

The Role of Cultural Institutions and Events in the Marketing of Cities and Regions

Edited by
Tomasz Domański



M.Sc. Marcin Jasiński

Prof. Stanisław Brzeziński PhD

Częstochowa University of Technology

Faculty of Management¹

Częstochowa, Poland

Communication platforms for shaping a mega-event. A case study of selected European Capitals of Culture

Mega-events such as the European Capital of Culture have a potential to involve several types of stakeholders from public, non-governmental and private sectors. To make the most of the title and create positive image of the initiative host cities are developing tools and platforms for communication between various actors and organizations whose activities correspond with different aspects of the programme. This article presents examples of the mega-events target groups and communication platforms dedicated to them which were designed and implemented by different European Capitals of Culture.

1. European Capital of Culture as a mega-event

European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is one of the most recognizable initiatives of the European Union in the field of culture and the designation of this title to the city is recognized as an extremely prestigious award. The title itself may be seen as both a year-long cultural festival and a multi-step cultural, social and economic process constituting an impulse in the history of the city and the region. The addressees of the ECoC are not only narrow elite groups of art lovers. The project is intended to involve all residents of the city, region, country and visitors from abroad. The ECoC was primarily set up in 1985 to highlight the richness of European cultures and bring people from different European countries into contact. Studies (Richards & Palmer, 2010), (Palmer, 2004), (Garcia

¹ Prof. Stanisław Brzeziński PhD — Częstochowa University of Technology, Faculty of Management; M.Sc. Marcin Jasiński — Częstochowa University of Technology, Faculty of Management. Corresponding author: jasinski.mar@gmail.com.

& Cox, 2013) have shown that the event might be a valuable opportunity to regenerate cities, raise their international profile and enhance their image in the eyes of investors (Brzeziński & Pietrasieński, 2011), as well as tourists and their own inhabitants.

Large-scale and mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup or Expos are subjects of hundreds of books and articles which analyse them from economic, social, tourism, urban or marketing perspectives (Garcia & Langen, 2009), (New Zealand Tourism Research Institute, 2007). They are often expressly targeted at international tourism market (Hall, 1989, p. 264) and can be described with a “mega-“ prefix because of their size, frequency, target markets, level of public financial support, political effects or social structure (Hall, 1997, p. 5).

In 2010 United Nations, Bureau International des Expositions and the city of Shanghai (UNDESA, 2010) published the report about sustainable urban development. The report defines mega-event as a *“large-scale, internationally sponsored, public entrepreneurship activity engaging a long-term multi-sector organization within the host city and nation with the double goal of supporting overall local and regional development and advancing universal values and principles to meet global challenges.”* (p. 3). Mega-events differ in scale and scope (see Figure 1), as well as in media exposure and visitors attendance.

Figure 1. Distinction between scale and scope of selected mega-events

+			World Expo	
SCOPE			Olympic Games	
	European Capital of Culture			
		Summit Global Conference	FIFA World Cup	
	Theme Park			
—	SCALE			+

Source: (UNDESA, 2010, p. 15).

Having in mind the above mentioned publications as well as the specificity of the European Capital of Culture, we define an event as mega-event when it fulfils the following criteria:

- it is planned — not a spontaneous or traditional event,
- it has got potential to attract attention of millions of participants or spectators (directly or through the media),
- it has got an international profile in terms of interest of foreign media and participants (players, exhibitors or actors and the audience),
- it is awarded by an international entity and requires the candidates to prepare specific bids,
- it is perceived as prestigious and beneficial to the place, therefore it is a subject of competition among states and cities,
- it is complex and multi-faceted — usually consists of a dozen of hundreds of smaller events (including the accompanying ones),
- its effective organization requires several years of preparation and involvement of many resources — financial, infrastructural, human, organizational and others,
- it engages an unprecedented number of different stakeholders (public entities, private sector, NGOs) at local, national and international level,

- it has got potential to affect several aspects of a place and might create major economic, marketing, touristic or cultural effects,
- it is generally unique for each place — if one city has already hosted the event the next occasion will happen not before several decades (e.g. Olympic Games in London in 1908, 1948 and 2012),
- it is repetitive and mobile — takes place at regular intervals (e.g. every four years) and in various cities.

