BIDDING WARS: ENACTMENTS OF EXPERTISE AND EMOTIONAL LABOR IN THE SPANISH COMPETITION FOR THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2016 TITLE

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I hereby state that this dissertation contains no material accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions. The thesis contains no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

Budapest, May 2017   Alexandra Oancă

In the loving memory of

Marcel Oancă (1961-2016)

Abstract

Competition appears to be pervasive. Nowadays, it is portrayed as the necessary philosophy of socio-economic life, seemingly driving both companies and cities, to engage in an all-out competitive struggle for resources. However, competition between cities is neither 'natural' nor a 'macro-structural effect' of contemporary urbanism and state restructuring but a dynamic and relational ensemble of socio-spatial policy processes that connect and disconnect cities, scales and wider policy networks. For European cities, the engineering of inter-urban competition is a state-led political and economic project: it is not a coherent project of the EU but a partial assemblage of different policy processes that have uneven consequences and that are contestable and contested.

Instead of looking at inter-urban competition and competitive bidding solely as phenomena that are reflecting and reinforcing class interests, state projects or hegemonic ideologies, it is more productive to include them into a relational and processual analysis and focus on how these processes of inter-city rivalries are actually unfolding and on the specific labor practices that make them possible. Elite projects, just like state-led projects, need to be labored-over. In this dissertation, I propose a relational and processual approach to the study of inter-urban competition based on the one hand, on the relationality of places and scales, and on the other hand, on the relationality of expertise and the interplay between competitive, cooperative and conflictual social relations underlying enactments of expertise.

While drawing on a multi-sited research of the Spanish competition for the European Capital of Culture 2016 title, I focus on the enactments of expertise and the techno-political work that inter-city rivalries require, and their contradictory effects. During this research, I carried out an extensive examination of policy documents and 110 in-depth interviews with policy actors involved in the competitive bidding process (civil servants, local professionals, external experts, EU technocrats, politicians, corporate actors, cultural producers, activists, and volunteers).

I argue that processes of inter-urban competition are made possible through three labor practices: first, the imagineering of the city through comparative practices with competitors, model and reference cities; second, emotional labor and the management of optimism, hope, and civic pride;

and third, the instrumentalization of socio-cultural and 'extra-economic' aspects in the pursuit of competitiveness. As part of the enactments of expertise, imaginative labor – through relational comparisons and the instrumentalization of the socio-cultural and 'extra-economic' – is prioritized and considered more 'worthy', while emotional labor is seen as 'inferior' work performed by 'street-level', frontline civil servants or policy actors in lower hierarchical positions – usually by women. Processes of competition and the pursuit of competitiveness are both premised on and are reinforcing this privileging of imaginative over emotional labor.

Competition itself is an inherently unbalanced, divisive, and ungovernable process. Inter-city rivalries are messy, antagonistic and cruel for the policy actors that are laboring for them. It leads to conflict, competition, and contradictions, and a weakening of cooperative social relations in and between cities, scales and wider policy networks. Yet, there are also openings and cracks in processes of competitive bidding, as actors – that are positioned in the flux of the increasing valorization and instrumentalization of socio-cultural and 'extra-economic' aspects for inter-urban competition – encounter discrepancies that can offer insights and enable them to practice critical politics.

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My father unexpectedly passed away in the summer of 2016, and he was not able to witness the completion of this work, and more. I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my father. I miss him every day.

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Abbreviations

ACS – Actividades de Construcción y Servicios S.A. – Construction Company

DSS – Donostia – San Sebastián

DG EAC – The Directorate General for Education and Culture

ECCM – The European Cultural Capitals and Cultural Months Network, or the European Cities of Culture Network

ECoC – European Capital of Culture

EC – European Community

EU – European Union

FCC – Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas, S.A. – Construction Company

IOC – International Olympic Committee

IBOCC – International Bureau of Cultural Capitals

PPACC – Plataforma de Profesionales del Arte Contemporáneo de Córdoba – Platform for Contemporary Art Professionals of Córdoba

UNIA – Universidad Internacional de Andalucía – The International University of Andalusia

WHS – World Heritage Site

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Introduction. To Compete or Not to Compete, that is an Absent Question

Competition appears to be pervasive. Nowadays, it is portrayed as the necessary philosophy of socio-economic life, seemingly driving both companies and cities, to engage in an all-out competitive struggle for resources. The concept of 'competition' was usually associated with the rivalry between firms and sectors within market economies. A mainstay of capitalism and markets, competition is heavily intertwined with the profit logic[1]: in order to achieve profit in the production and circulation of commodities, capitalists need to successfully compete with competitors and to innovate. Currently, the notion of competition is applied not just to capitalists and workers, and idiosyncratic individual action but also to public policies and non-market, territorial entities. It is increasingly applied to entities which are neither commodities nor solely profit oriented, such as cities, regions, nation-states, schools, and universities.

'Compete or die' (Eisenschitz and Gough 1998) and the need to become more 'entrepreneurial' and 'competitive' appear as the imperatives of policy makers around the world (T. Hall and Hubbard 1998; Brenner 2004; Brenner and Wachsmuth 2012). Policy actors and residents alike experience their cities "as being in *de facto* competition in the game of urban ranking" (Roy and Ong 2011, 13), as attempting to improve vis-à-vis other cities. These visions of "everything is a competition, we have to be competitive" expressed by my interlocutors are more common than not, leading policy actors to engage in 'bidding wars', 'place wars' and 'unchecked arms races' (Leitner and Sheppard 1998; Haider 1992), in a 'race to the bottom' and 'locational tournaments' (Fougner 2006), when trying to outbid and/or underbid competitors. These rivalries are geared not just towards attracting governmental funds and foreign direct investments but also towards amassing 'collective symbolic capital' and symbolic resources (Harvey 1989; 2002a).

The ubiquity of competition is expressed and felt acutely during these 'bidding wars' between two or more locations against each other (Leitner and Sheppard 1998; Haider 1992). Take the emergence and consolidation of the competitive bidding process for the European Capital of

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[1] See Heffernan (2014) for a discussion of the influence of social Darwinism/Spencerism and sports analogies on the ubiquity of competition as the default tool in public policies. See also Bowler (2006) for a discussion of how Darwinism, particularly social Darwinism as developed by Spencer, was used as a justification for laisser-faire capitalism, ruthless business practices, and competitive social policies.

Culture (ECoC), a programme of the European Union that was created in 1985. It currently functions as a European mega-event and organizes the competitions at the national scale of member states. In a short time, it shifted from direct nominations and negotiations between governmental authorities, to a full blown competition mode organized by a European panel. The Spanish competition for the 2016 title was the most expensive and extensive bidding process for ECoC, at the time of its unfolding (2009-2011). Its impact transcended this official timeline and involving a variety of actors and institutions from within and beyond the territorial-administrative borders of the 15 participant cities; 11 Polish cities also competed separately for the joint 2016 title. Before that, the UK selection process for ECoC 1990 (9 cities), the German competition for ECoC 2010 (10 cities) and the UK competition for 2008 (12 cities) were at time of their unfolding characterized as "the most rigorous and fiercely contested selection process to date" (Griffiths 2006, 419). But this trend towards bigger and costlier continued after the start of my project on the Spanish competition, with 21 Italian cities competing for 2019. In the subsequent portrayals of these competitions, their increasing size became a measure of the competitiveness and power of the ECoC 'brand', and by association of the European Commission (European Commission 2009; 2014). The imperative of competitiveness and the invocation of the harsh 'reality' of global competition have been crucial in the mobilization of ECoC at the local and regional scale (Harvey 1989; McCann 2004), and in the consolidation of the competitive bidding process at the national and European scales.

For policy makers, the contemporary global and urban system appears as a cutthroat world saturated with war-like metaphors. Wilson (2016) even refers to hyper-entrepreneurialism, a new phase of 'urban entrepreneurialism' (Harvey 1989; Leitner and Sheppard 1998), characterized by menacing visions of a hyper-competitive reality where an elusive globalization and neighbors alike are out to get us. There is a widespread sense of panic and fear regarding the 'threat' and 'menace' of an intense inter-urban competition and a widespread sense of concern (even obsession) with the need to improve competitiveness. In this warfare logic, cities are primarily understood as competitive, entrepreneurial entities operating in a competitive urban system (Sum 2009; Jessop and Sum 2010), constantly engaged in material and symbolic competition with one another for resources, jobs, tourists, and capital.

But, before moving on, it should be noted that inter-urban competition is not an entirely novel phenomenon. Historically, intense competition between cities, together with place marketing and city boosterism, have been characteristic of the rise of the industrial city in the US, for example in their attempts to secure railway links and additional markers of urbanity (S. V. Ward 1998a; S. V. Ward 1998b; Garcia and Judd 2012). US cities and states have long competed for industry or for labor, while using place marketing as a tool (McCann 2004; Dobbin et al. 2007; Greenberg 2009). Whereas competition and boosterism were "deeply entrenched as a part of the North American agenda for the city, forming an integral part of the whole process of settlement and urbanisation" (S. V. Ward 1998a, 34), this phenomenon deeply contrasted with the UK and continental Europe where such competition has never been essential to the national urban system. The Italian City States and the Hanseatic League are even older examples of rivalries among 'cities', among its merchants and bankers (Harvey 1989; Jessop and Sum 2000), but that was before nation-states consolidated their position and integrated European cities within their own markets (Le Galès 2002, 47). Within the national urban systems in Europe, the fortunes of cities were linked to the priorities of the nation-state, not to the logic of competition, and to their position as political and administrative centers (S. V. Ward 1998a; S. V. Ward 1998b; Garcia and Judd 2012). Like other European countries (Le Galès 2002), the Spanish nation-state has had a fairly stable urban hierarchy; its urban and regional inequalities first crystallized with the industrial revolution along a North-South divide and were later reinforced with the so-called Spanish 'economic miracle' of the 1960s (Palomera 2015).

Yet, despite the historical precedents of inter-locality rivalry, the apparent universality and geographic reach of competition distinguishes it from earlier occurrences. Competition among cities is neither 'natural' nor 'universal' but has to be constantly engineered and reproduced through the constant intervention of the state (Peck and Tickell 2002; Brenner 2004; Read 2009). Policy makers and governments have been organizing "the-winner-takes-all" competitions and introducing urban policies with an emphasis on competitive bidding. With the shift in European urban policy from dealing with urban decline to competitiveness and growth, the competitive mode has been encouraged and inter-urban competition has become institutionalized through competitive bidding initiatives and funding mechanisms (Stewart 1996; Oatley 1998). Therefore, bidding for funds has been used as a policy mechanism – introduced by governments and/or transnational institutions (like the European Union) – to encourage and institutionalize inter-

urban competition. On the basis of competition, governmental grants, funds and/or awards have been allocated through competition without using indicators of social and economic need (Oatley 1998). Similarly to other competitiveness policies, competitive bidding initiatives are meant to help localities respond to the 'threat' of inter-urban competition.

Visions of a harsh, competitive reality are accompanied by an ambiguous and contradictory process. Within the ECoC programme, a logic of zero-sum, 'beggar-thy-neighbor' competition (Swyngedouw 2004) has been institutionalized between cities from the same nation-state. Thus, participating in the competition means accepting – and at best creatively translating and mobilizing – the extra-local, inter-scalar 'rule regimes' (Peck 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002) that were put forward down by the European Commission, other EU institutions, and a transnational policy network. During the ECoC bidding process, the Spanish 'cities' and their coalitions[2] have spent considerable amounts of public money from the City Council in order to acquire more public money from regional and central governments, in a rivalry with other Spanish cities. As private sponsorship is limited and the EU makes a meager contribution (Palmer 2004), competitive bidding for ECoC – just like with other mega-events (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996) – is in fact orientated towards the attraction of grants from the regional or central government, but at the expense of other cities from the same country. Local tax payers' money are spent in order to secure more taxpayers' money, to materially and symbolically prepare the city for (external) tourists, and acquire uncertain rights for a mega-event that has ambiguous benefits for the population (Mooney 2004; Tretter 2008; Tretter 2009). Bidding wars do not impact just the citizens of the participant cities but its effects go beyond that. We are dealing with an allocation of resources less concerned with socio-spatial redistribution (Stewart 1996; Oatley 1998; Brenner and Wachsmuth 2012), and more according to the pursuit of competitiveness by urban coalitions and the nebulous competitive rules laid down by the EU.

Crucially, these notions of competitive urbanism and of a global and inter-urban competition as struggle and necessary warfare – widely held, mobilized and enforced by local, national and European policy makers – have overarching implications for contemporary urbanism in terms of agenda-setting, prioritization, budgeting of governmental institutions, solidarity, quelling

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[2] When I write of 'the city' as doing something – e.g.: entering competitions, implementing policies, etc. – I refer to the urban coalitions representing or claiming to represent that city, not to the city as agent. These coalitions are composed of a variety of actors and institutions, beyond city-bound, territorial actors.

resistance and contestation, etc. In the face of a variety of uncertainties, and more recent pressures (particularly public debt, welfare cuts, austerity measures, and unemployment), policy processes promoting competition and bidding wars do not provide neither an efficient allocation of public resources, nor solidarity and cohesion. Despite that, questioning inter-urban competition and its merits has been beyond the realm of reasonable debate.

Competition in general and inter-urban competition in particular is a dominant framework that forecloses its questioning and the examination of its own formation, relationality and processuality. Not just for cities, but also for regions, countries, schools, and universities, there is absence and an eloquent silence among policy makers on the issue of competition. It is my hope that this dissertation can point to some of the existing cracks and contradictions in processes of competition.

In order to do this, it is first helpful to make explicit how this dissertation relates to urban studies, as the notion of increasing inter-urban competition has become a mainstay of urban scholarship in the last decades. The intensification of inter-urban competition, with the advent of globalization and deindustrialization, has been one of its key assumptions. Although (increasing) inter-urban competition is a strong, central assumption in urban studies, that prevalence is a blessing in disguise for empirically grounded studies of inter-urban competition. Both for urban policy-makers and academic commentators, the notion of increasing competition between cities has become naturalized: it is that notion usually relegated to introductory statements. It is usually a building block to critical and non-critical urban studies, an assumption left unexamined, a nod which authors need to give before moving on to more 'important' topics.

The notions of competition and competitiveness remain elusive and a 'cipher' which needs to be decoded, even though they have been at the heart of urban studies (Brenner and Wachsmuth 2012; Kazepov 2005). 'Competition' is a fuzzy, elusive concept. There is widespread confusion and tension within the multiple understandings of inter-urban competition. While in policy materials and mass media competition is imagined as both means and ends, in urban studies inter-urban competition is conceptualized as both cause and effect, as both condition and structural effect, as both 'force' and 'background', as both trend and metaphor. In comparative urban scholarship, increasing inter-urban competition was conceptualized as a general trend brought about by globalization (K. Ward 2010). Wood sees inter-urban competition as "(t)he

crucial mechanism linking local developments to their more general reproduction" (A. Wood 1998, 283). Moreover, 'competition' is also routinely used in urban studies as a ubiquitous metaphor for the pressures faced by cities in the contemporary world.

In this introduction I briefly analyze the contributions but also the limits of critical urban studies on issues of inter-urban competition, competitiveness, and urban governance, with an emphasis on the way the concept of competition has been used. First, I present some of the contributions of critical urban studies on the topics of competition and on entrepreneurial urbanism, particularly its discussions about competition, competitiveness and entrepreneurialism not as natural properties of cities but a macro-structural effect and as products of place-bound coalitions of elite interests. Second, I argue that the central idea of inter-locality competition used in critical urban studies is modeled on inter-capitalist competition, in spite of the criticism leveled to the hegemonic discourse of entrepreneurial, competitive urbanism that consider cities to be alike capitalist firms.

Third, I argue that while modeling inter-urban competition on inter-capitalist competition explains why processes of competition are unfolding, this does not leave us any wiser on the actual, relational process of competition between various coalitions, nor does it allow us to understand the practices and techno-political work that make possible processes of competition. Last but not least, I outline my approach to this problem and the contributions a relational and processual analysis of inter-urban competition can make to improve our understanding of processes of competition between cities and of competitive bidding. Then, I present the research design and the methodological approach used in this dissertation, and its structure.

