

Planning Culture and Time in a Mega-event: Thessaloniki as the European City of Culture in 1997

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ABSTRACT *This paper addresses the growing importance of mega-events in urban cultural development, focusing on the atypical example of the European Cities of Culture, in particular Thessaloniki in 1997. The launch of the event demonstrates the significance of the international role of cultural activities in urban and economic regeneration. Comparison of the evaluation of Thessaloniki before and after the event demonstrates a lack of strategic planning, particularly cultural and time planning, resulting in a variety of interconnected problems such as the construction of flagship projects, the lack of a city marketing perspective and the need for a tourism policy.*

Introduction

This paper addresses the importance of the role of both culture and time in the process of planning hallmark, and especially mega, events. The focus of the paper is the institution of the European Cities of Culture (ECOC), specifically on Thessaloniki, which was ECOC in 1997 (ECOCT97).

Hallmark events “are our new image builders” (Burns & Mules, 1986, cited in Hall 1989a, p. 21), i.e. they constitute an intrinsic component of place marketing. Hallmark events are commonly regarded as essential for the creation of tourism opportunities, employment, and for the increase of national and international prominence of the host community in the market-place (Hall, 1989a, p. 22). Hallmark events need to be planned and their planning “should be concerned with the anticipation and regulation of the impact of the event on the host community, and the promotion of associated development in a manner which maximises short- and long-term economic, environmental and social benefits” (Hall, 1989a, p. 21).

Hallmark events constitute one of the possible objectives of cultural planning, and, according to Landry (2000, pp. 153–154), they constitute, along with place marketing, a statement of intent, and branded concepts, the four principal symbolic triggers for the

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“creative milieu” of a city. These are major international and world expositions and fairs (trade and others), festivals, carnivals, cultural and sporting events.

Due to the locational advantages of major world cities, most of the hallmark events, especially regular ones, occur in such cities (Burton, 1991/1997, pp. 57–58). The peculiar temporal characteristics of hallmark events (ranging from events on a one-off basis to those of up to a year’s duration, such as the ECOC) highlight the increasing importance of time planning, i.e. the consumption and management of time as part of planning.

According to the 1987 Congress of the Association Internationale d’Experts Scientifique du Tourisme (AIEST), the *definition of mega-events* is based on volume (1 million visits), capital cost (DM 750 million), and psychology, e.g. a reputation as a “must see” event (Marris, 1987, p. 3; cited in Getz, 1997). Some authors add the condition of duration. According to Roche (1994, p. 1), “mega-events are short-term events with long-term consequences for the cities that stage them”. According to Ritchie (1984, p. 2; cited in Hall, 1989b), they are of “limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal, and profitability of a tourism destination on the short and/or long-term”. Getz probably provides the best definition when he says mega-events: “by way of their size and significance, are those that yield extraordinary high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige or economic impact for the host community or destination” (Getz, 1997, p. 6; also Getz, 2000, p. 210). Thus, in this paper it is accepted that there is no temporal specification for considering an event mega.¹

The establishment of the ECOC implies a two-fold recognition: the importance of culture in European unification (Bekemans, 1994), and the role of cultural activities in urban regeneration (Wynne, 1992; Evans, 1993, 2001) and economic development (Williams, 1997). The ideal is the “imaginative linkage” between cultural development and sustainability, which raises questions about exactly whose culture it is that is being promoted, which parts of the city benefit, and whether repetition and homogenization are imposed over the uniqueness of a specific culture (Fudge, 1999, p. 31).

The idea of designating a different city each year to be ECOC was launched in 1983 by Melina Mercouri, the then Greek Minister of Culture, and adopted by the European Community in 1985, with Athens becoming the first ECOC. In 1992, the EU offered eligibility to non-EU members (Sjøholt, 1994, p. 467). The origins of the event were initially considered to be mainly cultural, but economic aspects were later introduced. The event was designed, in the words of the European Commission (1985, cited in Richards, 1996a, p. 25), 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 characterised by having both common elements and a richness born of diversity”. The aims were, according to Corijn and Van Praet (1994, cited in Richards, 1996a), twofold: firstly, to make the culture of the cities accessible to a European audience, and, secondly, to create a picture of European culture as a whole. The choice of cities has been, since Glasgow in 1990, open to cities which are not established capitals of culture as specified by the European Inventory of Cultural Tourism Resources, or are not well placed in the hierarchy of urban centres (Labrianidis & Deffner, 2000). Size is not a precondition: Weimar, which was the smallest of all the ECOC, had a population of only 60,000 (Roth, 1999, p. 480). Glasgow was a turning point, because it was realized that the ECOC could be used as a catalyst for urban regeneration (García, 2004).

The ECOC is not a typical mega-event, mainly due to its temporal dimension (it usually lasts for almost a year) and its launch signifies direct action by the EU regarding cultural

matters. The first significant step was in the reinterpretation of the Treaty of Rome, where culture was defined in economic terms by the European Commission, as “the socio-economic whole formed by persons and undertakings dedicated to the production and distribution of cultural goods and services” (Richards, 1996b, p. 96). A recent significant step in this protracted process is the Proposal for Decision of the European Parliament and Council outlining the creation of a uniform means of financing and programming cultural co-operation, “Culture 2000”.

These issues require an *ex ante* and an *ex post* evaluation, because it is important to study the impact of a mega-event both before and after its occurrence, mainly in order to avoid relevant future mistakes. The study of Thessaloniki as ECOC in 1997 is the focus of this paper. The theoretical and economic implications, and some of the cultural implications, of the ECOCT97 have already been the subject of analysis (Labrianidis & Deffner, 2000; Labrianidis, 2001). Sections 4 and 5 of this paper are based on two previous studies (Labrianidis *et al.*, 1996, 1998), and some of their findings are reinterpreted in order to address the questions presented in this paper.

The *key questions* that this paper raises are the following:

- 1) What is the role of planning in an (atypical) example of a mega-event, such as the ECOC?
- 2) Which relevant factors are the most crucial in this process?
- 3) What is the link between these issues and various urban cultural development dilemmas, e.g. city marketing versus urban planning, focusing on the residents or the visitors, flagship versus small-scale projects, focus on problems or possibilities. In addition, does mega-event planning connect to the main strategic dilemmas in cultural policy (Bianchini, 1993, pp. 200–204): city centre vs. periphery tensions and the risk of gentrification (spatial dilemma); consumption vs. production (economic development dilemma); buildings (or property/capital development) vs. human networks or activity (cultural funding dilemma).
- 4) What do these issues mean for Thessaloniki?

