

## TOWARDS URBAN GOVERNANCE IN POLAND – WROCLAW 2016 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE?

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper explains the state of urban governance in a Central European city, focusing on the case study of Wrocław, the fourth biggest city in Poland. Unfortunately, while the city's economy is doing quite well, especially in comparison with other big cities in Poland, local governance is yet to become a key asset and the city lacks an appropriate citizens-oriented policy and urban governance framework. That is why the paper is devoted to the opportunity provided by the initiative of the European Capital of Culture 2016 (ECoC), which can be considered as a pretext to introduce new strategies which better meet deficit solutions for new modes of governance at local level. The ECoC is a type of event which has a great potential and necessity to generate public interest, to reach out to and mobilise various segments of local stakeholders and to bring to the surface diverse constellations of open and invisible power relations. As such this important European initiative is a real challenge for cities to meet this dual expectation by creating an event of European dimension while supporting local governance. The paper, which considers the on-going evaluation approach, juxtaposes the assumptions made for Wrocław's bid as a ECoC 2016 with their current implementation (as of mid-February 2016) in the light of the urban governance concept. It provides an answer to the question of how far Wrocław has gone as the ECoC 2016 on its way towards urban governance.*

**Keywords** - European Capital of Culture, Local development, Urban governance, Urban policy, Wrocław as European Capital of Culture 2016.

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## INTRODUCTION

2015, the year of the 25th anniversary of the political transition in Central and Eastern Europe, marks more than two decades of the assumption that 1989 brought not only democratisation to this region of Europe but also a return to the idea of local government. Of significance is not only the breadth with which the thesis of a “renaissance of local government in Central and Eastern Europe” has been celebrated in the literature on the subject (Swianiewicz 2005, 111), but also the lack of detailed studies that address the thesis empirically and theoretically, and thus relating it to the experience of the Polish cities in the transformation of the local democratic system between 1989 and 2015. In this context the importance of transformation in urban governance as a necessity is widely recognised for its significant effect on the quality of life and strengthening of democratic legitimacy on the local level (John 2001). Decentralisation and the devolution of power and responsibility to local governments significantly affect the performance of Central and Eastern European cities. They influence their urban transformation: one of those influences is related to transition to democracy, markets and decentralized governance. Additionally, local responses to these drivers of change as well as global pressures and policy reforms at the national level set the framework for specific changes in the economic, social, institutional and spatial structure of the city. In this paper the transition to a decentralised system of governance will be analysed with regard to the case study of a Central and Eastern European city, Wrocław, Poland. Since 1989 Wrocław has undergone massive social, economic, political and urban transformations. It has also been experiencing the effects of globalisation. Moreover, urban redevelopment projects are getting increasingly important in Wrocław. An ongoing restructuring process is in progress. Unfortunately, while the city’s economy is doing quite well, especially in comparison with other big cities in Poland, local governance is yet to become a key asset and the city lacks an appropriate citizens-oriented policy and urban governance framework. That is why the paper is devoted to the opportunity provided by the initiative of the European Capital of Culture 2016 (ECoC), which can be considered as a pretext (chance?) to introduce new strategies which better meet deficit solutions for new modes of governance at local level. The Wrocław 2016 European Capital of Culture is a European project which should be useful primarily to residents of the city and the region. It is an important intervention in the genetic code of the city, which should not go unnoticed by the public.

The scholarly literature on the European Capital of Culture is rich. It covers a broad scope of aspects, mainly relating to cultural development, creative industries, urban regeneration and place marketing. Economic analyses of this important European initiative still predominate, while socio-cultural, political or environmental effects are featured much less extensively in the literature (Langen and García 2009). Only some studies tackle the community level of engagement (e.g. Palmer, Richards 2007; Jones, Wilks-Heeg 2004; García 2005; Anderson, Holden 2008; Sacco, Blessi 2007; Sassatelli 2002; Sykes, 2011). There are also a considerable number of case studies on the ECoC, including those that focus on the governance aspect (Garcia, Cox 2013, Németh 2015b). However they do not cover it in an in-depth manner. Unfortunately, only few authors explore the specifics of the ECoC associated with Central and Eastern European cities (Lähdesmäki 2014). There is also a lack of city specific case studies making it possible to examine one area in greater detail. The present author shares the opinion that “Research targeted specifically at local-community levels is needed. An on-going dialogue and discussion while a city is an ECoC would be helpful. Policies to encourage continu-

ous dialogue will be helpful in engaging diverse local communities in the ECoC project. Studies are needed to highlight the opportunities, challenges and best practices” (Ooi et al. 2014) and seeks to enrich the existing body of knowledge of the European Capitals of Culture by relating the Wrocław case study to the ECoC literature dealing with policy learning within Europe. The paper, which considers the on-going evaluation approach, juxtaposes assumptions made for Wrocław’s bid as a ECoC 2016 with their current implementation (as of mid-February 2016) in the light of the urban governance concept. It provides an answer to the question of whether Wrocław as the ECoC 2016 is on its way towards urban governance. In the first section of the paper key definitions and approaches to the European Capital of Culture and urban governance are elaborated. In the second section the author presents an evaluation model of urban governance in the context of the European Capital of Culture. Next she discusses how Wrocław became the European Capital of Culture. The following sections are analytical in nature and refer to the evaluation model of urban governance. They tackle aspects of the ECoC bid, internal capacity of Wrocław, actor groups involved, public participation, external capacity and background. The last part of the paper presents conclusions and recommendations.

#### **EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE AND URBAN GOVERNANCE – KEY DEFINITIONS AND APPROACHES**

Denationalisation of the economic policy, helplessness in the search for new areas of growth, erosion of security systems, problems associated with the individualisation of life – all these prompt a deeper reflection on new opportunities for the development of European cities. In this respect a special role will be played by issues that can be referred to:

- identification of the inhabitants with the city;
- practice of solidarity in local communities;
- growing interest of the inhabitants with the city, which is expressed in the number of citizens’ initiatives and projects;
- new vitality of neighbourhoods and settlements, and new meaning of peripheral and suburban areas;
- key importance of cities to business, economic, social and political innovation, and
- their role as drivers of the knowledge economy (Häußermann, Läßle, Siebel 2008, 8-22).

The above trends and transformations are also subject of the European initiative European Capital of Culture (ECoC), which was launched in 1985 by the European Commission. Its aim was to promote the European identity and integration, but hosting cities have since come up with a variety of visions and objectives, ranging from an enhancement of cultural life and attraction of more tourists, through city marketing and branding as well as improvement of the material infrastructure and urban regeneration, to alleviation of poverty through increasing employment. Over the decades this initiative has undergone a transformation, starting with a focus on city branding only. G. Monclus and M. Guardia emphasise the initiative of the European Capital of Culture focused on

urban branding as potentially dangerous for urban regeneration, because “all too often Capitals of Culture have focused most of their efforts on funding of events and projects that form part of a year-long celebration, with too little time and investment given to the future” (Monclus, Guardia 2006, 206). This is why today the ECoC should aim at playing a key role in promoting cultural events, enhancing the image, and, generally, stimulating urban regeneration (Balsas 2004, 396-410). Thus, on the one hand the ECoC title is seen as a powerful tool for cultural development and on the other as a catalyst of sustainable change in terms of social and economic improvement. Since 2000 in particular it has been emphasised that more attention should be paid to long-term objectives. This is why the European Capital of Culture does not mean only organising a series of prestigious cultural events in the field of high culture. It assumes that culture is much broader than a luxury item, than the idea of inviting European and world celebrities to visit the city or strengthening the role of inhabitants as consumers instead of creators and innovators. The main goal of the European Capital of Culture today is to bring about real change at the local level as well as to develop key areas of society's life such as education, migration, work, housing, intercultural dialogue, social affairs and sports. In the current European Capital of Culture guidelines the European Commission has formulated key dimensions of this initiative:

- involvement of citizens (residents) in various forms of consultation within co-operation and partnership and empowerment, influencing decisions taken by the authorities on the use of available tools and techniques of participatory democracy (e.g. public consultation, referendum) and deliberation (e.g. deliberative panels, civil juries);
- joint creation of public policies at the local level (e.g. with regard to social issues, culture, education, climate): a forum of public debate, presenting and exploring opinions and coordinating positions;
- action relating to access to public information, improving the exchange of information and opinions between citizens and the authorities/public administration: obtaining and sharing information on the activities of elected representatives, allowing citizens to follow and review actions of the authorities, and enabling them to participate in elections in an informed manner;
- creation or activation of auxiliary units of local government and institutions of civil dialogue: district councils, neighbourhoods or public benefit advisory panels (European Parliament 2006).