I.   Cities are not Companies: Urban Entrepreneurialism and Inter-Urban Competition in Urban Studies

Inter-urban competition has been a prominent feature of studies of urban governance, urban politics, and the entrepreneurial city (T. Hall and Hubbard 1996; T. Hall and Hubbard 1998; Cox 1993; Cox 1995; Leitner and Sheppard 1998; Jessop and Sum 2000; M. Garcia and Judd 2012; Brenner and Wachsmuth 2012; Peck and Tickell 2002; Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996;

McCann 2004). Increasing competition between cities has been an important assumption in research on contemporary urban restructuring. Moreover, starting with 1908s "the concept of the competitive city became relevant to comparative urban scholarship" in Europe (M. Garcia and Judd 2012, 486).

The surge of scholarly interest in contemporary urban entrepreneurialism and especially in contemporary inter-urban competition can largely be traced to David Harvey's seminal paper (Harvey 1989), *From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: The transformation in urban governance in late capitalism,* although Harvey himself was drawing on an extensive urban studies literature which has continued to grow since its publication (McCann 2004; K. Ward 2003). For Harvey (1989), the neoliberal shift in the 1980s from urban government to entrepreneurial strategies of urban governance led to the rise of 'urban entrepreneurialism' which rests on "a public-private partnership focusing on investment and economic development with the speculative construction of place rather than amelioration of conditions within a particular territory as its immediate (though by no means exclusive) political and economic goal" (Harvey 1989, 8). This new entrepreneurialism implies the implementation of speculative strategies and policies by public-private partnerships, undertakings which carry a considerable risk usually absorbed by the local sphere, and which tend to have an uneven distribution of costs and benefits. According to Harvey (1989), the new urban entrepreneurialism can take four pathways (or combinations of these pathways): strategies to improve urban competitiveness within the international division of labor (e.g.: offering subsidies and tax breaks to companies), within the division of consumption (e.g.: tourism, entertainment, festivals, spectacles, cultural events), within the redistribution of grants and resources offered by central governments, and lastly through the acquisition of key control and command functions.

This surge of scholarly interest in the new urban entrepreneurialism[3] has led to similar and extended notions like 'new urban politics' (Cox 1993), 'the entrepreneurial city' (Jessop and Sum 2000; T. Hall and Hubbard 1996; T. Hall and Hubbard 1998), the 'entrepreneurial turn' (K.

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[3] While these different concepts are mostly considered synonyms and used interchangeably, I prefer the 'entrepreneurial urbanism' concept as it emphasizes the qualitative shifts in the organization of the urban and the local state. Whereas 'urban entrepreneurialism' tends to emphasize the entrepreneurial measures taken *in* the city, the 'entrepreneurial urbanism' concept captures better the changing governance *of* the city, and the current norms of contemporary urbanism.

Ward 2003) and 'entrepreneurial urbanism' (K. Ward 2003; 2004). These accounts critique entrepreneurialism as the current norm and tendency of contemporary urbanism. According to these norms, contemporary urbanism has to be entrepreneurial: policy makers have to act "as entrepreneurs and, as importantly (and perhaps more), talk or narrate their actions in entrepreneurial terms" (K. Ward 2003, 124). In these entrepreneurial visions of intensified inter-locality competition, cities are constantly being sold and advertised, and are continuously competing for investment, jobs, tourists, grants, etc. We live in cities where urban policy-making is currently permeated by an aggressive competitive ethos and by a widespread trend of selling and marketing places (Mayer 2013). Even though they are not commodities, cities are participating in an ever growing globalized 'market' of cities. Great resources are being spent by urban coalitions and local governance structures to pursue highly speculative schemes in these world 'market' of entrepreneurial cities: these are high-risk and high-investment schemes which more often than not fail to bring more tourists, investments, capital, or even a better image. These priorities shape urban governance, and ultimately the cities we live in, often resulting in the commodification of culture, identity, heritage and land.

The hegemonic discourse of inter-urban competition and urban competitiveness policymaking is criticized by critical urban studies on the following interrelated counts: it portrays the city as homogenous, as a company/business, as an active, reified, unitary/unified, autonomous agent; and as a commodity to be created, sold and bought. Moreover, for McCann, the hegemonic discourse of inter-urban competition and urban hierarchies reinforces the "highly problematic view of cities as socially and economically homogeneous" (McCann 2004, 1926). For example, when making statements like "Barcelona is a great city to live in/visit", it assumes no fundamental differences in the enjoyment of the city, e.g.: class, gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, etc. Moreover, the hegemonic discourse of inter-urban competition assumes that the city is a commodity that should be branded, *imagineered* and sold in the pursuit of an elusive competitiveness.

The city as active agent?

Critical urbanists argue that policy-making centered on competition and improving competitiveness is based on the reification of cities as unified, active agents. For example, when making statements like "the city offers concessions to cultural firms", it presumes that 'the city'

as such exists as an agent, that it has power and capacity to do something, e.g.: to enter competitions, to adopt competitive orientations, to implement competitiveness policies, etc. Authors like Cox (1995), Harvey (1989) and Jessop (2013) criticize the indiscriminate attribution of agentic proprieties to cities. While cities are "not really agents or subjects" (Jessop 2013a, 19) but "mere things" and processes (Harvey 1989, 5), under certain conditions cities might become agentic: cities might become 'collective agents' (Cox 1995; Harvey 1989) or 'strategic actors' (Jessop and Sum 2000), or narrate themselves as such. When discussing some of the preconditions for localities to become agents, Cox and Mair suggest that:

> *If people interpret localized social structures in explicitly territorial terms, come to view their interests and identities as 'local', and then act upon that view by mobilizing locally defined organizations to further their interests in a manner that would not be possible were they to act separately, then it seems eminently reasonable to talk about 'locality as agent'* (Cox and Mair 1991, 198).

One of the valuable lessons of critical urban studies has been to avoid reification and not presume the agency of cities but to interrogate "(t)he determinate politico-institutional conditions under which localities might become agentic" or might appear as agentic (Brenner and Wachsmuth 2012, 24). And these insights can be applied generally to instances of 'city projects' or 'locality as agent', as 'localities' might theoretically mobilize around a variety of common interests and agendas (economic growth, profitability, equity, equality, social welfare, redistribution, human rights, etc).

The city as entrepreneur? On economic growth and place-bound interests

Crucially, it should be noted that entrepreneurial policy repertoires do not invoke simply images of cities as agentic but as entrepreneurial agents that seek to expand economic growth and their profit-making capacities, for the supposed benefits of all residents of all places. The hegemonic discourse of entrepreneurial urbanism and competitiveness policy-making hinge upon the assumptions that cities need to become agents oriented towards profitability, economic growth and profit maximization, and that this speculative economic growth and profitability are inherently good for all urban citizens. Entrepreneurial urbanism and policy-making centered on maximizing profitability will lead – of course – to the 'trickle down' of economic growth to all urban citizens of all places. Furthermore, the hegemonic discourse of entrepreneurial urbanism rests on the assumptions that competition among cities takes place on a level playing field

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(Leitner and Sheppard 1998) and that competition functions almost like a common good, improving efficiency, the allocation of resources. and leading to better performance in local government (Lever and Turok 1999). Growth does not 'trickle down' but in fact there is an uneven distribution of the advantages and disadvantages of growth.

Moreover, Leitner and Sheppard (1998) argue that two assumptions in the discourse of urban entrepreneurialism are deeply problematic: "1. Each city, like each firm in a perfect market, is competing with a very large number of other cities on a level playing field. (…) 2. Cities, as economic actors, are in all other respects analogous to firms" (Leitner and Sheppard 1998, 300; my emphasis). Brenner and Wachsmuth note the "untenable analogy between capitalist firms and urban territories" (Brenner and Wachsmuth 2012, 53), while Jessop, Leitner and Sheppard criticizes the negative effects of policies modeled on the city as a business, and of cities acting and being narrated as entrepreneurs (Jessop 1998; 2013; Leitner and Sheppard 1998).

Whereas capitalist accumulation (the realization of profit) is essential for the survival of the individual capitalist, cities do not cease to exist if profit is not realized. Whereas the "logic of competition in the capitalist mode of production is connected to the principle of unending, ever-expanding accumulation" (Jessop 2013a, 19), survival is not simply equated with profit, competitiveness and unending accumulation for cities. Cities and nations "do not go out of business" (Krugman 1994); cities do not have a singular objective, an overarching bottom line, the way firms have in the imperative of profit (Krugman 1994; Cox 1995; Leitner and Sheppard 1998) but a variety of objectives, goals, and interests. Cox argues that "whereas within firms coordination is facilitated by the focus on a single objective, that of profit; within `communities' or `cities' there are highly diverse interests that have to be coordinated" (Cox 1995, 215). Localities do not have unitary interests but a multiplicity of sometimes contradictory goals, which are pursued by a multiplicity of actors and institutions and which would need to be coordinated, negotiated and/or asserted; while cities do not have unitary interests, they do not have a level playing field nor do they operate in one. Serious conflicts among actors over the nature of the city and over the goals, objectives and strategies of urban governance can take place, for example between urban competitiveness and social cohesion, between economic growth and social welfare (M. Garcia and Judd 2012; Fainstein 2001).

The existence of a multiplicity of agendas beyond the requirements of profit maximization is not the only the aspect which differentiates cities from companies. Cities are defined by their territoriality. Cities are "legally fixed in place, with boundaries that can be extended only with difficulty" (Leitner and Sheppard 1998, 301). Although it is mistaken to assume that firms are completely independent from localized social relations (Cox 1995), cities are locally embedded in their territoriality to a higher degree than companies.

While cities are not understood by default as agents/entrepreneurs in critical urban studies, under certain politico-institutional conditions cities might become agentic/entrepreneurial or narrate themselves of such. Therefore, instead of assuming that cities operate by default as agents/entrepreneurs, critical urbanists argue that it is more productive to pay attention to "who is being entrepreneurial and about what" (Harvey 1989, 6), and to the "conditions under which cities can be said to act in a relatively unified and strategic manner" (Jessop and Sum 2000).

As localities have a different political structure than companies and operate through "multifaceted organizations subject to consensus building and ballot box constraints" (Haider 1992, 128), 'becoming' an entrepreneurial city and implementing entrepreneurial strategies in a democratic political structure require control over urban governance and/or the local state, legitimacy, and consent from urban residents, and the mobilization of diverse actors and social forces behind entrepreneurial strategies. These questions are common when studying entrepreneurial cities in the critical urban studies: who represents the 'city', who is claiming to speak on its behalf, who is able to define the interests of the city, who benefits and who loses, how was consent and legitimation achieved in urban governance, and so on.

This has led mostly to a focus on the politics of coalition and alliance formation and on the interests of urban elites; the focus is mostly on issues of power and authority in urban governance, and on the conflictual nature of entrepreneurial urbanism. Like Logan and Molotch (Molotch 1976a; Logan and Molotch 1987), Cox and Mair (Cox and Mair 1991; Cox 1993; 1995) link coalition and alliance formation in entrepreneurial strategies to local territorial interests. While Logan and Molotch's urban growth machines are comprised of land-based elites, 'rentiers' and other auxiliary vested interests with a stake in local property values and their maximization, for Cox and Mair the (new) entrepreneurial strategies and institutional structures are spearheaded by "place-bound interests", by "a number of economic interests which are

significantly place-bound and which therefore depend on the health of not just any urban economy, but on the health of their particular one" (Cox 1995, 214).

For Cox and Mair, these interests in the growth of urban economies are not just profit interests but more generally locally dependent interests whose realization and maximization is wedded to a particular city; "place-bound interests" are not limited to land-based or profit interests but extended to the imperative of profit/wages/ taxes/rents in particular localities. Therefore, some of the most important contributions of critical urban studies have been to draw attention to the politics of entrepreneurial urbanism (who is winning and who is losing): to the place-bound interests that are at the heart of the new entrepreneurial strategies and institutional structures, and the uneven distribution of costs and benefits between capital and labor/residents. In contrast to the purported positive benefits of entrepreneurialism, critical urbanists have tended to highlight its negative and ambivalent effects, especially the difficulties experienced by residents following the commodification of public places (Logan and Molotch 1987) and the advantages derived by mobile capitals and place-based interests at the expense of immobile `communities' and local labor (Cox 1993; 1995).

The City as Competitive? On Competitiveness and the Competitive City

The notion of competitiveness was first associated to the activities of firms and sectors, and then to the actions of nation-states. Since Oatley (1998) argued that there was considerably little written about the notion of urban competitiveness, the situation has changed significantly: the competitiveness of cities has increasingly received attention from academics, policymakers and mass-media. Among others, this has been connected with the creation of a variety of academic and popular rankings of best places, indexes of competitive cities, etc. (McCann 2004; Ni and Kresl 2010; Cheshire 1999b). Cities, regions and universities have not escaped this ranking fervor and the seduction of quantification (Shore and Wright 2015b; Shore and Wright 2015a; Sauder and Espeland 2009).

By now, it has become normalized to imagine cities as competitive (or as lacking competitiveness) and to rank them according to the presence or (relative) absence of competitiveness. Mass media, policy-making and mainstream scholarly accounts see the attempts to maintain and improve competitive advantages of cities, nations and territories as

understandable and desirable. Authors like Porter (1995), Haider (1992), Begg (1999), Lever and Turok (1999) claim that even though cities and nations do not compete like firms – agents that have a single unifying objective – they do attempt to improve their competitive advantages. Together with city rankings, mainstream urban studies and reports – that routinely focus on explaining the factors behind competitive cities – "act as a road map for urban political and business leaders intent on gathering information on best practices of economic development" (McCann 2004, 1214). As the notion of 'competitiveness' became normalized and institutionalized (for example, in governmental competitiveness reports and strategic documents), the following questions are seen by policy makers as justifiable and relevant: what explains urban competitiveness, what are the assets and factors explaining the success of competitive cities, what can nations, regions and cities do to boost competitiveness (Begg 1999; 2002; Lever and Turok 1999).

In the highly polemical piece, *Competitiveness: A Dangerous Obsession*, Paul Krugman (1994) argued that the concept of competitiveness is flawed when applied to territorial, political entities, as cities and nations as such do not compete with each other but "they are merely the locus for firms and enterprises which compete" (Lever and Turok 1999, 791); the survival of territories does not dependent on their 'competitiveness' like for companies. For Krugman, competitiveness is only the attribute of capitalist companies, profit-making entities; as such, the notion of national and urban competitiveness are a 'dangerous obsession'[4], "fallacies about international trade being dressed up in new and pretentious rhetoric" (Krugman 1996, 24).

Critical urbanists are generally positioned somewhere in between these two opposite opinions. 'The city' is not inherently an active, entrepreneurial, competitive agent, perpetually attempting to improve its competitiveness, as claimed in mass media and mainstream scholarly accounts. 'The city' is not inherently reflexive but permeated by reflexive human action (Storper 1997), by "the reflexive pursuit of entrepreneurial strategies" (Jessop 2002, 188). Jessop argues that while authors like Krugman might be correct in claiming that cities or nations are really not agentic, competitive or reflexive, "they err insofar as real agents or subjects do identify economies as being strategically engaged in 'competition', and act on this perception" (Jessop 2013a, 19).

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[4] In an ironic twist, Ni and Kresl (2010) have created a ranking system built on this criticism, as they equate urban competitiveness only to the benefits created from the production of local companies.

Even if the notion of competitiveness is intellectually flawed and 'dangerous', that does not explain how it became an 'obsession' permeated by a ranking fervor, entrepreneurial ethos, and the culture of competition.

Therefore, in contrast to the hegemonic, neoliberal discourse of urban entrepreneurialism that presumes that by default cities are or ought to be competitive and active entrepreneurial agents, critical urban studies interrogate the conditions under which particular cities might become entrepreneurial or competitive, or the conditions under which particular coalitions act on behalf of improving a city's competitiveness. Whereas Cox and Mair (1991) and Jessop and Sum (Jessop and Sum 2000; Jessop 2013a) argue that it is possible for localities to become active entrepreneurial agents and adopt competitive orientations against other cities provided that some preconditions are met, Harvey (1989), Cox (1995), Logan and Molotch (Logan and Molotch 1987; Molotch 1976a) tend to emphasize that cities as such are not inherently competitive or uncompetitive, and that policies of urban competitiveness are pursued by urban growth coalitions and alliances for the realization and maximization of territorially fixed interests.

