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**European Cultural Identity in Light of Brexit:  
A Comparison between Liverpool 2008 European Capital of  
Culture and Hull 2017 UK City of Culture**

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## **Abstract**

In 2017, the European Commission (EC) stated that the United Kingdom was excluded from the competition to host the title of European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2023. This was due to the British government's decision to exit the European Union after the results in the 2016 referendum where British citizens voted 'leave' with a slight majority. The EC's resolution has resulted in some debates across the UK regarding whether they should be excluded from the project or not, and remainers feel dispirited. Although the main objective of the ECOC programme is to create a common European identity through showing of the diversity of European people, the outrage arising from this decision has more to do with the impossibility to enjoy all the other benefits that the ECOC brings to the cities. The UK City of Culture (UKCOC) was created after the success of Liverpool 2008 – success measured in economic and urban regeneration terms mainly –, to follow the same path, so that British cities did not have to wait a long time to benefit from such programme. However, now that Brexit has stood in their way to host the European title, can the UKCOC project take over the role of ECOC and be used as a tool to foster a common European identity in a divided society? In this thesis, I want to research the European dimension and European identity building process through a non-EU project such as UK City of Culture, in order to see its connection with Europe and its potential to contribute to the creation of a common European identity in a country which has decided to leave the EU. To do so, I will take Liverpool 2008 as a reference point to compare with the latest UKCOC, Hull 2017. I will analyse the European dimension in both projects and compare the outcomes to draw a conclusion.

**Key words:** European Capital of Culture, UK City of Culture, European dimension, intercultural dialogue, European identity, Liverpool, Hull, Brexit

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## **1. Introduction**

The European Capital of Culture (ECOC) is a cultural project carried out by the European Union in which one city from a European country (either belonging or applicant candidates to the EU) is named European Capital of Culture. The designation of this title lasts for one year, and different cultural events take place within it. This project was born in 1985 and many European cities have benefited from it. The aim of the ECOC is to highlight the cultural diversity within Europe, as well as to build up a common European identity, and numerous reports prove its positive added results such as the increase in tourism or the city regeneration through culture. However, the United Kingdom has decided to leave the European Union as a result of a referendum run by the British government, and this entails a wide range of consequences, not only economic, but also in the field of culture and cultural relations.

In the past, Glasgow and Liverpool have already been ECOC and have shown the success of the project. After Liverpool 2008 ECOC, the Secretary of State for Culture, Andy Burnham, and Phil Redmond suggested that it would be a good idea to run a nationwide project similar to the ECOC to keep the momentum, since the next UK city holding the title would not be possible until 2023. Therefore, the British government created the project UK City of Culture (UKCOC) with similar goals and characteristics to those of the ECOC, but with the particularity of being a project just for cities within the UK. In 2013, Derry-Londonderry was the first UK city to be UKCOC, followed by Kingston upon Hull in 2017.

With this previous experience, different cities from the UK were hoping to become the future ECOC, but their dream has been shattered by Brexit. For the year 2023, the United Kingdom was one of the countries entitled to bid for European Capital of Culture. There were several cities, such as Leeds or Nottingham, preparing and submitting their bids. However, last year the European Commission announced that, due to the United Kingdom current situation and its decision to withdraw from the EU, it was no possible for any British city to bid for ECOC as for the year 2023 the UK would not fit the criteria for applying. Now, British people will need to rely on their new project UKCOC to boost their cities and cultural scene. However, in a context where society is divided between leaving and remaining, could this project become a new tool for cultural diplomacy between UK and EU?

## 1.1 Research question

This topic is at the core of European affairs at the moment, since Brexit is something that affects both, UK and EU. However, when we talk about international relations we tend to think about economics, trade, international law, etc. and we forget the importance of culture especially in such a diverse territory. During all this time that negotiations on Brexit have been carried out, we could see in media that a lot has been discussed about the single market, the borders or the free movement of people, but Brexit is more than that. The consequences that it might have affect many different fields and very little has been reported on cultural relations or how Brexit is going to affect these. Precisely, the ECOC was originally created by the EU after the idea of the Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri, in 1985, with the main goal of making cities' culture more visible and show how Europe is 'united in diversity'. Now, this union is being tested and people should start looking closer to these cultural policies and projects such as the ECOC. According to this context, in my thesis, I want to research the European dimension and European identity building process through a non-EU project such as UK City of Culture, in order to see its connection with Europe and its potential to contribute to the creation of a common European identity. To do so, I will take Liverpool 2008 as a reference point to compare with the latest UKCOC, Hull 2017. I will analyse the European dimension in both projects and compare the outcomes to draw a conclusion.

## 1.2 Framework and Methodology

The ECOC project focuses mainly on the idea of European culture and diversity and seeks to build a common identity and help integration. According to the ECOC factsheet it is emphasized that something common to all ECOC is to highlight "the richness of Europe's cultural diversity and take a fresh look at its shared history and heritage. They promote mutual understanding and show how the universal language of creativity opens Europe to cultures from across the world".<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the ECOC programme has been one of the cultural policies of the EU to help European integration and understanding between communities and states. Leaving aside other benefits that ECOC host cities can get, the European dimension has not only been the original feature

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. "European Capitals of Culture." February 07, 2019. Accessed February 02, 2019. [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en).

of the project, but it has been kept and has survived through all the years to the present. As Lähdesmäki points out in her publication about identity politics, in 2006 the European Commission declared that the aims of the project were based on its European dimension and the engagement of the community to keep the city developing culturally and socially.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in its *European Capitals of Culture 2020 - 2033. Guide for cities preparing to bid* published in 2014, the European Commission specifies the requirements for the bids to become capital of culture and dedicates one section to determine what European dimension has to be based on and what needs to be addressed in this area. The EC also highlights that “European dimension is at the heart of an ECOC programme”, the event must be European and be able to attract an international audience, as well as create a “co-operation with the partner ECOC”.<sup>3</sup>

As we can see, the ECOC project has been a key tool in EU cultural policy to help better understanding between European cultures. Lähdesmäki discuss the meaning behind EU’s “unity in diversity” and concludes that the EU aims to construct a European common identity based on the diversity of European cultures emphasizing a common cultural heritage and through intercultural dialogue. In line with this, it also adds that the rhetoric used by the EC in its guide for bidding cities “parallels the diversity and the richness, and emphasizes the creation of a sense of belonging, which is obtained through highlighting the common features in cultures and a better knowledge of the cultural features of others”.<sup>4</sup> The EC has used the ECOC to achieve these goals, and it makes sure that European dimension is a requirement for cities to be successful in the bidding process.

However, European dimension can be difficult to analyse and measure as it can be interpreted in various ways. As the Palmer report shows, all cities where the ECOC took place between 1985 and 2004 claimed to have had a strong European perspective, but they had focused on different things. Palmer classify them into six categories: running events with European artists participation; collaboration between artists or cultural organisations based in other European countries; organising events involving European

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<sup>2</sup> Tuuli Lähdesmäki. *Identity Politics in the European Capital of Culture Initiative*. Dissertations in Social Sciences and Business Studies, No 84. University of Eastern Finland, 2014, 13.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission. *European Capitals of Culture 2020-2033. Guides for cities preparing to bid*, [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/capitals-culture-candidates-guide\\_en\\_vdec17.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/capitals-culture-candidates-guide_en_vdec17.pdf), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Lähdesmäki, Tuuli. “Rhetoric of Unity and Cultural Diversity in the Making of European Cultural Identity.” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 18, no. 1 (2012) doi: 10.1080/10286632.2011.561335, 6-7.

issues/themes; celebrate European heritage/identity of the hosting city; building partnerships with other ECOC or European cities in general; fostering European tourism.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Palmer also found out that “about one third of the cities in this study preferred to focus on a broader ‘international’, rather than a more defined ‘European’ dimension, often making no real distinction between the two and “only four rated the European dimension as being a ‘high priority’”.<sup>6</sup>

In the UK, two cities have hosted the ECOC so far, Glasgow in 1990 and Liverpool in 2008. Both of them have been claimed highly successful. Glasgow changed the concept of ECOC focusing more on urban regeneration and city development creating a great success and helping to raise the profile of the city. Lädhesmäki points out that after Glasgow the project “have aimed to induce urban development and regeneration through the promotion of cultural and creative industries” and that “the designation has become a sought-after brand used by the cities in image building, place promotion, and city marketing.”<sup>7</sup> According to the report of Impacts 08, the effects that the ECOC had in Liverpool seem to show that the case is similar to that of Glasgow in 1990. In Liverpool, the programme was aimed to urban development and economic growth. This is the reason why many cities across Europe seek to become the next ECOC. They are not really looking for the European cooperation or the European common identity construction.

In the UK, different cities had already prepared their bids in order to apply for the project in the year 2023. However, the EC has decided to leave them out of the bid since the UK will not be part of the EU by that time. After the news leaked, many were the reactions and most of them showing disappointment. Beatriz García, who has spent many years researching the impacts of ECOC on Glasgow and later on Liverpool, wrote an article in [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com) explaining the reasons why the UK should stay in the ECOC project. According to her, the EU needs to bear in mind the effort that all bidding cities have put into the process. She argues that this should be recognised as an “evidence of ongoing pride in, and support of, the heritage” and beneficial to both

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Palmer. *European Cities and Capitals of Culture. Part I*. Brussels: Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004, [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/palmer-report-capitals-culture-1995-2004-i\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/palmer-report-capitals-culture-1995-2004-i_en.pdf), 85

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 86

<sup>7</sup> Lädhesmäki, *Identity politics*, 17.



parts.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, she admits that both Glasgow and Liverpool had great benefits from ECOC not related to the European dimension or the relations with the EU, but in other areas such as urban regeneration, tourism or community engagement. She writes that “it is true that, in a globalised world – and with pressure to pursue local regeneration agendas, first and foremost – exploring the European dimension of the initiative has often been challenging”.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, we can think that, as previously mentioned by Lädhesmäki, the European dimension is not their goal or what attracts cities to bid for ECOC, let alone their priority. It might lead us to think that cities focus on European dimension mainly because it is a requirement for a winning bid, but not because they really want to enhance a common or shared identity.

Building upon the success of Glasgow and Liverpool, the UK decided to create its own project to boost cities’ economy and profiles across the UK while waiting to host the ECOC again in 2023. This way UKCOC was born with similar features to those of the ECOC, but without the need of any European dimension. In a policy briefing of the Local Government Unit the aims of the UKCOC are described as “not so much about showing off the most cultural place in the UK, but more about how culture can be used effectively to drive and bring about economic and social regeneration whilst boosting the profile, confidence and aspirations of the city and its residents”.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the University of Hull’s report shows there are European themes in the cultural programme of Hull 2017 which describes itself as "a getaway to Europe", as well as a partnership with the ECOC Aarhus 2017.<sup>11</sup> Since the UK is not able to host any ECOC from now on, UKCOC could be taken as a starting point in cultural relations between the UK and the EU, if Brexit happens in the end.

Within the framework of European dimension and cultural identity in ECOCs previously mentioned I will analyse and compare Liverpool 08 and Hull 2017. Bee claims that social constructivism is a theoretical and methodological background which

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<sup>8</sup> Beatriz García. “Why Brexit Should Not Stop UK Cities from Competing for European Capital of Culture.” *The Conversation*. January 13, 2019. Accessed January 6, 2019. <https://theconversation.com/why-brexit-should-not-stop-uk-cities-from-competing-for-european-capital-of-culture-88115>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Marion Catlin. *UK City of Culture programme – history and update as Hull wins the 2017 title*. LGiU, 2013 URL: <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/UK-City-of-Culture-programme-history-and-update-as-Hull-wins-the-2017-title.pdf>, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Culture, Place and Policy Institute and University of Hull. *Cultural Transformations: The Impact of Hull UK City of Culture 2017*. Hull, 2018

has made a great impact on the concept of European identity and shows the different layers of it.<sup>12</sup> This can be related as well to the findings of Palmer in his report on previous ECOCs that led him to classify the different interpretations of the European perspective. As we can see, research on European identity and cultural policy is not easy and must be addressed carefully. Scullion and García made a literature review on the methodology used in different cultural policies studies coming to the conclusion that this field is interdisciplinary and the methodology is not well defined yet. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative analysis is usually conducted in order to gather data in how cultural policies have been implemented.<sup>13</sup>

According to this framework, I will use a mixed approach of qualitative methods to answer my research question. Firstly, I will take into account the different ways of showing European dimension in ECOCs to analyse Liverpool's and Hull's cultural programmes using the discourse analysis method. Due to the difficulties that I encountered to find the complete programmes of both cities – especially the one from Liverpool 08 about which there is not much information on the internet – I have based my analysis on some of the events I found on events listing pages such as [www.artinliverpool.com](http://www.artinliverpool.com) for Liverpool 08, and the leaflets with Hull's programme uploaded onto [www.issue.com](http://www.issue.com). Finally, I will compare both projects in order to draw a conclusion and see whether UKCOC can take over the role of ECOCs in case Brexit goes ahead. In this case, I decided to use a comparative approach as UKCOC was a project mainly based on ECOC programme and there are some similarities. Particularly, I chose the case of Hull because it gives the opportunity to analyse European themes, whereas Derry-Londonderry UKCOC programme was mainly aimed to conflict-solving goals due to its context. In addition, Liverpool and Hull share common features as both are port cities with a strong identity and used to have a low profile within the UK.