In addition, cities applying for the title in 2007-2019 should take into account the following criteria:

- European dimension of the project and the city contributing to the development of European art history;
- active involvement of citizens.

As regards to the “City and Citizens”, the programme of the European Capital of Culture shall:

- foster the participation of the citizens living in the city and its surroundings and raise their interest as well as the interest of citizens from abroad;
- be sustainable and be an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city (ibidem).

In the context of the strategic development of the city, more and more attention is being paid to the way in which ECoC influences public governance at the local level. There is no doubt that the use of such large-scale initiatives can have a positive impact on urban regeneration in all respects, whether it is about building infrastructure, rebuilding parts of the city, or long-term orientation on job creation or on rules of governance. Today, a particularly important approach in this area is urban governance, which stresses its capacity to change the urban society on the one hand, and to raise democratic and participatory issues on the other (Heinelt, Kübler 2005). The ECoC takes into account normative assumptions of the concept of urban governance and implies that recent decades have seen a shift from government to governance. This is equivalent to focusing less on the institutions of government and more on the processes through which government institutions interact with civil society as well as the consequences of this mutual influence between the state and the society. Through this transition the functions of formal government structures and contemporary agencies have also shifted. There is a new allocation scheme for the responsibilities of public, private, voluntary and household groups. What constitutes the main problem in the urban arena are new institutional relations and policy processes of various constituents and agencies at the national and local level. Globalisation has also led to changes in urban governance toward competition- and innovation-oriented policies (Jessop 2007, 5-25). Thus, urban governance is based on the explicit representation and coordination of functional interests at the local level. Under a cooperative style of policy-making the local authority moderates or initiates cooperation instead of giving orders. In these new forms of urban governance the actors in economic development and technological modernisation programmes are: business associations, chambers of commerce, local companies, banks, research institutes, universities and unions, and the expanded sphere of local political action includes additional sets of actors such as welfare associations, churches, unions, grassroots initiatives and community organisations (Mayer 2003, 110-132).

Systematic use of “local governance” is associated primarily with the concept of P. John (John 2001). The starting point is an analysis of the shape of local government institutions and their transformations. The scholar defines management at the local as a flexible model of decision-making based on loose horizontal connections between different public and private actors. “Local governance” is thus not exclusively about taking direct action under governmental authority, but about creating a climate for cooperation between different actors to achieve common goals. In his theory John draws attention to:

- new forms of participation in local communities;
- presence of critically-oriented residents who do not want to be just passive observers of the local political scene;
- new pressure groups and the decreasing importance of clientelism in local politics;
- role of market processes and importance of economic development for the political process in cities (ibidem).

This concept can be considered as a basis which explains the establishment of networks and linkages of actors formulating and implementing local policies: in the past the key role was played by elected politicians organised into competing groups (political parties). Today we have to deal with alternative forms of participation, delegation of responsibility for decision-making and delivery of services to various entities (not necessarily established as a result of elections). The network design often lacks a formal hierarchy, which means that the process of building trust between actors is crucial to the



effective functioning of local systems. Since none of the entities or organizations, not to mention individuals, has sufficient resources to achieve its objectives, cooperation is essential. Referring to P. John, citizen participation is defined as a process of collective decision-making which requires co-ordination of several actors, social groups and institutions to attain particular goals, discussed and defined collectively in fragmented and transforming environments (ibidem). Thus, urban governance relates to all the institutions, networks, directives, regulations, norms, political and social usages, public and private stakeholders that contribute to the stability of a society and of a political regime, to its orientation, to its capacity to direct, and to its capacity to provide services and to ensure its own legitimacy.

### **EVALUATION MODEL OF URBAN GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE**

The governance of the European Capital of Culture project can be regarded as one of the most complex challenges for public administration: it is a kind of balancing act, not just between competing priorities and needs, but between visions about the role of culture in society. This is a programme which does not fit into the traditional patterns of cultural consumption (Wiktorska-Święcka 2013). It cannot, therefore, be assessed only in relation to the number of tickets sold and attendance, or the amount of room nights booked. The governance of the European Capital of Culture from the perspective of urban governance requires a remodelling of the idea of this initiative to take into account in its creation, implementation and evaluation different groups of people and institutions wanting to participate in local development. The process requires multidimensional thinking skills and way of looking at the city in an integrated and horizontal manner, which involves not only - as it was the case in the traditional hierarchical structures - representatives of public authorities, but also representatives of the private sector, culture, science, media and all those willing and able to participate in the process. The open formula, which brings together people with their authentic ingenuity and commitment, and not traditional politics, will make it possible to use key assets of the city in an effective manner. Urban governance should contribute to the reinforcement of public administration by strengthening ties between the political and the administrative sphere, and creating citizens friendly administration. The strategy of urban governance should take into account:

- “political” control: strategic management through political and administrative leadership, clear rules for granting mandate and financing; flexible organisational structure: decentralisation, greater autonomy of the public administration, cooperation between departments;
- processes: focusing on results, preparing reports and evaluations of implemented and completed tasks;
- professional and organisational development: increasing the competencies and responsibilities of senior management, increasing training, career planning and professional development;
- relations with citizens: improving relations with citizens through marketing and improving the quality of governance.

Urban governance should focus mainly on users of services, their needs and expectations, on promoting competition between service providers and on the transfer of control to the local community, decentralising powers, and the introduction of participatory governance. The aim of the administration in this approach should be monitoring and accountability for results. Effective action requires a combination of efforts of public, private and civic sectors to solve problems. Urban governance is associated with striving for excellence in management and emphasises organisational development, organisational culture, managing the change process and building the organisation's mission. The approach focuses on:

- horizontal structure of governance, emphasis on the development of public institutions and learning, radical decentralisation and evaluation through the results achieved;
- protection of changes made in the organisational culture, emphasis on charismatic management methods;
- more intensive training programmes for managers;
- increasing awareness of the importance of the mission of public institutions, growing importance of the institution brand, explanation and communication strategy.

In this model of public governance, the normative basis of which is a set of conventions, the dominant mode of operation is the network. What remains a desirable style is partnership, and the nature of the relationship takes into account equality and interdependence. The aim of urban governance is thus to build a multi-level city agreement in which actions taken are focused on the needs of the inhabitants and ways of satisfying them. The organisation of local structures refers to the idea of civil society. Effective urban governance encompasses leadership, organisational structures and processes to ensure that the way in which organisations operate support the attainment of their objectives and implementation of their strategies. The concept of urban governance thus corresponds to three basic questions that should be helpful in implementing the idea of the European Capital of Culture:

- How much administration? A minimum: local government should play the role of initiator, coordinator, organiser, mediator, facilitator;
- What administration? Collaborating and open: local government should stimulate partnerships and enable different actors to collaborate at different levels;
- How to manage? Integrating efficiency, effectiveness, utility and sustainability. Urban governance should focus on external relations, public sector organisations and professionalism.