Competitiveness should not be seen as an inherent property of cities. It is not "a natural, almost ontological property of cities" (Wachsmuth 2014, 86). But dismissing the notion of 'urban competitiveness' as intellectually flawed and conceptually dubious does not explain its prevalence, nor its quintessential political-ideological character (Brenner and Wachsmuth 2012; Jessop 2013a; Wachsmuth 2014). In spite of its fallacies and ambiguities, the notion of 'competitiveness' is politically and ideologically charged since it is used and pursued for the promotion of place-bound interests.

Crucially, competition and competitiveness are not conceptualized as an inherent, natural property of cities but as a macro-structural effect brought by a historically-specific realignment, with a focus on urban transformations, economic change and/or state restructuring and rescaling. There is general agreement among urban scholars (Harvey 1989; Leitner and Sheppard 1998) that the impact of globalization, economic restructuring, deindustrialization, state restructuring (at the local and regional scale but also national and European), and other geopolitical and economic transformations of the 1970s and 1980s have led to difficulties and uncertainties for urban economies in Europe and the US, which drew cities into an intensified and generalized

competition with one another, and led to the emergence and consolidation of competitive urbanism and to new, entrepreneurial policies at the local scale.

This 'inter-urban competition as macro-structural effect' argument can be broken down into two inter-related claims.

On the one hand, inter-urban competition is not a natural given but "a structural effect of coalitions of local elites mobilizing to defend and promote their geographically fixed interests" (Wachsmuth 2014, 86). Inter-urban competition is interpreted as competition between various urban coalitions spearheaded by place-bound, territorial interests. Harvey (1989), Cox (1995), Molotch and Logan (1987) tend to emphasize that cities as such do not compete but that in fact urban growth coalitions and alliances claiming to act on behalf of various cities are competing against each other for resources. These urbanists tend to emphasize that the contexts of competition as structured by territorial economic interests, and put less emphasis on the state-led promotion of competition.

On the other hand, inter-urban competition is not an inherent property of cities but a historically-specific objective and outcome of the capitalist state. It is a structural effect of statecraft. Inspired by the regulation approach and/or by Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality and lectures on Biopolitics (Foucault 2008), Cerny (1997; 2010) and Jessop (2002; 2013a) highlight the transformation of the nation-state from the welfare state into the competition state, concerned with maintaining and promoting the competitiveness of its territory. Authors inspired by the regulation approach attempted to locate the new phases of inter-urban competition and competitive urban policy within structural shifts. For example, Oatley argues that deindustrialization, globalization, and the neo-liberal project of the UK Conservative government have forced cities to restructure institutions, to become more competitive, and to establish new urban policies and practices aimed at improving competitiveness. Thus, in response to political-economic restructuring, a 'new local mode of regulation' (Oatley 1998) has emerged which emphasizes inter-urban competition and competitiveness. State restructuring lead to the engineering of inter-urban competition and state-led promotion of competitive urbanism (Peck and Tickell 2002), more precisely to the promotion of competition among urban coalitions for (governmental) resources.

Overall, one of the most important contributions of critical urban studies has been the discussions about competition, competitiveness and entrepreneurialism not as natural properties of cities but as structural effects of territorial place-bound interests and/or of the restructuring of the capitalist state. Critical urban studies have proven enlightening in understanding the forces underlying the increased competition among cities, and the role of state restructuring, local economies and urban governance. State promotion of competition grew in tandem with competition among urban coalitions and place-based interests for resources. Urbanists have shed light on the logic of inter-urban competition as channeled both by the capitalist state and local elites, although the spotlight tended to shine on either/or. Moreover, critical urbanists have shed light on the negative and ambivalent effects of urban entrepreneurialism and on its uneven distribution of costs and benefits.

II.   Modeling Inter-Urban Competition on Inter-Capitalist Competition: The Limits of Critical Urban Studies

Yet, inter-urban competition is modeled on inter-capitalist competition, in spite of the criticism leveled to the hegemonic discourse of entrepreneurial, competitive urbanism that consider cities to be alike capitalist firms. Despite the extensive debate about the (un)natural properties of cities as entrepreneurial, competitive or reflexive agents, what is usually labeled as inter-urban competition is in fact (inter)capitalist competition.

Competition among cities remains one of the great unquestioned assumptions of critical urban studies, subsumed under the heightened capitalist competition in the global economy. Even though Harvey, Jessop, Sum, Leitner, Sheppard, Brenner, Peck, Tickell and other urban theorists (Harvey 1989; Jessop 2002; Jessop and Sum 2000; Leitner and Sheppard 1998; Brenner 2004; Peck and Tickell 2002) do not consider urban territories to be analogous to capitalist firms, capitalist competition is imagined to operate as an overarching coercive force over cities and urban governance, as a macroeconomic condition of contemporary urbanism. Pressingly, there is an untenable analogy between inter-capitalist competition and inter-urban competition, and this leads to limitations for critical urban studies. This is one of the main reasons why less explicit

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attention has been paid to the relational process of *inter*-urban competition, or to labor the practices that facilitates it.

When exploring inter-urban competition, critical urban theorists or urban political economists are drawing explicitly – as it is well known – on Karl Marx's critique of capitalism and analysis of competition in capitalism. In contrast with a perfect (or imperfect) competition model where cities are autonomous, independent actors that need to compete against one another in order to maximize profitability, economic growth, improve welfare, efficiency etc. – and which can be achieved only through an idealized phenomenon of competition – critical urbanists model inter-urban competition on capitalist competition. Capitalist competition is not idealized as in classical political economy nor seen as the general organizing principle of the economy; it is neither perfect nor imperfect, but messy and dynamic, driven by the inherent mobility of capital and the profit motive.

Even though 'Metro-Marxists' do not consider urban territories to be analogous to capitalist firms, capitalist competition – particularly inter-capitalist competition – is imagined to operate as an overarching coercive force over cities and urban governance, basically over everything. Harvey imagines competition as a 'force', operating as an 'external coercive power' for capitalist accumulation in/over cities (Harvey 1989, 10). It is useful to quote Harvey's paragraph in full for further discussion:

> *Urban entrepreneurialism implies, however,* some *level of inter-urban competition. We here approach a* force *that puts clear limitations upon the power of specific projects to transform the lot of particular cities. Indeed, to the degree that inter-urban competition becomes more potent, it will almost certainly operate as an "*external coercive power*" over individual cities to bring them closer into line with the discipline and logic of capitalist development. It may even force repetitive and serial reproduction of certain patterns of development (such as the serial reproduction of "world trade centers" or of new cultural and entertainment centers, of waterfront development, of post- modern shopping malls, and the like). The evidence for serial reproduction of similar forms of urban redevelopment is quite strong* (Harvey 1989, 10; my emphasis).

For Harvey, the coercive laws of competition bear upon not just on firms but also on states and cities (not just on individual but also on collective agents). Jessop argues that competition occurs "not only between economic actors (for example, firms, strategic alliances, networks) but also between political entities representing specific spaces and places (for example, cities, regions, nations, triads)" (Jessop 2013a, 22). For these authors, both cities and firms will seek their

distinctive pathways of survival and accumulation strategies in the face of capitalist competition (Harvey 1989; Jessop and Sum 2000). Hence, capitalist competition is 'out there' '*over*' cities, a 'force' which confronts companies, nations, regions, cities and more, "whether or not actors explicitly oriented their economic activities to enhancing their competitiveness", "whether or not attempts occur to attract (or repel) economic activities at levels above individual market agents" (Jessop 2002, 188). Leitner and Sheppard (1998) argue that capitalist competition creates unpredictable environments both for firms and localities, and that states can either attempt or not to mitigate these uncertainties through policies.

Thus, inter-urban competition is seen as operating as coercive laws, "as an 'external coercive power' over individual cities to bring them closer into line with the discipline and logic of capitalist development", as a 'force', "(b)ut where the "forcing" occurs after the action rather than before" (Harvey 1989, 15). It is noticeable that this understanding of inter-urban competition builds on Marx's analysis of competition among capitalists. For Marx, the benevolent dispositions of the individual capitalist towards workers does not matter as "(u)nder free competition, the immanent laws of capitalist production confront the individual capitalist as a coercive force external to him" (Marx 1867, 381). Driven by the inherent mobility of capital and the profit motive, capitalist competition – neither perfect nor imperfect – functions as the central mechanism of capitalism, by "subordinat(ing) every individual capitalist to the immanent laws of capitalist production, as external and coercive laws" (Marx 1867, 739). Coercion and force are the primary keywords used to describe inter-capitalist competition.

Going back to Harvey, he highlights that urban entrepreneurialism implies "*some* level of inter-urban competition" (Harvey 1989, 10; my emphasis) although this level remains unspecified and although it is unclear what are the pressures exerted by actual competitors. Similarly, Peck is vague when mentioning that "(t)he market for urban policy fads happens also to have grown in lockstep with the intensification of interurban competition" (2011a, 42), but when discussing Harvey's text, Peck argues that its most important contribution "lies with the direct but dexterous connections that are made between the disciplining and constraining effects of interurban competition (as a mutual condition nevertheless associated with highly uneven outcomes), and the rationalization, rollout, repetition, revision, recycling, and reproduction of politically produced urban strategies" (Peck 2014, 398). Thus for Harvey and Peck, inter-urban

competition is understood as a disciplinary mechanism of entrepreneurial urbanism, as a macro-economic condition driving or contributing to repetitive policy diffusion and mobilization of entrepreneurial urban policies. Despite national variations within Europe, Garcia and Judd argue that, "the pressure to compete led to similarities in the local strategies, with the cities providing bureaucratic personnel and substantial public subsidies for schemes to make them more attractive to affluent residents and investors" (M. Garcia and Judd 2012, 489). Competition and the pervasiveness of competitive pressures structure the fields of action of individual cities, leading to the serial reproduction of urban policies and ultimately to market or capitalist-conforming policy convergence, that facilitate capitalist accumulation.

In contrast to reductionist economist understandings of competition as solely the "struggle for some economic benefit rather than new information, vertical pressure, or a sense of appropriateness" (Dobbin et al. 2007, 463–64), critical urban studies interpret the functions of inter-urban competition and competitive pressures as both coercion and motivation, as both compulsion and discipline. The imperative of capitalist accumulation is asserted through competition and perceived as both coercion and 'motivation': as Marx argued, "the immanent laws of capitalist production manifest themselves in the external movement of the individual capitals, assert themselves as the coercive laws of competition, and therefore enter into the consciousness of the individual capitalist as the motives which drive him forward" (Marx 1867, 433).

Just like inter-capitalist competition coerces and motivates individual capitalists, Harvey, Peck and others argue that inter-urban competition constrains, disciplines and motivates 'cities' and urban coalitions to implement entrepreneurial, 'competitive' urban policies. Modeled on the competition among capitalists, competition both motivates and "compels him to keep extending his capital, so as to preserve it, and he can only extend it by means of progressive accumulation" (Marx 1867, 739). Coercion, sometimes perceived as 'motivation' by urban policy makers, is exercised through the disciplinary mechanism of inter-urban competition.

'Cities' might not be companies, but they do seem to compete just like capitalists. For example, Cox (1995), Jessop (1998), Brenner and Wachsmuth (2012) building on the arguments of Storper and Walker (1989) argue that inter-urban competition – just like inter-capitalist competition – can occur either in weak or strong forms (either through cost cutting, overbidding and zero-sum

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competition, or through innovation and 'real' entrepreneurship). Entrepreneurial and competitive properties are debated as part of the same bundle, 'the capitalist'. While Cox, Jessop and Sum have also included 'innovation' in these properties, together with entrepreneurship and competitiveness, Harvey has emphasized 'speculation' and 'risk', almost parasitism, as characteristics of the entrepreneurial city and inter-urban competition (Merrifield 2014).

Critical urban theories are implicitly inspired by Marx's understanding of competition among capitalists, rather than on general competition in capitalism. The competition among the workers themselves in order to survive, acquire, and maintain scarce jobs – and the interaction between the competition among capitalists and the competition among workers – falls by the wayside in analysis of inter-urban competition. It is surprising – and somehow incongruous – that urban political economists tend to prioritize competition among capitalists as capitalist competition, making the rivalries among 'workers' for survival and scarce jobs secondary or irrelevant[5]. I am not arguing that it is more useful to model competition among 'cities' on the competition among 'workers', but we should include more 'workers' and more 'labor' in our analysis of inter-urban competition[6].

III.   Back to Work: Towards Inter-Urban Competition as a Labored-Over Process

Critical urban studies have been dominated by an approach to inter-urban competition mainly as an expression of an economic and political realignment, and as a structural effect of territorial place-bound coalitions of interests and local elites and/or the restructuring of the capitalist state.

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[5] I am not arguing that it is more useful to model competition among 'cities' on the competition among 'workers', nor on the conflict between labor and capital. Regarding the latter, early urban studies inspired by the NUP were obviously modeled on the capital-labor conflict: they emphasized that competition among cities for mobile capital are characterized by unjust distributional effects and by an unequal power relation. In those studies, Cox argued that "(t)he water is further muddied by the sobriquet `capital vs. communities', since this might suggest that if communities represent anything it is not capital: when it clearly is, since capitals typically constitute the `private' part of public-private partnerships" (Cox 1995, 215). Cox argued that a 'capital vs. cities/communities' assumption understood city interests as unitary vis-à-vis capital (1993), with entrepreneurial policies and inter-urban competition as a reflection of the conflict between (mobile) capital and (fixed) cities and in this way effaced the difference between labor and capital within cities/communities.

[6] Additionally, we should differentiate between competition and conflict, between intra-class (competition) and inter-class social relations (conflict). Similarly, cooperation can be both intra-class and inter-class.

The modeling of inter-urban competition on inter-capitalist competition and its widespread characterization as condition, force or structural effect has implied a lack of attention paid directly to actual processes of competition between cities, to competition as something that is processual, relational and fragmentary and that needs to be labored-over.

Rather, the emphasis in territorial and/or macro-structural analysis is placed on the capitalist logic of urban governance, entrepreneurial urbanism strategies and/or state rescaling, than on the process of competition. Towards the end of the article, Harvey goes on to state that "it is not clear that the *mere fact* of inter-urban competition is the primary contradiction to be addressed" (Harvey 1989, 16; my emphasis). In urban political economy, competition continues to be seen as the surface, as the appearance to capital's essence, therefore considered secondary to understanding the workings of capital or contemporary urbanism. Yet, structures reproduce themselves through processes, practices and struggles; competition is always incomplete and never realized. Moreover, processes are a good entry point for empirically grounded theorization of competition.

Inter-urban competition is not addressed directly but rather conceptualized as a condition, as "the 'bearer' of capitalist social relations in any society where the circulation of capital is a hegemonic force" (Harvey 1989, 15). Similarly to Harvey, Peck refers to inter-urban competition as a macroeconomics mechanism and as 'a mutual condition' of contemporary urbanism (2014, 398) highlighting that the uneven effects of the macroeconomics of competition are disciplining and constraining, and they are both "self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating" (2007, 41).

Unfortunately, this macro-structural emphasis on inter-urban competition – as mechanism, as condition and 'bearer' of capital, as a force which pushes cities in line with capitalist accumulation and capitalist-conforming policies – undermines our understanding of inter-urban competition as an actual process, as a messy and dynamic process "antagonistic by nature and turbulent in operation" (Shaikh 2016, 259). Inter-urban competition is neither just a mechanism nor condition of contemporary urbanism or state restructuring but an actual social process that "does not occur in a social vacuum, but depends on complex sets of institutions and broader social frameworks" (Jessop 2013a, 18–19)[7]. Viewing competition as 'condition' or 'mechanism'

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[7] Jessop (1998; 2002; 2013) has emphasized the importance of preconditions and institutional frameworks in the historically-determined process of inter-urban competition. He has focused on the institutional frameworks of

reduces its messiness and contradictions, and effaces the actors, institutions, practices and especially labor that go into actual processes of inter-urban competition, taking place in between cities, scales, and wider policy networks.