Cultural Planning

The Relationship between Cultural and Time Planning at the Urban Level

The importance of culture has been recognized in recent years and there is even talk of a “cultural turn” in geography (Vaiou & Mantouvalou, 1999; Delladetsimas *et al.*, 2000; Naylor *et al.*, 2000). This is slowly affecting the field of planning, with the emergence of a new area of study—cultural planning. The main aim of cultural planning should be the achievement of sustainability (Nyström & Fudge, 1999), focusing on two axes: cultural industries (Wynne, 1992; Pratt, 1997; Deffner, 2000) and creativity/innovation (Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Hall & Landry, 1997; Landry, 2000). Cultural planning functions as an alternative to both traditional cultural policies and cultural policy-led regeneration strategies (Bianchini, 1999, p. 36).

Nowadays, the new field of time planning in cities is slowly attracting attention. This is related, not necessarily quantitatively, to the growing importance of leisure. Time planning has focused, till now, on Europe (Moccia, 2000), research being especially developed in France—with the concepts of chosen time (Échange et Projets, 1980) and

rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 1992); the focus in Germany has been on the structures of time (Henckel *et al.*, 1989; Eberling & Henckel, 1998); and in Italy the focus has been on gender inequality (Belloni & Bimbi, 1997; Zajczyk, 2000).

Cultural planning must be connected with time planning (Bianchini & Greed, 1999), since the two can contribute to a new approach to urban planning, focusing on the possibilities rather than the problems, from the moment that time and culture (like space) do not constitute only constraints but also resources (Deffner, 2005). This connection is especially difficult since one must specify various points of convergence (e.g. mega-events) as subjects of research. Work done so far in cultural planning indicates that, for cities to be successful (Landry *et al.*, 1996, pp. 2–7, 26–38; Landry, 2000, pp. 3–6), the interconnection between marketing and planning is crucial.

The Importance of Place Marketing—City Marketing versus Urban Planning?

For a city to become more attractive and competitive for residents, businesses and visitors, planning and design need to be complemented by an integrated marketing policy. A principal characteristic of such a policy is the use of branding devices such as “intelligent”, “educated”, “green” and “creative city” (Landry, 2000, p. 153). These slogans are potential mechanisms to focus strategy on reducing the gap between hype and reality (Landry, 2000, p. 153), something that resembles the function of cities such as theme parks (Deffner, 2002), and often stands in opposition to everyday life (Gottdiener, 1997, pp. 112–114).

Place marketing has faced much criticism, mainly in terms of being a substitute for planning. However, “planning without consideration of the property sector is not successful” (Haila, 1999, p. 265). Today we are witnessing the phenomenon of the entrepreneurial city (Hall & Hubbard, 1998), and the importance of the role of place marketing (Kearns & Philo, 1993; Gold & Ward, 1994). Place marketing, particularly vis-à-vis the local dimension, is not new (Ward, 1998), but today, especially in its new approach linked to place development (Murray, 2001), it is a necessity in the global competition between cities (Krantz & Schätzl, 1996), tourist attraction (Page, 1995), the public sector planning (Ashworth & Voogd, 1991), urban management and urban governance. Kotler *et al.* (1999) go as far as claiming that marketing is equivalent to designing the image of a place.

One of the principal aims of marketing is to attract visitors. The quest for sustainability necessitates a strategic basis and the formulation of an integrated tourism policy.

The Importance of Tourism: Focusing on the Residents or on the Visitors?

“An integral part of the image of a hallmark event will also include the marketing of the intrinsic properties of the tourist destination” (Hall, 1989a, p. 26). Cultural planning does not aim primarily to attract visitors, but the provision of a cultural infrastructure, if done on a strategic basis, benefits not only residents, but visitors as well. Place marketing benefits visitors more than existing residents. However, residents, especially those involved in tourism, benefit indirectly if new investments result.

According to Richards (1999, p. 405), the “cultural tourist has become central to the success of cultural development strategies in general and to the Cultural Capital event in particular”. He also claims that Zukin (1995), Britton (1991) and Richards (1996c) “have all argued that the amount and quality of real cultural capital² present in a city

will determine to a large extent the demand of cultural tourism” (Richards, 1999, p. 407). Place marketing is crucial for attracting urban tourism (Page, 1995), in the process of a successful bid for a mega-event, and in the subsequent satisfactory staging and audience attraction of the same.

Mega-events

The Impact of Mega-events on Urban Cultural Development

“Several key and related factors occur in the study of large-scale events: redevelopment, imaging and place promotion, and their impacts” (Hall, 1997, p. 77). A factor not yet studied in depth is the impact that mega-events have on urban cultural development. Mega-events have grown alongside modernity and their current socio-cultural context is globalization (Roche, 2000). In the post-modern epoch, globalization has a growing impact upon many facets of everyday life. The diversity of mega-events makes it impossible to generalize about their impact (Law, 1993, p. 98). What is quantifiable is their impact on international tourism (Kang & Purdue, 1994, cited in Dimanche, 1997).

Developing cultural activities improves the quality of life for a city’s inhabitants by making their leisure much more enjoyable, the diversity of events providing a plurality of choices. Leisure is where Greek influence on Western Europe is detectable, via the spread of hedonistic consumerism through tourism (Leontidou, 1993, p. 958). Diverse cultural industries, from fine arts to gastronomy (Pratt, 1997), may aid the accomplishment of various goals, such as enhancing the reputation of a city and consequently increasing opportunities for economic development. This explains the intense competition to host some internationally renowned mega-events such as the Olympic Games, Expos or the ECOC.

Although mega-events can be an opportunity to develop a city, it is inappropriate to think of cultural policy merely in terms of the economic benefits reaped. Culture, space and economy are all interconnected. Mega-events constitute a typical example of this interrelationship. Mega-events, especially if integrated into a redevelopment strategy (Hall, 1997, pp. 77–78), can be catalysts for change “by persuading people to work together around a common objective and as fast track for obtaining extra finance and get building projects off the drawing board” (Law, 1993, p. 107). Mega-events can be considered as important cultural networks involved in a dualistic concept of time: the “timeless present” (Castells’ term) of power elites, and the biological and social time of ordinary people (Roche, 2000, pp. 232–233). Property-led urban regeneration has had, according to Hall (1999, p. 198) some success in terms of localized economic regeneration, but it has not provided, according to Smyth (1994, p. 12), a solution to the problem of urban regeneration. The latter must “be seen as a long-term activity, in which diversity and relationships are enhanced” (Hall, 1999, p. 198).

Flagship projects have been criticized, by Swyngedouw *et al.* (2002), as constituting part of a new urban policy approach (based on new urban coalitions, the shift from social to economic policy, new state entrepreneurialism, selective deregulation, city marketing, etc). The claim is that planning is reduced to being the main strategy in stimulating economic growth, and that flagship projects are poorly integrated into the wider urban process and planning system, and their impact on the city remains ambiguous. An additional critique is that most flagship projects accentuate social polarization.