2. Factors increasing effectiveness of the European Capitals of Culture

2.1. High expectations and governance recommendations

Expectations for the future European Capitals of Culture are usually very high (Garcia & Cox, 2013, pp. 13–16), (Steiner, et al., 2013), (Palmer, 2004). To some extent this is due to the atmosphere and the promises made during the competition for the title. In each of the candidate cities, it is generally stressed that the title of European Capital of Culture is a unique opportunity for the city and the successes of the past ECoCs are cited. Also the need to mobilize citizens to achieve victory is usually stressed. As there is no single definition of what the ECoC is and what the programme of the event is to be like (as from the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup), every resident, artist, student or visitor might have his or her own idea and own expectations for the capital city. High standards expected to be met by the ECoC are also evidenced by the number and temperature of debates held in each of the cities vying for the title.

The range of potential activities associated with the ECoC project is very broad and for the most part different in each city. Based on reports commissioned by the EU (European Commission, 2015) and other documents analysing 30 years of history of the ECoC project (Garcia & Cox, 2013), we identified a number of trends and governance recommendations from the EU. Certainly, the ECoC should not be simply a yearlong theatre, museum, and opera festival, because the initiative is meant to be inclusive, and “culture” in European Capital of Culture is understood much more broadly than only high culture. Another recommendation is that the ECoC should not be treated as a one-year tourist event, but as a long-term process touching and affecting different aspects of life in the city. All this should happen with active participation of all stakeholders, not just public and private institutions, but above all residents and NGOs. Importantly, the representation of the latter should not be limited to those involved in the ECoC city, because at the macro level, the title can be viewed much more broadly than just as another opportunity to promote a given city. Equally important, both for the host-city and for the promotion of a country, could be linking the existing tourism, cultural, and other products to the ECoC brand. For example, whole range of events, tourist attractions, and artistic projects can offer a chance of extra promotion, expanding their audiences, or securing new resources in the context of the ECoC. Most states treat the ECoC as a cultural showpiece for the whole country and not only support it financially, but also provide assistance with regard to the organization and substance of the event.

2.2. Segmentation, positioning and target groups

As every city defines its goals in the context of the ECoC (e.g. to double the number of tourists, to double participation in cultural events, or to give the city better international visibility, as in the case of Wrocław) a bit differently, we analysed several documents (including application bids, promotional materials and reports), interviewed representatives of cities and examined websites of the ECoC to find out what approaches they applied in order to select target audience for the events. As Davidson & Rogers (2006, pp. 77–78) noted, market segments are composed of customers who are alike in some way or another, and who may appear in the marketing plan as discrete targets for specific mixes of marketing activities undertaken by the destination or venue. As in the most of marketing segmentation processes also in the context of the ECoC we could indicate different approaches and use variables in that process. Some of them are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Selected bases for segmenting the target audience for the European Capitals of Culture

Factor/base	Example of groups	City
Specific issue-orientated stakeholder groups (micro-targeting strategy)	Birdwatchers, football fans, film makers, theatre companies to school, ceramics-lovers, people interested in Jewish heritage	Leuuvarden
Exclusion from culture	Disabled people, large families, young people, seniors, ethnic minorities	Wrocław
Easy accessibility of the Culture Capital and the possibility of making use of existing tourist networks and partnerships	Citizens of: Linz & Upper Austria; Austria, with special consideration to Vienna; Other German-speaking countries, notably South Bavaria; The Czech Republic; Festivals & trade fairs both in Austria and abroad.	Linz

Sources: Application bids for the title of the ECoC of Wrocław, Linz and Leuuvarden.

Other target groups most regularly identified by the ECoCs as important in terms of addressing the programme are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Target groups identified by different European Capitals of Culture as subject of targeting

Target group	No. of cities who identified the group as a target one
Children and young people	32
Socially disadvantaged people	15
Disabled people	12
Minority groups (unspecified)	9
Different neighbourhoods	8
Elderly people	8
Ethnic minorities	7