By modeling inter-urban competition on inter-capitalist competition and stressing its character as central mechanism and 'the very basis' of entrepreneurial urbanism, (increasing) inter-locality competition can easily become a 'mere fact', 'necessarily entailed', the new/animating 'spirit' of contemporary urbanism. Although contemporary inter-urban competition was understood as a historically-specific expression of "the far-reaching macropolitical realignment that has taken place since the 1970s" (Peck and Tickell 2002, 396), as a structural effect of state restructuring and of the territorial mobilizations of place-bound interests and local elites, heightened competition among cities became established in urban studies as one of the features of contemporary urbanism – not as an inherent, natural property of cities, but as a contingent, structural, historical peculiarity. Yet, as a wide-ranging 'force' and macro-structural effect, 'competition' developed into a fact: it has increasingly been mobilized by urbanists as a fact, as part of the growing consensus in urban studies. Increasing inter-urban competition grew into syndrome and symbol, a ubiquitous metaphor for the pressures faced by the contemporary cities. Furthermore, critical urbanists and urban policy makers alike are sharing the structural idea of heightened inter-urban competition as a characteristic of contemporary urbanism and state restructuring[8].

My assessment should not be interpreted as the usual critique against the generalizing, totalizing tendencies of Metro-Marxism but as one questioning the long-term strength of its priorities. By stressing its territorial, place-bound expression and/or macro-structural character, (increasing) inter-locality competition became a 'mere fact', mentioned in passing. This closed off productive avenues of research, as competition was mobilized increasingly by urbanists as a 'fact' which

competition that enable inter-urban competition, rather than on the practices that make possible competition as a relational process taking place in between cities, scales, and wider policy networks.

[8] For Fainstein, the viewpoint of urban policy makers about increased competitive pressures is "not incompatible with structuralist analysis but rather, within that framework, represents a superficial explanation, since it does not account for the forces underlying the ceaseless competition among places, the contradictions that such competition creates, the necessary relationship between uneven development and profit, the dependence of the democratic state on capital, and the power exerted by business to bias the outcomes of the process. In other words, it accepts uncritically the workings of the global capitalist system" (Fainstein 1994, 10).

merely reflected political-economic trends, which reflected in and reflected the widespread adoption and mobilization of entrepreneurial strategies and competitiveness policies. Thus, the insistence on inter-urban competition as condition, mechanism and structural effect of entrepreneurial urbanism and state restructuring was accompanied by a focus on what inter-urban competition was meant to reflect (e.g.: capitalist logic, entrepreneurial urbanism, competitiveness policies, place-based interests, politics of coalition formation, state restructuring, etc.), and a lack of interest among urbanists for the actual relational process of competition among inter-scalar, multi-scalar coalitions representing cities.

This emphasis on inter-urban competition as territorial expression and/or structural effect has unfortunately come at the expense of studying competition as something that is processual, dispersed, relational, and fragmentary. Particularly the modeling of inter-urban competition on inter-capitalist competition has been one of the main reasons why less explicit attention has been paid to the relational process of *inter*-urban competition (not to territorial expressions), and to labor practices that facilitates it.

This modeling has focused on *why* competition and entrepreneurial policies are mobilized and *who* benefits, and less on *how* competition is actually unfolding in between cities, scales and networks or on the practices that make it possible. Surprisingly few 'workers' or 'labor' practices are included in capital-focused or elite-centric analysis of inter-urban competition, competitive bidding or entrepreneurial urban policies. While inter-urban competition has been extensively studied through territorial coalition formation, and/or as a macro-structural effect of state restructuring and urban transformations, the labor practices and broader working conditions underpinning actual, relational processes of competition between cities are more mysterious.

Even though 'workers' or 'residents' could potentially be part of urban coalitions, they are rather imagined as oppositional to the interests of the coalition, as the cost-paying losers, or at most as passively consenting to policies. The assumption that 'workers' or 'residents' are fundamentally objectively oppositional to capitalists or elites shows a marked difficulty in understanding not just social conflict but also mechanisms of cooperation, co-option, and complicity among elites, workers and residents, and mechanisms of competition among the workers themselves. This is due to an insufficient conceptualization of cooperation among 'interests' usually seen as

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oppositional[9], and of power beyond domination, coercion, and authority to include other modes of power such as seduction, persuasion or inducement (Allen 2003). One of the drawbacks of implicitly modeling inter-urban competition on inter-capitalist competition has been its lack of attention paid to processes of competition and cooperation among 'workers' and residents underlying actual processes of inter-urban competition, and to processes of differentiation among various (im)material and knowledge workers. A theory of the contradictory and uneven production of processes of inter-urban competition and the competitive city is needed, that focuses on the contradictory practices through which processes of inter-urban competition are made possible and less on exposing the interests that are served through these processes.

Even if processes of competition and competitiveness policies – entrepreneurial strategies and competitive policies, urban branding and imagineering, mega-events and iconic architecture – are state projects or elite projects benefiting mainly elites, they are not exclusively produced by elites but require the sometimes-contradictory and constant participation of workers and intermediaries. Even the selling of the city vis-à-vis other cities through 'off-the-shelf', 'ready-made' policy packages (Cochrane and Ward 2012; McCann and Ward 2011) involve not just capitalists or elites but the work of immaterial or knowledge workers – professionals, technocrats, consultants, experts, frontline workers, and other intermediaries – for policy scanning, and its mobilization at the local scale. Enactments of expertise are necessary for inter-city rivalries, and for the promotion and imagineering of the city vis-à-vis others. The practices of cultural producers, artists, volunteers, and residents are also part of these enactments of expertise to sell the competitive city.

Processes of competition and the state-led engineering of competition, just like other capitalist processes, are not abstract nor are they should be about identifying the 'bad guys': "(t)he people doing all this are not abstract 'agents'. They are real living people, vital individuals with likes

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[9] Urban politics studies inspired by political economy have focused on local-based processes of alliance formation and capitalist cooperation, on novel and more complex forms of economic coordination at the urban scale, and on the effects these alliances had on fomenting urban conflict between labor/residents/communities and capital. Even though 'workers' or 'residents' could potentially be part of urban coalitions, they are rather imagined as oppositional to the interests of the coalition, as the cost-paying losers, or at most as passively consenting to policies. Regarding the latter aspect, Boyle argues that most urban governance studies have relied on inferences from above about control, the production of legitimacy and consent among the public and failed to advance a 'theory of the consumption of boosterism' and the reception of ideologies of community by local residents (Boyle 1999, 70).

and dislikes and hopes and fears" (Mann 2013, 10). Elite projects, just like the state-led promotion of competition, require constant interventions and constant techno-political work to be made possible. They need to be constantly labored-over.

This dissertation proposes a relational and processual inquiry of inter-urban competition. Competition is neither 'natural' nor a 'macro-structural effect' of place-bound elites or of statecraft; it is neither a given nor a macro-economic condition of contemporary urbanism, but a dynamic and relational ensemble of socio-spatial policy processes that constitute and (dis)connect cities, scales and trans-local networks of policy, and that need to be labored-over. It is an assemblage of socio-spatial policy processes that connect and disconnect not just the competing cities among themselves but also wider policy networks, decision-making nodes, and/or other translocal nodes of persuasion or calculation. While the territorialization of processes of competition is important, inter-urban competition is more than the aggregate of the territorial strategies of different cities.

For European cities, the promotion of inter-urban competition is a historically-specific, state-led political and economic project. As Le Galès mentions, for European cities "the reality of inter-urban competition translates into public policies presented in the language of competition" (2005, 250). The engineering of competition as a state-led political and economic project is not a coherent institutional project of the EU or European states but a partial, messy assemblage of different policy processes that have uneven consequences and that are contestable and contested.

Instead of looking at inter-urban competition and competitive bidding solely as phenomena that are reflecting and reinforcing elite interests, an effect of statecraft, or hegemonic ideologies, it is more productive to include them into a relational and processual analysis, and rather focus on how processes of competition between cities are actually unfolding and on the specific labor practices that make them possible.

This dissertation will make a contribution to our understanding of processes of inter-urban competition and the engineering of competitive urbanism in Europe by analyzing in detail the workings of the Spanish bidding process for the ECoC 2016 title, the techno-political work that made it possible, and its effects. As competition between cities is neither 'natural' nor a 'macro-

structural effect' but an uneven ensemble of labored-over processes, I will explore how does the process of competition work in practice, what are the labor practices that make it possible, and what are its effects.

While the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games, the Seville 1992 Universal Exposition, and the opening of the Guggenheim Museum in 1997 in Bilbao came to symbolize the lure of competition and place marketing but also the limits of their 'success stories' (González 2011; Degen and Garcia 2012; Borja and Muxí 2004; Delgado 2007), the analysis of the Spanish competition for the ECoC 2016 title will shed light on the contradictory effects of processes of inter-urban competition and engineering competitive urbanism at the European scale; it will also shed light on the limits of competing for tourism, symbolic resources, and public sector grants in a context marked by austerity cuts, precarization, and urban mobilizations.

On Research Design and Methodology

Before moving on to present the structure of the dissertation, it is important to outline the research design and the methodological approach used in this dissertation.

The territorialist tendencies of earlier approaches in urban studies have led to a predominance of "single-city case studies and timid, like-to-like comparisons" (K. Ward 2010; Peck 2014, 397); this was due to assumptions that the local can be analytically isolated, that contextual variables can be controlled, and that contemporary urbanism and inter-urban competition can be understood through the local scale or through nested, hierarchical scalar thinking. Although it is justifiable to have 'the city' as an 'anchoring concept' (Davidson and Iveson 2015) or to have local-based processes as empirical sites of research and objects of theoretical inquiry (Brenner 2009), the predominance of single-place-based case studies and variable-oriented comparative approaches does point to some of the limitations of case selection and case-study research in urban studies. Also we need to re-imagine the 'case' and 'the field site' beyond the territorial-administrative boundaries of the city.

A study of processes of inter-urban competition and competitive bidding, just like the study of policy (multi- and inter-scalar by default), offers the opportunity for a profound reconceptualization of 'the field' beyond the bounded field site (Shore and Wright 1997; Wedel et al. 2005; Peck 2003; McCann and Ward 2011; Cochrane and Ward 2012). It presents a series of methodological challenges[10] but also allows us to problematize the usually taken-for-granted correspondence between a case and the fixed site (Riain 2009), refine case-study research and casing, and experiment with case selection. Moreover, as borders and boundaries are not merely administrative but also epistemic and disciplinary (Gupta and Ferguson 1997), the study of inter-urban competition and policy processes offers the potential for rethinking research practices and research strategies that blur disciplinary boundaries between anthropology, sociology, human geography, political science, and history (Gusterson 1997; McCann and Ward 2013).

When referring to inter-urban competition as an assemblage of different policy processes, it is important to note that the concept of 'assemblage' is used primarily as a methodological tool for its empirical applications (Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth 2011; McCann and Ward 2012; Baker and McGuirk 2016), and not ontologically (compare with McFarlane 2011b; Farias 2016). As inter-urban competition is an inherently relational process between different places, scales, and policy networks, the descriptive use of the concept of 'assemblage' allows me to focus on processuality, relationality, and 'the labor of competing'. It allows me to focus on labor practices and the relations (in) between elites, experts, instruments, informational and institutional infrastructures, non-experts, and contesters, that assemble, dissemble and make possible inter-urban competition, and even impossible at times.

But how can we study an elusive, complex and contradictory ensemble of policy processes like inter-urban competition? I argue that researching processes of competitive bidding, like the Spanish 'bidding wars' for the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2016 title, can shed light on an what is otherwise seen as an elusive, abstract, deterritorialized logic of inter-urban

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[10] When discussing policies-in-motion – an integral part of processes of inter-urban competition and competitive bidding – Peck argues that "the methodological challenge (…) is to develop adequate conceptualizations and robust empirical assessments of policies 'in motion', including descriptions of the circulatory systems that connect and interpenetrate 'local' policy regimes. This calls for an analytical shift of sorts, away from the traditional method of focusing on the internal characteristics of different regimes – qua taxonomically defined 'systems' – and towards the transnational and translocal constitution of institutional relations, governmental hierarchies and policy networks" (Peck 2003, 229).

competition. Focusing on processes of competitive bidding for mega-events can illuminate what are the specific labor practices required to actually do inter-urban competition, and how different actors and institutions are actually enacting 'competitiveness', 'entrepreneurialism', and 'innovation'. Mega-events[11] – such as the Summer and Winter Olympic Games (and other sports competitions recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) like the Asian and Youth Olympic Games), Football World Cups, European Football Championships, International or World Expositions, the ECoC – are considered classic, quintessential examples of entrepreneurial urbanism (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996; Cook and Ward 2011) and are readily recognized and unmistakably indicated as direct forms of inter-urban competition. Compared with other entrepreneurial policies (branding, cultural tourism, etc.), the logic of competition is direct, clearly entailed, and institutionalized in mega-events. In order to host mega-events, 'cities' (or, better said, the inter-scalar, multi-scalar coalitions representing or claiming to represent these territories) need to compete with other coalitions from other nation-states and/or from the same nation-state. Just like in the case of the competition for the ECoC 2016 title, increasing costs and accelerating 'bidding wars' characterize the rivalries for these mega-events.

Therefore in this dissertation I use the case study of the Spanish competitive bidding for the ECoC 2016 title; at the time of its unfolding, this was the most expensive and extensive bidding process for ECoC with a record number of participant cities[12]. The 15 participant cities were Alcalá de Henares, Burgos, Cáceres, Córdoba, Cuenca, Donostia – San Sebastián, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Málaga, Murcia, Oviedo, Pamplona, Santander, Segovia, Tarragona and Zaragoza (see Figure 1. Participant cities in the Spanish ECoC Competition for 2016).

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[11] As there is considerable ambiguity regarding the definitions of mega-events, Müller (2015) proposes a list of criteria for classifications, such as tourist attractiveness, mediated reach, costs, and urban transformation. While the ECoC is not as mega as other events such as the Olympics when taking these substantive criteria into account (for example, costs and reach), the competition, competitors and stake for these two events are very different, and attract differently positioned cities (for example, compare London with Essen). Instead of substantive criteria and definitions for mega-events, it is more productive to look at how the 'mega' characteristics of an event emerge historically and relationally: the Olympic Games evolved into an event for 'global' cities, while the ECoC has become established in the EU as a mega-event among post-industrial, post-socialist and smaller cities, particularly among second-tier and third-tier cities, and less so for coalitions from capital cities and European hubs that tend to gravitate towards the Olympic Games, Expositions, or creating their own flagship events.

[12] As noted by the Selection Panel for the Spanish competition, "(t)his number had never been reached by any other country in the history of the European Capital of Culture" (Selection Panel 2010, 2).

Figure 1. Participant cities in the Spanish ECoC Competition for 2016
Source: Gil de Arriba 2010; map modified to exclude Avilés, Gijón and Palma de Mallorca

Official descriptions cannot capture the amplitude of the process. It involved the participation of the Ministry of Culture based in Madrid, EU institutions particularly the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) based in Brussels, a selection panel of national and European experts, experts and consultancies – from Barcelona, Bilbao, Madrid, Seville, and other Spanish cities, but also from Essen, Liverpool, Luxembourg, Marseille, Sibiu, and other former ECoCs – and countless other actors and institutions (not necessarily from the participant localities or locally dependent, or associated with the ECoC policy directly). Moreover, even though the candidature of Palma de Mallorca and the Balearic Islands was prepared, it was not allowed to officially enter the competition since it did not have the support of the City Council. Other coalitions representing the cities of Granada, Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Valencia, and the region of Asturias (Avilés/Gijón/Oviedo) announced their intention of participating (Prado 2007) but in the end did not submit a bid. Furthermore, a coalition representing Perm – a Russian city and region in the Volga area – lobbied unsuccessfully to be included as a ECoC 2016 alongside the winning cities of an EU competition, Donostia–San Sebastián for Spain and Wrocław for Poland (Oancă 2015).