## **2. The formation of a European cultural identity**

Since the beginning of the European project there has been a willingness of integration and cooperation between European countries. The aftermath of the Second

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<sup>12</sup> C. Bee and C. Clarke. "Examining the Success of the European Capital of Culture in Sustaining the Cultural Foundations of the European Identity: An Analysis of Media Representations and Journalists' Views on Liverpool 2008", *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 11, no. 2, (2015), 215-216.

<sup>13</sup> Adrienne Scullion and Beatriz García. "What is cultural policy research?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 11, No. 2, (2005): 113-127 doi: 10.1080/10286630500198104, 122.

World War left a feeling of division and concern in the western countries of the European continent, pushing them to find a solution so that conflicts between European countries could be dealt with in a peaceful way, as well as to foster a common and better understanding between the member states to lessen any tensions. As a result of this situation, the political elites of some of these European countries reached an agreement to establish first the European Coal and Steel Community (Treaty of Paris, 1951) and a few years later the European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome, 1958). These communities formed the blueprint for what we know today as the European Union, officially established in 1992 with the Treaty of Maastricht. However, these organisations - as we can infer without much effort simply by taking a look at their names – were based in economic objectives leading to an economic and political integration, and it was not until the 80s when cultural identity and cultural policies were given more importance.<sup>14</sup> From this point, a European common identity - sometimes also referred to as or linked to a European citizenship - has become more relevant in the framework of the European integration leading to a Europeanization of the member-states through discourse and cultural policies. The construction of a European common identity, in which the ECOC is based, is considerably complex as it is aimed to encompass a large area with different traditions and cultures. Therefore, I think it is necessary for this thesis to do a review of the different theories and approaches towards European identity, as well as defining the concept and how these identities are created.

## 2.1 The definition of identity and how they are constructed.

The definition of the concept of identity is not an easy task as it implies many different factors and it can be approached from a diverse range of disciplines. Simultaneously, there are several theories within the same discipline. In this study, I am going to focus as previously said in a more sociological insight of this concept, which offers different approaches and classifications to define identity. Therefore, this needs to be discussed here for a better understanding of the future analysis.

If we look into identities from a post-modernist point of view, they are believed to be built on an individual and subjective basis. That is, the identification of the people with a community is the process to build the identity of the community. However, many

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<sup>14</sup> Monica Sassatelli. *Becoming Europeans: Cultural Identity and Cultural Policies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 3

scholars have been inclined to adopt the approach of social constructivism. If identities are defined following social constructivism theories they are constructed on the basis of social and cultural practices, orders and context. It is something created through negotiation and for the will of the subjects to create an identity within which they share common things.<sup>15</sup> As Lähdesmäki suggest “the analytical focus is laid on the creation of collective identity projects and the individuals’ notions and meaning-making of them.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, these identities can be classified as thick or thin. Thick identities are those naturally created upon similar features (history, heritage, traditions...), meanwhile thin identities are those formed in a more artificial way. In addition, they can have strong or weak ties, so strong communities with thick ties are those formed by physical interaction and unanimity, whereas weak communities with thin ties are those formed voluntarily (e.g. hobbies). Usually, thick communities are harder to enter or leave. Meanwhile, thin communities are the opposite. However, according to Lähdesmäki, it is believed that all types of communities are equally constructed and as easy or difficult to leave or join.<sup>17</sup> This way, identities can be defined as social constructions, regardless of their level of strength. In terms of cultural identity, Lähdesmäki points out that it is the process of dialogue and negotiation which is built through cultural phenomena and cultural narratives that usually evoke common stories and facts.<sup>18</sup> That is the European cultural identity is created not only through a common history and traditions but also through the discourse of the EU's cultural policy.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the use of constructivist approaches shows the “invention of Europe”.<sup>20</sup> In the introduction of the book *The Social Construction of Europe*, the authors explain how constructivism approaches can help International Relations studies and European studies to understand the complex realities that these new orders imply. In the case of Europe, being a project still in process of building and defining, social constructivism gives a new insight in the definition of identities within a European context. This approach also considers “the impact of norms and ideas on the construction of identities and behaviour”<sup>21</sup>, as well as

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<sup>15</sup> Tuuli Lähdesmäki, *Identity politics*, 31–32.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>19</sup> Tuuli Lähdesmäki. “Rhetoric of unity” 59–75.

<sup>20</sup> Tuuli Lähdesmäki. “Discourses of Europeaness in the Reception of the European Capital of Culture Events: The Case of Pécs 2010.” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 21, no. 2 (2012): 191-205. doi:10.1177/0969776412448092, 192.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jorgensen, and Antje Wiener, “Introduction” in *The Social Construction of Europe*, eds. Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jorgensen, and Antje Wiener, London: SAGE Publications., 2001, 5

the importance of language and speech acts that influence the process of identity formation through those norms/rules and political discourse.<sup>22</sup> In the specific case of the EU, Constructivism research focus on three groups for identity building:

First, research into the nature of a potential 'European identity'; second, research into the reconstruction of national identities under the influence of the integration process; and, third, informed by the results of both the above, there is the question of the plurality of national identities and cultures, and the extent to which a European political identity or political culture can be founded upon such difference.<sup>23</sup>

As we see, this approach is one of the best to take into account regarding the study of identity formation in a European context, as it considers different factors which influence the complex reality of identities, as well as the relation between the creation of a new order of governance - the EU polity - and the rearrangement of national identities.

Moreover, identities can also be analysed depending on the space. We can encounter area-based identities or territorial identities. Although some scholars have used the term territorial identity to refer to an identity linked to an area, this concept is connected to a specific delimited real or administrative area. Meanwhile, the concept of area-based identity is more abstract and flexible and can be used to refer to identities created in areas that do not necessarily have real boundaries. In addition, as Lähdesmäki points out, there is a distinction between the collective area-based identity concerning the people living in that place, and the collective area-based identity which is connected to the place itself. The conclusion is that the physical and historical features of that area create the feeling of communality among the people living there and at the same time the people are those who give meaning to these features and create the identity, it is a two way process.<sup>24</sup>

Another question in the discussion of the concept of identity is how defined and separated these identities are. According to the studies in the field, European identity does not compete with other identities. Sassatelli claims that the European identity is multi-layered and these different layers of identity (local, regional, national or European) does not collide or oppose.<sup>25</sup> Lähdesmäki agrees with this theory and points out identities fade into each other. For instance, a person can identify him/herself with

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 8-12

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 14

<sup>24</sup> Lähdesmäki, *Identity politics*, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 37-38.

his/her national identity but at the same time identify with a European identity. That is, because that person considers that his/her first identity belongs to the latter one and there is no contradiction in that. However, as Lähdesmäki explains, there are also different levels of strength, as the closer identities might be stronger than the others. Sometimes, even though the strength among the identities differs, it does not mean that can be separated. Most of the time these identities add to each other, there is a flow between them, and cannot be explained without one another. She still argues that these identities are constructed by discursive processes as it happens with the European common identity. Language and narrative are used to create that sense of belonging and the Europeanisation of the other identities through traditions, cultural heritage and the discourse in the EU cultural policy is visible and tangible.<sup>26</sup> In her analysis of the European identity in Pécs 2010, she found out that most of the interviewees identified themselves firstly as Hungarians and second as Europeans, but without the need of both identities being in conflict with one another.<sup>27</sup> People have various different identities which become activated in certain situations or circumstances. The same cultural phenomena, qualities, and issues can be considered as markers of different identities in different circumstances.<sup>28</sup> According to these theories we can conclude that people can identify with various identities simultaneously depending on the context and also at different levels without getting those identities into conflict.

However, this leads us to questions that reading any study on European cultural policy or Europeanization can arise: should not there exist any conflicts between identities, why is it the construction of a European identity so complex and problematic? Why is the Europeanization of the member-states taking so long and why does some of the European citizens not relate to a common identity yet? Probably, the shortest and quickest answer to these questions is that, although identities are changeable, it is not an easy task to modify them or to add other layers to the existing ones. If we look into the European case, the EU is made up of a number of nation-states, each with its own identity – and most likely identities in plural. As discussed previously, identities are based on values, history and traditions, and so are national identities. Hutchinson argues that “the ethnic building blocks of nations formed out of processes that began well before the modern period” such as “administrative centralisation”; “interstate warfare”;

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<sup>26</sup> Lähdesmäki, *Identity politics*, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Lähdesmäki, “Discourses of Europeaness,” 202.

<sup>28</sup> Lähdesmäki, *Identity politics*, 35.

“religious election”; or “colonisation and settlement”.<sup>29</sup> The national identity was not only based on a common history or sense of belonging, but the creation of the state helped people to create that commonality and union. That is, the creation of an identity is the result of a long complex historical process in which a lot of circumstances are involved. As a result of this complicated course of action for the identity formation, national identities are difficult to “penetrate (from above)” since they are based on all these common customs, histories, features, cultures, etc.<sup>30</sup> National identities have enough consistency and can remain without the protection of the state and its administration.

It seems difficult for a European common identity to permeate such strong boundaries despite the efforts of the political elites of creating a full integration of the EU. According to Hutchinson, some scholars assume that the concept of a European identity is created on a top-down basis where the European unity is attributed to economic and political elites and penetrates into the popular and national cultures as it is developed. However, he argues that this assumption is “doubtful” since this European idea of unity has always been in European elites’ consciousness and the existence of a European civilization awareness.<sup>31</sup> Yet, most of the member states – if not all of them – entered the EU for their own interests rather than a sense of commonality and willingness to create a common identity, but even though this was their first motivation to join the European project, the economic and political integration is increasing and “a European-wide federation might arise as an indirect effect of the competitive goals and fears of the European nation-states, just as before the nations of Europe formed as an unintended consequence of the competition of dynastic states.”<sup>32</sup> This might slowly create a common identity similar to that of the nations and that increasingly permeates or integrates in the national identity. Although national identities are hard to change and they evolve gradually, as previously discussed it is possible to modify them through new narratives that usually permeate better in difficult contexts such as economic crises when the “Élites start promoting new ideas about political order and about nation state identity when the old concepts are commonly perceived as irrelevant or as having

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<sup>29</sup> John Hutchinson. “Enduring nations and the illusions of European integration” in *Europeanisation, National Identities and Migration. Changes in boundary constructions between Western and Eastern Europe*, eds. Willfried Spohn and Anna Triandafyllidou, 36-51. London: Routledge, 2003,

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 40

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45

failed”. This new ideas are related to the national identity or they would be ditched by the society otherwise, and are mainly “interested-based” as political élites use them to gain power, finally these new ideas are accepted by society and internalized in the whole political culture.<sup>33</sup> National identities are tough but prone to change and be influenced by political discourse during crises.