Reference to these (not unavoidable) problems can be found in the rest of the paper, and in order to address them systematically a strategic cultural and time plan is required. Flagship developments have “become a vehicle for the testing of marketing strategies for an area and for a project” (Smyth, 1994, p. 19). However, marketing also plays a role in small-scale projects.

The Role of Flagship Projects—Flagship versus Small-scale

Cities with different economic functions in the European urban hierarchy can profitably use cultural policies to improve their internal and external images. Mega-events provide power elites with flagships to promote their visions of the future, but they also provide ordinary people with opportunities to connect with collective identities (Roche, 2000). Flagship projects are defined as: “significant, high-profile and prestigious land and property developments which play an influential and catalytic role in urban regeneration. In the final analysis such projects will only justify their flagship status if they succeed in attracting a “flotilla” of other developments in their wake” (Bianchini *et al.*, 1992, pp. 245–246). Additional principal characteristics of flagship cultural projects are: opposition to the local (Grant & Mawle, 1999, p. 420) and to community projects (Bianchini & Santacatterina, 1997, pp. 55–56), large-scale, high or elite culture, monumentalism, international tourist attraction. These projects are part of post-modern culture (Smyth, 1994, p. 6) and are employed in all types of cities.

Among the projects, there is an emphasis on history (Zukin, 1995, pp. 122–128), especially museums (Zukin, 1995, pp. 128–133; Lorente, 1996, p. 89), which can combine traditional content with modernity in terms of both presentation and structure (e.g. the Louvre Pyramid). Thus, heritage, which is a strength for many ECOC—e.g. Weimar (Roth, 1999, p. 480)—becomes a crucial issue, with all the contradictory connotations that entails.

Flagship projects connect directly to the *three main strategic dilemmas for cultural policy* mentioned in the introduction. Flagship projects tend to foster the development of the centre. Urban regeneration projects are usually located in the centre. Localities tend to foster small-scale projects, although this is not a foregone conclusion these days as localism itself has changed. There is no direct link between flagship projects and gentrification: both flagship and small-scale projects can be located in many areas. Flagship projects are ideally located in the centre, but this depends either on the availability of large empty lots or appropriate buildings for renovation. There is no direct link between flagship projects and the emphasis on consumption. Although the redevelopment of the centre focuses on consumption, the growth of cultural industries also stimulates production. Small-scale projects emphasizing activity do not necessarily focus on production, while flagship projects involve capital development rather than activity.

Flagship projects should involve long-term cultural and time planning, including issues such as place marketing, tourism development, and urban regeneration. Without this, flagship projects are, according to Smyth (1994, p. 7), “reduced to inducing social stability, assuming the generated experience is sustainable for enough people over a long period and is targeted towards those who are potentially the harbingers of disruption. Perhaps the analysis should take a step back: what are the markets and what is the purpose of marketing a city?”. We will look at whether or not these issues were posed vis-à-vis the ECOC concept, most particularly Thessaloniki.

The ECOC as an Atypical Mega-event

The starting point for examining the concept of an ECOC (generally a year-long festival) could be the characterization of a city, e.g. New York, as a capital of culture (Zukin, 1995, pp. 147–151). This does not necessarily relate to the available cultural tourism resources (Irish Tourist Board, 1988; cited in Richards, 1996d), but to the potential of cultural industries, as studied in the case of Stockholm (Gnad, 1998).

It is difficult to draw generalized conclusions about the role of ECOC in the absence of hard evidence rooted in an analysis of individual cases. Although Glasgow has been widely presented as an example of “best practice” (Myerscough, 1992, 1994; Landry, 2002), there were some criticisms of the city’s success, and those must not be ignored (Boyle & Hughes, 1991; Booth & Boyle, 1993; Williams, 1997, ch. 10). Glasgow’s experience demonstrates that the “strategy of using hallmark events linked to image reconstruction pays dividends in the growth of urban tourism”, and has revealed the political nature of marketing (Paddison, 1993, p. 348). The success of the ECOC event had a positive long-term impact, since, according to Landry (2000, p. 154), it helped to attract new talent to the city, initiating a cycle of creativity which led to the city being designated “City of Architecture and Design” in 1999.

Socio-economic impacts were also observed in Antwerp in 1993, although the effects on employment were, according to Antonis (1998, p. 135), rather short-term. The utilization of research is another important precondition for creating positive impacts; something observed in various recent cases: Copenhagen (Andersen & Matthiessen, 1994; Hjalager, 1996), Thessaloniki (Labrianidis *et al.*, 1996, 1998), Stockholm (Gnad, 1998; Nyström & Fudge, 1999), Weimar (Roth, 1999), Bergen (Sjøholt, 1994, 1999), Helsinki (Landry, 2002).

The ECOC has been the largest and most important EU cultural initiative. It has provided resources for urban and economic regeneration, the growth of tourism, and materialization of a plurality of cultures. In the context of competition, all these factors lead to an improved quality of life, but one which cannot be used to the same degree by all social groups, all the time, and in all types of spaces. There are certain constraints, especially if there is no balanced approach to the economic, cultural, and political factors as part of a strategic cultural and time plan.

The ECOC means different things to different people and can be used in various ways. The ECOC is an extremely prestigious cultural event, but for each city it lasts for only one year. The time-span, whilst longer than a typical mega-event, is short in terms of cultural planning. Hence, unless the opportunity is firmly grasped by individual cities, there is no guarantee of major long-term benefits. We will examine whether in Thessaloniki the socio-economic powers were well prepared.

European City of Culture Thessaloniki '97: The Evaluation of Planning a Mega-event

The Importance of the Particular Mega-event for Thessaloniki

The magnitude of this event was determined by the following factors: a) the Organization of the European City of Culture Thessaloniki '97 (OECOCT97) carried, by Greek standards, an extremely large budget; b) the initiation of a spatial infrastructure of cultural activities; c) a number of new cultural events and cultural institutions appeared for the first

time; d) an extremely rich, diverse, and high quality Cultural Programme was offered to the city for the first time. Thessaloniki is one of the six “autonomous” ECOC (Glasgow 1990, Luxembourg 1995, Thessaloniki 1997, Stockholm 1998, Weimar 1999, Graz 2003) that were not among the 35 cities with more than 10 cultural attractions in the European Cultural Tourism Inventory (Irish Tourist Board, 1988; cited in Richards, 1996d); e) there was wide public interest, accompanied by intense criticism, surrounding what occurred in the city due to ECOCT97; f) there were significant direct benefits (of income and employment) to the prefecture of Thessaloniki; g) a group of people within the OECOCT managed to gain significant experience in organizing large-scale cultural events and the professions supporting culture in the city managed to benefit from the increased activity.