Regarding the timeline, even though the competition took place officially from September 2009 when it was announced by the Spanish Ministry of Culture until the controversial victory of Donostia–San Sebastián in June 2011[13], most coalitions prepared for an average of 4 years, with Córdoba starting these preparations, as early as 2002, nine years before the final selection. And these preparations were in fact only a snapshot of its recent history of serial bidding that originated in the 1980s. Moreover, most of the coalitions which lost were attempting to challenge the decision and/or find alternatives, months and even years beyond the official closing.

This dissertation was based on a multi-sited research of the process of competing. Although I do not put forward a case study of a particular Spanish city and its coalition, or a variable-oriented city-to-city comparison on mega-events and other entrepreneurial strategies[14], I do pay attention to the territorialization of inter-urban competition and to how competitive bidding manifests at different scales. The next chapters will focus on the one hand on the formation of the 'rules of the game' and inter-scalar rule regimes (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996; Peck 2002) and on the other hand on the labor of competing for the coalitions that represented the cities of Alcalá de Henares, Burgos, Córdoba, Donostia – San Sebastián, and Málaga. The coalitions of these cities were incorporated in different and similar ways into the process of competitive bidding, with different consequences: during the research I noticed that these coalitions shared similarities and differences in the results of the competition, institutional arrangements[15], the predominance of extra-local, 'external experts' in the preparation process, the interplay between competitive,

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[13] The pre-selection took place in September 2010, while the final selection from 6 cities unfolded in June 2011 (Burgos, Córdoba, Donostia-San Sebastián, Segovia, and Zaragoza).

[14] While this dissertation draws upon insights generated in the extensive comparative and case-study based literature on mega-events and other entrepreneurial strategies (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996; Grodach and Silver 2012; del Cerro Santamaría 2013; Raco 2014; Tarazona Vento 2016; Lauermann 2015), I embed them within a relational study of the competitive bidding process, attentive to inter-urban linkages and connections, especially to the labor practices that constitute this process.

[15] All these coalitions were led and financed by the local government (*municipio, ayuntamiento*) and officially supported by regional governing bodies (by the provincial government – *diputación* – and by the regional government of the autonomous community). Spain is not a federal country but a highly decentralized state composed of 17 autonomous communities, 2 autonomous cities, 50 provinces and 8111 municipalities (Eurostat 2016), with different rights, responsibilities, and institutional frameworks. Garcia and Judd note that regional institutions play a 'strong role' in Spain and that this "creates a highly complex framework of governance mechanisms for the planning and implementation of urban regeneration projects" (M. Garcia and Judd 2012, 494). This also creates difficulties for a traditional comparative research design within Spain that relies on the notion of functional equivalence and comparing like-for-like.

cooperative and conflictual relations and dynamics within the coalition and beyond, and the existence of contestation and mobilizations against the bidding.

Although these differences and similarities influenced the final choice of these cities and my writing, the logic of traditional comparison did not propel the research design for this project. The research was not designed on a 'most different' and/or 'most similar' comparative approach that selects cities according to predetermined variables (like region, wealthier vs. poorer cities, tourist visitors, etc.), that attempts to control for extraneous, irrelevant variables, and assumes that cities are self-enclosed, and operating independently from each other.

While the logic of traditional, city-to-city comparison did not inform my methodological approach, it does resonate with 'relational' or 'encompassing' forms of comparison (Tilly 1984; K. Ward 2010; Robinson 2016) that "most explicitly seek to link cases together for comparison because they are part of shared circulations and stretched out social relations" (Robinson 2016, 6) but without presupposing a totalizing system. In my research, there are connections and relations crisscrossing these urban coalitions that highlight "the role of elsewhere, of other cities, in the constituting of the 'urban'" (Cook and Ward 2011), and that stress the importance of conceptualizing relationally inter-urban competition and the enactments of expertise.

Both the cities and the process of competition were shaped through the relations between different places, scales, and networks of expertise. Rather, as McCann and Ward note, "the already-assembled policy world is (re)assembled twice more, first in reference to research design decisions, then through writing" (McCann and Ward 2012, 51). Thus, Alcalá de Henares, Burgos, Córdoba, Donostia – San Sebastián, and Málaga were not the only focus of the fieldwork[16] but rather emerged and were assembled during fieldwork and then writing as a relational comparative snapshot of the process of competitive bidding, of the labor practices that make it possible. My account is a necessarily partial snapshot of competitive bidding and inter-urban competition as an ensemble of policy processes that systematically favor some social relations and some labor practices over others.

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[16] When pertinent I will refer also to other cities, as in my fieldwork I interviewed members of other participant coalitions and analyzed different policy documents.

Initially this research set out as an multi-sited ethnographic research of cultures of power – what Nader (Nader 1972) referred to as 'studying up', in contrast to 'studying down' those affected by global processes – more precisely a study of European, mobile experts working in competitive bidding. It was based on straightforward 'follow the people' research strategy where "the procedure is to follow and stay with the movements of a particular group of initial subjects" (Marcus 1995, 106). Even though at first this design seemed obvious and clear-cut, I quickly realized, as Cochrane and Ward note, that "finding straightforward ways of researching (policy) is not straightforward" (2012, 8).

There was a double bind regarding the classic understandings of ethnography as participant observation and 'being there' – first, dealing with multiple sites of research, mobile informants, and processes that operate in and beyond territorial borders and boundaries (Hannerz 2003), and second, studying elites, experts and policy professionals with careers at stake (Gusterson 1997; Mosse 2011), whose legitimacy and authority are ambiguous and contested. This brought a host of limitations for 'doing' ethnography and/or actually 'following' far-flung, mobile experts who were not based (anymore) in the participant Spanish cities or not even in one particular site (such as Brussels, Madrid, or Barcelona).

Notwithstanding practical and logistical problems which continued to partially haunt my research, my initial research rationale of studying up and 'following' mobile, 'external' experts shifted to 'studying through' and 'following the policy', tracing the process of competing and looking closely at the enactments of expertise and labor practices that make it possible (Shore and Wright 2011; Yanow 2009; Peck and Theodore 2012; McCann and Ward 2012). This analytical shift was meant to problematize the implicit use of dualisms such as 'up/down' and 'powerful/powerless' (Shore and Nugent 2002; Bunnell 2015) created by 'studying up'. The policy actors involved in competitive bidding were "not the all powerful behemoths that carve up the vulnerable as they will" (Burawoy 2001, 150): both the 'experts' and the 'expertise' necessary for competitive bidding were a bone of contention; the enactment(s) of expertise was something that needed to be labored over, and actively fought over. It was still important to take into account asymmetries in resources and capacities, centers of persuasion, and decision-making nodes, but without taking for granted a top-down, hierarchical understanding of policy-making, expertise, and power.

Thus, instead of studying those deemed as 'elites', 'experts' or most powerful in competitive bidding, I argue that it was more productive to question assumptions about who actually is an 'expert', who actually is 'powerful', and what is actually 'important' in competitive bidding. Similarly with Desmond's discussion of relational ethnography, I incorporated "into the ethnographic sample at least two types of actors or agencies occupying different positions within the social space and bound together in a relationship of mutual dependence or struggle" (Desmond 2014). Including a broader array of actors, ranging from 'middling' civil servants (Larner and Laurie 2010), 'street-level' bureaucrats and frontline workers (Lipsky 1980), to volunteers, protestors, and other 'less powerful' actors, was beneficial for understanding how the competition is truly made, remade and contested.

Throughout the research, my multi-sited methodological strategy retained its commitment to 'studying through' (S. Wright and Reinhold 2011; Shore and Wright 2011) and 'following the policy' (Peck and Theodore 2012). This allowed me to let the ECoC policy and the competition process itself to define the field. It also gave me the opportunity to trace configurations of relations and the "ways in which power creates webs and relations between actors, institutions and discourses across time and space" (Shore and Wright 1997, 11). As this 'studying through' strategy "ranges back and forth and back again between protagonists, and up and down and up again between a range of local and national sites" (S. Wright and Reinhold 2011, 101), it allows for a relational, processual understanding of inter-urban competition – attentive to the connections and relations between places, scales, and networks of expertise.

Given the nature of this 'unbounded' case-study where participation observation was limited, the in-depth interview was the most frequently used instrument for gaining access and gathering data. Between November 2011 and June 2013, I conducted 110 in-depth interviews with policy actors connected to the bidding (see Table 1. Type of Interviewees): European and Spanish consultants ('external experts'), EU technocrats, jury panel members, local and regional politicians, employees of public administrations (mostly City Council staff but also from regional and national governmental bodies and from public universities[17]), local professionals

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[17] In Spain, employees working in public universities are considered civil servants. According to the national government, "(t)he total number of civil servants is 2 636 900. Of these, there are 575 021 in the General State Administration, 1 332 844 in the Autonomous Communities, 629 505 in Local Administration and 99 530 in Universities" (Gobierno de Espana and Ministerio de la Presidencia 2010, 227).

(planners, architects, journalists, lawyers, etc.), corporate actors, artists and cultural producers, volunteers, and local activists protesting the ECoC. These interviews were conducted face-to-face during four separate research trips, each trip ranging from six months to one month in length. The semi-structured discussions were revolving around similar themes although I adapted the questions to the person's role or (dis)connection to the bidding process.

	Number of Interviews	% Total
Local Civil Servants	46	41.8
Politicians and Corporate Actors	5	4.5
Local Professionals	19	17.3
Artists, Volunteers, Protestors	13	11.8
Regional Civil Servants	6	5.5
External Experts	14	12.7
EU Bureaucrats, Selection Panel Members, Spanish Ministry of Culture	7	6.4
Total	110	

Table 1. Type of Interviewees

Most of the requests for interviews were surprisingly met with positivity. Sometimes these requests were postponed or ignored but rarely downright refused; the challenge was rather to identify those I needed and wanted to speak to, to find out where they are working and/or where they were based at that time, to find a way to reach them (phone, email or current employment), to ask for an appointment, and then to 'be there' and find a suitable place and time for a face-to-face interview. The process was difficult and far from straightforward even for those bids that contained a list of the names of people who were officially involved one way or the other in the competition and the production of the bid document; some of the 'key players' never lived in the city or were no longer living there at the time.

In the case of processes of inter-urban competition and competitive bidding, mobility and its multi-scalar characteristics end up guarding information in an implicit, subtle manner. Thus, access to actors involved in competitive bidding is not necessarily limited by refusal or hampered by downright secrecy but rather by the sheer complexity of crossing countless administrative-

territorial borders and boundaries, and by class boundaries, socio-economic inequalities, and the prohibitive costs in time and money of 'crossing' and 'following' as research strategy[18].

But once reached and the 'borders' and 'boundaries' more or less crossed, the interviewees were very generous with their time, with discussions ranging from at least one hour and half to 'marathon' interviews of 5-6 hours. About 85% of the interviews were conducted in Spanish (Castilian) which I learned during the first 1-1.5 years of my PhD programme, mostly when I was still based in Budapest. Overall, I was constantly surprised by their promptness, openness, and creative insights on the ECoC and the competition. As most interviewees were from the losing side of the competition, the interview situation seemed to be almost therapeutic, cathartic even, allowing them to talk about an experience they found both exhilarating and horrible, about which they felt both passionate and sad; they critiqued the principles, legislation, and rules of ECoC and they also criticized the other coalition members, the other participant cities, the national government, the European Commission, the members of the selection panel, and/or generally how the 'local' project and the 'Spanish' competition were carried out.

In Brussels – where my partner was working during the time of my fieldwork, and which was my home base in between trips to the field(s) – I conducted interviews with staff at the European Commission and DG EAC and with professionals in and passing through Brussels. I also attended meetings and conferences that were open to the public and that were connected to the ECoC programme or to cultural, urban or regional policy.

Concomitantly with interviews, policy documents were another valuable source of data (Shore and Wright 1997), as they reveal how actors make sense of the world and the meanings that they attribute to the ECoC policy, to the competition, and to the labor of competing (both for the Commission and EU institutions, and for the participant coalitions). I carried out an extensive examination of a variety of 'human artifacts' (Stepputat and Larsen 2015), ranging from the bidding documents of the participant cities, master plans, strategic plans, to the decisions and

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[18] One way of crossing more easily – but not eliminating – these boundaries would be to turn to interviews and interactions in virtual form, and generally to integrate and theorize what are the implications of using communication programs, such as Skype, for qualitative data collection. During my research, I had three interviews over Skype, and had short discussions over the telephone, but found face-to-face interactions more productive. While most social science researchers will share my position, Gusterson proposes a form of 'polymorphous engagement' – which can include interacting with informants in virtual settings – and argues that we need to take virtual space seriously as "a real space of social interaction" and follow our informants there (Gusterson 1997, 116).

legislation on the ECoC, documentation produced by EU institutions particularly by the Commission and DG EAC, commissioned reports and studies, etc. As Baker and McGuirk point out, these policy artifacts function "as texts that reveal particular ways of thinking and acting, and (…) as lively objects whose itineraries and effects can be apprehended by following their 'traces' in different contexts" (Baker and McGuirk 2016, 14). Thus, a brief examination of reports and the bidding documents can highlight that they are by design nebulous regarding the working process of the coalition, and the division of labor and responsibilities – even if they were not shrouded with secrecy regarding the identity of its members.

Besides policy documents that could be found online, I acquired the others in paper or digital form from interviewees and from archival research at the European Commission Central Library, and especially at a small ECoC-only archive which DG EAC was having in Brussels at that time[19]. During my visits to this small ECoC library, I could access all the bidding documents of the participant cities and other official documents, but I also found by serendipity more 'offstage' documents, like transcripts of the meetings of a former network of experts and directors of former ECoCs (the ECCM Network of Cultural Capitals and Cultural Months of Europe), tender contracts for reports, etc. While the interviews stopped after July 2013, my exit from fieldwork-as-deskwork was not so clear cut.

Although my research draws mostly from in-depth interviews and examination of policy documents, and contrasts starkly with traditional notions of ethnography[20], it was informed by an 'ethnographic sensibility': by treating the taken-for-grantedness of inter-urban competition as strange, and attempting to understand the worlds of competitive bidding that were inhabited by my informants (Shore and Wright 1997; Shore 2000; Baker and McGuirk 2016). This sensibility

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[19] The small ECoC-only archive was open for individuals interested in the ECoC programme, including students and academics; according to the Commission, it was visited mostly by repesentatives of candidate cities, although I was the only visitor during my times there. I found out about this small ECoC-only archive from Sassatelli's book on *Becoming Europeans* (Sassatelli 2009). The European Commission Central Library (now known as The European Commission Library and e-Resources Centre) is open for staff working at the Commission and other EU institutions, but students, academics, and civil servants from Member States could apply to access the Library's reading room as external readers.

[20] For Gusterson, Shore, Wedel, and other scholars working on policy, elites, and expertise (Gusterson 1999; Shore 2000; Wedel et al. 2005), ethnographic fieldwork is not limited to participant observation and immersion through participant observation but incorporates a variety of methods. Its main characteristics are its commitment to 'being there' and to "attempt a cultural understanding of the social, semantic and cognitive worlds inhabited by those who constitute the subjects of our study" (Shore 2000, 7).

was not reserved to dealing with actors, but also to policy artifacts. Conducting most of the interviews in Spanish (Castilian) was part of this commitment: it allowed me on the one hand, to reach beyond mobile experts and English-speaking, key policy actors, and on the other hand, to reflect on the competition process through language, and on the different meanings which words and phrases hold for different individuals.

At the same time, this sensibility and engagement within the networks of the ECoC policy were counterbalanced by a purposeful distancing. As in Merje Kuus's study on EU policy-makers, the design of my research enabled me "to maintain a certain distance from (…) power struggles" (Kuus 2014, 58) and from the conflicts between actors, coalitions, and institutions, which were stirred during and after the competitive bidding process. In contrast to an analysis of a particular field site or a particular 'side' in the competition, this distance from the 'bidding wars' has allowed me to provide a relational account of competitive bidding and of the labor practices that make it possible, and at times impossible. Next I present the structure of the dissertation.