This was the case of some of the countries during the creation of the European community where political élites started to adopt a pro-European discourse – based on their own interests – that helped people to accept the accession to this new system. At the beginning there were several types of discourses about the European Community which would influence the way the nation saw the EC, but only “the liberal nationalist identity and the modern Western idea of Europe as a liberal democracy” discourses remained in the 1990s. The first one preserves the nation state identity and keeps the sovereignty in the nation state hands. The latter is “based on liberal democracy and the social market economy”. In the case of France, Charles de Gaulle’s identity discourse, which was grounded on different (French) identities put together appealing to the national identity, succeed and struggled for the recognition of a “Europe of the states”. However, after other two crises this national identity discourse shifted to a more Europeanized view of the French identity and politicians used the European integration as a tool to seek their own interest. Germany also had different points of view within its political elites regarding identity. While some of them defended the national identity and the Europe of United States, others would fight for a deep integration into Europe and a more Europeanized German identity to overcome the damaged image that its recent history left and which would be the one prevailing until nowadays. However, and not surprisingly, in the UK the discourse about the EU has changed little over the years. It started as a liberal nationalist identity discourse and it has remained as such so far despite any critical juncture.<sup>34</sup> It seems that the English identity is so strong that is able to survive changes and crises, and we can confirm in the current situation that not only this identity survives crises but it becomes stronger and stronger, as it’s happening with the Brexit juncture. Although, the British society is currently divided, there seems to be

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<sup>33</sup> Martin Marcussen, Thomas Risse, Daniela Engelmann-Martin, Hans-Joachim Knopf and Klaus Roscher. “Constructing Europe? The Evolution of Nation-State Identities” in *The Social Construction of Europe*, eds. Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jorgensen, and Antje Wiener, 101-120. London: SAGE Publications, 2001, 103-104

<sup>34</sup> Marcussen et al., “Constructing Europe?” 105-114. More information about how the discourses of the three countries have evolved over time and what were the reasons and the interests that motivated it can be found in this chapter.



a strong perception of the English identity that has led to this situation. Also, we have to bear in mind that the countries voting for Brexit were England and Wales, whereas Northern Ireland and Scotland voted remaining in the EU, as well as being mainly English politicians the ones advocating for Brexit. This means that is the English identity the one prevailing and leading towards a Euroscepticism feeling. The British case is a good example of the complexity and the difficulties for a European common identity to become a reality, but the French and German realities show that there is room for change and for the integration of the European discourse, even though it is for the sake of their own interests. “In a certain sense, multiple European and nation state identities might actually be appropriate for a multi-level system of governance, such as the EU.”<sup>35</sup> Again, we can conclude that the European identity will eventually become an extra layer for European citizens.

Nevertheless, the European identity still presents some troubles regarding its formation in order to be embraced by the member states of the EU. As mentioned above, an identity is built on cultural narratives that create a sense of belonging through common stories and facts. The difference between national identities and the European identity is that the former is based on historical events, language, customs, etc., whereas the EU struggles to create the kind of narrative that induces a common past. In Shore’s words, “Europe has no coherent common culture around which fellow Europeans can unite”.<sup>36</sup> Even though it has symbols, they mean nothing unless they evoke a feeling of belonging and self-identification. In comparison with the USA, this union of states was based on the emigrants who joined forces against Europe and created the “New World” destroying the cultures previously settled in the land instead of including them in the creation of the nation, which may have caused more problems in terms of identity and union. On the other hand, the EU has the myth of trauma and defeated nation-state elites.<sup>37</sup> This might serve as a common narrative to start building that identity.

The creation of a European collective identity has been carried out throughout the centuries, and according to Giesen, it has gone through different stages: translations, missionary movement and collective memory. He explains the translation processes as the “transfer of a cultural heritage from Greek antiquity to the contemporary Western

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 118

<sup>36</sup> Cris Shore. “Inventing Homo Europaeus. The Cultural Politics of European Integration.” *Ethnologia Europaea* 29, no. 2 (1999): 56

<sup>37</sup> Hutchinson, “Enduring nations”, 46

civilization” – being that cultural heritage embedded in “objects, places and territories” – which preserve some continuity.<sup>38</sup> In contrast with this view of translations, the European mission does not have continuity and it is based on “an invisible and categorical unity” which included the whole mankind and “instead of moving cultural objects it moved persons from outside into the community”.<sup>39</sup> However, Europe cannot longer use these two arguments as a characteristic feature to create its own identity, thus it needs to create a collective memory in order to build a European identity. Due to the lack of a common “heroic uprising”, he suggests that the narrative to use is the “traumatic past [...] of victims and perpetrators” after the aftermath of the World War II which has been embedded in the discourse and actions of the political elites and the nations involved in it.<sup>40</sup>

This collective memory that Giesen discuss has served Europe to start creating a common identity. However, we can see in recent events that this might have lost effect. In Sassatelli’s *Has Europe lost the plot?* the author discuss how the narrative – or narratives in the case of Europe due to its diversity – needs to make sense and tell a story, rather than just gather together a list of elements or facts with no meaning, that is it has to have a plot. She claims that the plot that has guided Europe to the point of becoming what it is now, it was the same as we find in Giesen analysis, the solution to centuries of wars between European nations, the need for collaboration to reach peace, which, due to its success in achieving its objective, now it has become superfluous and something new generations might take for granted.<sup>41</sup> Europe has evolved and it is no

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<sup>38</sup> Bernhard Giesen. “The collective identity of Europe: constitutional practice or community of memory?” in *Europeanisation, National Identities and Migration. Changes in boundary constructions between Western and Eastern Europe*, eds. Willfried Spohn and Anna Triandafyllidou, 21-35. London: Routledge, 2003, 27-29. In his analysis about translations he highlights three main periods when this happened: firstly, the transfer of aesthetics and religion from the Greek world to the rest of Europe mainly through the Roman Empire, which created a commonality between all the Greek territories and its descendants; secondly, the adoption of the Roman Empire values by some peoples of Europe, especially the Latin Christianity which not only would spread over the European territory, but also would set a differentiation with Muslims; and finally the sense of commonality with the arrival to the New World and the European hegemony.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 29-31. Here, he explains three other periods when this happened, being the Reformation the starting point, followed by the Enlightenment movement and finally the quest for civil and human rights beginning in the nineteenth century in Europe which gained “the status of a global ethic of international responsibility and intervention.”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 31-32. I think, it is right to highlight that he also mentions that “right-wing extremism [...] is treated as political deviance that could never succeed in entering a national government”, which we can see this is no longer true as new parties embracing this ideology are gaining momentum throughout Europe and even getting some seats in some of the European member states’ parliaments.

<sup>41</sup> Monica Sassatelli. “Has Europe lost the plot? Europe’s search for a new narrative imagination.” *Narratives for Europe: Reading Room*. European Cultural Foundation, 2017,

longer in the same situation as it was in the past century, therefore it needs to create a new narrative, or at least to find a new plot for its narrative which will make their diverse nations stick together. She also highlights that Europe's narrative should not be compared to national narratives because these tend to homogenise the community whereas Europe's narrative is meant to be heterogeneous due to its diversity. Here, the recent discourse of the European institutions, 'Unity in diversity', comes into play and must be analysed to see whether this will be the right path to build a European common identity.

## 2.2 The Discourse of "United in Diversity"

It is clear that, although quite a complex and challenging process, many theories in the field of European identity agree that a person can feel part of different communities and identities at the same time. However, as we have seen in the previous analysis, creating a narrative for a common European identity has evolved throughout time and there have been various perspectives. The motto of the EU is "United in Diversity", but it is good to look into what is understood for unity, diversity and how the EU has ended up embracing both, as well as managed to create a common identity based on this premise.

The discourse of *unity* is a homogenizing theory – similar to the nations discourse – in which the diversity and plurality of the European region is left behind. According to this approach, the current European common identity comes from a common historical past based on high culture (usually Enlightenment values, literature, art, architectural streams, etc.) and European achievement which is seen as a positive feature excluding the down sides of European history.<sup>42</sup> Besides the complexity that creating such identity entails as we have seen before, this is not the best way to make the peoples of Europe unite as many of them will not relate to those elements or will perceive it as an appropriation.

Regarding the *diversity* discourse, scholars criticise the point of view of Europe united by a common high culture and history. On the contrary, they argue that Europe comprises a wide range of regional and local cultures in addition to the national ones.

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/526e5978e4b0b83086a1fede/t/59494ceee4fcb5287dc5673d/1497976047788/M.+Sassatelli+Has+Europe+lost+the+plot.pdf> (Accessed May 15, 2019), 3

<sup>42</sup> Tuuli Lähdesmäki. "Rhetoric of unity," 62.

For them, the best way to approach the European common identity is from a political perspective, although its critics claim that culture cannot be separated from the concept of identity.<sup>43</sup> Following this logic, only the economic and political side of integration would be carried out which might create a lack of cohesion between cultures.

Finally, the discourse that gives base to the motto of the EU *United in diversity* understands the concept of a European common identity as the diversity of the cultures within the European region and, at the same time, connected to each other by common features and history too.<sup>44</sup> This narrative is more balanced as it tries to create a common identity without neglecting the differences between countries (or even regions) in Europe. However, this does not solve the problem of a common identity creation through the appropriation of the national stories and achievements.

Sassatelli goes further and parallels these theories with the integration process of the European Union and the different approaches that could lead to this integration. As for the European integration there are two different approaches which are federalism and neo-functionalism. Federalism is based on a radical political integration of the EU states at a transnational level, meanwhile neo-functionalism tries to create a sense of belonging through economic and monetary unity following the theory of the "spill-over". In other words, it sees the individuals as "interest-oriented" and assumes that the political and cultural integration will be naturally created by them after the economic and monetary integration is implemented. However, it does not take into account the identity as a creator of interests. Criticism to these failing theories argues that the solution is an alternative model of 'multi-level governance' which stays between the simplistic Federalist approach and takes into account the "identitarian and cultural dimension" that neo-functionalism leaves behind. These approaches to European integration can be paralleled with the European cultural identity theories of the Unity similar to Federalist ideas, Diversity with a similar approach as neo-functionalism, and Unity in Diversity which tries to bear in mind features of the identities that the others neglect.<sup>45</sup>

Globalization and localism are gaining momentum in the contemporary world, and thus world's societies and identities are showing a higher level of complexity. Through the

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<sup>43</sup> Lähdesmäki, "Rhetoric of unity," 62.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>45</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 25-26.

approach of unity in diversity, Europe tries to "mediate" between them so that they are "no longer seen as opposite phenomena", but as elements of complex and multi-layered identities.<sup>46</sup> The same as the unity and diversity discourses were similar to the integration approaches of federalism and neo-functionalism, the unity in diversity discourse is similar to the multi-level governance since this approach is not as inclusive as federalism and takes into account the plurality of the region without trying to homogenize it.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Lähdesmäki points out in her article that regions and cities are becoming more important within Europe, whereas nations are losing their status. EU's policies give priority and foster regionalism and localism through its projects and funding programmes, which shows that the creation of a European cultural identity is not a bottom-up process though, but something coming from the EU governance.<sup>48</sup>

However, this new narrative that tries to overcome the defects of the previous discourses is not safe from criticism. Sassatelli points out how scholars traced the origin of this discourse back to the nineteenth century and its similarity to the ideas of "Romantic nationalism combined with the Enlightenment's pan-Europeanism", in which "European superiority and its civilizing mission, cloaking with universal or cosmopolitan overtones what were actually national imperialist designs" was legitimised. That is, the unity discourse keeps being stronger than the diversity discourse and the support to plurality within the European identity. Lähdesmäki also claims that the narrative in the European Union documents still emphasizes that the European common identity is based in these values and, therefore, it leaves out the diversity enforcement,<sup>49</sup> which demonstrates that there is still a danger of the narrative becoming homogenising again as the unity discourse theory.<sup>50</sup> One example of that is the ECOC project - later analysed in this paper- which has a strong ideological dimension and even though regionalism is fostered through it, it also promotes a Europeanisation of the countries participating in it.<sup>51</sup> Sassatelli suggest that the creation of a European civic identity will preserve the national cultural identities and it will be based on a 'social contract' which is described "as a set of political allegiances

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 34–35.

<sup>47</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>49</sup> Lähdesmäki, *Identity politics*, 9

<sup>50</sup> Sassatelli., *Becoming Europeans*, 36.

<sup>51</sup> Lähdesmäki, *Identity politics*, 28.

conceived in more realistic and instrumental terms".<sup>52</sup> However, there is still the task of gaining those allegiances, especially from some sceptical states such as the UK, where in the 1990s Thatcher strongly criticised the creation of a European citizenship suggesting that this implies to give up on your national identity and gives the EU "all the sovereignty of a state".<sup>53</sup> Also, we need to bear in mind the current political situation and the rise of nationalisms in most of member states.

As for the narrative of "Unity in diversity" in the EU discourse, the idea of identity started to be used first in the 80s. Previously, it was mainly the word "integration" that appeared in European discourse, however, it was due to the change of times and the flourish of new theories that the EU began to use the word "identity" to define the commonality of European societies. At the beginning this word was used in a federalist way highlighting the discourse of unity and the superiority of Europe based in its traditional *mission civilisatrice*. Later, the term embraced the discourse of diversity trying to enhance the plurality of the nations and regions within it, but it was during the 90s and after the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht that United in Diversity started to gain momentum and, as it has been explained, to build a bridge between the two former theories which would preserve the different identities within the European region bringing them together through common features and heritage. However, this can be related to the appropriation of cultural heritage, national histories and traditions to create this European common identity. As it seems the discussion on European identity is still not over as it is such a complex topic, and there will always be criticism since the line between homogenization and the creation of a common identity acknowledging the diversity of the region is rather thin. Therefore, the conclusion on the multi-layered identity narrative, where people can define themselves as belonging to different identities (although probably in a different way) is the one that suits best this rhetoric.<sup>54</sup>

### **3. Europeanization through cultural policies**

We have seen so far the struggles that the EU has gone through to define a European identity and its foundation so that it can elaborate that common sense of unity, realising that the motto "Unity in diversity" with the celebration of the diverse cultures

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<sup>52</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Rey Koslowski, "Understanding the European Union as a Federal Polity" in *The Social Construction of Europe*, eds. Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jorgensen, and Antje Wiener, 32-49. London: SAGE Publications, 2001, 43. Thatcher's words as quoted in Koslowski.