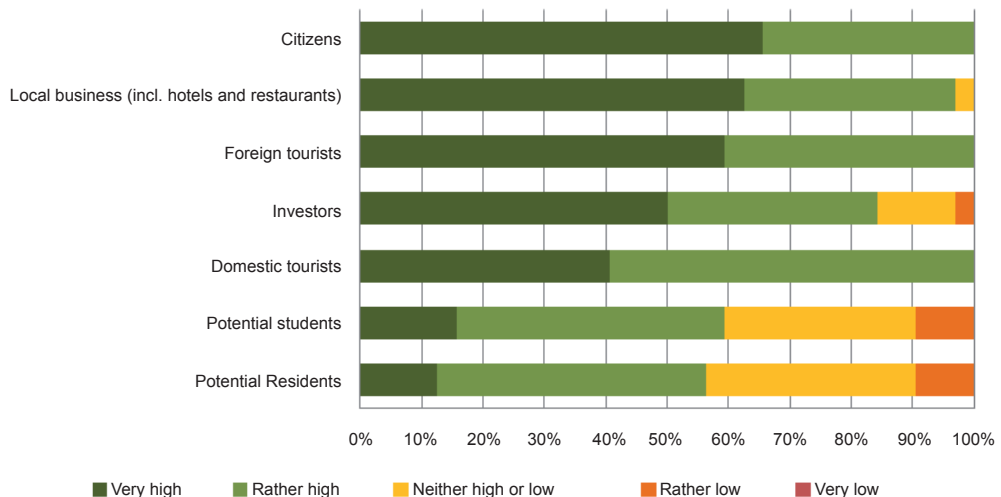
Women	5
Unemployed people	4
Gay/Lesbian people	3

Source: (Garcia & Cox, 2013, p. 92)

2.3. Importance of different target groups in the context of communication and marketing activities from the organizers perspective

In 2015 we asked 87 people previously or currently involved in the European Capital of Culture programme in 27 European cities about their views on relations between the event, city image and communication and marketing activities. Some of the questions were related to the perceived importance of different target groups in the context of these activities. The questionnaire was filled out by 32 professionals from 19 European Capitals of Culture. Among them 11 people held the position of a director, vice director or chairman of the board, 4 marked their role as a head of department or a supervisor, 6 as project managers or specialists and 11 as other (e.g. international relations, research or tourism). Although the question focused on city-image related activities, such as promotional campaigns or public relations actions, we presumed that these opinions could be extended also to the importance of the groups in terms of general communication of the event. As it was highlighted also in most application bids, the respondents pointed at citizens as the most important group, after local business, foreign tourists, investors, domestic tourists, potential students and potential residents.

How do you assess the importance of addressing city-image related activities (promotional campaigns, public relations activities or commercials that use the mega-event in order to influence the image of the host-city) to the following target groups



Source: Own research (2015).

The results corresponds with research of Garcia and Cox (2013) who noted that "an assessment of the literature gives a strong indication that the emphasis on local (or internal) audiences as top priority continues to be on the rise and that, since 2005, this

is the area benefiting from the most extensive variation of dedicated communication techniques". They also found out that "The most important change over time has been a switch from a focus on reaching out to local media and other local elites (cultural and political actors), to a far broader exploration of local community marketing strategies." (p. 87).

3. Mega-event communication platforms — examples of different European Capitals of Culture

3.1. Necessity of communication platforms

As literature and professionals suggest, one of the way to exploit the potential of the ECoC given many high hopes, different expectations, variety of actors, and diverse social, cultural, economic, and marketing aspects of the title is to establish effective communication platforms, continue discussions and create tools for collaboration that can bring about visible effects. To ensure that enthusiasm does not turn into criticism and that the citizens feel the ECoC title also belongs to them, it is considered essential to engage in professional two-way communications, provide clear criteria for the selection of submitted initiatives, and explain what kind of support can be provided by the ECoC operator and its partners (European Communities, 2009).

As shown by the practice of the previous ECoCs and other large-scale event host cities (Richards & Palmer, 2010) successful ideas do not have to require large funding to be implemented. Very often, assistance in promotion, receiving permits, premises, or contacts with relevant partners are equally important forms of support to artists, associations, and institutions. In this context, ECoC organizing committees often play the role of not only initiators of artistic, social, and cultural projects and events, but also of intermediaries between the parties involved and umbrella organizations that can strengthen the synergies.

We define mega-event communication platform as planned, long-term, accessible and inclusive instrument enhancing multilateral communication between event organizing committee and various internal and external stakeholders in order to shape, co-create and give feedback about planning, delivering and evaluating the event. Single debate, public consultation event or social media campaign were not considered as communication platforms but as various tools and activities supporting marketing and communication. On the other hand, some activities which were not initially launched for communication purposes might work well as communication platforms.