In any complete assessment of urban governance, two sets of measures are essential. The first relates to standards proposed by the European Union, standards like effectiveness, openness, effectiveness, accountability and participation (White Paper 2001). The second focuses on five categories to assess "the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city" (Good governance 2001). In integrating those two approaches and considering assumptions of the Europe-

an Capital of Culture, the following criteria to evaluate urban governance in the context of the ECoC initiative can be proposed (Table 1).

**Table 1: Criteria and indicators of urban governance in the context of the European Capital of Culture**

Criterion	Feature	Indicators
Effectiveness	refers to the improvement of the “state capacity” in terms of efficient, effective (i.e. acting without delay) public administration to pursue the objectives of public policies. The criterion includes two additional principles: the principle of proportionality (which assumes that the instruments of service delivery and public policy should be proportionate to the objectives pursued, and thus implemented in an optimal and cost-effective way); the principle of subsidiarity (whereby the higher-level administrative actions are merely ancillary to the activities carried out at lower levels of management, so they do not replace them).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• main sources of funding</li> <li>• predictability of the flows of local budgets</li> <li>• open and publicly available performance standards of services offered</li> <li>• customer/users satisfaction survey</li> <li>• precise definition of vision, and then construction of a plan and its implementation</li> <li>• evaluation of implemented and completed tasks in the context of moving towards a certain vision</li> </ul>
Openness	assumes, that public institutions should be fully transparent to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publication of contracts</li> <li>• facilities for citizens in the process of complaints and appeals</li> <li>• making public expenditure and revenue visible</li> </ul>
Equity	means justice and equal access of individuals and groups to the possibility of creating an initiative, real impact on its implementation, the right to be heard effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charters and Civil Agreements</li> <li>• presence of women in decision-making bodies</li> <li>• friendly solutions for persons with low income</li> <li>• support for informal enterprises (citizens’ initiatives)</li> <li>• participation of minority groups in the creation of public policies</li> <li>• adherence to the principle of empowerment</li> <li>• open and comprehensive communication</li> </ul>
Accountability	means a precise definition of the responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in the initiative, including, in particular, standards and norms promoted by the public sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guaranteed protection of the initiative and its sustainability through higher levels of public administration (region, state)</li> <li>• codes of conduct for policy makers and senior officials</li> <li>• commissions and anti-corruption panels</li> <li>• independent audits</li> </ul>



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• norms, values and standards in building relationships between sectors and in relations with the media and citizens</li> </ul>
Cohesion	provides for an integration of the management of various public policies, both European and national, as well as between the various levels of public authorities within the framework of multi-level governance and an integration of sectoral and territorial policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• linking the European Capital of Culture with the development strategy of the city</li> <li>• linking the European Capital of Culture with sectoral policies implemented in the city</li> <li>• linking the European Capital of Culture with agglomeration and regional policies</li> <li>• European Capital of Culture as a flagship project for Poland</li> </ul>
Participation	means broad public participation in public administration, at all levels, as well as at all major stages of implementation of public policies (i.e. in programming, implementation and monitoring); participation of community organisations and NGOs in the work of the administration (civil dialogue) and representatives of employers and trade unions (social dialogue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• civic groups involved in the decision-making process</li> <li>• amount of funds dedicated to civic initiatives</li> <li>• manner and quality of cooperation with local NGOs</li> <li>• cooperation with minority groups</li> <li>• cooperation with business organisations</li> </ul>

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Source: Author's own compilation on the basis of UN-Habitat indicators and EU-Guidelines (see United Nations 2009; European Commission 2001).

John's concept, which refers to a "flexible model of decision-making based on loose horizontal connections between different public and private actors" (John 2001) and assumptions of "good" urban governance indicators mentioned above are the basis of an analytical model that has been developed to facilitate the understanding of the concept of urban governance in Wrocław in the context of the development of the idea of the European Capital of Culture 2016 (Table 2).

**Table 2: Dimensions and indicators of urban governance in Wrocław in the context of the European Capital of Culture 2016**

Dimensions	Indicators
Bid: goals of the effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bid framing: clarifying vision, goals and priorities</li> <li>• Bid assessment: weighing support for and opposition to the agenda</li> <li>• Comprehension of the bid: assessing how much inhabitants know about the ECoC goals</li> </ul>
Internal capacity: ability to secure Wrocław's own resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and expertise: gaining the knowledge needed to succeed</li> <li>• Authority and legitimacy: assessing the actor group's engagement and inclusion at the local level</li> </ul>
Actor groups: individuals and organisations that worked together on the bid and its implementation; top-down initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actor group composition: Deciding who will be in decision-making bodies</li> <li>• Leadership roles: Identifying who is in charge</li> <li>• Actor group commitment: people's motivation and engagement</li> </ul>
Public participation: bottom-up movements, citizens initiatives, NGOs, openness of local authorities to them, inclusion/exclusion in/from work on the bid and its implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public participation: no participation, semblance of participation, information, consultation, partnership, empowerment</li> <li>• Participation's tools: meetings, debates, round-tables, brain-storming, e-participation (online-for a, blogs), deliberative polls, charrette, open space, future city game, planning for real, World Café</li> </ul>
External capacity: ability to secure resources from outside the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money and related resources: developing an ECoC budget</li> <li>• State-level influence: securing support from state</li> <li>• Regional-level influence: securing support from the regional government</li> </ul>
Background: experience and legacy of operating at the local, regional, national and European level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity with regard to the ECoC main goal: learning from similar experiences</li> </ul>

Source: Author's own compilation

## HOW DID WROCLAW BECOME THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE?

After the reconstruction of local government in 1990 and the second stage of decentralisation reforms in 1998–1999, local government in Poland has two levels: the municipality (*gmina*) and the county (*powiat*), but either on each level different types or bodies may be found. One of three forms of municipalities is urban municipality (*gmina*

*miejska*). This type of a local entity covers the area of towns (there are about 300 of them in Poland). Within this group there are large differences in terms of size: from about 1,000 residents to about 1.7 million residents (City of Warsaw). Wrocław is one of the biggest cities in Poland. Since 1998–1999, a group of 65 largest cities, including all 16 capitals of the provinces, with Wrocław also among them, were given the status of city with county rights. According to this formula, the authorities of these cities are given the tasks and powers of both a municipality and a county (Kulesza, Sześciło 2012). Wrocław, one of the oldest and biggest cities in Poland, is the capital of Lower Silesia, a region in the western part of the country, bordering Germany and the Czech Republic. It is an important cultural centre, a religious centre of many confessions, a city of universities, cultural institutions, including museums and theatres, as well as cultural events. It is also a major centre of economic development. The city occupies an important place in recent Polish history, too: it is associated of the Orange Alternative movement, which contributed to the change of the political system in Poland. Wrocław is the place where began the activities of the Solidarity movement, which influenced the democratisation of Poland and Europe. The city is proud of its multiculturalism, but has to demonstrate it in the everyday life. Although in recent years Wrocław has seen a very rapid economic growth, today it faces many challenges, including dealing with the impact of rapid but unsustainable progress.