<sup>54</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 42.

within the European space is the best way to achieve its goal. The main tool, besides plain political discourse, is the cultural policies. As Sassatelli argues “one of the aims of cultural policy has always been the fostering of specific identities and thus the formatting of a fully socialized, compliant citizen.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it is the right way to proceed to look into the evolution of the EU cultural policies and its connection with the creation of the European common identity. In this section I would like to go through the EU cultural policies that have made this possible, and how their objectives and goals have changed throughout time in order to accommodate to the discourse.

### 3.1 Integration of culture into the political agenda

Most scholars claim that the origins of the concerns for culture and a change of the approach towards integration emerged back in 1970s. However, although it is true that the European Community started to take culture more seriously from this period, we cannot forget that the Council of Europe (COE) has been concern with cultural matters since its origins in 1949. With the European Cultural Convention signed in 1954, it openly showed its commitment to a common European culture declaring the COE intentions ‘to foster among the nationals of all members, and of such other European States as may accede thereto, the study of the languages, history and civilization of the others and of the civilization which is common to them all’, it has also been a great influence for the EU in the adoption of cultural symbols such as the flag or the anthem, and it has carried out many cultural initiatives.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, this Convention was crucial for the concept of ‘European cultural heritage’, as Calligaro suggests, and it will be the blueprint for the cultural discourse integrated in EU politics and cultural schemes.<sup>57</sup> This shows us how culture is an indivisible part of European integration.

In addition to this, although the COE had been trying to highlight the importance of culture in the European member states understanding, the EC had mainly ignored it in its policy-making process, as from the beginning it was based on a strictly economic integration through the neo-functional approach which was believed it would have a

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<sup>55</sup> Monica Sassatelli, “The Logic of Europeanizing Cultural Policy” in *Transcultural Policy. Cultural Policy in a Changing Europe*, eds. Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, and Anna Triandafyllidou, 24-42. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 24

<sup>56</sup> As quoted in Sassatelli “The Logic of Europeanizing”, 25

<sup>57</sup> Oriane Calligaro, “From ‘European cultural heritage’ to ‘cultural diversity’? The changing core values of European cultural policy.” *Politique Européenne* 3, no. 45, (2014): 60-85, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-europeenne-2014-3-page-60.htm>, 65

‘spilt-over’ effect and the political and cultural integration of the member states will come along without any effort. In the Treaty Establishing the European Community (TEEC) - or Treaty of Rome - signed in 1957, there was only one article that explicitly addressed culture, however, since its regulations involved different aspects of the economic integration, such as economic activities between different states, culture was also implicitly integrated in it. Some states took for granted that culture was excluded from the treaty and therefore the EEC would not have any competences in cultural matters, but the TEEC did not exclude culture explicitly therefore, it also applies to culture as Craufurd-Smith suggests.<sup>58</sup> Throughout time the enforcement of the TEEC brought some advantages since it involved more protection for the states which might not have achieved on their own and more funding for cultural projects, however this was not exempt of strains as some member states remained sceptical due to its creation of “a new focus for identity beyond the nation state and displacing established cultural connections.”<sup>59</sup> The neo-functionalist approach did have some results in bringing cultural issues to the fore, yet “there is widespread acceptance within the Union and member states that the market alone cannot be relied on to drive cultural development” for different reasons: the proportion between the value of the cultural institutions given by individuals may not equal to their engagement with these institutions; the global market may homogenise the production of cultural products due to the need to catch the interest of a broader public; different factors can lead to a disadvantage of the foreign competitors; and studies show that public investment in “non-commercial cultural activities” can enhance a positive income for the countries.<sup>60</sup> For this reasons, the concern about a European cultural policy started to grow in some sectors of the European Community in order to achieve further integration.

The kick-start point for the inclusion of culture in European matters was in the 1970s, when the federalist division realised that market could not be in charge of a cultural integration as it would not be fully effective and decided to bring to the table the debate about culture and its inclusion in the political agenda. It was with the Declaration of

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<sup>58</sup> Rachel Craufurd Smith. “The Cultural Logic of Economic Integration” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, 7-24. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 8. The trading issues addressed in this Treaty also included the free movement of (cultural) goods and therefore the need to protect intellectual property, and goods with ‘artistic, historic or archaeological value’ for the states, as well as the free movement of workforce in the cultural industries and funding measures for the creative sectors.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 15



European Identity of 1973 had this become a reality also backed by the Tindemans Report of 1975. These documents declared the need of a European identity to make progress in the political integration and to keep a balance with the technocratic approach, also giving some advice which would set the strategy for a cultural policy.<sup>61</sup>

In the next decade, this awareness of cultural integration and the need of a common identity kept increasing and more documents would justify new initiatives to achieve the EC goals. Shore points out that in the decade of the 1980's the European elites realized that the integration had to have a more cultural approach, and tried to spread among the miss-informed citizens information about the European Community's work, as well as "the shared values of Europeans and cultural heritage", "the task was to educate and inform the public about Europe" and this would be done through policies with initiatives such as Inter Alia, The People's Europe, Television Without Frontiers Directive, or even the single currency.<sup>62</sup> The Solemn Declaration on the European Union signed by the (then) 10 member states in 1983 encouraged a "closer cooperation on cultural matters, in order to affirm the awareness of a common cultural heritage as an element in the European identity"<sup>63</sup> According to Sassatelli, this was the triggering reason for the Commission to come up with a series of strategies to foster the European identity such as the previously mentioned the 'People's Europe' campaign (1985) which "was at the origin of measures of pervasive if often dismissed impact such as university exchange programmes and the introduction of the Euro-symbols", and three years after, based on the success of these measures, the third Communication *A Fresh Boost for Culture in the European Community* promoted a stronger cultural strategy.<sup>64</sup> We cannot forget that during this period the ministers of culture of the member states started to gather together in informal meetings giving birth to one of the most successful cultural policies of the EU, the European Capitals of Culture.<sup>65</sup> The decade of 1980s saw a great evolution and achievements of an approach more and more inclined to cultural integration, although we cannot speak about an official European cultural policy yet.

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<sup>61</sup> See Sassatelli "The Logic of Europeanizing" 26; Monica Sassatelli, "EUROPEAN CULTURAL SPACE IN THE EUROPEAN CITIES OF CULTURE", *European Societies* 10, no. 2, (2008): 225-245, doi: 10.1080/14616690701835311. (Accessed March 23, 2019) 228, and Craufurd-Smith, "The Cultural Logic of Economic", 16.

<sup>62</sup> Shore, "Inventing Homo Europaeus", 57.

<sup>63</sup> European Council. "Solemn Declaration on European Union". *Bulletin of the European Communities* 6 (1983): 25-29, 25

<sup>64</sup> Sassatelli, "The Logic of Europeanizing", 27.

<sup>65</sup> Craufurd Smith, "The Cultural Logic of Economic", 16.

It was not until 1990's when finally culture gained its position within the legal framework of the EU. In 1992, the member states of the European Community decided to go further in the European integration question signing the Treaty of Maastricht (TFEU) which established the European Union as we know it today. During the 1970s, the cultural action within the European space was intergovernmental, and it was only after the enforcement of the TFEU that the EU gained "a specific, supranational, competence on culture."<sup>66</sup> However, as I mention in the first section of this chapter, the member states' fears of a high interventionism into the national policies by the EU were still palpable, especially in the UK where the government was never too keen to pledge allegiance to a supranational body. This is probably the reason why the EU tried to keep a low profile in the TFEU, also in the culture subject, with a mainly subsidiary role where "only if necessary is the EU to support or supplement the actions of the member states in the cultural field" according to the Article 167, but at the same time stating that the EU has independent "competence in the cultural field" –if necessary too – and it is allowed to "take action at the international level".<sup>67</sup> Although this may seem as a great move forward, the truth is that the EU had little and rather limited competences in terms of culture relegated to "co-ordination, integration and support initiatives" being the nation-state still the dominant player, and therefore criticised for having similar functions to those before the TFEU.<sup>68</sup>

After the official incorporation of culture to the legal framework, the EU started to launch cultural programmes during the 1990s such as Kaleidoscope, Raphael and Ariane leading to a bigger framework strategy in the 2000's with Culture 2000, a programme that would include all the previous and other cultural initiatives the approach of which kept being the supporting and funding of cultural projects across Europe with a European dimension, "a system of direct grants to various cultural actors, operating mainly at the local level."<sup>69</sup> Although this may seem ineffective at first sight, and critics highlight the lack of progress in the strategy, the main goal of the Commission has been to "shape the debate" through Communications which, along with the strategy of direct grant, "creates a climate of consensus and coalition that

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<sup>66</sup> Sassatelli, "The Logic of Europeanizing", 27.

<sup>67</sup> Craufurd Smith, "The Cultural Logic of Economic", 16-17 According to the TFEU, the EU is entitled to foster "an understanding of 'the culture and history of the European peoples' [...] conservation of cultural heritage; and support for non-commercial cultural exchanges" as well as to cooperate with other countries and international organisations" such as the CoE.

<sup>68</sup> Sassatelli, "European Cultural Space", 229; and Sassatelli, "The Logic of Europeanizing", 27.

<sup>69</sup> Sassatelli, "The Logic of Europeanizing", 28.

eventually legitimate the Community proposals”.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, the Commission implicitly makes people want to participate in its cultural approach without directly impose it – if they were grass-roots movements –, which is what Sassatelli names the “European cultural space”.<sup>71</sup> But it is not until 2007, when we can start talking about an explicit European cultural strategy with the launch of the Cultural Agenda where the European Commission specifies the guidelines for the EU cultural policy: “promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity; and promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union’s international relations”.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, the Treaty of Lisbon, also signed in 2007, states that diversity is a “fundamental value of the European legal order”, points out the European heterogeneity in terms of culture and languages and claims the protection of the European cultural heritage.<sup>73</sup> The different cultural programmes and initiatives that the EU has introduced in the framework of a cultural policy have evolved little in their approach being mainly financial support for projects with a European scope which help creating a European discourse on a common identity. However, we should now analyse the content and the meaning of the EU cultural policy, and try to define that European cultural space and European dimension on which this cultural policy is based.

### 3.2 Evolution in the meaning of the EU cultural policy. From Unity to Diversity.

The main struggle of the EU has always been to find common features upon which to build a European identity that people from different cultures within the European territory can relate to. This was also reflected in the EU motto “Unity in Diversity” and its evolution, since the EU elites tried different perspectives, first more inclined to the “unity” side, then more inclusive with the European “diversity”, and finally trying to adopt a balanced discourse between them. This has also affected the lack of consistent content for the EU cultural policy. Caufurd-Smith notices the unproductive task of recognizing “any coherent policy principles in the European Union” in terms of culture and, as a result, the delay in the delivery of a cultural policy with defined guidelines by the EU since its legitimization in 1992.<sup>74</sup> As previously

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 30

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>72</sup> Anna Kandyla, “The Creative Europe Programme: Policy-Making Dynamics and Outcomes” in ” in *Cultural Governance and the European Union*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, 49-60. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 49

<sup>73</sup> Craufurd Smith, “The Cultural Logic of Economic”, 14

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 17

discussed, the same difficulties to find coherent principles for the European integration beyond the economic side of the process and the definition of a common culture has been transmitted into the EU cultural policy.