The assessment of this mega-event is not such an easy task.³ This paper attempts the appraisal of the mid-term impact of the ECOCT97 through both the Cultural Programme and the Technical Programme.

The Connection of ECOC Thessaloniki '97 with the General Directions of EC Urban Policy

An extremely large number of activities took place: 1,271 events and 75 documentaries were staged, whilst 58 books and 5 magazines were published. During Antwerp's term as ECOC, in comparison, the number of single events was 1,979 with 463 different kinds of events, 70% of the total being art events (Antonis, 1998, p. 133). Prior to the ECOCT97, the average number of events organized annually was approximately 200 (Theodoridis, 1998), whilst the general average between 1995 and 2004 was approximately 500 (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, p. 59). The majority of events consisted of musical events (27.7%), exhibitions (15.6%) and stage productions (14.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Total events and performances

Type of event	Events		Performances	
	No.	%	No.	%
Conjectural arts: exhibitions, Design Museum of Thessaloniki; photography: Museum of Photography	198	15.6	5,953	58.0
Workshops; educational programmes	75	5.9	1,486	14.5
Sports	10	0.8	30	0.3
Archaeology	12	0.9	203	2.0
General: various	119	9.4	596	5.8
Special actions	5	0.4	45	0.4
Lounges	17	1.3	17	0.2
Theatre	189	14.9	601	5.9
Cinema	40	3.1	161	1.6
Literature	95	7.5	125	1.2
Music; opera	352	27.7	515	5.0
Conferences	95	7.5	390	3.8
Dance	64	5.0	135	1.3
Total	1,271	100.0	10,257	100.0

Source: Labrianidis *et al.*, 1998.

The large number of performances (10,257) meant that people had the choice of an average of 27.8 events per day, a particularly large number by Thessaloniki standards. In fact, Tüpper (1997, cited in Roth, 1999) calls ECOCT97 an “Olympics of the arts”.

A qualitative characteristic of the events was innovation, which can be linked to creativity (Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Hall & Landry, 1997; Landry, 2000). ECOCT97 was innovative in the sense that it introduced “new types” of cultural activities including: a) Workshops: schools of cultural production for young persons; b) Lounges: areas offering immigrants the opportunity to amuse themselves, to be engaged in creative activities, or attend language courses and lectures; c) From Far Beyond: it presented the Greek element of Diaspora as a synthetic historical factor of globalization; d) Special Actions, concerning people with special needs.

One could delve beneath the surface and search for a link between these activities and the four main planks of EC urban policy (CEC, 1998), which focus on the problems rather than the possibilities, while the combination of time and cultural planning could contribute to a different approach to planning, activities (b) and (d) are examples of attempts at social inclusion, which must be linked to the regeneration of downgraded urban zones. Activities (a) and (c) are indirectly linked to the challenge of globalization, economic restructuring and the strengthening of employment—the latter characterizes the general operation of ECOCT97.

An additional aspect of globalization is the degree of participation of non-Greek performers. A high percentage of events were performed by Greek artists (69.5%), or in co-operation with Greek artists (7.7%). A peculiar nationalism was on the rise, due to the conflict between Greece and FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and unfortunately the history and contribution of non-Greek nationalities was largely ignored.

Somewhat perversely, this contributed to the reinforcement of local potential, which constitutes, along with good governance, the third plank of the EC urban policy. Thessaloniki was historically a multi-ethnic city, comprising Greeks, Turks and Jews, although today multi-ethnicity does not characterize the city.

The basic characteristic of the Cultural Programme was heterogeneity, which Xidakis (1997) accurately characterized as the “apotheosis of everything for everyone”. The branding device was to present Thessaloniki as a city of the Orient and also of the West, of the North and also of the South, as a capital of refugees, as a Balkan and also a European city (OECOCT97).

The management of this heterogeneity is also linked to the issue of good governance. In general, OECOCT97 became a “cultural impresario” rather than a cultural policy maker. Although it seems that there was a preoccupation with the differentiation between globalization and locality, in essence there was no relevant debate. Neither was there any debate regarding whether OECOCT97 should promote high or popular culture. These cultural planning issues are linked with global and local sustainability, i.e. the fourth main plank of the EC urban policy.

The Necessity of Relating Time and Cultural Planning to City Marketing and Tourism Policy

Many of the performances with paid admission were poorly attended: 37.6% of events had attendances below 34%, while only 21.6% had over 75%. The relatively low attendance

rates must be attributed to: a) the excessive supply of events in 1997; b) the extremely high time-concentration of events (especially between May and September, which constitutes the tourist season in Greece—this is a characteristic of tourism in Greece and reflects the lack of tourism policy and time planning); and c) the very large number of similar events aimed at the same audience. Factors (a) and (c) are matters of cultural planning.

A high percentage of events (20.5%) occurred outside the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, though the number of performances was significantly lower (7%). Those events took place in the summer (Figure 1), mainly in the neighbouring Prefecture of Halkidiki—Thessaloniki's main holiday resort (39%). However, it is apparent that approximately 90% of the ECOCT97 events were aimed at inhabitants of Thessaloniki. Potentially they could also attract tourists in the area.

The profile of the audience was derived through field research in which 1,021 questionnaires were completed on site. Three main parameters were used to reveal the profile of the audience: place of residence, occupation and level of education. The criterion of *place of residence* was utilized as a basis for geographical delimitation on three main levels. Firstly, the distinction between international tourists and Greeks: the first constituted no more than 10% of event audiences. Approximately half of the international tourists were recorded at two events (the U2 concert and the exhibition of the treasures of Mount Athos). Secondly, the place of residence of Greek visitors: the vast majority of the audience resided in the city of Thessaloniki (80%). A different picture was observed in Antwerp, where inhabitants of the province of Antwerp accounted for only 55% of the total number of participants and 46% of the people visiting the inner city were foreigners (Antonis, 1998, p. 134). This relates to the interrelated issues involved in a mega-event: cultural planning, time planning, marketing and tourism policy. Thirdly, the local level: only one out of four residents of the city of Thessaloniki came from its peripheral municipalities. This may be because the majority of events took place in the municipality of Thessaloniki.