Structure of Dissertation

In Chapter 1, *Redefining Inter-Urban Competition: Towards a Processual, Relational Approach to Competition*, I outline in detail the relational and processual approach to the study of inter-urban competition that was hinted in the introduction. While in the introduction I advanced an understanding of competition as a relational ensemble of socio-spatial processes, the approach in Chapter 1 is premised on two main elements: the relationality of places, scales and spatial boundaries and the relationality of expertise, policy and symbolic boundaries. In the first sub-section I deal with how to rethink competition beyond the territorial and the macro-structural, while in the second sub-section I propose a relational theorization to expertise: expertise as a social relation not as thing or possession. The enactment(s) of expertise – as the bringing together of (im)material infrastructures, concepts and actors in alignment – are shaped by the interplay between co-production, contestation, and the (re)production of epistemic control and symbolic 'boundaries'. Here, I present how the enactments of expertise making possible inter-

urban competition are not just shaped by the interplay between co-operation and competitive social relations among policy actors, but that they are also a site of conflict and contestation.

In Chapter 2, *Engineering Competition: Policy Infrastructures and the Trajectory of the European Capital of Culture Programme,* I argue that inter-urban competition is a historically-specific process that is made possible by the (re)production of policy infrastructures and institutional frameworks. The change in the trajectory of ECoC to a competitive paradigm did not come naturally with the inevitable maturation and progress of the programme, but it was engineered through techno-political forms of intervention. This promotion of inter-urban competition and engineering of competitive urbanism should not be reduced to a hierarchic and repressive project that operates through authority and domination in a top-down manner from the state or elites to the 'masses'. Rather, it worked through the interests and aspirations of autonomy, merit, and deservingness of professionals and experts that contributed to the formation of policy infrastructures as part of an appeal to 'professionalism'. Crucially, these policy infrastructures – that made possible the promotion of competitive bidding, and facilitated this alignment between the European Commission, transnational experts, reports, models, and decisions – emerged and mutated from a very specific context, Glasgow as ECoC 1990, characterized by the confluence of three trends: first, the translation of 'US-style' urban entrepreneurialism to initiatives led by UK municipalities; second, the turn towards competitive bidding as a model of resource allocation in the public sector led by the UK Conservative government; third, the increased instrumentalization of the cultural sector, and the spread of calculative, comparative expertise in the arts and culture in the UK. The institutionalization of competitive bidding modeled on this particular case has led to an enlargement of the roles and powers of the European Commission and transnational experts, and to a translation of US-UK (Anglo-Saxon) style of entrepreneurial, competitive urbanism to the whole ECoC programme.

As competitive bidding is a labored-over policy process, in the next chapters I look at contradictory but constant participation of 'knowledge workers', 'professionals' and 'experts' in enabling the socio-spatial processes of competition and at the practices that made possible these processes in and between cities, scales and policy networks. In this dissertation, I argue that processes of inter-urban competition are made possible through three labor practices: in Chapter 3, the imagineering of the city through comparative practices with competitors, model and

reference cities; in Chapter 4, emotional labor and the management of optimism, hope, and civic pride; and in Chapter 5, the instrumentalization of socio-cultural and 'extra-economic' aspects in the pursuit of competitiveness.

In Chapter 3, *The Techno-Political Work of Comparison: Benchmarks, References and Model Cities in the Imagineering of the European City*, I explore how comparison works in practice in competitive bidding, how it is enacted, and what are its effects. There are the two interrelated functions for comparison, particularly for comparative learning practices with competitors and with model and reference cities: policy actors are conceiving competitive imaginaries and generating problematizations through comparison, and at the same time these comparative practices are tools of policy legitimacy, persuasion, seduction, and reassurance. Modeling and inter-referencing are essential tools for persuasion and seduction and for the alignment of a variety of actors, institutions, and concepts. But this comparative work carried out within a competitive context has contradictory effects: as comparison and co-operation between cities, scales, and wider policy networks are increasingly commodified and instrumentalized within inter-city rivalries, comparative practices end up fostering tensions, frustrations and even more competition among policy actors.

In Chapter 4, *The Uses and Abuses of Emotional Labor: Assembling Hierarchies and Divisions in Projects of City-Making*, I argue that emotional labor and the management of emotions are making possible processes of inter-urban competition but at great cost to the policy actors performing it. In the unequal, hierarchical, and interstitial work environments of competitive bidding, emotional labor is performed in order to reconcile the hierarchical structure of coalitions with an outward, extrospective projection of harmony, unity, and consensus necessary for inter-city rivalries. Moreover, the products of emotion management such as optimism, hope and particularly civic pride have been instrumentalized as comparative advantages in extrospective processes of competition. Despite that, emotional labor is seen as 'inferior' work performed by street-level civil servants or policy actors in lower hierarchical positions, usually by women, while imaginative labor is prioritized and considered more 'worthy'. Processes of competition are both premised on and reinforcing this privileging of imaginative over emotional labor.

In Chapter 5, *'The City is (Not) for Sale': The Creative Precariat and the Artistic Critique of Culture-Led Urban Development*, I claim that processes of inter-urban competition require the

formation, encouragement and instrumentalization of a wide range of labor practices outside of standard employment structures, such as free labor, underpaid labor, and volunteering. In the pursuit of a fleeting success, urban policy actors increasingly valorize and instrumentalize socio-cultural and 'extra-economic' aspects in order to make claims to uniqueness and authenticity, particularly the labor and precarity of artists and cultural producers. But actors that are positioned in the flux of this state-led precarization can be resistant to these processes of instrumentalization and commodification. This leads to the creation of a 'creative precariat' as a condition and as political mobilizations against culture-led development. I document how their members and their critique can be instrumentalized, appropriated, and co-opted during inter-city rivalries as a source of innovation and renewal in an oversaturated field. Inter-urban competition and the pressure to valorize the socio-cultural and 'extra-economic' are leading to an increase in mobilizations, resistance, and protests from actors in the flux of that instrumentalization.

1. Redefining Inter-Urban Competition: Towards a Processual, Relational Approach to Competition

In this chapter, I propose a relational and processual approach to the study of inter-urban competition, building on insights from relational thinking in anthropology, sociology and urban geography (Massey 1991; Emirbayer 1997; Amin and Graham 1999; McCann and Ward 2010; Jacobs 2012; Monterescu 2013; Monterescu 2015; Desmond 2014).

This relational and processual approach to competition is premised on three interrelated elements. First, competition is neither a 'thing', 'structure', inherent 'substance' nor a macroeconomic condition or structural effect but a relational ensemble of socio-spatial policy processes that connect and disconnect cities, scales and wider policy networks. Second, a relational approach to places and scales is attentive to (dis)connections and (im)mobilities within, between and across different places and scales. Third, a relational and processual conceptualization of places and scales has to be complemented by a relational approach to intersecting and overlapping social processes and relations, particularly a relational approach to expertise.

In the next sub-section of this chapter, I deal with how a relational conceptualization of places and scales can improve our understanding of processes of inter-urban competition. It can enable researchers to transcend and include both territorial, place-bound understandings of competition by proxy, and macro-structural conceptualizations of inter-urban competition within a relational approach to competition. This section outlines the limits of 'territorial' and 'sedentarist' urban studies for a study of inter-urban competition, while also highlighting their subtle 'deterritorialized', borderless percepts to competition. First, I present a critique of the methodological localism of earlier approaches in urban studies. Then I put forward a critique of methodological territorialism in comparative urban studies. Afterwards, I look at competition in studies of neoliberalization processes and neoliberalism (neo-liberalism or 'advanced' liberalism), both at neo-Marxist and neo-Foucauldian approaches. Then, I outline some promising emerging fields of inquiry and propose a processual, relational approach to the study of inter-urban competition beyond the 'urban' and the `global'.

In the second sub-section, I present how a relational understanding of expertise and policy – attentive to symbolic boundaries in conflict, and to the interplay between competitive, cooperative and conflictual social relations underlying enactments of expertise – benefits a study of competition.

1.1. Relationality of Places, Scales and Spatial Boundaries: Redefining Inter-Urban Competition beyond the 'Urban' and beyond the 'Global'

Inter-urban competition is an elusive process that does not occur on a single scale, a more-than-local and not-really-global phenomenon. Nor can it be said that competition happens everywhere and nowhere. Inter-urban competition is neither local nor global, but an intra-urban, inter-urban and trans-urban process at the same time, a process that does not involve a particular scale as primary. Crucially, inter-urban competition is an inherently relational process between different places, scales and networks, replete with comparisons, models, and benchmarks.

From the perspective of a relational and processual study on inter-urban competition, the main drawbacks of earlier approaches to urban studies are in their 'localist' and 'territorialist' tendencies and in the lack of attention to relationality, linkages, mobilities and (dis)connections. These localist tendencies have manifested, both in single-city case studies and comparative approaches, in a variety of ways (K. Ward 2010; Brenner 2009). The most problematic manifestation is related to the ontological foundations of localism: assumptions about the nature of the urban as a territorial, bounded, fixed, self-evident, fully autonomous arena. These ontological foundations of localism can have profound epistemological and methodological implications. Fortunately, most urbanists steer clear of 'pure' ontological forms of localism.

But even when non-local or non-territorial conceptualizations of place-making are acknowledged (and therefore the ontological claim that local entities are fully autonomous is rejected), methodological localism and methodological territorialism[21] remain the norm in urban studies

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[21] Angelo and Wachsmuth (Angelo and Wachsmuth 2015) use the notion of 'methodological cityism' to refer to what I term 'methodological localism'. I consider methodological localism (the city as container) – and methodological nationalism (the nation as container) – to be a sub-type of methodological territorialism operating at different scales, and which predominates in different disciplines. Both assumptions (methodological localism and

(K. Ward 2010; Brenner 2009). Methodological localism is the assumption that a city "can and must be isolated (…) for analytical purposes, as a means to decipher its "internal" structures and determinants" (Brenner 2009, 124). Thus, even though ontologically cities are not fully autonomous, isolated or bounded, analytically they become so.

In his critique of traditional approaches to urban politics – urban regime theory, Marxism, urban growth machine, New Urban Politics – Cochrane argues that the urban is delineated by the administrative setting of the city (Cochrane 2011c) and that local and global scales are "overwhelmingly discussed as if they operated independently of each other": "(t)he context is given by global processes of economic change" and then at the local scale that 'context' is not part of the studied 'local' processes but it is simply accepted as given by urban growth coalitions or regimes which seem to exist and develop strategies independently of non-local scales of authority (Cochrane 1999, 117). Thus the 'local' is imagined as almost fully autonomous.

Moreover, comparative urban studies operate with a theorization of place and scale that could be characterized as 'methodological territorialism', in which "territoriality—the principle of spatial enclosure—is treated as the necessary spatial form for social relations" (Brenner 2004, 38; K. Ward 2010). In comparative studies, methodological territorialism has manifested in the 'isolation' of the local scale and in the conceptualization of scale (local, regional, national, global) as hierarchical, nested 'containers' of social relations. Even though cross-national comparative urban studies have highlighted the role of national and regional institutional frameworks in structuring urban politics and urban governance, this approach has analytically isolated cities and has treated the national or regional scale as a container of local-bound social relations, operating in a hierarchical, unidirectional manner. Moreover, urban comparativists work with a hierarchical and additive approach to scale which emphasizes the importance of 'isolating' and 'controlling' for multiple scales and categories in case selection (scale/level as variable). The relationship between scales is mechanical, either as 'nested scalar hierarchies' (when the 'higher' level influences the other in a unidirectional manner) or as 'multi-level governance' (urban governance as multi-level urban governance).

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nationalism) can be generated by 'methodological territorialism', the belief that "all social relations are organized within self-enclosed, discretely bounded territorial containers" (Brenner 2004, 38). Likewise, I would add that concepts like 'nested scalar hierarchies' and 'multi-level governance' embody methodological territorialism.

1.1.1. The Critique of Methodological Localism: The Urban as a Territorial Arena

The urban as a territorial policy arena has been, as Cochrane noted (Cochrane 2011c; Cochrane 2011a), the main focus of traditional approaches in U.S.-based urban studies, either inspired by pluralism, elite theory, urban regime theory or Marxism (urban growth machine, urban entrepreneurialism, New Urban Politics). Analysis focused on the territorial setting of the city, with urban politics and urban governance understood as the politics and governance of territorial-based agglomerations (Cochrane 2011c). This tradition of conceptualizing the urban as a territorial arena has produced some remarkable and influential analysis of urban politics such as the work of Harvey Molotch and John Logan on the urban growth machine, Clarence Stone on the formation of urban regimes, David Harvey and Helga Leitner on urban entrepreneurialism and the transition to entrepreneurial urban governance, Kevin Cox and Andrew Mair on 'local dependence' and politics of local economic development (Molotch 1976b; Logan and Molotch 1987; C. Stone 1989; Harvey 1989; Leitner 1990; Cox and Mair 1988; Cox 1995).

These contributions are characterized by a tendency to delineate 'the urban' by the geographical administrative boundaries of cities (Harding 1995; Judge 1995; K. Ward 1996). Cities seem to have an unrealistic high degree of local autonomy with relevant actors and institutions residing within the city limits. 'Interests' and power relations seem to stop at city boundaries. These localist tendencies are further exacerbated by empiricist and voluntarist aspects of urban regime theory and the New Urban Politics (K. Ward 1996; Cochrane 1999). Through their focus on local elites and the importance of business, these theories embody an approach to the urban and to urban politics which dismisses explicitly or implicitly non-local actors and institutions and non-local scales of authority; this approach is one which conceptualizes the urban as territorial, bounded, fixed and immobile and disregards how cities and urban policies are constituted through their relations – across space and time – with other places and scales.

In urban regime theory[22], Stone argues that competition among cities for mobile capital is obviously a factor which increases the bargaining capacity of investors but not one which is determining local policy action: in the last instance, it is the coalition building process and informal bargaining between private and public actors which are shaping urban governance; competition among cities is 'out there' and does not influence urban affairs (C. Stone 1989, 173–74). Thus, Stone's urban regime analysis is localist not because it empirically focuses on the governing of the city of Atlanta as case study but because it presupposes that local processes of informal bargaining are more causally significant than non-local entities or scales for explaining urban politics and urban governance. As such, according to urban regime theory, the form which the urban regime takes – entrepreneurial, caretaker, activist, progressive, etc. – is contingent on local processes of coalition building.

In contrast with urban regime theory, Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that the US city becomes organized like an enterprise, like an 'urban growth machine', oriented toward maximizing land value: urban coalitions represent the vested interests in 'growth' of 'place entrepreneurs', 'land-use interests' and other auxiliary, place-bound supporters that attempt to attract investments that will increase local rents. Urban growth machine theory and its empirical research prioritize these ongoing place-bound, rentier efforts and the resultant struggle between entrepreneurs and residents. Even though they recognize how national US government determine land use legislation, their focus is on the authority of private developers and the "extreme independence of local government agencies" to undertake local economic development[23] (Logan and Molotch 1987, 147). Unfortunately, competition between cities is, for Logan and Molotch, simply understood as an 'external' battle among coalitions of place-bound elites:

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[22] Stone defines the urban regime as "the informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together to make and carry out governing decisions. There are three elements in this definition: (1) a capacity to do something; (2) a set of actors who do it; and (3) a relationship among the actors than enables them to work together" (C. Stone 1989, 179).