In the 1970s, when European institutions started to debate the need of culture as a tool to bring Europeans closer, it was believed that a common identity should be based on common features, something people could relate to and would keep them united as the ‘spill-over’ effect of neo-functionalist approaches was not having a great impact in integration at a higher level. We have seen already how some scholars blame the lack of a common identity and the sense of belonging of European citizens due to the troubles to find a common heritage similar to that of the nation state. The role model for this was the nation state that had been able to create a strong identity among its citizens, and therefore, Europe should do the same. The discourse on identity formation then was grounded in a European common heritage, which gives “specific content to European identity and draws the cultural boundaries of the community”.<sup>75</sup> In the European Cultural Convention in 1954, the COE introduced the concept of a common cultural heritage referred to “‘objects of European cultural value’ and to ‘language or languages, history and civilisation’ of the different European nations part of the Convention”.<sup>76</sup> Although the UNESCO did not use the concept of cultural heritage with a immaterial dimension until the 1980s, this definition by the COE, in which intangible heritage such as languages and values is also considered, was key to the concept that the European Community would use later and the recognition of diversity in Europe.<sup>77</sup> Values have always been considered a foundation for the EU, and it makes sense that European institutions used them as starting point for the creation of a common identity. According to Calligaro, two dimensions derived from these discourses, one related to a common cultural wealth and another one related to common values, which ended up in giving a material notion to cultural heritage but with “spiritual and symbolic meaning”,<sup>78</sup> in other words, although cultural heritage was represented by tangible objects, these objects had a meaning based on values to which all European could relate. This was a way to avoid criticism of hegemony or homogenization of the different cultures of Europe.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Calligaro, “From ‘European cultural heritage’”, 63

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 65

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 65

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 66

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 63

However, finding the objects which gave meaning to this new concept of heritage was not an easy task. At that time, the European Community did not have the competences to grant status of cultural heritage, but it did so through funding sites that turned out to be related to Greek, Roman and Christian heritage. This, not exempt from controversy, generated criticism among scholars who labelled it as an attempt of homogenizing Europe or leaving diversity out due to the high culture profile that the concept had.<sup>80</sup> But this was not the only problem which arose around the European cultural heritage question, a centralized narrative about European heritage was not the best way to proceed as they could cause rivalries among communities and this led to more decentralized narratives and a shift towards diversity discourse in the 1980s where “social heritage” and the inclusion of “minority cultures” was introduced, this means that not only diversity at the national level was considered, but also at a subnational level.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the concept of culture began to be used in a broader anthropological sense including the “promotion of human development” which means “diversity, creativity and self-expression”.<sup>82</sup> So far, the discourse of unity had been the basis of the cultural initiatives that the EC executed, due to this decentralization of the narratives in the decade of 1980s prolonged to the 1990s there was a change, and diversity gained popularity.

The discourse of “unity in diversity” was officially adopted in 2000,<sup>83</sup> happening at the same time as the introduction of the cultural strategy ‘Culture 2000’. This programme pointed out the “integrative role of culture” and sought a space of “cultural cooperation” between the member states, becoming intercultural dialogue one of its objectives.<sup>84</sup> However, intercultural dialogue can have different meanings as it is a concept also used internationally, and borrowed by the EU. The introduction of the concept evolved from its more international meaning to a more specific one within the EU, but used in different contexts: sometimes it was referred to the dialogue and understanding within the different European cultures that composed the EU, and other times it was related to the inherited civilizations of the Greek and Roman cultures on the other side of the Mediterranean and giving it the status of becoming a tool for international dialogue with

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 68

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 68-69

<sup>82</sup> Liza Tsaliki, “The Construction of European Identity and Citizenship Through Cultural Policy”, *European Studies* 24, (2007), 159

<sup>83</sup> Calligaro, “From ‘European cultural heritage’”, 70

<sup>84</sup> Kandyla, “The Creative Europe Programme”, 50

the ‘Other’.<sup>85</sup> In addition the meaning that scholars’ give to the concept, according to Calligaro, is that of a “process in which common human rights-based values are debated in the public sphere” which is based on shared values instead of common heritage, making it more like a paradigm.<sup>86</sup> This definition is more inclusive and it helps to use the term for the integration of new citizens that might not share a common heritage with other Europeans.

Culture 2000 also introduced the “European added value” or European dimension, “typically measured in terms of actual cooperation (organizational, institutional, financial) and exchange with partners of different member states”.<sup>87</sup> The grants were given to projects with a strong orientation to cooperation where a minimum of three countries belonging to the EU collaborated, and also to certain cultural events such as the ECOC.<sup>88</sup> Despite of still highlighting the protection of the common heritage and the promotion of diversity of the European peoples as the previous approaches, this was considered of a more high-reaching quality due to financing projects with this European added value.<sup>89</sup> These two concepts – intercultural dialogue and European dimension – are somewhat related in the sense of fostering the cooperation between actors of different member states increasing their understanding and therefore building the foundations for a common identity, again without the need of a tangible common heritage. Some scholars, as we have seen in the previous discussion on European identity, have come up with the problem that not having a defined common heritage entails for identity formation and the eagerness of those scholars to compare this European process to the national one. However, this point of view has been strongly criticized as the European identity should not be compared to the national identities due to its distinctive and diverse nature, and although EU rhetoric might seem contradictory, Europeanization process works “as everyday, tacit, heuristics”.<sup>90</sup> It is this new framework based on common values that creates the perfect arena to re-think new ways of building a common identity.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Calligaro, “From ‘European cultural heritage”, 72-73

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 75-79

<sup>87</sup> Sassatelli, “The Logic of Europanizing”, 28

<sup>88</sup> Kandyła, “The Creative Europe Programme”, 51

<sup>89</sup> Sassatelli, “European Cultural Space”, 229

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 232-233; and Sassatelli “The Logic of Europanizing”, 32

<sup>91</sup> Calligaro, “From ‘European cultural heritage”, 80

If we take a look to the last years in terms of cultural policy, there has been another shift in its approach towards economic interests and benefiting the creative industries. Due to the integration of new countries in the EU during the 2000's and globalisation, "member states have realised that in order to maintain or strengthen European cultural production, products need to be commercially competitive and attract large audiences."<sup>92</sup> The initiatives launched by the EU started to introduce "industrial concerns", especially after the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), such as "professionalisation, capacity-building and development of the sector", leaving behind the intercultural dialogue approach or the protection of a common cultural heritage that characterized previous strategies, which developed into Creative Europe – the latest EU cultural programme – mainly based on "economic and technological development concerns".<sup>93</sup> The European Agenda for Culture (2007) highlights the importance of intercultural dialogue as it is crucial for social cohesion and therefore the creation of a common identity, although this is eventually used as a tool to achieve economical purposes.<sup>94</sup> This economic turn was mainly adopted to avoid member states become sceptical about the "cultural implications of a European cultural policy".<sup>95</sup> As we see again, the EU culture policy has been conditioned by many factors. Although its main goal was to enhance a European common identity, it has always been limited by EU's fears of being too intrusive into the member states' national identities and their own cultural policies, as well as the struggles to find a good narrative in order to create the sense of belonging through culture. Economic integration is important and has also contributed to a cultural integration, however more strategies based on culture and Fundamental Rights need to be implemented, together with programmes related to EU citizenship anchored in universal values".<sup>96</sup> Thus the best approach that fits EU cultural policy to achieve its objectives, it is to create initiatives that foster projects with a European dimension.

#### **4. European Capital of Culture and its European dimension**

The ECOC was the result of some European member states' willingness to increase European integration and to make a change of direction from a pure economic approach to a cultural one, which was believed it would be the only way to achieve this.

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<sup>92</sup> Tsaliki, "The Construction of European Identity", 158-159

<sup>93</sup> Craufurd Smith, "The Cultural Logic of Economic", 17

<sup>94</sup> Lähdesmäki 6

<sup>95</sup> Craufurd Smith, , "The Cultural Logic of Economic", 19

<sup>96</sup> Craufurd Smith, , "The Cultural Logic of Economic", 22

The ECOC was an initiative proposed by Melina Mercouri, the Greek Minister of Culture, in 1985. She stated: ‘It is time for our [the Culture Ministers’] voice to be heard as loud as that of the technocrats. Culture, art and creativity are not less important than technology, commerce and the economy’.<sup>97</sup> The Ministers of Culture intended to make, what would be later European Union’s motto, ‘Unity in diversity’ a reality through a project which highlights “both common elements and richness born of diversity”.<sup>98</sup> So as Sassatelli states: “the idea is that of cultural exchange, here between the city and Europe: promoting the city’s cultural assets in of Europe and hosting events from the rest of Europe, and in so doing creating an image of a cultural Europe.”<sup>99</sup> This discourse, along with the decentralization of European narratives and the flexibility given to the ECOCs for their own interpretation of ‘European’, meant for the cities which would hold the title in the future an opportunity to showcase their local and national culture together with European culture components.<sup>100</sup> This provided the ECOC a multilevel character in both cultural and political terms: it benefits nations, regions and cities allowing each of them to seek and fulfil their own interests, and it gets funding from all these levels in order to achieve it.<sup>101</sup> The discourse of ‘Unity in diversity’ accommodated to a multi-level identity and multi-level governance seems to find a perfect arena in the ECOC project.

When Melina Mercouri proposed the initiative in the 1980s, the main intention was to bring Europeans closer through common features, something that would make Europeans relate to. The very first city to host the brand new programme was – not surprisingly – Athens in 1985. Athens embodied perfectly the European common heritage that European institutions were persistently looking for in their discourse. The opening ceremony that characterises this project was carried out in the Acropolis, a place probably most Europeans would link to the origins of civilization and democratic values. Moreover, the EU was described by the EU political elites “as the legitimate heir of the Greek heritage”, and in line with this, the second edition was celebrated in

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<sup>97</sup> As quoted in Sassatelli, “European Cultural Space”, 234

<sup>98</sup> Ministers of Culture resolution for the annual designation of a ‘European City of Culture’ as quoted in Immler 4

<sup>99</sup> Sassatelli becoming europeans 85

<sup>100</sup> Nicole L. Immler and Hans Sakkers.,“(Re)Programming Europe: European Capitals of Culture: rethinking the role of culture.” *Journal of European Studies* 44, no. 1, (2014): 3–29, doi: 10.1177/0047244113515567, 5

<sup>101</sup> Immler et al. “(Re)Programming Europe”, 6



Florence, also a significant place for European values.<sup>102</sup> The following years, the selected cities were also emblematic for European culture, such as Amsterdam (1987), Berlin (1988) and Paris (1989), where the ECOC programme remained as a pure “arts and culture festival” benefiting from modest funding and planning, and reached a turning point with the selection of Glasgow (1990), a city with local issues and not considered a cultural city itself. The main motivation to select Glasgow as ECOC was the will to improve those problems through the benefits that culture can provide and this marked a trend in the following years with the selection of similar port cities – Dublin (1991), Antwerp (1993), Rotterdam (2001), Genoa (2004), and Liverpool (2008).<sup>103</sup> However, not only cities took advantage of this new turn, also regions envisioned a great opportunity to develop the area and from 2000s more regions and smaller cities became part of the ECOCs adding to the European diversity.<sup>104</sup> The ECOCs background and purpose have noticeably change throughout time becoming more economic oriented but also ‘bringing to the fore’, besides a common heritage, the diversity and the richness of the European landscape, which was one of its main objectives.

Following the trend that has characterized the latest years of the EU cultural policy with a shift towards a more economic cultural approach where creative industries gain importance, the ECOC has not scape this and presents strong influences.<sup>105</sup> In this industrial turn, proven the sustainability of culture, it becomes a benefit and “local capital”, therefore cities bidding or hosting the ECOC title find in this a justification to carry out the project.<sup>106</sup> The ECOC “is believed to provide a strong impetus to improve a city’s image and cultural development, to bring local communities together, to attract visitors and to enhance its physical and cultural infrastructure.”<sup>107</sup> In addition, the cities hosting the ECOC project receive only a tiny part of funding from the EU to execute the initiative.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, the cities need to seek support from other sources, usually the

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<sup>102</sup> Calligaro, “From ‘European cultural heritage’”, 68

<sup>103</sup> Immler et al., “(Re)Programming Europe”, 7

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>105</sup> Lähdesmäki, *Identity Politics*, 10

<sup>106</sup> Can-Seng Ooi, Lars Håkanson, and Laura LaCava. “Poetics and Politics of the European Capital of Culture Project”. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 148, (2014): 420 – 427, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.061>, 424

<sup>107</sup> Ooi et al. “Poetics and Politics”, 423

<sup>108</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 85-86. Sassatelli claims that during the first ten years of the programme’s life, only about 1% of the budget aimed at “‘European projects’ through international collaborations” was granted to the ECOCs, and although it has increased over the years, this has not been significantly. She points out that during the second decade of the project only 1.5% of the budget was

local government or cultural organizations from their own country. In order to achieve this support the city needs to present themselves with an “appropriate brand and story” to prospective stakeholders, and not only this, but it also needs to meet the requirements or needs that its stakeholders look for when investing in the programme.<sup>109</sup> This might be one of the main reasons that triggered the shift in the approach along with the benefits that culture can bring to a city.

