends	38,3 %
3. Good job opportunities	37,9 %
4. I moved here because of my job	33,3 %
5. I was born here	30,60%
6. I studied here	30,1 %
7. Good variety of leisure and entertainment	23,7 %
8. City size	21 %
9. Cultural diversity	16,5 %
10. Close to nature	15,7 %
.....	
14. I moved here because of my spouse	9,8 %
15. Presence of good universities	9,8%

¹² The sample selected 11 European cities, 2355 persons, 8 socio-professional categories — with 300 persons for each — distinguished graduate engineering, law, finance, lawyers, academics, research fields. But also fields of letters and art, video games, electronic media publication, advertising & architecture, media, photography, and so one.

¹³ Another complementary figure: there is only 26% who were born elsewhere and have pursued studies somewhere else.

¹⁴ Eckert, Grossetti, Martin-Brelot, “La classe créative”, Table 3, p.6-7.

Ultimately, the results can be summarized as follows: in red we highlight the relational reasons (1, 2, 5, 9, 14) that are the main ones. In blue, the economic reasons (3, 4, 8). And in green the cultural reasons (6, 7, 10, and 15).

In the conclusion of their article, the authors point out the need to rethink more precisely the question of mobility. We observe similar preliminary results in our survey. After consultations with the team and the direction of the *La Criée National Theater*, four shows were chosen for the investigation. *Cyrano de Bergerac*, in a staging by Bernard Lavaudant (performances of the 15 and 18 January 2014), *Queen of Heart*, show proposed by Juliette Deschamps (3 and 4 February 2014), *De Nos Jours*, the show of circus company, Mosjoukine (03 and 04 April 2014), and finally two comedies by Shakespeare, staged by the Propeller Company, directed by Edward Hall (12 and 13 April 2014). The four scenic proposals were extremely heterogeneous. The first, a classic of high quality, was an almost film-like production. The second performed a hybrid voice of lyrical music-hall practices and staged an evocation of the great voices of the twentieth century. The third, made in the fabric of the new art of the circus, combines the intrigue of the bodily prowess of actors, acrobats, mimes, jugglers, as well as philosophical clowns. The last, finally, incorporates two classic texts – *The Comedy of Errors* and *Dream of a summer night* – staged in the original language with subtitles that manage to coexist in a happily historicist choice. Although we have not described in detail here the four amateur populations targeted, it is ensured that they are different from each other and involved in these offers in diverse ways.

Cyrano de Bergerac, the 15 th and 18 th January 2014, <i>La Criée</i> national theater, Marseille			
If you live in Marseille, what determined your choice of residence?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 – Professional reasons	46	23,1
	2 – Cultural resources	11	5,5
	3 – Quality of life	18	9,0
	4 – Economic and fiscal reasons	3	1,5
	5 – Family, friends	38	19,1
	6 – I did not really choose to live in Marseille	20	10,1
Total		136	68,3
Missing		63	31,7
Total		199	100,0

The questionnaire we developed for the audience study at each of these four shows is characterized by a strong qualitative component. Through a series of explorative questions, we planned to establish a "dialogue" with each spectator individually. The methodological novelty of our approach consisted in a syncretic combination (1) the typical characteristics of a quantitative questionnaire and (2) with features of an ethnographic interview processed in written form. Viewers were invited to also share with us their thoughts, opinions, and wishes related to their *subjective cultural experience*, which is the main object of our interest. Therefore our questionnaires were adapted to the particularities of each artistic performance studied.

Our preliminary results show that the relationship between cultural institutions and urban habitat is weak. Even in cultural places where practitioners are heavily invested (former subscribers attending the *La Criée National Theater* for several years, for instance), answers to the questionnaire do not evoke the cultural dimension of the city. This dimension is secondary (it is clearly in fifth position), including the most institutional cultures related to urban populations.

The professional and family reasons of living in Marseille are widely cited reasons. So the cultural attractiveness of the city, in 2014, is – still – very low, even for long-term subscribers of the theater, since the “cultural” response appears only in fifth position. The survey results are very much in line with the findings of the aforementioned article of Eckert, Grossetti and Martin-Brelot. Moreover, the close analysis of the populations who indicated that the cultural reasons determined the choice to live in Marseille, shows that the same population is *the least engaged* in frequenting *both old and new cultural amenities* than the publics that live in Marseille for the professional and family reasons.¹⁵

