

The EU Omnipotence Paradox: Inclusive Cultural Policies and Effects of Exclusion

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Abstract : Can the cultural geography of European cities be durably managed by European policies? To answer this question, two hypotheses can be proposed. (1) Either European cultural policies are able to erase cultural inequalities between the territories through the creation of new areas of cultural attractiveness in each beneficiary neighborhood, city or country. Or, (2) each European region historically rooted in a number of endogenous socio-historical, political or demographic factors is not receptive to exogenous political influences. Thus, the cultural attractiveness of a territory is difficult to measure and to impact by top-down policies in the long term. How do these two logics - European and local - interact and contribute to the emergence of a valued, popular sense of a common European cultural identity? Does this constant interaction between historical backgrounds and new political concepts encourage a positive identification with the European project? The European cultural policy programs, such as ECC (European Capital of Culture), seek to develop new forms of civic cohesion through inclusive and participative cultural events. The cultural assets of a city elected 'ECC' are mobilized to attract a wide range of new audiences, including populations poorly integrated into local cultural life - and consequently distant from pre-existing cultural offers. In the current context of increasingly heterogeneous individual perceptions of Europe, the ECC program aims to promote cultural forms and institutions that should accelerate both territorial and cross-border European cohesion. The new cultural consumption pattern is conceived to stimulate integration and mobility, but also to create a legitimate and transnational ideal European citizen type. Our comparative research confronts contrasting cases of 'European Capitals of Culture' from the south and from the north of Europe, cities recently concerned by the ECC political mechanism and cities that were elected ECC in the past, multi-centered cultural models vs. highly centralized cultural models. We aim to explore the impacts of European policies on the urban cultural geography, but also to understand the current obstacles for its efficient implementation.

Keywords : urbanism, cultural policies, cultural institutions, european cultural capitals, heritage industries, exclusion effects

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