

# Cities and Artists: developing international cultural projects together?

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“meeting and collaboration of different initiatives,  
cultures and convictions are an  
inexhaustible source of creativity”

*City Mine(d)*

This paper starts from the observation that there is a rising interest from artists to support and engage in international cultural co-operation initiatives and, at the same time, there is a rising trend in city led initiatives to support and promote international cultural co-operation.

From cities that have been European Capitals of Culture:

Sibiu 2007 - European Capital of Culture - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.sibiu2007.ro/en2/strategia.htm

Sibiu 2007 - European Capital of Culture

SIBIU 2007  
CULTURAL CAPITAL OF EUROPE

Sibiu CCE 2007 The 2007 events The European Dimension About Sibiu Sibiu 2007 Association Links

romăna Home - Sibiu CCE 2007 - **THE STRATEGY**

**1. Mission statement**

In our understanding, the designation 'Capital of Culture' is an open concept, finding a home in various environments and contexts and promoting an idea capable of many interpretations, rather than the mere nomination of a place. We believe that there is no universal solution and each designated city is free to arrive at its own understanding of the concept. Sibiu is inscribing itself in such a process: for us the dialog begins with ourselves - but it does not end with us. One over-riding duty of a designated city is to respond. We understand that it is not sufficient to go through the year as if it was a normal festive year, promoted a little more at home and abroad. We intended to respond to the designation with a solid platform of partnership, both with the artistic and social communities of the city, as well of Romania as a whole. Through such partnership we discover ourselves: we find Europe at the heart of our own cultural being.

**2. Objectives of the Programme**

As well as recognising the city's existing cultural excellence, "Sibiu European Capital of Culture 2007" is designed to encourage the City of Sibiu to develop and innovate through cultural action. The Programme is designed to promote cultural cooperation and to celebrate the European destiny of Sibiu, through a cultural programme with European dimension and significance. "Sibiu European Capital of Culture 2007" will offer opportunities for social inclusion and cohesion, business, education, tourism, heritage and urban regeneration at every level. The Programme puts culture at the heart of city life and seeks inspiration to drive it forward.

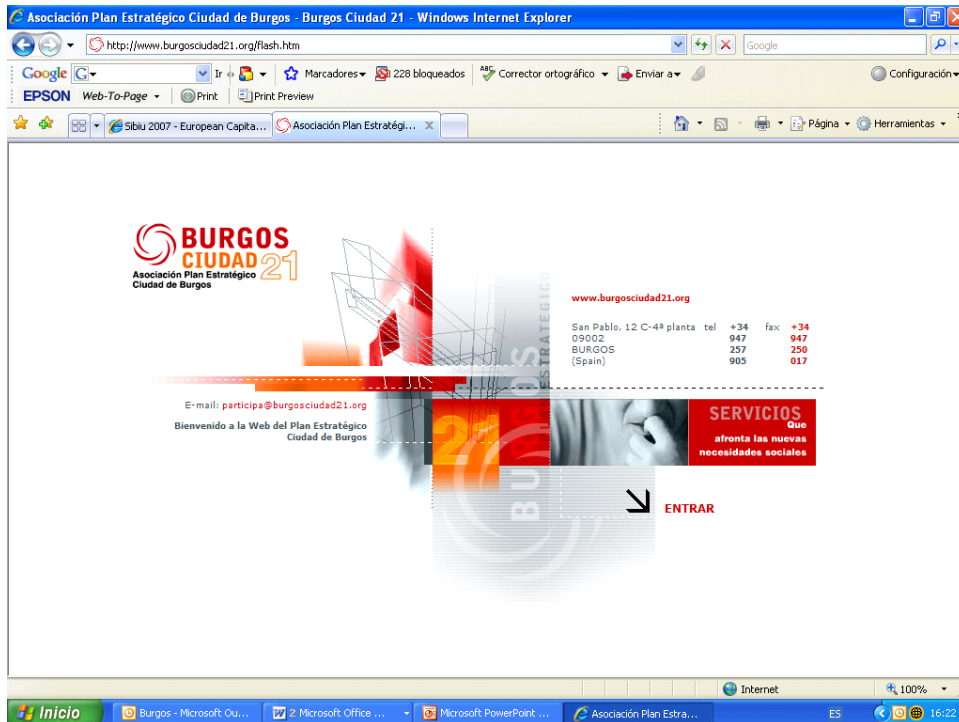
To cities that haven't been but have undoubtedly a high cultural profile internationally:



To those that wanted to be European capitals of culture and now brand themselves as World cultural cities:



To those that want to be seen as cultural and international in the future:



All are investing large amounts of money and time into re-inventing their cultural and international image:



- **Burgos 2016 Capital Europea de la Cultura** equals an investment of 40 - 55 million €!
- Cultural programming will consume close to 70% of the total investment!

Combining desk research, a survey of cities and interviews with selected experts, the main motivations in a selected number of European cities of cultural importance, to work internationally in areas of culture, were established:

## Why do cities want to be seen as cultural and international?

### INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

- Develop and learn from partnership with other cities nationally and internationally
- Promote tolerance and understanding of other cultures
- Support pluri-cultural activity and exchange
- Increase excellence by learning from others
- Enrich cultural offer at home
- Develop friendships abroad – security against aggression

### ECONOMIC

- Maintain and expand the city as a leisure and business destination
- Position the city as one of the best places to live and work
- Make the city a venue for world events
- Support the broader development of tourism
- Support and promote cultural industries

### VISIBILITY – both internal and external

- Harness the pride and passion of citizens
- Regeneration of poor areas – inused factories etc.
- Promote a world-class image
- Be known – be on the map

Unsurprisingly social cohesion, cultural tourism and marketing the city are highest on the agenda as motivations for cities to engage in cultural co-operation. This paper questions however, how far this desire to be cultural and international matches with the ideas of 'international cultural co-operation'.

A list was identified of different possible tools or measures that could be adopted by city councils for engaging in international cultural co-operation – these included:

- support for international tours of local artists
- competing for international cultural title
- promoting the image of an international in city in branding/marketing initiatives
- inviting international artists and guest stars
- connecting diasporas communities with homeland
- investment in new technologies for international artistic work
- investment in new technologies for marketing and access to local artists
- providing advice and information systems for local artists and arts institutions
- developing public/private strategies in international cultural co-operation
- co-ordinating between different public service departments
- providing cultural admin./management training courses with focus on international cultural co-operation
- consulting artists in key decisions
- city support for museum and gallery acquisitions

- engaging artists in local schools

Using a randomly ordered questionnaire the current tools being used by the same seven cities to engage in cultural co-operation projects was analysed.

From the sample of cities investigated it seems that in-house operations are the favoured measures and unsurprisingly, transferring responsibility and subsidies to artists to carry out cultural co-operation projects is extremely marginal – even in cities well established as “cultural cities”. The results suggest that cities are ineffectively engaging with local artists in the endeavour to promote international co-operation initiatives in the cultural field. The question remains; what stops our cities engaging artists at the forefront of international cultural co-operation?

- Are artists a risk? Will they make a diplomatic error...?
- Are artists still seen in the old traditional sense of being a rebel against the status quo?
- Are artists not visionary enough? Do they not see themselves in the role of greater city strategies? Do they want to be part of the wider city strategies?
- Is it just a lack of understanding (not speaking the same language) between policy-makers and artists?

Indeed, it seems that artists have a different set of agendas to artists when they engage in collaborations internationally.