The most significant parameter was the *level of education*. There was no interviewee with primary education who attended more than 10 events. Both men and women tended to attend more events as the level of education rose (Table 2). The majority of the regular attendants were in the middle age group (26–40). The explanation for these attitudes must be linked to Bourdieu's cultural capital (see note 2). Approximately one-third of the audience was rather circumstantial (attended 1–3 events) and only

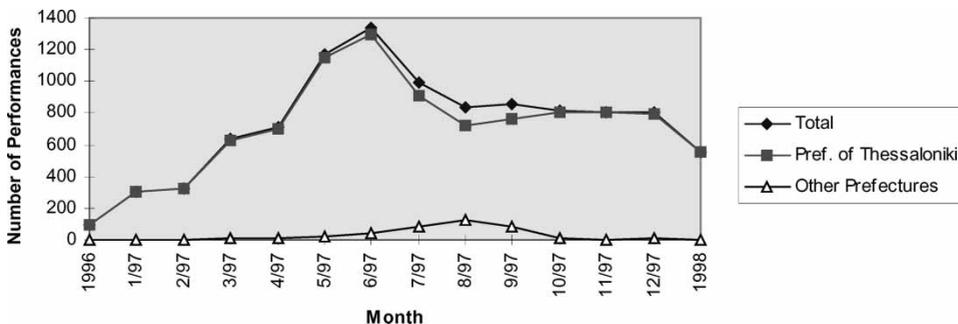


Figure 1. Variation in the number of performances of all events (Prefecture of Thessaloniki and other prefectures)

Table 2. Frequency of attendance of audience (percentages) according to gender and education

No. of events attended	Men			Women		
	1–3	4–10	>10	1–3	4–10	>10
Level of education						
Primary	50.0	50.0	0.0	91.7	8.3	0.0
Secondary	51.1	18.2	30.7	40.0	24.4	35.6
Tertiary	32.5	26.1	41.4	24.9	28.7	46.4

Source: Labrianidis *et al.*, 1998.

two-thirds had a modest (4–10 events) or steady (more than 10 events) attendance at events (Table 3). This could be attributed to the interrelationship between cultural planning (e.g. excessive supply—see above), time planning, and marketing.

As far as occupation is concerned, civil servants were the most regular attendants, followed by private sector employees, artists and, to a lesser extent, pensioners. Housewives and the unemployed were only occasional attendants (Table 4). One could argue that in the case of housewives perhaps the most important factor, apart from time constraints, was the insufficient marketing of the city that did not address specific groups of residents for the particular event. Although the unemployed have increased leisure time, this is, according to Rojek (1985, p. 134), “redundant” leisure, and the lack of a preferential pricing policy limited their attendance.

There were a number of events of particular importance and international significance (inevitably very expensive to produce), marking a highly diversified pattern of response. Five events alone absorbed 24.2% of the Cultural Programme budget. This is typical for the cases of cultural planning in which the economic aspect is dominant. These blockbuster events had multiple effects in that they resulted in the promotion of the ECOG, higher attendances, and the promotion of the “image” of Thessaloniki, showing the impact of marketing both for residents and visitors.

The Cultural Programme had considerable financial resources, surpassed only by Copenhagen before (in 1996) and Lille afterwards (in 2004), while the total operating expenditure of ECOCT97 was the highest between 1995 and 2004 (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, pp. 63, 86). However, the outcome fell short of expectations. This is attributable to both the heterogeneous character of the Programme and to its unrealistic time schedule, i.e. a combination of a lack of cultural and time planning.

The Cultural Programme lacked *time planning* basically due to the unavailability of appropriate spaces. This prevented the arrival of various internationally-renowned art groups. As a result, 235 programmed events had to be cancelled. Last minute designation of locations, plus some changes in the location of programmed events, confused the public

Table 3. Sample distribution of audience according to frequency of attendance of events

Number of events	No.	%
1–3	297	33.0
4–10	235	26.1
>10	368	40.9
Total	900	100.0

Source: Labrianidis *et al.*, 1998.

Table 4. Frequency of attendance of audience according to occupation

Occupation	1–3 (%)	4–10 (%)	>10 (%)
Student	39.1	29.2	31.7
Employee	34.7	22.4	42.9
Housewife	48.0	20.0	32.0
Civil servant	22.7	28.3	49.0
Self-employed	32.9	25.9	41.2
Unemployed	45.7	22.9	31.4
Artist	27.9	25.6	46.5
Employer	25.0	37.5	37.5
Other (retired)	33.3	16.7	50.0
Average	34.8	24.5	40.7

Source: Labrianidis *et al.*, 1998.

and engendered negative publicity. This constitutes a typical example of the interconnection between planning and marketing.

The Cultural Programme is extremely difficult to evaluate. As far as an increase in an “arts audience” is concerned, it was successful. However, the true success of ECOCT97 will have to be judged by whether this increase is sustained, and whether it leads to an increase in audiences for high quality cultural events. These presuppose the existence of a strategic plan.

The Lack of Strategic Planning

Property or Capital versus Network or Activity

The Technical Programme of ECOCT97 constituted a large-scale intervention in the city. Over a very short period new cultural institutions and a significant cultural infrastructure was created, capable of hosting a variety of events. Furthermore, there was action aimed at “changing the image of the city” by displaying its public spaces and its historical continuity. Some 56.9% of the Programme budget went to finance cultural infrastructure (thus enforcing property or capital rather than activity or network), whilst the remaining 43.1% was spent on various urban regeneration projects.

The main characteristic of the Technical Programme was the dispersion of its funds to a plethora of projects (383), with the exception of 10 large projects (not, however, flagships) accounting for 45.6% of the total budget. The Programme increased the existing spaces for cultural activities. However, the additional facilities had similar technical features. This was a not uncommon problem of cultural planning, since before the advent of ECOCT97, most cultural venues shared the same lack of technical facilities. Unfortunately, the new spaces are now mostly underused and economically problematic. This is due to the fact that ECOCT97 operated in fewer spaces than those which had been deployed before 1997, since most of these were being renovated during 1997. Today there are significantly fewer performances and significantly more spaces, leading, inevitably, to underuse and to a correspondingly high respective maintenance cost.

The Cultural Programme took place in a restricted number of cultural spaces (14 spaces hosted 67% of the events with entrance fees). Caution is always required regarding the utility of new spaces, as well as the financial viability of these spaces due to high

operating costs. This constitutes another example of the importance of the economic dimension of cultural planning, or rather the lack of it, in connection with the lack of time planning.

Issues of Flagship Development in Relation to Individual Buildings, Time Planning, and Politics

The Technical Programme was not actually a programme, in terms of a methodology, clear objectives and resource limits. It was rendered even less effective by failure to keep to budgets or time schedules. This constitutes yet another example of the importance of the economic dimension of time planning. The causes of these problems are deeply rooted in Greek society itself, and the OECOC97 simply did not manage to overcome them. The lack of planning (and especially strategic planning) is a central element of Greek society, and various authors, e.g. Mitsos (2000), claim that planning could be “imposed” by the EU, something which, in a way, did happen, albeit to a limited degree. It is characteristic that, in the case of Athens, a Council of Europe study concluded that: “the key problem appears to be the difficulty in establishing a planned approach to cultural provision, which would be needed because of the detrimental impacts of urbanization on the identity and quality of life of many of the city’s neighbourhoods” (Bianchini & Santacatterina, 1997, p. 79). One could argue that these arguments also apply to the case of Thessaloniki, as well as most other Greek cities.