3.2. Platforms for business

Private sector is very often perceived by the ECoCs as a potential source of financing for the events. Most of the cities have developed dedicated sponsorship programmes allowing business to get extra presence and to build cultural associations with their brands. Long-term systemic approaches are still rare (Palmer, 2004, pp. 100–102), however, recent changes in companies' approaches to CSR might create additional chances to sponsor sustainable public initiatives (Kot & Brzeziński, 2015). In order to involve numerous businesses from the city and region and acquire new resources and support Mons 2015 Foundation agreed

to launch in 2012 the *Club Mons 2015 Enterprises* — an initiative of the group of local entrepreneurs (mostly SMEs) who came up with the idea of developing a network to unite the economic potential of the region around the European Capital of Culture. Membership in the club costs 1000 euro and gives the members several privileges: possibility to attend monthly meetings of the network, promote a company on the website, receive several invitations and tickets to the events dedicated to network members or a permanent 20% discount on various VIP formulas proposed in the context of Mons 2015 events. With the aim to get 2015 members by the end of the year, in June 2015 the Club numbers more than 840 entrepreneurs and is still growing. A special brand “Club 2015 Enterprises” with its own logo, website and other communication materials has been created and became one of three official business partners of the Mons 2015. (Club Mons 2015 Enterprises, 2015). Success of the Club Mons 2015 Enterprises and previous ECoCs which developed similar platforms (Marseille, Linz, Essen) inspired another ECoC — Dutch city of Leeuwarden — to establish its own platform for communication with business called “Club 2018”. Entry fee of 2018 euro will give to its members possibility to use the golden logo, add a product of the merchandising under the label 2018, attend networking events and have two exclusive tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies (Leeuwarden 2018, 2015).

3.3. Platforms for volunteers and tourism sector

Every mega-event host-city has nowadays a dedicated volunteering programme. Some of them are organised not only to support organisation with additional resources but also to regularly communicate an event, make it more visible and better perceived in the eyes of the citizens. For example, Liverpool as the ECoC 2008 developed the Welcome Programme which combined a volunteering programme, training for key front line staff and a free customer service programme for business. (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2008, p. 267). More than 5,000 people, out of 10,000 involved, attended dedicated training sessions. In Pecs (ECoC 2010) a foreign language training programme was launched in order to prepare groups such as policemen, fire-fighters, health-care workers, taxi and bus drivers and people working in cultural institutions for the influx of international tourists (ECORYS, 2011, p. 62).

City of Linz cooperated with tourists guides in order to develop new types of city tours corresponding with the ECoC programme. This was a part of a broad Hospitality Programme which was largely developed by Linz City branch of the Economic Chamber of Upper Austria. In 2008 they organised around 30 information events for different groups such as businessmen, hotels, taxi and catering companies. “The bottom line of this particular initiative was that far more than 1,000 entrepreneurs and their staff ended up sharing a high level of information on Linz09’s most important projects, dates, information points and PR material concerning Linz09. They were also sensitized to their roles as co-hosts and co-hostesses of Culture Capital Year. The Economic Chamber’s City branch also initiated hotspots, the successful cooperation between 60 top hotels and catering businesses.” (Linz 2009).

3.4. Platforms for the citizens

There are several types of communication platforms devoted to citizens of cities organising mega-events including regular discussions, conferences or Internet tools. Among the most popular are regular public consultations and debates organised at the bidding, preparatory and implementation stages. They vary in size, scope and themes.

In the context of the European Capital of Culture 2016, Wrocław has developed a platform called Forum 2016. One of the strengths of city's application for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2016, highlighted by the Selection Panel, was that it contained 150 out of more than 600 projects submitted at the competition stage by private individuals, institutions, and NGOs. That was the response to the appeal of the Wrocław 2016 Office: "Will Wrocław be named European Capital of Culture? It depends. On you". When the city moved on to the programme preparatory stage, the question changed into an invitation to join the effort and was rephrased accordingly: "What kind of European Capital of Culture will Wrocław be? It also depends on you". This tradition continued through the establishment of Forum 2016, an open platform for discussion on various aspects of the ECoC project. Its first edition was launched in December 2011 (four years before the event) and was devoted to the promotional potential of the title. Till the end of 2014, another 18 editions of the Forum 2016 and the Social Academy of Culture took place in various places in the city involving hundreds of participants, local and national opinion leaders and media (Wrocław 2016, 2015). The intention of the organizers was to initiate debates involving three groups of participants: professionals and experts with relevant expertise, enthusiasts and activists presenting their innovative and creative ideas along the lines similar to the TED platform, and the audience actively participating in the debates. All of this is to be brought together by the website and dedicated social media.