Since 2009 the EU has annually designated at least two ECOCs – one in an old Member State and one in a Member State that joined the Union after 2004. As T. Lähdesmäki notes, after this change in the designation policy in 2005, many cities in the new Member States started to prepare bids and develop plans in which they sought to present themselves through their culture and city space as “European” (2014, 482). Wrocław, too, decided to join the competition. It was the last of the 11 Polish cities which announced it would compete for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2016, following Białystok, Gdańsk, Katowice, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Szczecin, Toruń and Warsaw. The preliminary application, prepared by a team led by Prof. Adam Chmielewski from the University of Wrocław, contained the main idea of the project, “Spaces for beauty”. Wrocław wanted to emphasise “Metamorphoses of cultures” as an idea both at the urban and regional level. The assumption was that if the idea were to be approved by the Polish government, represented in its efforts to support the ECoC bid by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Wrocław would expand its portfolio with two additional topics: “Recovering beauty” (restoring local sights to their original splendour), and show “New Spaces for Beauty” (by building new culture facilities i.e., National Forum of Music). After qualifying for the finals, alongside Gdańsk, Katowice, Lublin and Warsaw, Wrocław refined its application and presented it to the public in Warsaw on 21 June 2011. Wrocław was acknowledged as the Polish winner of the competition for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2016. The Selection Panel identified as key factors for this selection the following elements:

- the motto of the bid, “Spaces for Beauty”, which was well translated into Wrocław’s objective to affirm and further develop the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural past of this European city by focusing very specifically on intercultur-

- al and interreligious dialogue as well as cultural development and social inclusion;
- the convincing programme the main goals of which were to improve social cohesion as well as education in culture and art, to enhance participation of people in culture, to foster creativity and to make the city better known internationally;
  - the advanced process of urban revival through culture with important cultural investments already made in the city – many of which were already completed or under way – and based on a convincing long-term cultural strategy, accompanied by its well developed links with cities in neighbouring countries;
  - the energetic and cosmopolitan leadership of the city, which – together with the support for the programme by all political and administrative bodies as well as by the very dynamic business sector – seemed to provide the necessary stability for the rather complex system of governance of the 2016 project (Selection Panel 2011).

The Selection Panel was convinced that the project proposed by Wrocław for 2016 can be used to position culture as the axis of the future development of the city and the region: “a large majority of the Panel agreed that the bid of Wrocław best reflected the objectives and criteria of the European Capital of Culture, and that it provided the best potential for a successful implementation of the event” (ibidem). Finally, the Panel pointed out the weaknesses and areas which should be improved. One of them was the necessity to take a closer look at the organisational and managerial structure of the entity that would make it more efficient. Nevertheless, the Panel recommended that Wrocław be made the Polish European Capital of Culture for the year 2016. On 10 May 2012 Wrocław was officially granted the title of the European Capital of Culture. Since then the idea proposed in the bid is supposed to have been implemented. Results of this process should be presented to the European community and residents of the city during the final year 2016. They will reinforce – or not – the long-term development of the city in the future.

### **BID: GOALS OF THE EFFORT**

Like other Central and Eastern European cities – of Sibiu in Romania (ECoC 2007), Pecs in Hungary (ECoC 2010), Tallinn in Estonia (ECoC 2011), Maribor in Slovenia (ECoC 2012), Kosice in Slovakia (ECoC 2013), Riga in Latvia (ECoC 2014) and Pilsen in the Czech Republic (ECoC 2015) – which, according to Lähdesmäki, are “cities, which have carried the physical and mental heritage of the past socialist regimes, have aimed at strengthening their belonging to the European cultural and social sphere through the ECoC designation”, Wrocław, too, by bidding for the ECoC 2016 title aimed at getting back onto the European stage by positioning itself as a progressive and multicultural Central European metropolis. However, this goal was not developed in the ECoC bid. Rather, it was a consequence of former visions of the city development formulated after 1990 and requiring an improvement of Wrocław’s image and efficiency, and enhancement of its connections with the region, country and Europe. The goal was

important also on a symbolic and emotional level. Wrocław wanted to be recognised as an important European city, to share its unique history and experience. To achieve this, Wrocław promoted itself as a “meeting place”, a place uniting different cultures, ideas and people (Mironowicz 2015). To fulfil the vision of a “meeting place” at the European and international level, the city kept applying for the organisation of international events. Two failed applications for EXPO 2010 and 2012 were followed by the successful Polish-Ukrainian application for the UEFA European Football Championships in 2012, with Wrocław being one of the host cities, World Games 2017 and – last but not least – European Capital of Culture 2016.

In the first version of the bid one can read e.g. that “the efforts of Wrocław to obtain the title of the European Capital of Culture in 2016 expresses the concept of the ‘Metamorphoses of cultures’. Culture of the present inhabitants of Wrocław is a testament to the mutation of the whole Europe (...). As the motto of Wrocław as the European Capital of Culture we propose the idea of ‘Spaces for Beauty’. Our aim is to create an open, dynamic and friendly space, designed to satisfy the human desire to commune with art and culture. We want to make present what is beautiful in social and personal dimensions. We want to build spaces in which it will be possible to restore the presence of beauty in public life and daily habits” (Biuro Festiwalowe Impart 2011, 12-14). When it comes the objectives of the Wrocław 2016 EcoC, we can also read: “We have made our weaknesses our challenge and inspiration to build an ECoC plan that will allow us to overcome them. These are:

- concentration of cultural life in the city centre;
- insufficient international recognition of the city;
- low level of participation in culture in the Lower Silesian region;
- poor quality of cooperation between the city and the region;
- social and economic exclusion of several minority groups;
- retreat from civic and social attitudes;
- insufficient involvement in the activities of European cultural networks” (ibidem, 107).

Thus, the assumptions of ECoC Wrocław 2016 fit in with expectations of both the European Commission and inhabitants of the city. It is worth noting that the bid, which the city submitted in the competition for this prestigious title, was marked by a high level of expertise, and was prepared by scientists and researchers from the University of Wrocław, who were invited to collaborate on it by the Mayor of Wrocław. The experts developed the basis of the ECoC initiative with a local perspective. This stage of the process was close to stakeholder groups. Citizens, representatives of minority groups, NGOs and other interested entities could not participate and contribute to the development of the idea of Wrocław 2016 ECoC. This was noticed by the Monitoring Panel, which highlighted the difficulty of the idea of “Spaces for Beauty” and a high level of their intellectual complexity. It also noted that this would require special arrangements when it came to communicating the idea for the Wrocław 2016 European Capital of Culture, so that every resident of the city could understand the objectives in this respect (Selection Panel 2011). At the same time the Panel commented that Wrocław 2016 team

“have committed at bidding stage to make the most of the diversity of their citizens. The Panel did not fully grasp during the meeting to what extent Wrocław 2016 intended not only to approach the ‘minorities’ issue in the artistic programme but more significantly to reach out to minorities audiences” (The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2013). Thus, an important element in the dissemination of the assumptions of Wrocław 2016 EcoC is communication. From this perspective, it should be stressed that the decision makers, while presenting the idea of the European Capital of Culture for Wrocław, repeatedly pointed out that the main premise of the 2016 EcoC was to increase citizens’ participation in culture, understood as visiting cultural institutions and attending cultural events, as well as to increase the attractiveness of the city to tourist and enhanced its visibility. This shows a rather narrow perception of the EcoC initiative and its reduction to the image dimension. In the communication about the 2016 ECoC the residents of Wrocław did not initially feature as creators of culture all. Under pressure from the Monitoring Panel, the communication started to take into account Wrocław’s residents as the final users of the European Capital of Culture.