The “flagship” idea advanced in the Technical Programme takes for granted integration into a Strategic Plan for the city. This constitutes almost a reversal of the common practice in the use of flagship projects, i.e., on the one hand, as a fragmented intervention-substitute for comprehensive planning, and, on the other hand, as an eclectic planning style where attention to design, detail, morphology and aesthetics is paramount. Even though a *building* cannot by itself transform the standard of cultural life in a city, it could contribute positively to it. The ideal flagship type for Thessaloniki would be the “innovative-international” one.⁴ Such a project could have put Thessaloniki on the map of internationally-significant venues. It could have made the city attractive to high quality cultural activities. It would have remained a living symbol of the city, like the Sydney Opera Building, even if the initial reactions were negative (Hall, 1981). This, of course, cannot be taken for granted, but with the appropriate policy means it could occur, provided that the building itself were important in architectural terms and that it followed the standards for high quality events.

The new Concert Hall in Thessaloniki can be considered the closest approximation to a flagship in the city, but its architecture is nothing exceptional, its location not particularly good, and its programme, up till now, nothing special, even if its artistic director believes (Terzopoulou, 2001, p. 95) that there is always something better than the expected.

The Technical Programme turned out to be a list of projects which included all the “urgent” and “chronic” city problems that needed solving. It was the result of intense bargaining between different groups. It was neither prioritized so as to form a *time plan*, nor a negotiated compromise between interested parties to form a coherent agenda of strategic goals for the development of the city. This underlines the importance of the politics so evident in the case of mega-events: there is even talk of the “festivalization of urban politics”, as the result of the dominant role of flagship projects in urban development (Häußermann & Siebel, 1993; Roth, 1999).

The Technical Programme detracted significantly from the time schedule set, which constitutes a crucial dimension in time planning. Only a fraction of the projects out of the total budget were completed by December 1996, while over half (56.6%) of the projects and a larger percentage of the budget (82.2%) were not completed until May 1998. There are two basic interpretations of this, and both indicate the necessity of combining cultural and time planning. Firstly, if the Programme was designed with the prospect of the projects being completed in 1997, then it represents a complete failure.

Secondly, if it had been known that many projects would not be ready for 1997, then the public adoption of such a strategy would have been acceptable in the light of the long-term contribution to the cultural infrastructure of the city and the pressure for completion would have been unnecessary. In Thessaloniki, the fast method of direct auctioning was chosen in most cases, though it was usually more expensive and often less efficient. Moreover, the design and architectural aspects were clearly subjugated to the interests of the construction companies (see also Tzonos, 1998). This whole process is labelled “fast track planning” and involves the waiving of normal procedures in acknowledgement of the urgency of the short time frame in mega-events (Hall, 1989a, p. 26; Thorne & Munro-Clark, 1989).

The 80 billion drachmas allocated to the city of Thessaloniki for the Technical Programme was a tremendous opportunity to claim a new and enhanced role for the city, and fortuitously came at a time when the opening up of the Balkan countries could be used to advantage. However, the *results fell far short of expectations*. The significant opportunity for raising the status of Thessaloniki in the European hierarchy of urban centres—according to Lever (1993, p. 938) it is placed in class 7—was missed (Labrianidis & Deffner, 2000).

A coherent Technical Programme would have enhanced the status of the city, engendered a strategic cultural plan and provided a better quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The fact that the opportunity was forgone has three primary causes: a) a huge and complex task, to be planned and executed over a short time scale, was assigned to a new organization with no administrative experience, or direct knowledge of the problems to be encountered; b) the Board of Directors of the ECOCT97 did not manage to operate as a source of strategic planning; c) most importantly, there is a characteristic lack of strategic planning in most aspects of Greek society (including time and cultural planning). The inability to compile a comprehensive programme should not be seen as a result of contingent factors; it has much deeper roots in the intrinsic characteristics of the Greek society, e.g. the dominance of politics, and especially clientelism, over societal organization.

Comparison of Thessaloniki ECOCT97 with Other Cultural Interventions

At the level of strategic planning, there have been examples of other ECOCT that demonstrate good practice. Copenhagen utilized ECOCT status as a strategic planning tool in relation to the importance of marketing (Andersen & Matthiessen, 1994). In particular, the aim was to combine a long-term strategy for the development of a city of culture with the improvement of the image of the city (Hjalager, 1996). Bergen explored a similar connection between culture and marketing as strategic development devices (Sjøholt, 1994, 1999).

The budget of technical works represented 81.4% of the total budget of the ECOCT97 and this, combined with the final appointment of an engineer as managing director, showed an emphasis on technical aspects, which differentiates Thessaloniki from all the other ECOCT—according to the available data (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, pp. 68, 88).

An ambitious large-scale parallel plan for redefining the city's public spaces was never really put into practice. Salient points of this plan could be: the redesign of its historic axes, the re-interpretation of the role of the city's important monuments within the urban fabric, the redefinition of the relationship between the city and its waterfront, the reinstallation of a feeling of urbanity in the most marginalized areas of the urban complex, and the expansion of the metropolitan area (Kalogirou, 2003).

The central dilemma of whether to disperse funding to various projects, or concentrate on a *flagship project*, was never confronted. Most funding can be concentrated on a flagship project, such as a high technical specification building complex to serve as an international attraction, something that has been often successfully implemented in the USA and Europe. Cultural flagships like the Albert Dock in Liverpool, the Antigone district in Montpellier, and the Museum Quarter in Frankfurt, have all become powerful symbols of urban renaissance.

As far as isolated buildings are concerned, international experience has demonstrated that buildings of aesthetic value designed by renowned architects are usually very beneficially promoted. Recent examples are the "Pompidou" National Centre of Art and Culture by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, and the Jean-Paul Getty Museum at Malibu (Meier, 1998) by Richard Meier. The most typical example is the Guggenheim Museum of Modern Art in Bilbao, which was completed in 1998 and designed by the American architect Frank Gehry. Its promotion through a successful place marketing strategy has also benefited the city of Bilbao, and the general impression is that there was a positive impact on urban development and tourism (Plaza, 1999, 2000a, 2000b), although contrary views also exist focusing on the difficulties in the economic and social recovery of the city (Gómez, 1998; Gómez & González, 2001). The lesson for Thessaloniki is that a carefully planned flagship project connected to a city marketing and tourism policy could constitute the basis both for its successful operation as ECOC and for its long-term development.