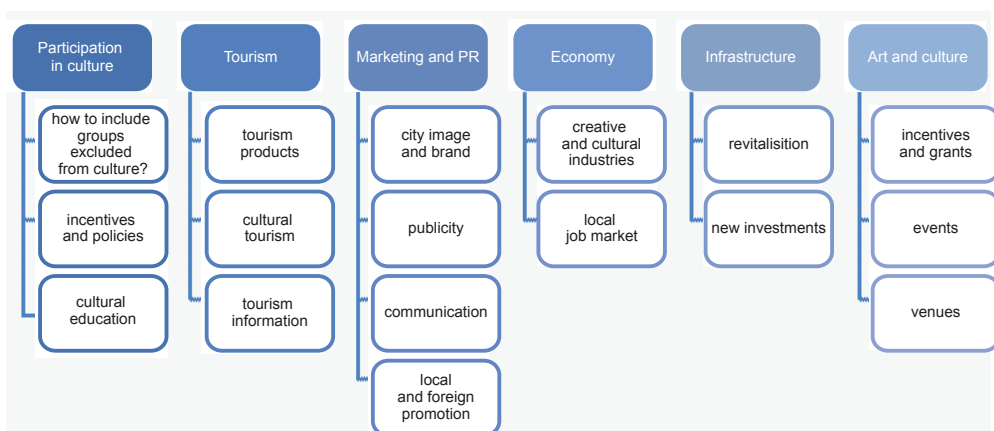


Illustration 2. Scope of Forum 2016 as an example of topics engaging stakeholders of the mega-event

Source: authors' illustration based on the Wrocław 2016 website.

It should be borne in mind that ECoC-related interactions are taking place outside and regardless of the efforts of the institution in charge of the city's formal preparations for the mega-event. New initiatives developed in the preparatory period, for instance through public debates platforms, represent only one group of products related to the project.

Many European Capitals of Culture run information points in the city (Palmer, 2004, p. 82). Aiming at informing about the title, they often also act as a space where citizens can express their artistic talents — perform, give a concert or lecture. Examples of such spaces include The Glass House (box construction situated in the centre Umeå, ECoC

2014), The Aarhus 2017 Glass container or Riga 2014's Esplanade (spaces equipped with furniture, WiFi access, Café or boxes where visitors could propose their ideas for the ECoC year) (Riga 2014).

3.5. Platforms for media

Media relations are one of core marketing and communication activities of each European Capital of Culture. There are some similarities and common challenges in terms of relations between a mega-event and the media. Rolf Norås (2014), a former strategic director of Stavanger ECoC 2008 after interviewing 29 people from 12 European Capitals of Culture, mostly directors and heads of boards, found that "What characterises the media attention most in the different ECCs, is the development from being critical and negative to a more positive and supporting position as time went by. The media could be cruel when things were difficult (especially in the early), and enthusiastic when there was success. Many cities experienced a higher attention from international compared to national media, but the overall impression is that the cities are fairly satisfied with the media." (p. 56). Most of the communication platforms with media used by different ECoCs are well-known and broadly used instruments such as regular meetings, press conferences, cooperation agreements or social media (Facebook and Twitter). Cities are paying high attention to media trips organised directly or with the help of entities such as destination management organisations. Some cities, like Turku (ECoC 2011) broadened the concept. The city created Cultural Correspondents Network — kind of journalists in residence programme where a group of 13 people from all over Finland was invited to the city, visited the events of the year for free and wrote blogs about them on the turku2011.fi website (Turku 2011 Foundation, 2012).

Summary

It is broadly accepted by professionals — event organizers, external advisors and researchers — that two-way, systematic and effective communication is essential to inform, engage and convince different stakeholders in the city about the upcoming mega-event. The successes of many projects are proportional to the quantity and quality of actors involved in their development and implementation. Since target groups of mega-events vary in size, types and importance in the eyes of organisers, they develop and implement numerous tools and activities at different stages of the events (bidding, preparation, organisation, evaluation). Some of these tools might be planned or evolve to work as more complex and long-term instruments supporting marketing and communication. The article presents examples of such platforms dedicated to citizens (including volunteers), business and tourism sector, as well as the media. As shown by examples, such communication platforms do not have to be designed and launched only by event organizers. Sometimes ideas proposed at grass-roots level have at the end stronger legitimacy and level of citizens support. Researches also confirmed that in the eyes of professionals citizens, local business and foreign tourists are at the top of target groups for marketing and communication activities in the context of the European Capital of Culture.