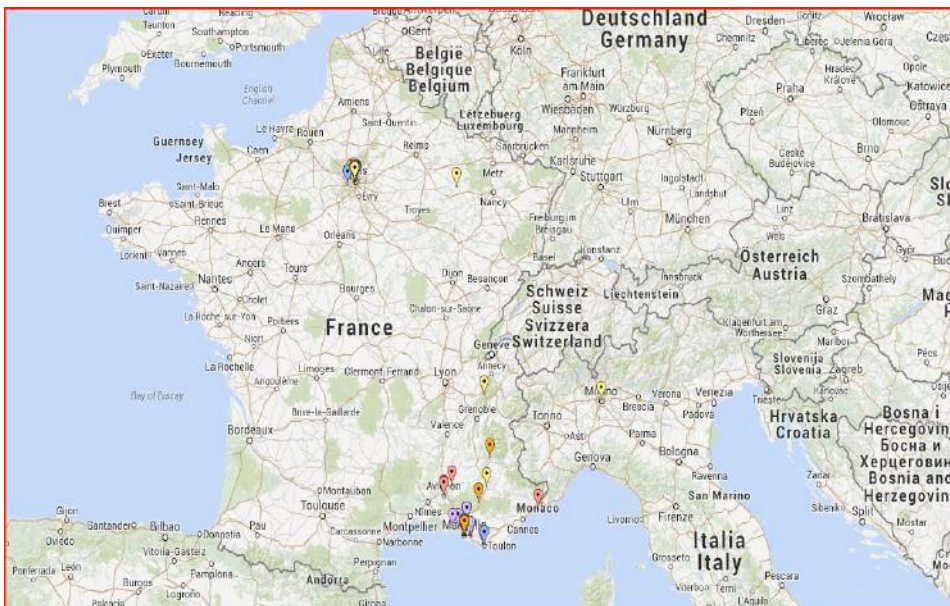
The other significant result of our pre-survey is the weak international mobility of the *La Criée* theater spectators. In the case of two comedies by Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Dream of a Summer Night*, staged in an ultra-contemporary style by the British company Propeller, we can observe the absence of spectators who live abroad and who came to Marseille for its new cultural programs:

¹⁵ These results will be a part of our consulting report for *La Criée* governance and tutelage that will be published in September 2015.

Question 27 : Where do you live ?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 - Marseille	71	64,5
	2 - Aix / Cassis	9	8,2
	3 - Towns / villages in the department	13	11,8
	4 - PACA Region	6	5,5
	5 - Other regions in France	2	1,8
	6 - Abroad	0	0
	Total	101	91,8
Missing	System	9	8,2
Total		110	100,0

Despite the efforts for a powerful international opening, invitation of the international artists, musicians and circus companies, La Criée remains mainly attractive for residents of Marseille and its suburbs. Furthermore, it was found that La Criée local audiences do not move to the other European countries for cultural amenities. The occasional cases of European mobility should be treated rather like the exceptions. As the map below illustrates, the audiences of the four shows investigated moves mostly for the cultural amenities of the national scale. Milan and Monaco are the only European destinations that attract La Criée spectators with cultural offers.

Cartographic representation of La Criée audiences' European cultural displacements:



The main results highlight the following conclusion: attractiveness is not a judicious concept. It must be replaced by a less categorical notion. In fact, three meanings of the concept of attractiveness can be considered: Meaning 1: a city is attractive because it brings in over a long period of time, for cultural reasons, individuals who choose to live in proximity to cultural offerings. Meaning 2: a city is attractive because it attracts temporarily for cultural reasons, individuals who choose to live in proximity to cultural offerings for a short time (transitional place). Meaning 3: a city is attractive because it permanently settles, for cultural reasons, individuals who are already residents, but could be tempted by migration.

Mapping the cultural form of a city leads to objectify the mental mapping of ordinary fans and give substance to what in a given urban space, connects, assembles, and associates. It is therefore necessary to replace the static image that we have of a city with the consideration of the power of an army (how many grants and “weapons” does it have?) – by a representation of the living experience of a city in building an archispectateur - if we can borrow and reuse the notion that Michel Riffaterre has developed based on the literature ¹⁶ – which describes the paths of new amateur cohorts and new audiences.

But this description is not without consequences for the institutional actors of culture: by replacing the single struggle and the spirit of competition by the culture of active convergences and by putting at the heart of the action the issue of visibility coordinated by complementarities and singularities, the historic institutions of culture could find a more central place. They could find material to feed a more open cultural policy that distances the counter-productive and disrupting imperative – improperly formulated and poorly conceptualized – of the democratization of culture that has durably sterilized political thought during the second half of the twentieth century.

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¹⁶ Michel Riffaterre, *La Production du texte*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1979.

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