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# The European Capitals of Culture Program as a Tool of Cultural Diplomacy: a Comparative Survey in France, Sweden, Poland and Italy

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# Transatlantic Dialogue No 4 2017

## Creating Human Bonds through Cultural Diplomacy

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# Foreword

The theme of the Transatlantic Dialogue 2017 'Creating Human Bonds through Cultural Diplomacy' is most generous and this moment truly seems to me also very well chosen.

More than ever before, cultural diplomacy has a vital role to play in international relations, enabling us to appreciate and promote points of inter-sectionalism and common bonds.

Bridging differences begins with approaching others with the will to acknowledge and understand their and our own identity and cultural 'otherness'.

Universities have a key role to play in this regard and this truly interdisciplinary forum will for sure offer multiple perspectives on how this can be achieved.

The challenges our world presents today can seem unprecedented. Profound differences over the complex issues confronting us, manifest themselves in loud and often discouraging public debates over everything from how we best foster human prosperity to how we address each other on an equal foot in its many forms, protect our fundamental freedoms, and care for the most vulnerable and marginalized among us.

The challenges that come to us from the outside are no less complex as we struggle with multiple, competing interests and unintended consequences in a deeply interconnected world.

If we are building an integral human community in which all of us are thriving, we will be prepared throughout our lives to generate

new knowledge and solve new problems, to engage in creative expression, to serve others purposefully, and to help those around us to do the same.

This is the enduring outcome of a liberal education, which remains the best hope for bringing a diversity of perspectives and knowledge to addressing our most vexing problems.

Our time here steers the course of not only our lives individually, but of our collective future together in this complicated, ever changing world.

This way of thinking and of teaching ourselves to think, is part of our DNA with liberal education at its core. Through our commitment to liberal education, we could develop the capacity and empathy to discern for complex understandings of the knotty issues that confront us now and in the future.

It is my belief that we must do much more. If we want to achieve a true peace and understanding between people, we should focus not on the lowest common denominator, but we must work towards the highest one.

Let's take up this responsibility not for the sake of recognition but because we have a responsibility and obligation to provide leadership where we are called to do so.

Let me close and share with you a quote by His Holiness the Dalai Lama: *'The reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue.'*

François Carbon  
TAD'17 Conference Chair

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# THE EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE PROGRAM AS A TOOL OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: A COMPARATIVE SURVEY IN FRANCE, SWEDEN, POLAND AND ITALY

Maxime Jaffré and Elena Raevskikh

Since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the European Community has enhanced its competence in the field of culture. The use of cultural diplomacy has become a central concern in contemporary European political thought, promoting the impact of inclusive cultural policies to strengthen European regional and municipal cohesion and mobility, but also to generate new cultural scenes promoting more “participative” and “multicultural” experiences for EU citizens.

With the aim of promoting a better understanding of the common cultural heritage and bringing closer together European citizens, several political programs were created and applied to territories that needed top-down political intervention for raising their international profiles. For instance, the “European Capitals of Culture” program (ECC),

which was created in 1985 by the European Union Council of Ministers and focused initially on major big cities (Paris ECC-1989, Madrid ECC-1992, Stockholm ECC-1998), has changed the rules and criteria of attribution of this status in favor of smaller, cross-border or economically fragile agglomerations (Marseille ECC-2013, Umeå ECC-2014, San-Sebastian ECC-2016).

The new cultural consumption pattern is conceived to stimulate integration and mobility, but also to create a legitimate and transnational ideal European citizen type. Inclusion is conceived as an equal participation of all citizens, both nationals and foreign nationals, without considering foreigners as a separate group, in all sectors and in all aspects of city life. However, cultural struggles and identity conflicts that



...promises –  
... "the hood"  
... location "Downtown"





are emerging in contemporary Europe, especially in the context of increasing immigration issues, raise new challenges for European cultural policies to cope with inclusion and integration with populations poorly integrated into local cultural life.

By varying the contexts, sizes, politics, and cultural histories of cities designated ECC, the analysis includes cases of cities recently concerned by the "European Capitals of Culture" program, such as Marseille (ECC-2013), Umeå (ECC-2014), Wrocław (ECC-2016), to their counterparts who were elected ECC in the past (Genoa (ECC-2004), Bologna (ECC-2000)). From this framework, we aim to explore the implementing and anchoring processes of European dynamics at the local level, but also to understand how the ECC political mechanism integrates the collective memory of targeted populations. Finally, our project focuses on heterogeneous immersive cultural institutions (operas, theaters, museums) that are analyzed and compared according to the criteria of their impact on inclusion of populations poorly integrated into local cultural life.

We started our survey with two major theaters of the city of Marseille that were integrated into the Marseille ECC-2013 program: the National Theater of La Criée and the Theater of Le Merlan-National Scene. This choice was determined by two main causes: (1) the two theaters are durably anchored in the Marseille's cultural landscape, and (2) they present dissimilar institutional profiles, and are located in two economically and socially very opposite neighborhoods.

The methodology of our research is built on the articulation of several types of statistical and cartographical data analysis. To deepen our results, we also proceeded several paper and online questionnaires with a number of detailed questions on personal cultural experiences and practices. For the survey by questionnaire, we've chosen five different shows from the program of the Theater of La Criée, and five shows from the program of the Theater of Le Merlan. This approach allowed us to analyze the socio-demographical differences between the audiences of each show, and to understand how inclusive programs of the two theaters meet the expectations of different types of spectators.

*Here we present several conclusions of our analysis:*

1. We can observe a weak correlation between (1) the inclusive European policies applied to cultural institutions and (2) the participation of audiences poorly integrated into local cultural life. In the two cases of theaters investigated during our survey - the Theater of La Criée (downtown theater) and the

Theater of Le Merlan (peripheral theater) -, immigrants, young and poor populations were underrepresented among the audiences of both "classical" and "contemporary" shows.

2. The regular theater audiences can easily reach the peripheral districts to participate to new cultural offerings, while populations poorly integrated into cultural life are not attracted by cultural offerings from downtown Marseille, despite the new "inclusive" program of the La Criée central theater.

3. In the case of the Theater of Le Merlan, the local populations from the poor northern districts of Marseille are weakly integrated in the Theater's program and offerings, despite the spatial proximity with the institution and the "inclusive" program focused on hip-hop, juggling and musical shows. However, our survey shows that several local residents have been more attracted by the youth and family shows.

The European cities and institutions could potentially become more attractive and inclusive (1) by increasing the geographical proximity of cultural institutions and amenities in low incomes neighborhoods, (2) by providing inclusive cultural programs more focused on youth and families as well as on immigrants' ordinary concerns and ambitions, (3) by improving urban mobility and public transports across the city between the center and periphery.

*Concluding comments and summary by reviewer:*

Marseille's analysis is ongoing. The next steps will be to grasp the cultural activities of the peripheral neighborhoods and districts of the city that attract more populations poorly integrated into local cultural life. The questions that arose were (1) what do the local populations expect from the pre-existing cultural institutions such as theaters, and (2) whether classical theater plays would attract bigger audiences in peripheral institutions such as the Theater of Le Merlan. (3) Are populations from the poor northern districts becoming more participative, or conversely, do they remain resilient to the European cultural policies?

*Reviewer: Greta Szendrei, Student, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg, greta.szendrei.001@student.uni.lu*

Panel Session

*Cultural Diplomacy as:  
Diversity, Human Rights*

*Date: Wednesday  
24th May, 10:45-12:15*

*Keywords: European  
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*Maxime Jaffré and  
Elena Raevskikh*

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