References

- Club Mons 2015 Enterprises, 2015. *Club Mons 2015 Enterprises*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.2015enterprises.eu/propos/> [Accessed 5 June 2015].
- Davidson, R. & Rogers, T., 2006. *Marketing Destinations and Venues for Conferences, Conventions and Business Events*. s.l.:Elsevier.
- ECORYS, 2011. *Ex-post evaluation of 2010 European Capitals of Culture*, Birmingham: ECORYS.
- European Commission, 2015. *European Capitals of Culture*. [Online] Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm [Accessed 15 May 2015].
- European Communities, 2009. *European Capitals of Culture: the road to success from 1985 to 2010*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Brzeziński, S. & Pietrasieński, P., 2011. Instruments for Supporting Foreign Investors in the Selected Central and Eastern European Countries, *Business in Central and Eastern Europe: Cross-Atlantic Perspectives*, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago.
- Garcia, B. & Cox, T., 2013. *European Capitals Of Culture: Success Strategies And Long-Term Effects*, s.l.: European Parliament.
- Garcia, B. & Langen, F., 2009. *Measuring the Impacts of Large Scale Cultural Events: A Literature Review*, Liverpool: s.n.
- Hall, C. M., 1989. The definition and Analysis of Hallmark Tourist Events. *GeoJournal*, III(19), pp. 263–268.
- Hall, C. M., 1992. *Hallmark tourist events: impacts, management and planning*. London: Belhaven Press.
- Hall, C. M., 1997. *Hallmark Tourist Events: Impacts, Management and Planning*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2008. *Tourism. Eighth Report of Session 2007–08. Volume II — Oral and written evidence*, London: s.n.
- Kot, S. & Brzeziński, S., 2015. Market Orientation Factors in Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility. *Asian Journal of Applied Sciences*, Volume I, pp. 1–12.
- Leuwarden 2018, 2015. *Club 2018*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.2018.nl/nl/club2018> [Accessed 5 June 2015].
- Linz 2009, 2009. *Linz 09 and Hospitality*. [Online] Available at: www.linz09.at/en/hospitality.html [Accessed 5 June 2015].
- Masterman, G. & Wood, E., 2005. *Innovative Marketing Communications. Strategies for the Events Industry*. Oxford: A Butterworth-Heinemann.
- New Zealand Tourism Research Institute, 2007. *The benefits of events: an annotated bibliography*, s.l.: AUT University.
- Norås, R., 2014. *What would you do differently if you knew what you now know ? An investigation into 12 former European Capitals of Culture*, Stavanger: City of Stavanger.
- Palmer, R., 2004. *European Cities and Capitals of Culture. Study Prepared for the European Commission*. Brussels: Palmer-Rae Associates.
- Richards, G. & Palmer, R., 2010. *Eventful Cities: Cultural management and urban revitalisation*. London: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Riga 2014, 2014. *European Capital of Culture in Riga — a Resounding Success*. [Online] Available at: <http://riga2014.org/eng/news/57444-european-capital-of-culture-in-riga-a-resounding-success> [Accessed 6 June 2015].
- Steiner, L., Frey, S. B. & Hotz, S., 2013. *Satisfaction, European Capitals of Culture and Life Satisfaction*, Zurich: Center for Research in Economics, Management and the Arts.

- Turku 2011 Foundation, 2012. *Final report of the Turku 2011 Foundation about the realisation of the Capital of Culture year*, Turku: Turku 2011 Foundation.
- UNDESA, 2010. Mega-Events as Catalyst for Urban Transformation. In: *Shanghai Manual: A Guide for Sustainable Urban Development in the 21st Century*. s.l.:United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- Wrocław 2016, 2015. *Wrocław 2016*. [Online] Available at: <http://wroclaw2016.pl/?s=forum> [Accessed 7 June 2015].



Faculty of
International and
Political Studies
University of Lodz



University of
LODZ



Culture



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission
cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made
of the information contained therein.



WYDAWNICTWO
UNIWERSYTETU
ŁÓDZKIEGO

www.wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
e-mail: ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
tel. (42) 665 58 63