#### **INTERNAL CAPACITY: THE ABILITY TO SECURE WROCLAW’S RESOURCES**

The monopolisation of actions relating to Wrocław 2016 EcoC by the public authorities, which emerged at the stage of preparing the bid for the title, has been a constant way of proceeding within the project governance at the local level. Internal capacities fall within the jurisdiction of the local authorities. There were some significant structural and procedural aspects of the city’s local government before the implementation of the ECoC started. They can be divided into the following steps:

- Step 1: end of 2008–June 2011. A time when the idea of applying for the ECoC title arose. Prof. Adam Chmielewski was appointed to develop the programme and the bid. At the same time the work was carried out on establishing an organisational structure for the implementation of the ECoC. Modifications of the organisational units of the city were intended to ensure the smooth entry of the ECoC into the existing organisational structures subordinated to the City of Wrocław. Finally, in the Wrocław’s model a decision was made to entrust the management to one of the municipal entities. In February 2010 a cultural institution Wrocław 2016 was established in a merger of two other municipal cultural institutions. In June 2011, after winning the title of the European Capital of Culture for Wrocław, one decided to end its collaboration with the programme coordinator, Prof. Adam Chmielewski, and launched modifications both in terms of the project governance structure, as well as the programme itself.
- Step 2: May 2012–January 2013. The city ceased to be a candidate in May 2012, when the European Commission officially presented Wrocław as the European Capital of Culture 2016. In June 2012 the Impart 2016 Festival Office was established as an operational office for the Wrocław 2016 ECoC. At the same time, following a media scandal caused by a lack of transparency of procedures and personal concerns, two directors were appointed: one respon-



sible for organisational and one for artistic matters. Significantly, unlike in the case of some other successful cities in terms of managing the ECoC, the Wrocław decision makers did not make use of internal capacities and the professionalism of local experts, but instead entrusted project management to persons from other Polish regions. In addition, the Programme Board was established as a consultative and advisory body. Members of the Board make up a relatively homogenous group of people not representing a broad spectrum of potential stakeholders (e.g. in the initial composition of the Board there was not a single woman. Only under pressure from the media and the public did the Mayor of the city invite a woman to join the Board as a member, but she does not play any significant role in the context of the ECoC). The Board members also have the title of Ambassadors of Wrocław 2016 ECoC. Another institution in the governance structure of Wrocław 2016 ECoC is the Wrocław Culture Council, which brings together representatives of the most important cultural institutions in order to ensure good relations between the team implementing the ECoC project and artists and citizens. The council does not have any power. It exists only on the basis of formal appointment and is not visible by the public. In January 2013 a new vision of Wrocław 2016 ECoC was presented. It departed from the original vision declared in the bid. The new idea was associated with “Deep Culture”. However, ideological objectives and operational aspects were not presented in detail, and the same went for budget-related issues or communication policy. There were also reasons which did not justify the replacement of the winning concept of “Spaces for Beauty” with one of “Deep Culture”. At that time the most significant action relating to the implementation of Wrocław 2016 ECoC was associated with scandalous procedures of limited transparency linked to the choice of the logo for Wrocław 2016 EcoC (Wójcik 2013, Foremna 2013). Three months after the announcement of the concept of “Deep Culture”, its author and, at the same time, artistic director of the ECoC 2016 project, Krzysztof Czyżewski, resigned from his post. Thus in May 2013 another new concept of project management was introduced involving the appointment of a Board of Curators (initially 9, then 8 persons) responsible for the various programme divisions. Yet no explanation was provided – as in the case of the previous institutional change – as to why the new solution had to be implemented and how far it would improve the quality of management. The Board of Curators reports directly to the Mayor Wrocław. The overall role of the curators is to make sure that there will be no gap between the bid-book and the programme of the Capital of Culture year. Regarding artistic leadership, the curators are responsible for one single artistic field each: architecture, opera, music, visual arts, theatre, film, literature/reading, performance. Under pressure of the Monitoring Panel, one of the curators became the artistic director as the chair of the Board of Curators.

- Step 3: May 2013–December 2015. After more than 2 years of waiting for the final year there were still no significant projects that would permanently alter the existing manner of urban governance through the use of the ECoC title. Although managers informed the public about the events organised under the

auspices of the ECoC, these projects did not have any significant impact on the existing institutional arrangements. That period was marked by a growing polarisation of communication about the ECoC: critical voices were suppressed by representatives of the municipality (e.g. public opinion and community reporting of local scientists, politicians, representatives of the cultural community, non-governmental organisations, urban movements, local media), while activities aimed at presenting a positive image in the national and international media were intensified. Relatively late, in June 2015, part of the final vision and purpose of the Wrocław 2016 ECoC was presented to the public. Wrocław reverted again from “Deep Culture” to the original vision of “Space for Beauty”, now called “Space for Beauty: Designed” (MIS, KAZ 2015). The European Capital of Culture was presented in the following way: “Wrocław 2016 means a process. A diversity of autonomous curators and of cultural environments. Building at once a programme and a chance to participate in it. And finally – it means many ways of understanding culture, also of undertaking the common task of developing through it” (Biuro Festiwalowe Impart 2015). The priority and the main goal of the effort remained the same: to attract tourists. No additional goals were declared. In addition, despite pressure from the local community it was only very late, in December 2015, that a partial schedule of events that would take place in 2016 was finally published.

- Step 4: January–December 2016. The final year of ECoC implementation began with a bang during the opening ceremony. It aroused mixed feelings among the local community due to the technical complexity and the idea of the performance, in which residents of Wrocław were treated as passive observers only.

Within all those 4 steps, cooperation with experts was limited to a minimum: a few well-known scholars personally invited by the Mayor of Wrocław to cooperate within the ECoC 2016 project in the different bodies created a semblance of cooperation with the academic community only. Some of them withdrew from this cooperation, for example Prof. Stanisław Bereś from the University of Wrocław, nominated Chairman of the Programme Board (Matuszewska 2015). Another weakness in this respect is the assumptions of the evaluation of the Wrocław 2016 ECoC. This was recognised by the Monitoring Panel, which “noted the steps setting in place the evaluation of the ECoC and the use of the Impacts08 work. Whilst that work was ground breaking and is still very useful, it is pointed out that the current ECoC programme works to a different set of criteria, most notably on the ‘European Dimension’ and on the ‘City and Citizens’”. It is therefore recommended that Wrocław reviews the evaluation strategy of the Leeuwarden 2018 bid-book and adapts its own strategy to the objectives and criteria mentioned there. There should be explicit objectives in the variation of awareness of the diversity of European cultures and an increase in cultural participation in the city” (The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2013).

The method of project management presented does not protect the internal resources of the city in an appropriate manner and does not relate to the concept of urban governance: the structure of responsibilities of the various groups involved in its implementa-

tion is not clear enough, powers are distributed, management is top-down, final decisions are made individually by the mayor and are often not systemic but only temporary in nature.

In terms of the internal resources, it should also be noted that one of the essential elements of the ECoC programme in Wrocław is investment in institutions and spaces for culture. Some of these investments projects have been completed according to plan, some are still in progress, others have been abandoned, and some remain at risk, e.g. “WUWA2”, a model community residential estate, drawing on the tradition of modernist architecture in Wrocław (Skupin 2015).