However, as Sassatelli’s research shows, most of the cultural operators that she interviewed expressed their desire for a larger EU involvement in the project but in economic terms, rather than in the cultural events programming.<sup>110</sup> This seems to manifest that cities are comfortable with the openness of the programme and their freedom to choose the approach suitable in order to achieve their own interests, and even though they wish the EU gave more (economic) support, this shows the cities’ main interest is not that of community building and European identity fostering. Moreover, it is good to point out that being one of the EU projects that claim to be the flagship of diversity and community building, the numbers in local and community involvement are not very high in some of the cities. Ooi points out that only 12% of the residents in Luxembourg perceived that they were engaged in the programme, as for Liverpool, this was one of the main goals of the bid and encountered significant discontent in local communities, and Genoa did not show an interest in community building.<sup>111</sup> There is a different approach depending on the cities’ interests. Also Lähdesmäki highlights the little representation of minorities in the programmes.<sup>112</sup>

Glasgow (1990), Lille (2004) and Liverpool (2008) have been considered a success of the ECOC project in terms of regeneration and city branding impacts, as this project has helped them improve their bad image and boost their economy based on culture. As we can see, the only two cities in the UK that have hold the title of ECOC so far – and for now – are considered role models regarding benefits coming from urban regeneration and marketing, bearing in mind that Liverpool’s bidding motivation was to recreate the

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granted to the ECOCs, however, due to the shift in the project’s nature towards other dimensions, it has been possible for the cities to get funding from other EU funds.

<sup>109</sup> Ooi et al. “Poetics and Politics”, 421

<sup>110</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 88

<sup>111</sup> Ooi et al., “Poetics and Politics”, 425

<sup>112</sup> Tuuli Lähdesmäki, “European Capitals of Culture as Cultural Meeting Places - Strategies of Representing Cultural Diversity.” *The Nordic Journal of Cultural Policy* 13, no. 1 (2010): 27–43, <https://www.idunn.no/nkt/2010/01/art08>, 38

success of Glasgow.<sup>113</sup> So, where does this leave the European dimension? Many of the cities following Glasgow declared their cultural motivation to bid for the project, however, when measuring their success tourism was taken as a marker.<sup>114</sup> In addition, it can be notice that the studies to measure the impacts of ECOC usually “focus on specific studies and the potential gains, especially in terms of cultural development, urban regeneration and place marketing”, instead of analysing to what extent the European dimension requirements have been met revealing the secondary position that this dimension has.<sup>115</sup> One of the best examples is Liverpool, where a committee to evaluate the impacts of the ECOC was established, but mainly focused on the effects in the local economy, city image and urban regeneration.<sup>116</sup> If we focus on the UK case, the UKCOC originated as a project to build up on the success of Liverpool 08 and it was a way to have this type of event more often since the ECOC title is awarded to different European countries every year.<sup>117</sup> This gives us a clue why the UKCOC main goal was seeking the same results as Glasgow and Liverpool. It seems that UK cities are more concern with urban regeneration and improvement rather than with the creation of a common identity able to make people feel closer to Europe.

Moreover, the small intervention of the EU in the programme and the flexibility given to the cities in their interpretation of “European” has resulted in a wide variety of projects which, according to their creators, meet the requirements of the European dimension.<sup>118</sup> Palmer states this in his report about the analysis of ECOCs from 1985 to 2004:

all cities, without exception, confirmed that they did [to include a European dimension]. So at one level, all cities felt an obligation to at least consider this aspect when developing their approach and plans. However, the ways in which the term European dimension and significance was interpreted or defined, and the priority it was accorded in the development and delivery of the cultural programmes varied substantially between cities.<sup>119</sup>

This means that all cities are willing to implement a European dimension in their programmes, although their visions about implementing it differ. So what does this

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<sup>113</sup> Ooi et al. “Poetics and Politics”, 422

<sup>114</sup> Immler et al., “(Re)Programming Europe”, 7

<sup>115</sup> Ooi et al. “Poetics and Politics”, 425

<sup>116</sup> Institute of Cultural Capital. <http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/about/> The Institute of Cultural Capital was establish to continue with the research programme Impacts 08, a collaboration between The University of Liverpool and the Liverpool John Moors University in charge of creating a research programme to evaluate “culture-led regeneration” projects.

<sup>117</sup> UKCOC origins?

<sup>118</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 81

<sup>119</sup> Palmer, *European Cities*, 85

European dimension mean in the end if there are no specific guidelines? According to Sassatelli, the European added value is more about a 'European cultural space' which cannot be compared to that of the nations that seek to homogenise the identity of their citizens, but to a landscape of different cultures which need to work together and coexist instead of imposing other's cultures in a particular lifestyle.<sup>120</sup> This concept is reproduced through the ECOC project.<sup>121</sup> Cities are not meant to look for European cultural elements to show how much they belong to Europe, but is through their own culture representation that they become European cities as it can be implied from the project's own title "European City/Capital of Culture" – "City/Capital of European culture" would make it more essentialist.<sup>122</sup> This idea backs the theory of foster diversity through the different interpretations of the cities about the European dimension. In Palmer's report, the different elements and ways in which the European added value was implemented are divided into six categories:

- 1) Presenting events (productions, performances, exhibitions) that focus on the talents of European artists;
- 2) Collaborations, co-productions, exchanges and other means of developing cooperation between artists, cultural organisations and groups who are based in different European countries;
- 3) Developing European themes and issues;
- 4) Identifying and celebrating aspects of European history, identity and heritage that are present;
- 5) Very specific partnerships between two or more cities [...] or within a region;
- and 6) Promoting European tourism.<sup>123</sup>

This classification includes more than just creating and delivering events with a strong European theme as it may be believed. As deduced from the results of Sassatelli's research, what seems to work better than just a European dimension based on the theme or European content is the cooperation between countries. The key is to have "international active participation" where people from different places and cultural backgrounds come together and create something.<sup>124</sup> In the year 2000, nine cities were selected to host the project due to the celebration of the new millennium and they were encouraged to cooperate and create connections between them. After this the EU began to select two cities every year and the collaboration between both cities has become a mandatory requirement for the execution of the programme over time.<sup>125</sup> This way of proceeding is a key feature of the intercultural dialogue approach that the EU cultural policy promotes, and it can increase the awareness of the different cultures within the

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<sup>120</sup> Sassatelli, "European Cultural Space", 239

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 226

<sup>122</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 80

<sup>123</sup> Palmer, *European Cities*, 85

<sup>124</sup> Sassatelli, "European Cultural Space", 239

<sup>125</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 87

same space creating the sense of belonging through a better understanding of these diverse cultures with which European people need to coexist. This has also reached minority cultures and immigrants whose importance in the project has increased and sometimes has been considered a main focus of the programme in some cities.<sup>126</sup>

Therefore, we can point out that the concept of diversity is getting broader and this is reflected in the ECOCs.

The Palmer report is considered one of the most relevant studies in the ECOC and it shows how the European dimension of the ECOCs is pushed to the background or diminished in favour of other dimensions that the ECOC provides depending on the cities' very own interests – which are mainly economic.<sup>127</sup> In recent years, the European Commission has acknowledged this situation and expressed their concerns about it, since this was one of the pillars of the project. In 2006, the programme was “divided into two sections: ‘European dimension’ and ‘city and citizens’ (Decision 1622/2006/EC).”<sup>128</sup> Lately, the EC has shared some best practices to help cities and encourage them to improve the European dimension when planning their programmes. Among these, we can find international cooperation, collaboration or reference to local artists that had a European impact or events which show the European linguistic diversity, as well as immigrant inclusion.<sup>129</sup> Another measure taken by the EU in order to ensure the cities meet the European dimension requirement has been to set up a board of experts that unbiasedly select the ECOC.<sup>130</sup> There is a visible commitment from the EU to keep the European dimension as the main goal of the project, but we can notice that the economic benefits overshadow the real meaning of the programme and establish a primary motivation for the bidding cities.

On the contrary, Sassatelli does not agree with this, or at least, she argues that this is not completely a negative thing for the European identity. Although it might be true that the main motivation for European cities to bid for the ECOC title is economic purposes, this is not necessarily at odds with the European dimension of the project. As we have seen in Palmer's report, every city is aware of the requirements and the need of creating a

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<sup>126</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 102

<sup>127</sup> Palmer, *European Cities*, 86. According to the findings of this report, only four of the cities expressed that the European dimension was considered as a ‘high priority’, and a good part of them (one third) focused on an international aspect rather than European, sometimes mixing both.

<sup>128</sup> Lähdesmäki, “Rhetoric of Unity”, 9

<sup>129</sup> Immler et al., “(Re)Programming Europe”, 6

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

European dimension for the project, however, every city has its own interpretation of this. Sassatelli suggests that the European dimension is “tactfully kept in the back ground, and is symbolically even more powerful as it is increasingly taken for granted and naturalized, informing the programme.”<sup>131</sup> This means that cities know that the European dimension requirement needs to be met in order to win the bid and therefore, this formation of a common identity, the sense of belonging, is created naturally without imposing any dominating European culture and fosters diversity among Europeans.

The ECOC’s European dimension aimed at creating a European common identity started as its main objective through the promotion of a common heritage and the diversity of European cultures. In the 1990’s it suffered a change in its goals after the success of the urban regeneration and economic improvement in Glasgow and many other cities have sought these benefits turning the economic dimension in their main goal to host the title. However, since the European dimension has become a requirement for the bidding cities to be selected, these cannot forget this feature when planning their bid books or programmes. On the other hand, there have not been specific guidelines on how to represent the European added value of the project until recently – and yet they are quite broad – resulting in a wide range of interpretations, and therefore, the EU is rather flexible when it comes to evaluating the projects. Although, many criticize the loss of the ECOC essence due to this shift in the cities’ interests, some scholars as Sassatelli still defend that the European dimension is preserved as a requirement to be selected and that an economic motivation does not impede to create a European common identity, as long as the European cultural space where different cultures come together and coexist is fostered and conserved. In this paper, I would like to follow this premise and analyse the cases of Liverpool 08 as ECOC and Hull 2017 as UKCOC to see if there is any similarities regarding the European dimension and, based on this, whether the UKCOC can become the next cultural bridge between Europe and post-Brexit UK.

## **5. Analysis of the European dimension in ECOC and UKCOC**

Following the discussion on the European dimension, I will examine some of the events from Liverpool 2008 ECOC and Hull 2017 UKCOC in order to analyse the similarities and differences between both projects. This comparison will allow me to

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<sup>131</sup> Sassatelli, *Becoming Europeans*, 100

determine if the UKCOC also carries some European features and can contribute to the creation of a common European identity, or at least, to keep the good relations and understanding between European and British citizens. To analyse the events, I will focus on different aspects that cities might have taken as ‘European’ consciously or unconsciously. These aspects will be the collaboration between cities from Europe and UK or with European artists; European themes and values (common heritage, human rights, etc.), and the city’s contribution to European identity/heritage. However, it is right to point out that some of these aspects are hard to distinguish from one another or they are just intertwined in the same event at a time.

### 5.1 European Capital of Culture: Liverpool 2008 ‘The World in One City’.

As previously mentioned, when the city of Liverpool decided to apply for the ECOC title, people’s eyes were on Glasgow. This city had achieved a series of benefits through the project that were not directly connected to the creation of a common European identity, but more with urban regeneration, improvement of its image and economic boost. Therefore, the main aim of Liverpool when bidding for it was to achieve these benefits as well. At that time, Liverpool was another post-industrialized city in the north of England which did not have a very good image among British nationals, and the local economy was not at its best. After the success of Glasgow in 1990, the city of Liverpool saw a great opportunity for regeneration through the European project and started a long journey to do so. However, the European dimension is a requirement to be selected as ECOC and Liverpool had to adapt its programme to this criteria. Did it succeed? Once the year was over, the University of Liverpool and the Liverpool John Moors University joined forces in order to carry out a research programme on the results of the ECOC in Liverpool 2008. The research project is called *Impacts 08* and it continues researching some aspects of the city’s year as ECOC. Nevertheless, this project focuses mainly on the economic results, the impacts of city branding and the long term outcomes of Liverpool 08.<sup>132</sup> This means, they have done little research on the European dimension of the programme and how this was shown in the events carried out by the city during that year. In the following sections, I do my own analysis on some of the events that the city of Liverpool run over 2008 as ECOC.