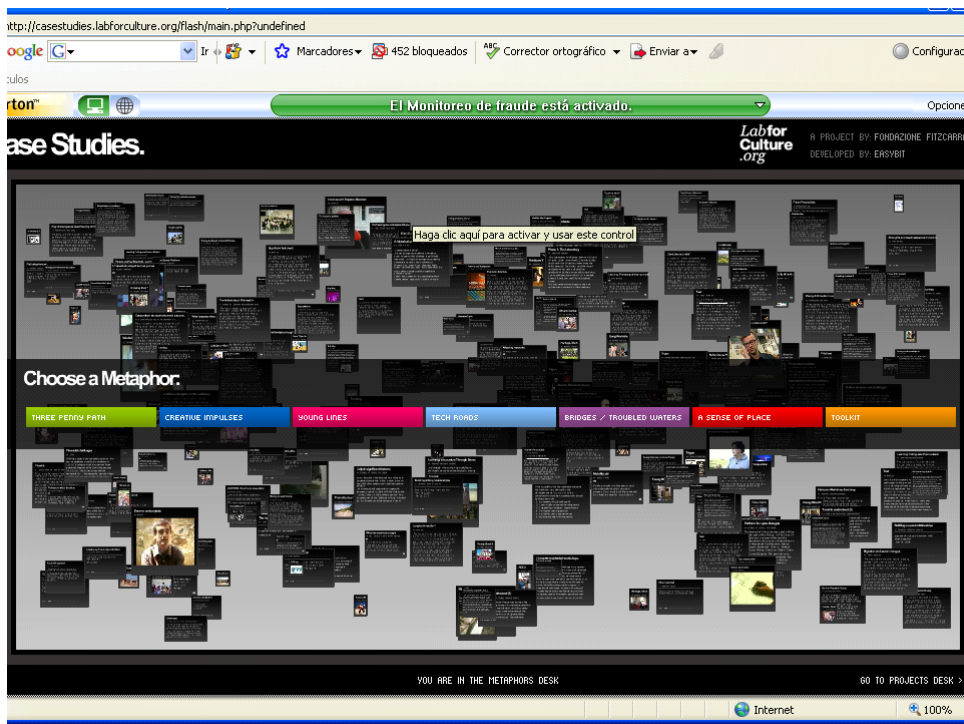
## Goals and motivations of artists and cultural operators when they start working in cultural co-operation, and start crossing borders...

### They do it:

- to promote their own work;
- to learn and adapt from other artists and discover new artistic techniques;
- to travel and visit colleagues;
- to have an income – easier to get commissions abroad than at home!
- to transfer a personal idea i.e. environmental issues, gender issues, gay rights, black rights

None of the artists interviewed considered that they had the status of cultural ambassadors (neither for their country or their city) many found the concept amusing. Some expressed worries about being used a political tool.

Looking at barriers to working internationally and artists' experience of working with local authorities, the Fitzcarraldo website of case studies on cultural co-operation within the framework of the Labforculture portal was visited. The situation on the surface seems positive with over 50 cases of cultural co-operation initiatives between artists based in different cities.



A closer look though and one has to question the level of cultural co-operation initiatives in Europe. Of the 50 projects cited, many of them are only barely collaboration projects. A further study would be needed to look at the scale of interaction of these projects. Artists interviewed randomly pointed out problems to cultural co-operation that included:

- the need for long-term funding and back-up funding to balance fragile EU funding
- the need for strong international partners with an equal footing
- the need for logistical support locally but also support for travel to meet and work with partners abroad
- the need to be able to participate in networks and develop partners organically

In looking at the so-called cultural cities there is a real lack of inter-cultural engagement – working and building productions together with other cities and risk-taking exercises. Little

support for process led artistic creations was identified, much less citizen engagement and artist engagement in international projects. This is disappointing given the increasing desire of artists and citizens to work and collaborate with their European counter-parts.

The paper finally reflects that the link between international creative initiatives and urban development needs further exploration. The research questions what more could be done to engage cultural operators in international cultural co-operation initiatives within the framework of city support.

The research highlighted the emergence of intermediary organisations to manage and support the translation of artistic objectives into public policy objectives. Good artistic practice was often led by production houses rather than individual artists. Research is needed to see what is behind the concept of emerging production houses and how far this model can be a bridge between artist and local authority?

The research also questions the training and education possibilities for cultural managers and cultural administrators. One of the main conclusions being that the current provision for the training and education of cultural operators and civil servants working in the cultural field is lacking. The Vania project will hopefully shed some light in this area.

However, further research is desirable in order to establish gaps and opportunities for new training, models of working and information initiatives that could meet the challenges of city-led international cultural co-operation.

Diane Dodd

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