#### **ACTOR GROUPS: INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS THAT WORKED TOGETHER ON THE BID AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION; TOP-DOWN INITIATIVES**

In the context of the involvement of different groups of actors, during a meeting with the Monitoring Panel in October 2013, the Wrocław delegation presented the philosophy of the ECoC 2016 project in terms of roles and relationships. Project management is based on the principle of “spiral” (The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2013). In the centre of the spiral are the Municipal Office and the Office of the ECoC, the Impart 2016 Festival Office (ibidem). Impart 2016 is responsible for the general organisation, coordination of the event, allocation of resources and production of some cultural projects, while the Mayor of Wrocław exercises general control and responsibility. Additionally, he appoints and invites people to cooperate within the ECoC project, for example under the formula of the Programme Board. Curators are in charge of artistic management.

Another layer of the Wrocław “spiral” is the cooperation with other Polish cities, including the cities competing against Wrocław for the title of the European Capital of Culture, within the framework of the so-called “Coalition 2016”. The idea is to allow these cities to present some of their original ideas within the project “Wrocław 2016 Scene”. The next circle of the spiral represents the region of Lower Silesia. Wrocław has declared that the artistic residencies will be created in smaller cities in the region in order to promote culture through the ECoC 2016. This is a very important assumption from the perspective of urban governance, where boundaries between various levels of local government are blurred. Nevertheless, it should be noted that from the perspective of mid-2015 the general public is yet to become aware of the “Wrocław 2016 Scene” idea.

Europe plays a key role in the management model of the Wrocław 2016 European Capital of Culture. In this regard particular emphasis will be placed on the neighbouring EU Member States (Germany and the Czech Republic), as well as San Sebastian, the Spanish ECoC 2016, through the implementation of joint projects, such as the Tamborrada presentation on the streets of Wrocław. Wrocław also takes into account former, current and future ECoCs in its programme for 2016. Outside the European Union, Wrocław 2016 plans to explore further opportunities for cooperation with Russia, taking advantage of the fact that a growing number of Russian tourists visit Wrocław as a result of the UEFA Euro 2012, as well as because of the historical ties existing between Rus-

sia and Lower Silesia in 1945–1990. Wrocław 2016 ECoC also intends to develop relations with Lviv, Ukraine, which is its partner city, providing the potential to disseminate knowledge and results of the ECoC outside the European Union (The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2013).

It is worth noting that the Wrocław “spiral” initially did not include key stakeholders, users and beneficiaries, who live in the city. Even formally the project management did not guarantee the participation of interested individuals and groups of citizens, including non-governmental organisations, in the formulation of the idea of the Wrocław ECoC and its implementation. Under this approach residents of Wrocław have only an indirect, secondary influence: they are treated as recipients and potential users of the ECoC initiative only, not its creators. In terms of their involvement, a small part of the budget, PLN 50,000 (EUR 12,500) was earmarked for the so-called “micro grants”. They were to be given to people for the organisation of small cultural events. The formal inclusion of residents in the spiral model was made possible in June 2015, when they were taken into consideration in the last version of the assumptions for Wrocław 2016 ECoC (Biuro Festiwalowe Impart 2015). At the same time we need to emphasise the superficiality and lack of coherence of the city authorities in engaging local actors in common matters: on the one hand, the authorities have strengthened the aspect of engaging citizens in the ECoC activities by allocating a small budget to it, on the other they have reduced the budget of a stable and long-standing institution, which for many years has provided services to strengthen the civil sector in Wrocław, e.g. the “Sector 3” centre of support for NGOs.

In addition, the main activities do not include actions involving minority groups. Under the influence of the recommendations of the Monitoring Panel from October 2013 (The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2013), the local authorities started to communicate the necessity of including minority groups. Nevertheless, the concept still was not clear enough. In March 2015 the Monitoring Panel expressed a concern that Wrocław “delegation’s plans to reach out to minority audiences were not fully understood by the Panel. There was a concern that the delegation was only focussing on the concept of minorities within the programme” (The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2014). It also should be noted that verbal declarations of the authorities are political in nature and do not translate into real action addressed to minorities. An extreme example of a reverse approach – exclusion instead of inclusion – is the way how Wrocław’s authorities coped with solving the problems of the Roma minority. Representatives of the city closed down an illegal encampment, justifying their actions by citing the law in force at the time but without taking into account the human aspects of the situation. Although the problem of the Roma minority was not a new challenge – it had intensified in recent years – the city authorities were not able to face the situation effectively. In this context the European Capital of Culture does not fulfil its role according to the concept of urban governance. In the case of the situation of the Roma minority, the whole initiative was renamed by local activists the “European Capital of Resettlement” (Prof. Lipowicz krytycznie o usunięciu koczowiska Romów we Wrocławiu 2015).

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: BOTTOM-UP MOVEMENTS, CITIZENS INITIATIVES, NGOs,  
OPENNESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO THEM, INCLUSION/EXCLUSION INTO/FROM  
WORK ON THE BID AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

As has already been mentioned, the residents of Wrocław were not involved in the creation of the vision of the Wrocław 2016 ECoC or the creation of the winning bid. It was developed by a team of experts and came to light only when it was necessary to win public support for the municipality's efforts in applying for the title. Unfortunately, even then no public consultations were held. Instead, selected interest groups – individuals, non-governmental organisations, experts permanently cooperating with local authorities – were asked for a positive opinion and support for the already finished bid-book.

Thus from the perspective of 2015 it should be noted that the implementation of the guidelines to strengthen participation has failed. The local government has not developed a permanent formula to enable citizens to participate in the process of the creation of the ECoC. What is more, it effectively suppressed any grassroots initiatives in this respect. The microgrants should not be treated as a permanent mechanism to support grassroots activity because of the small scale and the amount of the budget. In addition, they were linked to other policies implemented by the city, which, instead of encouraging participation, effectively restricted it, like e.g. in the case of participatory budget implemented in Wrocław in 2013 (Wiktorska-Święcka, Kozak 2014).

Yet Wrocław does have relatively rich traditions of strong civil society: many NGOs, active student organisations, informal movements and initiatives, socially committed academic community as well as church initiatives and institutions, numerous district councils provide a very good platform for their involvement in such projects as the European Capital of Culture. Especially given the fact that they have expressed their willingness – on their own or in coalitions – to participate and to cooperate within the project. They proposed several initiatives and ideas for specific projects to the local authorities. Unfortunately, either they were not heard, or – if they were approved by authorities – they were taken over and used as the authorities' own activities.

While evaluating the degree of public participation in the implementation of Wrocław 2016 ECoC, we should note that it draws on undemocratic solutions, such as manipulation, when citizens and representatives of civil society are placed on advisory boards, but have no powers. In addition, communication is one-way and top-down: from the local government to the citizens. Only the public administration makes decisions about the ECoC and informs the public about them. In this model there is no consensus on renegotiations or feedback: meetings with citizens are a rarity and if they do take place, they are dominated by presentations prepared by government representatives without the public being able to ask questions and engage in a discussion. It can be argued that even the minimum standard of democratic government action through which the right of access to public information could be exercised does not work perfectly: the Wrocław 2016 ECoC website, <http://Wroclaw2016.pl/>, contains only basic information; some of it is outdated, and many resources are not available to all users (e.g. no applications for people with disabilities) (Biuro Festiwalowe Impart 2015).



In the Wrocław urban governance model there is no guaranteed space for partnership, which can be defined broadly: agreement on planning, decision making and other responsibilities, power division between citizens and representatives of the public authorities. Nor there is any space for civic control, where citizens can manage a programme or institution, be decision makers in terms of specific policies and be able to negotiate the terms. Before making decisions policymakers do not actively consult individual citizens (leaders, experts) and do not take advantage of public hearings. If consultation does occur, it is limited to consultative bodies, which must be heard, but even in this case consultation does not have an impact on final decisions.