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<sup>132</sup> University of Liverpool. “*Impacts 08*”. <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/impacts08/> (Accessed February 26)

One of the main aspects that scholars highlight when speaking about the European dimension of the ECOC programmes is the collaboration between European cities and artists. It is through this approach that most of the cities and directors of the project have shown a better understanding of the European identity based on common features and at the same time on diversity. This method is a great tool to bring people together through the praised intercultural dialogue that the EU has introduced in its cultural policies in the last decades. When cities had to collaborate in a project, they had to adapt and understand how the others work, reaching a better perception of the others' culture, and getting different perspectives. Many have described it as a better way to raise awareness of the European space diversity than working simply on European themes.<sup>133</sup> In Liverpool 08, we can find many events where European or even international artists participated or collaborated somehow.

Early in the year, one of the events called SK-Interfaces proved this European collaboration where Zbigniew Oksiuta (Poland), Orlan (France) and Jens Hauser (Paris and Copenhagen based art curator) came together to create the FACT's Human Futures programme:<sup>134</sup>

exploring the idea of skin as a technological interface. The first exhibition of its kind in the UK, SK-Interfaces includes the work of artists that use biology as a material for art and new commissions from artists including the legendary Orlan and award winning Polish artist and architect Zbigniew Oksiuta. International curator Jens Hauser has devised a concept that highlights the research potential of art transforming FACT's exhibition spaces into a hybrid lab / art space where visitors will experience an engaging, critical and thought provoking approach to how current technologies are changing our perceptions of the body and bridging the gap between science and art.

As we see in the description of the event, artists from different places of Europe collaborated in the exhibition that was eventually displayed in Liverpool. This not only makes the artists to collaborate and bring new ideas to one another, but they also bring this experience and the outcomes to the public of the city, which can get new perspectives from European.

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<sup>133</sup> Sassatelli, "European Cultural Space", 239

<sup>134</sup> Ian Jackson, "2008 Events – January Listing". ArtinLiverpool.com.  
<https://www.artinliverpool.com/2008-events-january-listing/> (Accessed October 3, 2019)



From February to October, every third Friday of each month there was a cabaret evening at an odd theatre set up on a ship. These performances mixed “the best of Liverpool’s home grown talent, and special guests from further afield, including Barcelona, Basel and Copenhagen”, as well as their “late night DJs offer unusual tunes from Balkan beats to deviant country”.<sup>135</sup> Again, there is a “mixture” – in this case – of European and local artists, therefore the collaboration between artists is motivated through their performances and also complemented with European music. This shows the influence of other European cultures in the programme.

The Big Hope was an event that showed the spirit of the EU at its finest. Liverpool Hope University contributed to the ECOC with this event where “1,000 young people (18-35 years) from across the world who have faith and are potential leaders of their communities” gathered together to “consider urgent issues such as the relationship between personal integrity and human life, the development a more humane global society and our roles as individuals.” This was part of the European Parliament’s Year of Intercultural Dialogue and besides representing the collaboration between European people; it also exemplifies the EU’s foundations. In the same line with this event, Liverpool hosted the European Youth Parliament project where young Europeans gathered in one of the most iconic buildings of the city, St. George’s Hall, for ten days of experience, culture and ideas sharing resulting in fifteen resolutions which were sent to the European Parliament.<sup>136</sup>

Another event that reflects this European collaboration is the European Union Youth Orchestra performance in Liverpool directed by Russian director Vladimir Ashkenazy, who fled his country in 1967:<sup>137</sup>

The European Union Youth Orchestra is one of the world’s most prestigious and dynamic orchestras. It unites Europe’s most talented young musicians, under some of the world’s most famous conductors, in an orchestra that transcends cultural, social, economic, religious and political boundaries and performs all over the world.

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<sup>135</sup> Ian Jackson, “2008 Events – February Listing”. ArtinLiverpool.com. <https://www.artinliverpool.com/2008-events-february-listing/> (Accessed October 3, 2019)

<sup>136</sup> Ian Jackson, “2008 Events – July Listing”. ArtinLiverpool.com. <https://www.artinliverpool.com/2008-events-july-listing/> (Accessed October 3, 2019)

<sup>137</sup> “2008 Events – March Listing”. ArtinLiverpool.com. <https://www.artinliverpool.com/2008-events-march-listing/> (Accessed October 3, 2019)

This project is based on intercultural dialogue, as it unifies people from different European countries regardless of their differences, and makes them work together to create something which will have influences from all of them. Although, this event does not fall into the European collaboration category – with the city – it is also a feature of European dimension as it is focused on European talent and European diversity.

Regarding direct collaboration between cities, we need to highlight two important ones. One of them was with Stavanger (Norway), the other city to host the title of ECOC in the same year. The project ‘High Hopes’ was a collaboration between First Take and Sydvest Films, two local film companies from Liverpool and Stavanger, respectively. As described in the website [www.artinliverpool.com](http://www.artinliverpool.com):<sup>138</sup>

The series follows the lives of 10 teenagers approaching adulthood in a tale of these two very different cities. The chosen characters all have a particular driving passion, a dream, high hopes for the future. The documentary series is a graphic example of what it’s like to be growing up in Liverpool and Stavanger in 2008 and serves as a lasting record for generations to come.

This co-production was screened in different countries of Europe. Through this project, the cities compared the differences and similarities in these teenagers’ lifestyles also making possible to other European teenagers to compare their own lives with those appearing in the film, resulting in a greater awareness of the unity and the diversity of Europe. The other collaboration was the creation of the book *Reberth. Stories from Cities on the Edge*. This book tells the stories of “six [European] port cities – Liverpool, Bremen, Gdansk, Istanbul, Marseilles and Naples” which are considered ‘Cities on the Edge’ and

sought to build on common characteristics and problems that port cities face such as the contraction of port activities, gentification, displacement and dislocation of the working class population and global migration no longer contained or protected within the ‘space of mixing’ of the immediate port area.<sup>139</sup>

This project made visible the European space showing the common situation of port cities around Europe facing similar problems, highlighting their commonality.

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<sup>138</sup> Jackson, “2008 Events – July listing”

<sup>139</sup> Franco Bianchini and Jude Bloomfield. “Foreword” in *Reberth. Stories from Cities on the Edge*, ed. Jim Hinks. Comma Press: 2008, vii

However, when it comes to collaborations, there is a blurred line between European and international. Although we see that Liverpool 08 had some projects which entailed European cooperation and highlighted European themes or values, this was also carried out in an international context. One of the very first events happening in Liverpool at the beginning of January was the ‘Fresh Festival’, a jazz music festival where international artists collaborate with local artists. Wayne Shorter, a saxophonist from the United States collaborated with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.<sup>140</sup> In March, the English choreographer Akram Khan presented *Bahok*, a choreography made in collaboration with The National Ballet of China and with dancers from different countries and backgrounds. The project was also within the intercultural dialogue approach:

Being a community that wants to create together a utopian project but speaking both with their bodies and tongues different languages. They meet in one of this globalised world’s transit zones and try to communicate, to share ‘the things they carry with them’

These two events are just a small proof of the internationalization of the ECOC programme in Liverpool 08. This means that the city did not only aimed at collaborating with European organisations and cities, or to foster European talent, but also to reflect the effects of globalization and its connection with other countries and cultures. If we take a look at the ECOC year’s motto, “The World in One City”, it can be interpreted as the willingness of Liverpool to show the diversity of the world within the city, or Liverpool as a multicultural place where different cultures coexist – no need to be only European.

Liverpool 08 did not only showcase the European dimension of the ECOC in terms of collaboration or presentation of European talents, but also with various events focused on European themes and values. Besides the two events related to the European Parliament, Liverpool hosted events that brought to the fore the European heritage mainly based on high culture, Greek-Roman heritage or the trauma of the two World Wars. For instance, the theatre play ‘3 Sisters on Hope Street’ is a new version of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* classic, adapted to the “Liverpool Jewish community of 1946-1948”.<sup>141</sup> On the 27<sup>th</sup> January, the Holocaust Memorial Day is celebrated in the UK which “educates about the Holocaust and its lessons for the present day. It prompts

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<sup>140</sup> Jackson, “2008 Events – January”

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

action in the UK highlighting the continuing dangers of racism, anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination.”<sup>142</sup> In 2008 the National Commemoration was hosted by Liverpool. John Taverner Requiem “is an attempt to reconcile the world’s warring religions through music and through contemplation of the final journey that we all share” and represents the four main religions, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.<sup>143</sup> Also related to religion, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a talk on ‘Europe, Culture and Faith’<sup>144</sup>, and the project ‘Tales...From far away and the house next door’ was a project that sought to create new Fringe Festivals made by local young people exploring “European myths and tales.”<sup>145</sup>

As we can imply from this, even though Liverpool ECOC had other goals in mind when it was bidding for the project, it did meet some of the interpretations of the European dimension required by the programme, and the city managed to deliver events within this framework. However, we must be careful when analyzing and interpreting this as European and international can be sometimes mixed and lines might be blurred instead of defined. Yet, I managed to find events that properly showed the European focus, proving right Sassatelli’s theory on the European cultural space which is formed in the background and taken for granted.

## 5.2 UK City of Culture: Hull 2017 ‘Everyone Back to Ours’.

Same as Liverpool took Glasgow as a role model to bid for the ECOC thanks to its success on regeneration and city branding, two Liverpoolians, Andy Burnham (Secretary of State for Culture at that time) and Phil Redmon (Liverpool 08), saw Liverpool as a key point to reassure this success in using culture as a tool to improve the city’s situation. Here it is when the UKCOC originated. The UKCOC project was created to follow the same path and help cities in the UK to benefit from culture without needing to wait until 2023 – year in which the UK would qualify to host the title again.<sup>146</sup> However, being a project based on the success of a ECOC city in which the main outcome or measure was the economic benefits and the improvement of the city’s image means that this national project would have a clear goal set in improving through

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Jackson, “2008 Events – February”

<sup>144</sup> Jackson, “2008 Events – January”

<sup>145</sup> Ian Jackson, “2008 Events – May Listing”. ArtinLiverpool.com. <https://www.artinliverpool.com/2008-events-may-listing/> (Accessed October 3, 2019)

<sup>146</sup> Catlin, *UK City of Culture*, 4-3

culture the conditions of cities across the country. In 2017, the UK was excluded to host the ECOC in 2023 due to the country's decision on triggering article 50 to exit the EU. Thus, the UKCOC has become now the only option to have a year-long cultural project in the UK, although the project does not have the requirement of the European dimension. Can this new programme contribute to the common European identity now that the UK cannot host the ECOC anymore?

The UKCOC year in Hull was divided into four seasons: Made in Hull, Roots & Routes, Freedom and Tell the World. The first season – as its name suggests – was focused mainly on the city's identity;<sup>147</sup> the second season tried to create a connection between the city and Europe, presenting itself as the “getaway to Europe”;<sup>148</sup> the third season showed the city's values and contribution to modern universal values;<sup>149</sup> and finally, season four was focus on the future and Hull's position in the world.<sup>150</sup> Even though, the UKCOC project's goal was economic regeneration, Hull decided to include a whole season, Roots & Routes, to celebrate its connections with Europe. However, I have found that there were events with a European dimension throughout the whole year.

One of the main characteristics of the European dimension – or at least how the cities hosting the ECOC title perceived it – was the collaboration between cities and organisations, fostering the intercultural dialogue and reaching a better understanding of other's culture. In Hull 2017, there were some events with this feature. In season one, Made in Hull, ‘I wish to communicate’ took place, an event based on the idea of Silvio Palladino, an Italian artist, developed by James Bawn (an international lighting consultant) and the people of Hull:<sup>151</sup>

The arts project, part of the Hull UK City of Culture Made in Hull celebrations, was initially developed by Silvio Palladino, an Italian artist in residence with the estate-based Goodwin

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<sup>147</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017. “Made in Hull Season Guide”. Issuu Inc. [https://issuu.com/hullukcityofculture2017/docs/25954\\_season\\_guide\\_low\\_res\\_with\\_cov](https://issuu.com/hullukcityofculture2017/docs/25954_season_guide_low_res_with_cov) (Accessed October 4, 2019), 3

<sup>148</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017. “Roots & Routes Season Guide: Apr – Jun 2017”. Issuu Inc. [https://issuu.com/hullukcityofculture2017/docs/hull2017\\_seasonguide\\_rootsandroutess](https://issuu.com/hullukcityofculture2017/docs/hull2017_seasonguide_rootsandroutess) (Accessed October 4, 2019), 3

<sup>149</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017. “Freedom Season Guide: Jul – Sep 2017”. Issuu Inc. [https://issuu.com/hullukcityofculture2017/docs/hull2017\\_freedom\\_seasonguide](https://issuu.com/hullukcityofculture2017/docs/hull2017_freedom_seasonguide) (Accessed October 4, 2019), 3

<sup>150</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017. “Tell The World Season Guide: Oct 2017 – Jan 2018”. Issuu Inc. <https://issuu.com/hullukcityofculture2017/docs/seasonguide-telltheworld> (Accessed October 4, 2019), 3

<sup>151</sup> Yorkshire Life. “I Wish to Communicate art installation on the Thornton Estate in Hull”. <https://www.yorkshirelife.co.uk/out-about/i-wish-to-communicate-art-installation-on-the-thornton-estate-in-hull-1-4892657> (Accessed November 6).