[23] Boyle argues that in Logan and Molotch, reference is made to the urban growth machine not serving just "to maintain social control locally", but also "as a key instrument in the legitimation of larger structural interests, which benefit from the globalization processes" (Boyle 1999, 64). Thus, for them, "the interests that are legitimated are not local but instead global in character" (Boyle 1999, 64), part of larger structural interests, interests of 'capital'. While Logan and Molotch hope that their analysis will show "how local actors link parochial settings with cosmopolitan interests, making places safe for development" (Logan and Molotch 1987, 13), these linkages between local actors and global, cosmopolitan interests are only referenced and assumed in the way they model inter-urban competition on inter-capitalist competition; they are not the focus of analysis, nor addressed in a systematic manner.

one form of truly *urban conflict is the internal struggle between use and exchange values, a second is the external battle of place elites against one another – the battle of the growth machines. This contest goes on at all geopolitical levels, with competitive systems* nested *within one another. Owners of a commercial block compete against owners of the next block, but they unite when their business district competes against other business districts in the same city. The owners of all the business districts in one city stand together in competition with other cities* (Logan and Molotch 1987, 35; my emphasis)

The way the authors use the notion of 'external' is unfortunate and confusing: do they mean that competition between elites is taking place outside of the 'city'?; where does the competition of place elites take place; do they mean that its urban characteristics are doubtful when compared with the struggle between use value and exchange value? While Logan and Molotch have put forward important insights about the role of national government and national institutional parameters and about the linkages between local actors and global, cosmopolitan interests (Boyle 1999; Brenner 2009), the main story is about the 'internal', 'truly' urban processes of cooperation among place-based elites and the resulting conflict between residents and entrepreneurs. For them, the competition of the growth machines among each other is trivial and collateral; nor does it seem to involve non-local actors. Moreover, Logan and Molotch offer a territorial interpretation of spatiality and a conceptualization of scales as nested hierarchies, when actors and institutions are mechanically operating in the 'Russian dolls' mode in a straightforward scalar progression from commercial block to city-level (see Western 2008).

In an attempt to capture local-global interactions and the relationship between globalization and local politics, Cox proposed the term 'New Urban Politics' as "a means of conceptualizing the urban (local) in the process of globalization and is grounded in the notion that the local is a site from which change can be effected " (Cox 1993; K. Ward 1996, 434; Imbroscio et al. 2011). But even though global economic change and the increased mobility of capital were acknowledged, Cox and Mair (Cox and Mair 1988) rely on the notion of 'local dependence' to explain local economic development and to understand why competition among localities for investment, not the internal conflict within them for reproduction and consumption, is the dominant feature of contemporary urban politics. The growth machine with its focus on land-use can be seen as exemplifying the notion of local dependence. Thus competition is seen as the grand narrative of the New Urban Politics, almost as a deterritorialized, abstract mechanism of contemporary urbanism. For Cox (Cox 1993), the shift towards 'new urban politics' has brought about new

economic spaces that were characterized by increased competition, decentralization and autonomy.

Moreover, for both, the mobilization of place-bound economic interests necessarily leads to increasing competition among 'places', although competition is also presented as the premise of the analysis. For Logan and Molotch, land-based "strivings for exchange value *create* a competition among place entrepreneurs to meet the preferences of capital investors" (Logan and Molotch 1987, 13; my emphasis), whereas Cox and Mair offer a more comprehensive account of the 'channeling' of place-bound interests that increasingly brings cites into competition with one another (Cox 1995; Cox and Mair 1988). Crucially, both for Logan and Molotch and for Cox and Mair competition among cities for investment is a central mechanism and logic but their focus is on urban politics as the mobilization of local, territorialized, immobile interests: growth coalitions and/or local dependence form the basis of urban politics of development. Moreover, much of the single-city case studies which apply urban regime theory or urban growth machine theory slide, as Brenner argues, into a problematic methodological localism: "extralocal institutional parameters are generally presupposed as the analysis focuses primarily or exclusively upon intralocal coalitions and conditions within a particular city" (Brenner 2009, 125).

Although non-territorial conceptualizations of place-making were readily acknowledged in broad generalizations about the need to understand urban politics within a wider context, within the state or within the changing global environment (K. Ward 1996; Cochrane 1999; Cochrane 2011a; Brenner 2009), 'external forces', 'globalization', 'inter-urban competition' or 'economic change' are relegated at most to the role of frames or external background structures for the main, more exciting story of 'local intrigue' and territorial, contextual specificity. Local politics, local dependence and land-use interests were given analytical and empirical primacy vis-à-vis potential linkages across scales and places.

1.1.2. The Critique of Methodological Territorialism: The Urban as an Analytically Separate Object

The critical assessment of earlier approaches to urban politics and of their localist assumptions has been hastened – at least partly – by the theoretical transfer from US case studies to European contexts. Broader inadequacies connected to transferability and comparability beyond North-American case studies brought about a reevaluation. These theories were found wanting for a variety of reasons: European cities – in contrast to US cities – are "more open to central (and European) policy discretion" (K. Ward 1996, 435), have a stronger presence of the public-sector in urban governance (M. Garcia and Judd 2012), and business interests are differently organized and have a weaker presence (Savitch and Kantor 2002).

Starting with the 90s, dissatisfied with the predominance of case studies of individual US cities and with the localist weakness of urban studies, authors like DiGaetano and Klemanski (1993a; 1993b), Fainstein (1994), Harding (1994; 1997), Haddock, Kantor, and Savitch (Savitch 1988; Kantor, Savitch, and Haddock 1997; Savitch and Kantor 2002), Mossberger and Stoker (2001), Pierre (1999), Salet (2008) and others put forward a systematic, cross-national comparative approach to urban governance.

These urban comparativists had a cross-national research agenda – composed of explicit comparisons between US and Western Europe countries especially UK, or comparisons among different European countries (and with the US as an implicit comparison). Whereas urban regime theory was found wanting for this comparison agenda, its tenants were embraced to a large extent but with additional attention to the structuring influence of national and regional institutional frameworks in urban governance[24]. Building directly on urban regime theory, Pierre argues that "urban governance should be understood of as a process blending and coordinating public and private interests" but that it is "also important to acknowledge the significance of the national context within which urban governance is embedded" (Pierre 1999, 374–75). Most comparative studies of urban governance (urban governance literature) could be interpreted as a

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[24] The theoretical translation of urban growth machine theory was more limited (Harding 1994; Jonas and Wilson 1999; Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996).

neo-institutionalist urban regime analysis which has developed an even greater variety of ideal-types of modes of urban governance[25].

The main focus of urban governance literature was on the specificities and peculiarities of different forms of urban governance in different countries, in response to general trends and wider contexts of globalization, economic restructuring and deindustrialization. National and/or regional contexts were one of the main explanatory factors for the differences and similarities among cases.

The intensification of inter-urban competition was conceptualized as a general feature of the context of urban development (Fainstein 2001) or as a general trend of globalization, with an emphasis on how it played out in different places (K. Ward 2010). While building on Charles Tilly's work on comparison (Tilly 1984), Kevin Ward (2010) argues that comparative urban governance literature has been characterized by a predominance of individualizing and variation-finding comparative strategies which both tend to 'emphasize contextual specificity, institutional diversity and the divergence of evolutionary pathways' (Brenner 2009; Brenner 2004, 18). According to Ward (2010), most comparative urban studies tend to combine these two research strategies, although with different emphases.

In individualizing comparative scholarship, authors focus mainly on local 'details' and on how the same phenomenon or theme played out differently in different cities (K. Ward 2010); similarities between cases are downplayed, as cases are treated as unique (Tilly 1984). This approach is also described as a contrast-oriented comparative research strategy by Skocpol and Somers (1980) where contrasting cases are selected to highlight their contextual uniqueness and specificity; case selection is mainly motivated by "clear-cut differences between or among cases", as cases assumed to be "maximally different cases within given bounds are chosen for comparison" (Skocpol and Somers 1980, 179). Moreover, cities are contrasted in terms of pre-

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[25] Compared with the original proponents of urban regime theory, this comparative approach has produced an even greater variety of ideal-types of modes of urban governance, e.g.: entrepreneurial, managerial, welfare, social reform, caretaker, organic, symbolic, instrumental, corporatist, pro-growth market-led, pro-growth government-led, etc. (DiGaetano and Klemanski 1993b; Pierre 1999; K. Ward 1996; K. Ward 2010). On the one hand, the predominance of ideal types is problematic as they can be used as 'sensitizing devices' (Skocpol and Somers 1980) not just for the reader but also for the researcher when establishing the particular features of each case. Moreover, it can be argued that this typologies-focused work led to 'splintering' within urban governance literature: for example, it is unclear what are the differences and similarities between the typologies of different authors.

given, general themes or questions, in order to place limits on theories considered overly generalized, like urban regime theory and to a lesser extent urban growth machine.

While contrast-oriented scholarship focuses on differences and specificities, the variation-finding strategy attempts to uncover why these differences exist by looking at regional and national institutional frameworks for answers. Thus explanation is mainly achieved by pointing to the power of the national and regional institutional frameworks in influencing urban governance. The logic of variation-finding comparative research strategies, also described as macro-causal analysis (Skocpol and Somers 1980), tends to resemble statistical multivariate analysis in its search for causal claims and the set up of controlled comparisons: cases are selected through a combination of Mill's method of agreement and method of difference (Skocpol and Somers 1980; K. Ward 2010) in order to control sources of variation and to explain differences and similarities between cases.

Both in individualizing and variation-finding comparisons, inter-urban competition is generally seen as a general theme, challenge or trend of globalization, together with deindustrialization, changes in the global market, and demographic changes. Just like globalization, competition is seen as an 'out there' phenomenon standing above cities and countries which then need to respond to these pressures.

On the one hand, the accounts given by authors like Fainstein (1994) and Savitch and Kantor (Savitch 1988; Savitch and Kantor 2002) can be interpreted as dealing first of all with the territorialization of global trends – shift to post-industrial economy, increasing international competition – at the local 'level'. For them, it is important how specific 'cities' have reacted to these general trends and mobilized their specific entrepreneurial strategies in order to improve urban competitiveness and economic growth, with specific politics of planning and urban development, and with their specific, individual(ized), local(ized) results. For example, Savitch (1988) offers an account of the post-industrial transformations of three cities, New York, Paris and London, which faced a variety of internal and external pressures, including deindustrialization and increasing competition from other cities. In order to answer how post-industrialism and increasing competition played out in processes of governing and their outcomes, Savitch proposes three different typologies of urban governance: London is described as a case of Liberal Corporatism, New York as a Corporatist-Pluralism Hybrid, Paris as a

Mobilizing Corporatism – each characterized by different developmental results (ambivalent, unbalanced, concentric).

On the other hand, Savitch and Kantor (2002) and Fainstein (1994) have attempted to explain patterns of variation between different cities, in addition to looking at the territorialization of global trends at the local 'level'. In the following years, Savitch and Kantor (2002) have extended their analysis to include not just 'market-advantaged cities' like London, Paris and New York but also 'secondary' North American and European cities like Marseilles, Naples, Glasgow, Liverpool and Detroit. Their study can be described as a combination of individualizing and variation-finding research strategy, with an emphasis on the later: individualizing because the authors focus on the different 'choices' of developmental strategy which cities make in the post-industrial area: "after all is said and done, postindustrial choice is a product of human decisions" (Savitch and Kantor 2002, 27). For them, to the extent which market conditions and intergovernmental support allow it, urban development policies are a 'strategic choice', and these choices are being analyzed. Their main purpose was to explain differences within the same nation-state (e.g.: Paris and Marseilles) and similarities between cross-national cities (e.g.: Paris, Milan and Toronto). Savitch and Kantor produce a variety of typologies – market-centered, social-centered development and hybrid – and place cities on this continuum.

In these variable-centric studies which attempt to resemble statistical multivariate analysis, the accounts offered by variation-finding comparisons can appear too mechanistic and too ordered. Savitch and Kantor's study display a linear conception of urban governance and policy where driving variables and steering variables lead to a process, which then leads to an outcome. More significantly, the economy and the state are understood as separate variables.

Despite these drawbacks, their most insightful observations refer to the variety of pathways of institutional (re)organization and the role of national governments in urban governance: for example, Savitch and Kantor (2002) argue that urban governance structures are controlled by national political and technocratic elites to a larger extent as the budgets of European cities are more supported by national government. They also argue that an integrated inter-governmental system in Europe tends to mitigate inter-urban competition and the type of intense 'place wars' characteristic of US cities, although this mitigation is nuanced and even contradicted by state-led

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promotion of competition carried out by rule regimes operating in between the EU, nation-states and wider policy networks.

I will give another example of an excellent study based on the variation-finding comparative strategy. In her highly regarded The City Builders, Susan Fainstein [1994](2001) presents an explicitly comparative study of urban governance and property development in New York and London from 1980 until 2000. For Fainstein, the status of these two cities was threatened by globalization "through the challenge of increased competition from other aspirants for their economic niche" (1994, 23). The sites were chosen because of their economic similarities so as to highlight the importance of national differences for shaping redevelopment activities: dissimilarities are explained through institutional traditions, governmental programs, and national frameworks. Fainstein [1994](2001) argues that differences in the governance of London and NY stem fundamentally from national differences between the UK and the US: the home rule characterizes the US, while centralized parliamentary government the UK. In the 1970s and 1980s, the UK still continued to regulate real-estate and land-use far more than the US. In the 1990s, governmental intervention diverged again due to the increase of regulations on property development in London, while in NY opportunistic development continued. But in the 1980s during the Thatcher years, differences in large-scale national programs and institutional structures (local government and planning) narrowed pointing towards the influence of national policies and ideology on urban governance. Real-estate development in London in the 1980s was not pursued by growth coalitions between business and government as was the case in American cities but encouraged through the national measures of the Thatcher government. Thus, the convergence of the '80s between London and NY was shaped by the governmental promotion of property development as a strategy for improving economic growth. But for Fainstein convergence between two cases of urban governance seems to operate almost independently of the other: Thatcherism and centralized government in the UK and Reagoeconomics and home rule in the US. The actual process by which convergence was achieved is presumed on the ideological links between Thatcherism and Reagoeconomics, without analyzing in detail what are the mundane practices of this convergence and how convergence and 'diffusion' were mobilized in practice.

Comparative urban governance literature has delivered considerable insights, marking an improvement to the localist tendencies of earlier approaches to urban studies. Despite these improvements, analysis continued to be caught into the trap of methodological territorialism, although of a more subtle but no less pervasive variety. At first glance it might seem counterintuitive to critique comparative urban studies for methodological territorialism since this cross-national approach to urban governance was meant to circumvent the methodological localism of earlier approaches to urban studies, to counter the predominance of single-city case studies, to place limits on overly generalized theories, and to propose new theories of urban governance that took the role of the regional and national government into account. As Brenner argues, "(a) concern with multiple cities, longer term temporal frames, and/or divergent national contexts seems to attune scholars more explicitly to the broader spatial and institutional fields within which urban politics are constituted" (Brenner 2009, 126). Yet, a cross-national comparative approach in itself does not safeguard against a theorization of the city – or of the nation – as bounded, territorial or self-evident. It does not safeguard against a theorization that analytically isolates cities and/or nation-states.

The methodological territorialism of comparative urban studies is caused by three interrelated factors. First, the urban as territorial, administrative arena is unreflexively presupposed. Even in cross-national comparative studies, cities and locally-scaled processes were assumed to be comparable, distinct and identifiable. Second, the comparison is set between cities which are conceptualized as unrelated, disconnected, operating in a clear-cut space, and independent from each other. Case selection is mainly motivated by assumptions of cities 'as discrete, self-enclosed and analytically separate objects' (K. Ward 2010) and by "clear-cut differences between or among cases" (Skocpol and Somers 1980, 179). In the individualizing strategies, similarities are minimized, while in both individualizing and variation-finding comparisons, linkages and (dis)connections are dismissed or downplayed.

Third, inter-urban competition, national frameworks, and non-territorial scales of authority tend to be relegated to the global, non-local 'forces', while local specificities are discussed separately. As comparative urban studies commit to understand the impact of globalization and local-global interactions, the 'context' is out-there (e.g.: inter-urban competition) and 'cities' choose what to do at the local 'level' in response. Scales – local, regional, national, global – are easily

identifiable, assumed to be separate spheres of action and discussed separately. Relations between scales are portrayed as hierarchical, nested and working in a unidirectional manner without discussions about how the urban might shape the global (Imbroscio et al. 2011); the analysis is static as cities seem to accept the context and scalar relations, and act in accordance. The later discussions of urban governance as 'multi-level' portray scales as additive levels, with a focus on governmental institutions (Bache and Flinders 2004). The banal, hazy claim that urban governance in the EU is made possible by the interactions between different levels of government (or that all governance is multi-level) does not have much explanatory power but it has become "an accepted idiom for describing the modern regulatory state" as it signals the practitioner's (un)common sense to policy (Shore and Wright 2011, 10). The notion of 'multi-level governance' effaces issues of power and accountability in inter-scalar interactions and urban governance.