Wrocław 2016 ECoC lacked the desirable situation in which – before taking their decision – the local authorities cooperate with social partners (negotiations, joint planning, consensus building) and together with them made joint decisions, for example in the form of an agreement or a joint programme. Nor did the authorities allow a group to make the decision and accept this way of deciding public issues. In the Wrocław 2016 ECoC project one no adequate participation tools were used in the context of a growing civic consciousness and progress of ICT, tools like e-participation (online forums, blogs), deliberative polls, charette, open space, future city game, planning for real, Word Café.

This aspect of the implementation of the ECoC should be classified as the weakest element in Wrocław's urban governance: there is no real public participation of citizens. Bottom-up initiatives are suppressed, opinion leaders criticised by representatives of the local authorities, the public is manipulated. (For example, in 2014 the local authorities purchased a collection of photos of world film and music stars by Milton Henry Greene for more than PLN 6 million (ca EUR 1.5 million). When asked about the source of funding they indicated the Melina Mercouri Prize, which referred to the ECoC, while a decision on the granting of this award to Wrocław was being made by the Monitoring Panel in March 2015, see: Migdał 2014). The Wrocław concept and ways of inclusion exclude rather than promote volunteering or welcome representatives of different actors, fields, age-groups, etc. in the decision boards (making decisions on project applications). They do not provide real incentives and support to local and regional civil society organisations, nor simply acknowledge and respect their suggestions and contribution as equal parties. Existing formal solutions create only a semblance of participation; in assessing their effectiveness it can be said that the Wrocław model provides for the participation of citizens without encouraging them to participate.

#### **EXTERNAL CAPACITY: THE ABILITY TO SECURE RESOURCES FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION**

In terms of securing resources from outside the region, the main concern linked to the organisation of Wrocław 2016 ECoC refers to financing of the project. Initially, the city declared a financial contribution of ca PLN 380 million (approx. EUR 95 million) and assumed that the state will contribute to as well. In the end the amount was reduced to PLN 300 million (ca EUR 75 million). Due to the European requirements linked to the application for the title, the Polish government had to make a political declaration on



co-financing to cover approx. 1/3 of the amount. The promise was not kept for a long time and was a subject of political games, in which e.g. the mayor of the city was allegedly supposed to join the ruling party in exchanged for the transfer of funds for the ECoC (as of January 2015), and the Prime Minister of Poland used the funding of the ECoC by the state to increase the popularity of the government (as of July 2015). In the end Wrocław will ultimately receive approx. PLN 100 million (ca EUR 25 million) from the state. The money will be allocated to specific projects starting in January 2016 (Saraczyńska & Kokoszkiewicz 2015). Similarly unfavourable is the situation with regard to the lack of financial support for the Wrocław 2016 ECoC from the region. The authorities of Lower Silesia have so far failed to secure any funds for the purpose.

In addition the ability of the local authorities to raise funds from other sectors than the public, has been rather weak: in March 2015, only 3% of the current budget came from private funds (The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2014). The ECoC management has so far failed to carry out effective activities with private partners. Moreover, the authorities have not acquired any significant additional funding from the EU. Nor have they thought about organising a public collection among the residents of Wrocław and its sympathisers or about other activities that could strengthen the financial resources of the project. They do not create any innovative solutions that could translate into guaranteed financing of the project, solutions such as agreements with the municipalities making up the Wrocław agglomeration that would contribute financially to the project. Ultimately, this means that the budget of Wrocław 2016 ECoC comes mainly from the city budget.

Apart from the issues relating to the budget in terms of Wrocław's ability to secure resources from outside the region, the Wrocław 2016 European Capital of Culture project has not been secured at higher levels of public governance, i.e. at the national and regional levels, also in other respects, for example marketing and dissemination. Only in mid-2015 did it become the subject of a multi-annual programme of the Polish government in this respect. Unclear and unknown are also measures and actions planned to safeguard the sustainability of the effects of ECoC 2016. When it comes to the ability to secure resources from outside the region, the local authorities have been left to themselves. Although the European Capital of Culture should be a flagship initiative of Poland for Europe, it has been implemented on a scale which a city with a population of approx. 600,000 can afford.

#### **BACKGROUND: EXPERIENCE AND LEGACY OF OPERATING AT THE LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVEL**

Wrocław has some experience in applying to host large and prestigious events of European and global significance. Therefore, the city should be able to organise big events, also at regional and national level. When it comes to projects of a profile similar to that of the ECoC, Wrocław has no experience, although it does host important cultural projects, both national and international. It has no experience with initiatives requiring new approaches to governance, open to other partners, flexible, built on partnership, negotiation and values-based communication. The current socio-political situation, administra-

tive structures as well as the political culture in Poland, including Wrocław are among the reasons why cooperation between different local authorities is rather poor. That is why the involvement of the regional government in Wrocław 2016 ECoC is symbolic and is limited to delegating several officials to work in one of the working groups. Wrocław does cooperate with other municipalities but the cooperation is rather poor, even when formal cooperation agreements are in place (e.g. with Kłodzko). The project itself does not have the support of either the local or regional community. Among the residents of Wrocław the project has a rather bad reputation due to the way it is funded, no lasting results in the wake of previous big events or ECoC-related scandals revealed by the local media. On the other hand people living in the region do not really know about the initiative taking place in the capital of Lower Silesia: knowledge of the subject is reserved for selected decision makers and individuals, mainly public administration employees.

At the same time it is worth noting that the above risks to the Wrocław 2016 ECoC projects were not indicated by representatives of the Monitoring Panel who evaluated the preparation of the city in March 2015. In their monitoring report, they praised all key aspects of project management and awarded the city with the Melina Mercouri Prize for in recognition of its implementation of the provisions of the initial winning bid (ibidem).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The quality of the future development of Wrocław and the Lower Silesia region depends on many variables. The European Capital of Culture is one piece of the puzzle, which ultimately will determine the success or lack thereof. However, it is an important project that should be treated as a serious opportunity for further development. The European Capital of Culture will be held only once in the history of the city. However, the current state of implementation of the project raises many questions and concerns, especially with the lack of a comprehensive vision of the programme, operational details, lack of a declaration of financial security, lack of coherence between the many elements of the “ECoC”.

At the moment the ECoC 2016 has a very modest impact on urban governance in Wrocław. The ambitious objectives regarding the modernisation of governance have not yet been achieved on the scale envisaged in the application. Moreover, the current project management style lacks a clearly defined vision, purpose, value system, way of communicating and providing public information, a clear system of monitoring and evaluation indicators. The management of the Wrocław 2016 ECoC project is marked by e.g.

- a narrow perception of culture as the domain of institutions involved in cultural and artistic activities;
- insufficiently transparent financial calculations;
- lack of involvement of different groups of stakeholders, including residents;

- poor knowledge and lack of public awareness of what the ECoC is and what an opportunity it can provide for the development of the city;
- underutilisation of the city's assets;
- numerous bureaucratic procedures that limit civic activity;
- lack of integration of city governance policies that should be subordinated to the ECoC;
- short-term action aimed at strengthening the political capital of the Mayor of Wrocław.

If the current ECoC project management is continued by the local authorities, Wrocław will see

- a short-term effect (high costs relative to benefits);
- deepening negative development trends (increase in public spending, deepening of social problems);
- failure of a development opportunity in the economy, innovation and culture.