Development Trust and lighting design consultant James Bawn who worked with residents to create the effect called I Wish to Communicate with You.

During the second season, the one aimed at show the connections between Hull and Europe, there were different events where this collaboration can be found. The REDboard was an exhibition on contemporary art that changed its focus depending on the season. Whereas in the first season, its focus was on local artists, during the second season “moves to work from our international partners in Rotterdam, Reykjavik, Aarhus and Freetown”.<sup>152</sup> The city developed strong connections with other cities with which it collaborated over the year, and three out of the four mentioned above are European cities – including Aarhus (Denmark), which hosted the ECOC that same year. Another significant collaboration in this season was the event John Grant’s north Atlantic flux: sounds from smoky bay where Hull showcased their connections with the Scandinavian area, as described in the programme: “We celebrate the city’s Nordic links in this four-day experimental music festival. [...] Featuring artists from, but not limited to, the Nordic region.”<sup>153</sup> In line with this, “Opera North: The Height of the Reeds: A sound journey for the Humber Bridge” also sought that link to the Nordic countries with the performance of Norwegian artists.<sup>154</sup> Again in ‘Hullzapoppin’, the city collaborates with its “sister cities of Aarhus, Rotterdam, Reykjavik and Szczecin” welcoming guest artists.<sup>155</sup> During this season, there was also a version of the WORM Festival of Rotterdam, which tried to show the underground culture of this city and transfer it to Hull for a week through workshops and events.<sup>156</sup>

However, the collaboration for excellence regarding the European dimension was the one carried out between Hull and Aarhus. Aarhus was ECOC during the same year as Hull was UKCOC and, even though, this collaboration was not a requirement for neither the UKCOC nor the ECOC – since Hull was not ECOC – both cities decided to join forces and produce a project that involved people from both places. The project was called ‘2097: We made ourselves over’ and tried to show how life would be in the future working with communities from Hull and Aarhus to record a film.

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<sup>152</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017. “Made in Hull”, 63

<sup>153</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017, “Made in Hull”, 70

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 75

<sup>155</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017, “Roots & Routes”, 37

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 51

2097: We Made Ourselves Over is a science fiction project that took audiences on a journey into an imagined future. Blast Theory worked in partnership with diverse communities from Hull in the UK and Aarhus in Denmark to develop a speculative vision of the world in 2097. Creating a series of five science fiction films shot on location around each city, and an accompanying smartphone app, the project drew audiences to participate in immersive performances, taking them on a journey into a speculative future.<sup>157</sup>

This project signified a close collaboration between the British and the Danish cities where both places had to work together in creating that common vision of the future, meaning that intercultural dialogue was fostered and each other's cultural awareness might have increased. This is quite relevant, as mentioned before, since this collaboration was not a requirement for any of the cities taking part.

Another important point is the events which can be classified as having a European theme, or related to European values. The same as Liverpool 08 based this type of events on high culture and universal values, Hull does something similar. During the first season which was meant to highlight local talents and the city heritage, the European dimension can be found in events such as 'Lines of Thought', an exhibition where famous European artists' works from previous periods were displayed (Rembrandt, Michelangelo, etc.)<sup>158</sup>, 'Siena to Hull. A masterpiece revealed' where Pietro Lorenzetti's art piece from the Middle Ages was first displayed to the public,<sup>159</sup> or the 'Opera at Hull City Hall' with the performances of *La Bohème*, *Nabucco* and *Aida* which were sung in Italian with English subtitles.<sup>160</sup> Over the second season, we can also find this kind of European influence in events such as 'Masterpieces in focus from the royal collection: Rembrandt' where a link between the city's heritage with Europe is made through the masterpiece *The Ship Builder and his wife* by the Dutch painter Rembrandt.<sup>161</sup> Hull partnered up again with another European city, in this case Warsaw, to explore the connections between Poland and Hull based on the cities "rich folk music tradition".<sup>162</sup>

In this season, Hull examines one more time its connections with Northern Europe, for instance, with the event 'Somewhere becoming sea', where international artists

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<sup>157</sup> Blast Theory. "2097: We made ourselves over". <https://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/2097-we-made-ourselves-over/> (Accessed November 6)

<sup>158</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017, "Made in Hull", 17

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 59

<sup>161</sup> Hull UK City of Culture 2017, "Roots & Routes", 11

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 16

participated but the project described Hull as “a getaway to the North Sea and beyond”, and stated that “expanses of water that divide countries are also channels that connect them”.<sup>163</sup> Hull also stands as one of cities integrated into the Hanseatic League medieval trading network of Northern European countries during the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, and the city celebrated this event with a medieval market to highlight its participation and its connections one more time with the north of Europe.<sup>164</sup>

Another recurrent topic related to European identity and the European dimension of the ECOC was the past trauma of the European wars, especially the First and Second World Wars. Hull also hosted an event related to the First World War called ‘Poppies: Weeping Window’ consisting of a cascade of poppies as a symbol to remember those who fought and died in the war.<sup>165</sup>

Over the second and also the third seasons, Hull keeps exploring its connections with Europe, the northern countries and, especially, with Reykjavik. There are three events that show Hull’s heritage and its position towards Europe. ‘The train track and the basket’ shows the role of Hull as a transient city for Europeans, who migrated to the New World, arriving in Hull and then departing from Liverpool or Southampton in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>166</sup> The events ‘The Hessle Roaders: Hull’s Fishing Community’ and ‘Fishing Heritage Art Exhibition’ represents the strong identity that Hull has got as port city, its connection to the sea and the relations with Reykjavik.<sup>167</sup>

As we see, Hull had several events with a strong European influence regardless of its main goal of improving the city’s economic situation through culture. Again, Sassatelli’s argument about the European dimension and its relation with other dimensions of the project not being at odds seems right. In addition, the fact that Hull as a UKCOC, which is not required to include any feature of the European added value, executed several projects within this framework and even decided to collaborate with Aarhus ECOC, proves how integrated these European features are in the cities that aspire to carry out such programmes. This also allows us to compare it with other ECOC’s and see how different or similar these projects are.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 30

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 17

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 39-40



### 5.3 Comparison between Liverpool 2008 and Hull 2017

Taking a quick look at Hull's programme for the UKCOC year, one can notice how eager the city was to show the world its connections with Europe, a common heritage and its internationality. However, it seemed less obvious with Liverpool's programme. Liverpool had many events that could be classified as international and many international artists participated in the ECOC year, nevertheless, the participation of European artists was probably equivalent to the internationals – using international to refer to those non-European. Although Hull did also have events with international participation, the European participation and connections with European artists was more visible. If we analyse Liverpool's and Hull's slogan, they seem very different at first sight. Liverpool's 'The World in One City' shows the desire of the city to find a place in the world and to point out the diversity that one can find in Liverpool. On the other hand, Hull's 'Everyone Back to Ours' seems to claim the opposite. This is mainly based on Hull's heritage and what the city can contribute with to the world. This might explain how the programme focuses more on connections with Europe and its heritage which is related to European countries, instead of trying to be more international.

Regarding the collaboration with other countries both cities have included this feature in their programmes. In the case of Liverpool, the main collaborations were with Stavagner, the other ECOC in that year, and the book *Reberth. Stories from Cities on the Edge*, with the participation of writers from different European cities telling the stories of six port cities similar to Liverpool. Hull did have collaborations with other cities as well, many of them Europeans such as Rotterdam, Warsaw, Szczecin, Aarhus or Reykjavik. The most significant one was the collaboration with Aarhus for the fact of being ECOC, this way Hull was imitating the model of ECOC where the collaboration between ECOC is encouraged.

Moreover, both cities had programmes that manifested European themes or values. Liverpool carried out a series of events that resembled a common European heritage that scholars always mentioned as the pillar of a common European identity and the features that kept Europeans united, especially those based on religion and the collective memory of trauma after the World Wars. Liverpool also had a couple of events directly related to the European Union and the way the European Parliament works, transmitting the EU values to the young people that participated in the events. On its part, Hull's

programme included a range of events related to high culture that can also be connected to a common European heritage such as the opera performances or the exhibitions about European artists from previous periods, and it also touched the feature of the collective trauma with its poppy cascade.

However, one difference I encountered while doing the analysis of both cities' programmes, is that Hull had more events related to its own cultural heritage as a port city, and how this was connected to the sea, which at the same time was linked to the northern European countries. In this case, Liverpool did not have much to analyse, and some of the events related to the identity as a port city was more related to slavery rather than the New World rather than with Europe. Hull also was described in its programme as a "getaway to Europe". If we look into this, not only tells us their willingness to show a connection to Europe, but it also shows a parallel approach to other ECOC that used similar vocabulary to describe themselves. As Immler points out "it is striking that Marseille, Riga, Turku and Tallinn, all cities at the 'border' of the EU, are largely programmed through shared histories, using metaphors such as bridge, coexistence, centre, gateway, shared stories or memories", including also Graz as bridge to southern Europe and Salamanca as bridge to Latin America.<sup>168</sup>

My intention here it was not to measure to what extent Liverpool's and Hull's programmes had covered the European dimension, but to see if being different projects – and especially the UKCOC with no requirements to include a European added value – had similarities in their programmes regarding this dimension. After this comparison, it is obvious that Hull did include a European dimension in its programme, and sometimes even stronger than that of Liverpool.

## **6. Conclusion**

The issue of a European identity is not an easy one. There are many theories and many factors that define an identity as it is something changeable and malleable. The European identity is based on different features such as common heritage, collective memory and intercultural dialogue. The ECOC project originated as a tool to create this European identity through a cultural discourse which tried to find things in common to all Europeans that they could relate to, but at the same time to make European people's

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<sup>168</sup> Immler et al., "(Re)Programming Europe", 15

diversity more visible and raise awareness about it. As seen in this thesis, the ECOC is one the best tools for this and adapts perfectly to the EU cultural policy discourse. Cities are happy to apply to become the next ECOC because of all the benefits they can get from this project, but in exchange they are asked to foster the European dimension. It seems that the ECOC project is doing its work well since the UKCOC, which was meant to be a national project with economic purposes, has copied even the European dimension of the ECOC.

At the time of writing this, Brexit has not happened yet, and there are still doubts – for some people hopes – whether it will eventually happen after a few delays on the exiting dates and the impossibility of the British Parliament to agree on what to do next. With a general election approaching, the British society seems to be quite divided and Brexit monopolizes most of the politicians' speeches. But if something is true is that – whether the UK leaves or not – it has been excluded from the ECOC programme for now. The analysis of the programmes of Liverpool as ECOC and Hull as UKCOC shows that, even though both cities aimed at urban regeneration and local economy improvement, the European dimension is embodied in both projects. Liverpool wanted to imitate Glasgow and get the same benefits as this city did, and then the British government created a project with the specific goal of getting those benefits and so that the UK cities did not have to wait that long to host the ECOC title again. Although the UKCOC project does not have any requirements for adding a European dimension in any form or interpretation, Hull 2017 has done so. The UK referendum took place in June 2016, which means that it was after the bidding process (Hull got selected as UKCOC in 2013) and just a few months before the year started, therefore it seems hard to think that the referendum aftermath had influenced the programming of the year towards a more pro-European one. If we follow this premise, it means that Hull had already planned to include European themes and features in their programme. As Sassatelli claims, the European dimension is doing its work in the background as it is taken for granted. Perhaps, if the UK eventually leaves the EU, and therefore is not allowed into the ECOC project again, the UKCOC could make a good substitute as it has a similar structure and can add a European dimension which does not seem too intrusive to the national identity. This way, the UKCOC could keep the cultural relations between the EU and the UK alive and in good terms, improving the understanding between cultures that it is more and more needed in this globalized world. However, it is good to point

out that if the UK leaves the EU, keeping these relations will not be as easy as now, as we have to take into account that the movement of people might be restricted, as well as many other implications that Brexit can entail. Governments will have to work together to overcome these obstacles, but the fact that a project like the UKCOC, which was born with a completely different objective, has included the European dimension and has contributed to raise awareness of its connections with Europe is good news to intercultural dialogue advocates and the making of a common European identity.

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