Other ECOC had differing key issues of *cultural planning*, although the lack of connection with time planning is an important common characteristic. Antwerp managed to promote the image of an historic town offering a plurality of choices (Munsters, 1996, p. 120). However, it proved necessary to extend the organization of cultural events in order to enhance its image as a city of arts and culture. Better co-ordination is still required among the cultural institutions and between the cultural and other sectors, e.g. tourism (Antonis, 1998, p. 136).

The International Role of Thessaloniki

The funding of the Technical Programme was extremely generous. A comparison of the 80 billion drachmas with the Community Support Framework Operational Programmes of the region of Central Macedonia (250 billion drachmas) and of the region of Western Macedonia (103 billion) for six years (1994–1999) is more than enlightening.

Why was such *generous funding* given to ECOCT97? There are at least four answers. Firstly, it reflects the prevalent belief that the abrupt changes in the Central and Eastern Europe countries would affect the geopolitical position of Greece. It was a period when the so-called economic penetration of Greek companies into the Balkans was on the daily political agenda. It was widely believed that this economic penetration would substantially promote the economic development of the country, particularly its northern

regions, while Thessaloniki was “bound to become” the “Metropolis of the Balkans” (Labrianidis, 1996).

Secondly, it was a period of significant tension between Greece and FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), regarding the name Macedonia. This tension was much higher in Thessaloniki and in the region of Central and Western Macedonia. It was a period when civic pride was very low, and in that sense the nomination of Thessaloniki as the ECOC 1997 was expected to help revitalize the city and highlight its “supreme” European profile.

Thirdly, the city definitely needed modern cultural buildings built to high specifications, as well as improvements to its urban network. These needs took on greater urgency with the nomination of Thessaloniki as the ECOC, because the government wanted to honour an institution that Greece had introduced. At that time, the cultural infrastructure of Thessaloniki bore no comparison to previous ECOC (particularly Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Florence, Copenhagen and Madrid).

Finally, it could have allayed suspicions that the government is more concerned about Athens than Thessaloniki. Even though, in the absence of a coherent strategic plan, Thessaloniki itself is partly responsible for this situation, it is possible that the government took that decision to calm the reactions stemming from concerns that most major projects were taking place in Athens. This was aggravated by the demands that the 2004 Olympics made on funding, even though Thessaloniki was an “Olympic City” and received some additional funds. Hence, the budget of the Technical Programme of OECOCT97 was increased substantially over the years (48.4 billion drachmas in 1994 and 78 billion in 1997).

Conclusions

It is now appropriate to return to the key questions posed at the end of the introduction. An atypical mega-event such as the ECOC needs strategic planning, something that can be appropriately achieved through the combination of cultural and time planning. The strategic planning of mega-events involves a variety of crucial, and interconnected, factors such as constructing flagship projects, having a city marketing perspective and formulating a tourism policy. Throughout this process, the relevance of various urban cultural development dilemmas comes to the fore.

In particular, cultural planning, especially in combination with time planning, includes a series of *dilemmas*: “theoretical framework” as contrasted with “practical application”, plurality/constraints, production/consumption issues, popular/high culture considerations, innovation/tradition, local/global dimensions, city centre/periphery issues, networks/buildings, marketing and planning, management and accountability, governance/leadership issues, social inclusion or exclusion, problems and possibilities, etc. Harvey (1989) also refers to the dilemmas posed by consideration of fragments/totality and ephemerality/enduring values. In the context of mega-events, there are additional dilemmas: competition and sustainability, flagship as opposed to small scale concerns, long-term/short-term effects, tourist/resident considerations, and the uniqueness or routinization of everyday life (Lefebvre, 1992) or homogenization (Fudge, 1999), the event/process issues, planning considerations regarding isolated/integrated planning (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, pp. 64–65), and the sense of place set against the failure to construct a cultural identity and to increase civic pride, etc.

As far as the main strategic dilemmas of cultural policy are concerned, in ECOCT97 there was an emphasis on capital (or property) rather than activity (or network), as well as a concentration on the capital of the region rather than decentralization. In terms of planning, this focus on infrastructure was contradictory from the moment it was combined with pressure for short-term investments.

The aforementioned issues have the following *implications for ECOCT97*: that it was a great opportunity for the development (including cultural) of the city, which in turn implies improving the image of the city, raising the civic pride, contributing to the, short-term and long-term, growth of income and employment, enhancing the position of the city in the tourism market, creating a sustainable long-term setting for cultural activities, upgrading the role of the city in the European urban hierarchy, and creating a “vision” for the development for the city.

Actually ECOCT97 can be seen as a series of “missed opportunities”. A crucial one was the failure to change the image of the city, either through its huge Technical Programme, or to seize a unique opportunity for the cultural development of Thessaloniki and the promotion of the city in Europe. This opportunity stemmed not only from the substantial funding provided to Thessaloniki for the Cultural Programme, but also by the nomination itself as an ECOC, since artists consider their participation at an ECOC event to be a recognition of their work.

ECOCT97 failed to raise the civic pride of the inhabitants of Thessaloniki, to dispel widespread discontent, usually expressed through resentment against Athens, or to unite the city in a vision of improved infrastructure and socio-economic conditions. Such a communal spirit did exist before the nomination of Thessaloniki and for a short period after, only to fade dramatically during the early months of 1997. Civic pride over an effectively managed event is developed even if most of the preparation for a mega-event does not involve the community (Mueller & Fenton, 1989, p. 275). Thus, civic pride does not relate only to psychology—including the “psychic income” (Burns & Mules, 1986, cited in Hall, 1989a, p. 28)—but also to marketing and management.

The economic aspects of *cultural planning* are crucial. The more direct ones relate to income and employment. A simple indication of this importance is that, according to conservative estimates, the total additional income to the local economy (66,425 million drachmas) represents 4.3% of the current income (1994 GDP: 1,530,695 million drachmas) of the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, whilst the total additional employment (5,950 people) represents more than 2% of the area labour force (Table 5). However, in Antwerp some 6,500 people were involved in the project, although this “hardly gave rise to permanent job creation after 1993” (Antonis, 1998, p. 135). The construction of the works and the realization of the activities create a temporary income; the crucial issue is the way that the infrastructure will be developed and managed in order to achieve permanent results.

ECOCT97 failed to establish the city as a new destination in the cultural tourism market, which in any case, according to Richards, is difficult (1999, p. 411). Thessaloniki managed to take advantage of its nomination as ECOC to strengthen its weak cultural infrastructure and its wider urban landscape. The ECOCT97 altered, perhaps temporarily, the relative indifference in the city towards cultural events. An extremely large number of events were hosted during 1997 (six times the yearly average). These events covered almost all aspects of artistic production; some were of a particularly high standard and may have “educated” a certain part of the population, increasing the demand for cultural events.