A desirable urban governance model in the context of the ECoC in terms of the key objectives of the governance system should take into account, first of all, effectiveness in dealing with issues that are most important to the community. Yet in Wrocław the local government continues to assume that its mainly responsibility is providing services of the welfare state. The public sector has a monopoly on the ethos of public service. While the dominant ideology continues to be focused on bureaucratic specialisation and party politics, it is not possible to implement ideas associated with managerialism and localism. Public interest is continued to be defined by politicians/experts with little public participation. However, the urban governance approach assumes individual and collective preferences produced and manifested in the complex process of interactions, which in Wrocław occur only on a small scale. The dominant model of accountability refers to the general principles of democracy. The preferred mode of operation is based on the decisions taken during the elections and transfer of the mandate to govern to the politicians, while goals are achieved by controlling the bureaucracy. Elected leaders, managers and major players involved in the search for solutions to the problems of the community are eliminated from the public sphere by representatives of the administration and local politicians. The system defends itself against challenges of referendums, deliberative forums, task analysis, public opinion. The preferred system is hierarchical service delivery by departments and agencies created by and subordinated to the municipality. A pragmatically selected set of alternative suppliers is not seen by the public, as can best be seen in the establishment of the office managing European Wrocław 2016 Capital of Culture. The local administration maintains a strict relationship with the higher levels of government, mainly representatives of ministries and the European Commission. Local, regional, national and European relations are rather simple, not complicated and rarely negotiated.

In terms of local development, we can discern an authoritarian style of leadership with minor manifestations of an authoritarian-consultative style. A fully democratic participatory style does not exist in Wrocław. The scope of local development refers to

the law and is based on a literal implementation of tasks mandated by law. The hallmarks of strategic management have been absent so far. When it comes to transparency, its degree is extremely low: decisions are announced, strong actions are associated with propaganda and PR, authority is hermetic, and the media – even if free – are weak, and few and far between.

The local administration continues to refer to the principles of bureaucracy, which make the interest and authority of officials a priority, and not to the public service ethos, which assumes an overriding public interest. There are some legal foundations of true decentralisation involving the contracting of services and tasks in a competitive environment, but there are a lot of shortcomings in practice (as it happened, for example, with the selection of the Wrocław 2016 ECoC logo).

The weakest element of urban governance in Wrocław is public participation. It is very limited: ECoC project management involves only individuals and groups designated by the municipality. Direct participation is a façade and is eliminated by the attitudes of decision makers. What has also contributed to the situation are the low level of civic awareness, lack of education in this respect, weak civil society and continued strong commitment to representative democracy. Governance structures and financial assets are limited to the budget delivered mainly by municipal structures. The diversity of partnership structures, for example PPP, is marginal.

To understand these results, we need to refer to the underlying factors behind them. They are complex in nature and are both internal and external. One of the domestic, Wrocław-related aspects is the fact that the style of urban governance in Wrocław is very much affected by a business-like approach (New Public Management). This market-oriented policy tends to ignore important public needs. In addition, the local authorities are yet to fully embrace the idea that a genuinely participative approach involving an informed society reduces the possibility of mistakes both in public spending and urban development. Some participative tools are, nevertheless, used, although always under pressure from the public and rather unwillingly. Moreover, the lack of transparency in decision making erodes the trust between the authorities and the stakeholders. There is also the question of the local democratic culture: low awareness of citizens' attitudes inherited from the previous political system (e.g. public engagement only in an emergency situation or in the case of particular, individual interests), decision makers' unwillingness to share power, weak institutional arrangements stimulating participatory democracy. External features which influence results are associated with the fact that Wrocław is a rapidly globalising city: with an increasingly affluent consumer society the civil society is getting weaker, non-governmental organisations are relatively weak and a small number of people engage in civic affairs. The causes of these phenomena can be found, if we look deeper into the lack of a civic education system in Poland. After the political transformation of 1990 no mechanisms were introduced to raise people's awareness of what democracy is, what the values associated with it are and how to translate them into specific behaviour in public spaces. There is also a lack of arrangements that would force decision makers to improve their public governance competences, not to mention a system of public norms and values. In addition, citizens are not willing to make the political decision makers accountable for their actions. In this re-

spect, when comparing Wrocław to other cities in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe, we can find a number of similarities. The phenomenon can be linked to similar experiences in the political, social, cultural and economic transformation. These features have a direct impact on the effects of implementation of the European Capital of Culture in Wrocław. Just like in the case of Vilnius, Wrocław's project is focused primarily on place marketing. Like in Tallinn, actions taken have translated directly into urban space regeneration. Like in Riga, residents are more consumers rather than creators of activities associated with the ECoC implementation. Like in Pecs, preparatory years in Wrocław "brought many system errors and incongruities to the surface, awakened by the distance of communication between the ideas of local and regional civil initiatives and those existing (more centralised) structures" (Németh 2015a, 9). At the same time good practices developed by other Central and Eastern European cities during previous editions of the European Capital of Culture are used only to a limited extent. For example, Wrocław has not taken advantage of the possibility of enhancing the local pride of its residents, which was accomplished in Sibiu. The city has not used Kosice's experience to strengthen the culture of everyday life directly in living spaces (housing estates, districts) – Wrocław's events associated with that ECoC are mainly, with a few exceptions, mass events organised by public cultural institutions. They are mostly located in the city centre in spectacular venues traditionally associated with culture. Nor has Wrocław drawn on the experience of Pecs in the integration of minorities with the local community – the unresolved conflict over the Roma community in Wrocław is something to be concealed rather than shown as a good practice. This can be explained by the reluctance of decision makers to change the existing practices and habits.

The beginning of the twenty-first century confirms the reliability of the main stakeholders in determining the development of the modern world: these are still cities, and particularly metropolises. The pillars of their development are: the economy, innovation, culture and identity. In this context, it is worth considering whether in its specific structure a European city has a development potential, or rather whether it is a model in decline; in what directions it will evolve to face the challenges of competitiveness, unfavourable demographic trends, shrinking resources, climate change and global competition. Urban governance, which is an awareness of creating processes and coordinating them in cooperation with various stakeholders who want to shape the urban space, becomes a common formula for the prevention of crises and challenges which cities are facing today. Taking into account the desire to maintain balance between economic, social and environmental development, urban governance is seen as a guarantee of balanced and sustainable development. Some of its assumptions directly relate to the idea of the European Capital of Culture initiative, which creates opportunities to build long-term city development. The ECoC combines all elements believed to be ways of preventing crises and challenges: creativity, culture, strategic management, sustainable development. The European Capital of Culture can be implemented as an "event" or a "process".

The case study analysed in the paper shows that in Wrocław the ECoC is considered to be an event: a set of actions produced and consumed (e.g. performances, exhibitions, films, parades). It is not considered to be an opportunity for a process that

may generate new ideas, new partnerships and alliances between different groups providing a solid basis for the future development of the city. If the ECoC is to be designed to boost further development of Wrocław, it must be combined with the involvement of people living in the city. This requires an integration of different actors, activists and interest groups with different backgrounds, with different aspirations, potentials and culture. The process demands multi-level governance based on a stable and transparent structure, with a stable and transparent plan of action and organisational dimensions of programming. Without these elements Wrocław 2016 European Capital of Culture will remain:

- a year-long series of interesting public art events, concerts at the stadium, festivals, large-scale performances addressed mainly to tourists and observers;
- an instance of the implementation of the existing cultural policy of the local government only under a new name;
- additional financing of the activities of cultural institutions subordinated to the local government;
- a pretext to invite celebrities in order to build political capital;
- only a matter of the local government or – even more narrowly – of the entity acting on its behalf.

It does not accelerate the shift towards urban governance, and the opportunity that Wrocław 2016 ECoC can become for the future development of the city should be a lesson to be urgently learnt. Otherwise it will be an opportunity wasted.

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