Table 5. Estimation of income and employment effects of ECOCT97 (1997 constant prices)

Expense category	Income (m DRS)			Employment		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
<i>Optimistic Estimation (r = 1.5)</i>						
Technical Programme	41,832	20,916	62,748	3,747	3,803	7,550
Cultural Programme	9,267	4,634	13,901	0	843	843
Organisation operation costs	4,675	2,338	7,013	449	425	874
Visitors	1,000	500	1,500	0	91	91
Total	56,774	28,388	85,162	4,196	5,162	9,358
<i>Conservative Estimation (r = 1.17)</i>						
Technical Programme	41,832	7,111	48,943	3,747	1,292	5,039
Cultural Programme	9,267	1,575	10,842	0	286	286
Organisation operation costs	4,675	795	5,470	449	145	594
Visitors	1,000	170	1,170	0	31	31
Total	56,774	9,651	66,425	4,196	1,754	5,950

r: is the regional multiplier and it takes two values, i.e. that of the optimistic scenario $r = 1.5$, and that of the pessimistic scenario $r = 1.17$.

Source: Labrianidis *et al.*, 1998, p. 216.

The high attendance at the high cultural events, as well as the enthusiastic participation at the popular cultural events, demonstrated that there is a call for all forms of art. The impetus of the ECOCT97 must be maintained and it seems that the only way to achieve is by continuing the supply of high quality art. We have the example of Amsterdam, where research carried out in 1997 (ten years after its year as ECOC), showed that the new producers display a preference for mixing high and popular culture (Richards, 1999, p. 411).

The continuation of such events in the city, in connection with the established annual International Film Festival, could elevate Thessaloniki to the elite of European “cultural cities”. It would justify the shift of certain cultural events away from Athens. It would also reduce the feeling of Thessaloniki being an “orbital” city, and would help the local economy by boosting a number of occupations supportive to artistic events. In the long run, it would help to elevate the standards of arts education in the city as well as fostering beneficial competition among local artists and groups.

However, the creation of new institutions and the reinforcement of existing ones cannot be a panacea. Issues concerning the production of art and its promotion to the public may prove to be much more significant and decisive. One such issue is the invigoration of artistic creation, which, even though it increased in 1997, needs even greater stimulation: literature prizes, scholarships to artists, commissions to composers, enrichment of the public galleries, etc. Such development could even stem the exodus of successful local artists to Athens.

ECOCT97 failed to create a sustainable long-term setting for cultural activities in terms of both consumption and production. It failed to create an art market which could in turn increase the number of events offered annually and also enhance the quality of art in Thessaloniki. The improvement in the cultural activities offered to the city must be seen as an agent for development. In this context, the role of the arts as a significant

economic activity with direct and indirect multiplier effects should be taken into account (Myerscough *et al.*, 1988), but not overestimated (Landry *et al.*, 1996, pp. 10, 15).

Thessaloniki, like most large and medium-sized Greek cities, lacked basic cultural infrastructure and provision systems. It was the title of ECOC that brought the status rather than the status of the city that has brought the title of ECOC (e.g. Paris). ECOCT97 could have followed one of the tested formulae (e.g. urban regeneration and a “flagship” project) in an attempt to make the city more attractive for both residents and visitors, as well as enhancing the role of Thessaloniki at both national and European level. The upgrading of the role of Thessaloniki in the European urban hierarchy is by no means an easy task and it requires a precise strategy incorporating elements of cultural and time planning.

Finally, ECOCT97 failed to create a “vision” for the development of Thessaloniki. This failure is due basically to the entrenched socio-economic forces in Thessaloniki that lacked the “vision” and leadership needed to enable the city to transcend its present “small town” attitude. This should be the greatest cause for concern because it could create similar problems of urban governance and management in the future. However, the existence of problems in governance structures is a common characteristic of almost all ECOC (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, pp. 47–48).

Also, there are various issues in relation to the long-term effects and keys to success which affected Thessaloniki, in common with other ECOC. The emphasis has generally been on “hard”, i.e. tangible, legacies (buildings and infrastructure, jobs and tourists, events) rather than “soft”, i.e. intangible (image enhancement, increased confidence) ones. Success was based on a variety of factors, such as the context of the event, the extent of local involvement, the importance of long-term planning, strong content, good communication and marketing, strong leadership and a committed team, and political will (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, pp. 133, 138).

Hopefully the failures of ECOCT97 will provide a *useful lesson* in three directions. Firstly, other cities, especially Greek, could be more successful as ECOC. However, Patras, which is the next Greek ECOC in 2006, has begun its preparations very late (mainly due to lack of time planning). Secondly, other cities will be able to grasp the opportunities offered by mega-events. Although the Athens Olympics 2004 had a cultural axis focusing on the Cultural Olympiad, there was no strategic cultural plan. Also, the various delays explicitly showed the lack of a time plan, despite the ultimate success of the event. Thirdly, and most importantly, Thessaloniki will be able to turn to its advantage these cumulative experiences, which have increased, albeit in a negative way, with the failure to claim the EXPO 2008, in order to play an important role in the wider Balkan area.

Notes

1. There are some reservations about the use of the term “mega-event”, rather than hallmark event, in the case of ECOC—and Thessaloniki, as an example— but based on the definition of Getz in connection of the non-acceptance of the condition of duration, the term “mega-event” is preferable.
2. According to Richards, “real cultural capital forms a vital link between explanations of cultural consumption, as advanced by Bourdieu, and production of the supply of cultural tourism attractions as indicated by Harvey” (Richards, 1999, p. 407). According to Honneth, Bourdieu defines cultural capital as “all the learnable skills and competencies that enable individuals to handle the social potentials of scientific information, aesthetic enjoyment and everyday pleasures” (Honneth, 1986, p. 58).

3. As was mentioned in the introduction, sections 4 and 5 of this paper are based on two previous studies (Labrianidis *et al.*, 1996, 1998). The two studies were carried out with the scientific responsibility of one of the authors (Labrianidis) and were commissioned by the OECOCT97. The first study was aiming at the location of possible problems in order to take the necessary measures during the event. The second study was aiming at the ex-post evaluation of ECOCT97 in order to reach conclusions that will help the functioning of planning in Greece. In the first study there was a review of the international literature of cultural mega-events, of the institution of the ECOC, as well as an evaluation of its operation till then. In the second study the emphasis was on the analysis of the data of ECOCT97 (Cultural and Technical Programme), and on the behaviour of the audience. For this reason, 1021 questionnaires were compiled in 46 events of the ECOCT97 in order to deduce the profile of the average viewer/listener, as well as 15 interviews with key individuals.
4. An "innovative-international" flagship project is defined by Smyth (1994, pp. 77–80) as "I-type project", an example, not typical, being the leisure facilities in Baltimore.

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