1.1.3. Competition beyond Neoliberalism? Inter-Urban Competition in Analyses of Neoliberal Urbanism and State Restructuring

Scholarship on urban governance and urban entrepreneurialism – both single-city case studies and comparisons (analyzed in the previous two sub-sections) – has attempted to capture the relationship between globalization and urban policy, between the global and the urban, with varying degrees of success. More recent manifestations of this work on urban entrepreneurialism focus on variegated neoliberalization processes and the role of state restructuring, neoliberalism and globalization in processes of urban change (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002; Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002; Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009; Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010). Inspired by Marxist political economy, regulation theory, radical geography and state theory, the new critical urbanists of the 1990s and 2000s conceptualize cities as "strategically crucial arenas for neoliberal forms of policy experimentation and institutional restructuring" (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 357). Cities are seen as battlegrounds of 'actually-existing neoliberalism', and as critical nodes of globalizing, neoliberalizing capitalism (Peck and Tickell 2002; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2013).

Neoliberalism (or neo-liberalism) is understood as a dominant cultural and political strategy that holds competition as a primary virtue and seeks to extend markets and the principles of competition, efficiency and utility to the operation of states, to individuals, and beyond (Larner 2000; Harvey 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002; Wacquant 2012). In this form of state-assisted, state-crafted market rule, competition is a central virtue, the ideological core of neoliberal urbanism, mediated through competitiveness policies, privatization, deregulation, outsourcing, and other strategies. As the "new religion" of competitive globalization, neoliberalism provides both 'ideological software' and also the roll-out of far-reaching, aggressive forms of institutional 'hardware" (Peck and Tickell 2002), including programs of state rescaling and urban restructuring in the North America, Europe, and beyond.

The neo-Marxist approach to neoliberalism and neoliberal urbanism has been criticized for lamenting the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism and treating it as an encompassing hegemonic project that it is omnipresent and has almost universal potency in driving processes of change and urban restructuring, particularly by the neo-Foucauldian literature on governmentality (Larner 2000; Hoffman, DeHart, and Collier 2006; England and Ward 2007; Clarke 2008; Cochrane 2011a; 2011b). Whereas both the notions 'globalization' and 'neoliberalism' have been severely criticized, debated and/or refined by scholars from a variety of disciplines (Massey 1991; Ong 2006; Hoffman, DeHart, and Collier 2006; Clarke 2008; Smith 2008b; Ferguson 2010; Wacquant 2012; Jessop 2013b; Collier 2012; Venugopal 2015 and more), the same cannot be said about the 'partner-in-crime' of globalization and neoliberalism. The prevalence of the term 'competition' in social sciences and in neoliberalism analyses has been inconspicuous but no less pervasive. Like neoliberalism and globalization, competition seems to be everywhere and nowhere.

In accounts which underscore the (pre)dominance of neoliberalism or globalization, inter-urban competition appears to be almost 'deterritorialized' and borderless. The logic of competition seems to be omnipresent and omnipotent, leading to an environment characterized universally by competitive pressures, anxieties and new competitiveness policies; its existence makes the accounting for "extra-local influences, pressures and relationalities" necessary for researchers dealing with even the most 'local' of studies (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2013, 1096). Whereas competition and competitiveness are not conceptualized as an inherent property of

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cities or social relations, analyses of neoliberalism tend to relegate inter-urban competition to a general, "extra-local" feature of contemporary urbanism[26].

Moreover, using notions of 'actually existing neoliberalism' or 'variegated processes of neoliberalization' only as variation and contingency-finding devices can exacerbate this understanding of inter-urban competition as a powerful extra-local, global pressure. It over-emphasizes an understanding of competition as part of the neoliberal core/'package deal' that reinforces the omnipotence of neoliberalism. At best, analysis would focus on specific territorial manifestations of inter-urban competition, and on the 'local' institutional forms which neoliberalism takes. But this can veer into a problematic methodological territorialism: non-local actors and 'external' forces are equated with increasing competition/neoliberalism while the urban is understood as a territorial policy arena.

Just like 'neoliberalism' and 'globalization', 'competition' is relegated to a 'preface' of research, mainly at the beginning and the end as a frame around the picture of 'territorial' processes. As such, the advantages and limitations of research on neoliberalism are similar to the ones of earlier case-study work on the shift to urban entrepreneurialism. They are also comparable to the some of the drawbacks individualizing and variation-finding comparative strategies that have drawn attention to the local(ized) outcomes and contextual specificity of urban transformations and coalition formation in various cities in North America and Europe.

Taking cues from the conceptual critiques of globalization and neoliberalism particularly from neo-Foucauldian approaches (Peck and Tickell 2002; Ong 2006; Hoffman, DeHart, and Collier 2006; Clarke 2008; Wacquant 2012), the proponents of political economy analyses of neoliberal urbanism argue that neoliberalism should not be understood only through impact studies at the 'local' or 'national' level or through simple diffusion narratives. Rather, just like globalization, neoliberalism should not be conceptualized as an 'end-state' nor as a coherently bounded system or model but instead composed of diverse, ongoing processes of neoliberalization that are actively contested and involve contradictions and unevenness (Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck and Brenner 2009). The purpose of examining different historical and geographical contingencies –

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[26] Urban studies generally and analyses of neoliberalism particularly are replete with phrases like: "under conditions of increasing inter-urban competition", "in an environment characterized by increasing inter-urban competition", "in a climate of increasing inter-locality competition", etc. In an earlier draft, I also wrote about "the era of intense inter-urban competition".

'local' and 'national' conjunctures of 'actually existing neoliberalisms', multiple processes of neoliberalization in particular cities and countries – is not reduce it to its concrete manifestations, or to put a spotlight on the all-penetrating force of neoliberalism. It is not difference for difference's sake, where contextual specificity and contrast are counter-posed to an inflexible, ideal-type understanding of neoliberalism.

Rather, the objectives are to highlight similarities between programs of neoliberalization across sites, their underlying structural transformations, shared pathways, and institutional and ideological communalities of neoliberal urbanism. The objectives are "to develop a more critical approach to the political and ethical stakes of neoliberalism" through the examination of multiple differences and alternatives (Hoffman, DeHart, and Collier 2006, 10; Peck and Tickell 2002; K. Ward 2007). Although 'local' or contextually specific institutional forms of neoliberalism and entrepreneurial strategies are important, its main proponents propose a process-based analysis of neoliberalization, attentive to its interaction and effects across sites (Peck and Tickell 2002). Thus its main goal is to offer a systemic account of state restructuring, rescaling, and political-economic transformations beyond a focus on the urban as a territorial arena.

This process-based analysis of neoliberalization is attentive to how interaction and effects relate across places and scales to more-than-local transformations. It has produced some interesting insights about inter-urban competition beyond a limited, deterritorialized understanding. Just like earlier instances of the literature on urban entrepreneurialism, authors working on urban neoliberalization processes do not understand competition and competitiveness as natural facts or givens, and draw on insights generated in the literature on urban entrepreneurialism and comparative urban studies reviewed in the previous sections. As discussed, the literature on urban entrepreneurialism has explained increasing inter-urban competition as a structural effect of competing place-dependent, territorial economic interests. For Molotch and Logan (Logan and Molotch 1987; Molotch 1976a), Harvey (Harvey 1989), Leitner (Leitner 1990) and Cox (Cox 1995), cities as such do not compete but in fact urban growth coalitions and territorial alliances acting on behalf of various cities are competing against each other for resources.

Authors working on neoliberalization processes – inspired by Marxist political economy and/or neo-Foucauldian approaches – analyze inter-locality competition as a structural effect of the state and state restructuring; they highlight the promotion and engineering of competition by the

'competition state' (Jessop 2013a; Jessop 2002; Cerny 2010; Peck and Tickell 2002; Brenner 2004). An important inspiration for discussions on competition and the extension of competition to non-market aspects has been Foucault's concept of governmentality and particularly his lectures on 'The Birth of Biopolitics' (Foucault et al. 1991; Foucault 2008). When comparing German ordoliberalism with neoliberalism, Foucault argued that:

> *competition as an essential economic logic will only appear and produce its effects under certain conditions which have to be carefully and artificially constructed. This means that pure competition is not a primitive given. It can only be the result of lengthy efforts and, in truth, pure competition is never attained. Pure competition must and can only be an objective, an objective thus presupposing an indefinitely active policy. Competition is therefore an historical objective of governmental art and not a natural given that must be respected* (Foucault 2008, 120).

There is a confluence between Marxist political economy and neo-Foucauldian governmentality literature on the issue of competition as a rationality of governmental art, as an effect of statecraft. Building on Foucault, Cerny (1997; 2010) refers to as "the state-supported promotion of competition" (2010, 7) and highlights the transformation of the nation-state from the welfare state into a new form of governmentality, the competition state, concerned with maintaining and promoting the competitiveness of its territory. Building on state theory and the regulation approach, for Jessop (2013a; 2002), the competition state "tends to prioritize strategies that are intended to create, restructure, or reinforce – as far as it is economically and politically feasible to do so – the overall competitive advantages of its particular territory, population, built environment, social institutions, and economic agents" (Jessop 2013:12). For Jessop (2002; 2013a) and Brenner (2004), the extension of the regulatory capacities of the competitive state into its territories leads to the promotion of inter-urban competition; territorial speculative interests underlined in the literature on urban entrepreneurialism and urban governance are important but secondary. Instead, they emphasize the role of structures, preconditions, and institutional frameworks which make possible international and interurban competition.

As such, the current happenings and promotion of inter-urban competition in Europe should not be interpreted as solely an aggregate effect of the mobilization of territorial economic interests at the local scale, but as a recent outcome of state restructuring and scale remaking. Historically the European urban system has had a fairly stable urban hierarchy, with capital cities or regional capitals at the pinnacle: cities came into being and became established mainly as political and

administrative centers, and their development was linked to the priorities of the nation-state, not to the logic of competition (S. V. Ward 1998a; S. V. Ward 1998b; Garcia and Judd 2012). In his account of state restructuring in Western Europe, Brenner claims that:

> *the new interlocality competition of the post-1980s period cannot be understood simply as the aggregate expression of localized policy responses to global and European market integration. On the contrary, (…) must be interpreted as a politically constructed imperative that was imposed upon local and regional economies in significant measure through the rescaling of national state spaces* (Brenner 2004, 212–13).

In a similar vein, Oatley (1998) – through the lens of regulation theory (Lauria 1997) – argues that "political changes in the neo-liberal project of the Conservative government" in the UK have forced cities to restructure institutions, to become more competitive, and establish new urban policies and practices aimed at improving competitiveness (1998, 21). Thus, in response to the restructuring of the national state, a new mode of regulation has emerged which emphasizes inter-urban competition and competitiveness.

Despite considerable insights, there is some slipperiness on the topic of inter-urban competition. Increasing inter-urban competition is so much as emphasized as the outcome of state restructuring – and not an emergent and uncertain ensemble of state-led political and economic processes – that it becomes a 'fact', an almost abstract logic. For urbanists, the idea of increasing competition as a macro-structural effect of a general realignment, state transformation and extensive economic restructuring was and is mobilized as part of the "growing consensus" (Jensen-Butler 1999, 865). Though historically-specific, the logic of competition is now seemingly present everywhere and nowhere.

Overall, there is an uneasy oscillation in urban studies between a territorial, place-bound *answer to* competition and a deterritorialized, macro-structural understanding of inter-urban competition. In both the literature on urban entrepreneurialism and neo-liberalism, competition is not considered a natural property of cities but a structural effect: it is a macro-economic and macro-structural feature of the restructuring of the state and of urban economies. At best, a territorial/place-bound and deterritorialized/global conceptualization of inter-urban competition and other neoliberalization processes are analyzed dialectically, as "a multi-sited, unevenly developed, relationally interpenetrating and more-than-the-sum-of-its-parts process, under which 'internal' forms and 'external' relations are jointly constituted and continually transformed in a

contradictory mutually recursive dialectic" (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2013, 1094). At worst, there is a stark division of academic labor between the two parts of the dialectic: between empirical/territorial/particular/specific and 'theoretical'/deterritorialized/global/abstract studies, between the territorial manifestation of place-bound interests and the structural effect of urban transformation and state restructuring.

Notwithstanding this slipperiness to a deterritorialized, departicularized understanding of inter-urban competition (or solely to a territorial conceptualization), the analyses of neoliberalism have offered a more sophisticated, complex account of scalar relations and interactions in urban governance. Particularly the understanding of neoliberalization as a multi-sited, 'more-than-the-sum-of-its-parts process' (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2013, 1094) have transcended the usual acknowledgement of nested scalar hierarchies or global-local interactions which seem to happen independent of each other or in a uni-directional hierarchical manner.

Hybridized conceptions of scales were advanced in terms like 'glocalization' (Swyngedouw 1997) and 'glurbanization' (Jessop and Sum 2000). Albeit scales do not matter for/by themselves, attuning to the production of new scales, the inter-mingling of scales, and to inter-scalar, trans-scalar and multi-scalar relations is necessary in order to understand how political and economic processes operate through "the power-laden and shifting relations between scales" (Peck 2002, 337). Even though they mostly appear 'at the receiving end' of neoliberalism and inter-urban competition, Cities are not merely 'territorial' relay stations for neoliberalism but arenas of active production, crosscut by contestations[27] and potentially also generative nodes for new policies.

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[27] By seeking to trade upon the city and its attributes, by trying to impose a norm of profitability and entrepreneurialism, a space for struggle and contestation is opened at the same time (Harvey 2002b; Jessop 2013a; Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2007).

1.1.4. Beyond Territorial and Macro-Structural: Inter-Urban Competition as Relational

A generous reading of earlier approaches to urban politics and urban governance (analyzed in the first two sub-sections) would suggest that researchers study inter-urban competition by proxy: they pay attention to its territorialization, the implementation of competitiveness policy repertoires and the competitive-city measures at the local scale. Inter-urban competition is seen as a 'global' force that impacts on specific territories. Research tend to focus on how inter-urban competition, globalization or neoliberalism plays out in a particular city, how general trends play out in a particular local arena, and how they manifest in different entrepreneurial policies and strategies. Even though considered necessary (see Imbroscio et al. 2011), the study of local-global interactions is reduced to "ritualistic connections to 'the wider system'" (Massey 1991, 521) or to "genuflections to global context" (Cochrane 1999). Thus, the forms which urban governance and urban politics of development take are stand-ins for territorialized processes of inter-urban competition. But while the territorialized forms of urban governance and its intra-local or territorial dynamics are important, inter-urban competition is more than the aggregate of different intra-local dynamics and local-bound coalitions.

As the process of competition takes place (in) between different cross-scalar coalitions, it is more than sum of policies and strategies which different coalitions are pursuing as a reaction/response to competitive pressures. Inter-urban competition is more than the sum of its parts, especially in analyses that are characterized by methodological territorialism or methodological localism when 'the urban' is a territorial, discrete arena and an analytically separate object. Actual processes of inter-urban competition cannot be understood as solely the aggregate of various coalitions of land-based interests or place-bound interests, or as the sum of different territorial policy responses; it is somehow ironic to reduce *inter*-urban competition to an emphasis on *place*-bound interests. The territorialization/placing of inter-urban competition at the local scale is relevant but not by itself: putting the spotlight on individual(ized), territorial urban development strategies does not capture well neither the patterns and mechanisms of competition nor the inter-urban linkages and connections in actual processes of inter-urban competition.

Moreover, the fundamental 'territorial' and 'sedentary' assumptions of urban studies rely on and are accompanied by an almost 'deterritorialized' and macro-structural conceptualization of inter-urban competition (Brenner 1999; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006). Inter-urban competition – just like other trans-urban or more-than-territorial processes, supra-local entities, non-local scales of authority – is either relegated to a frame, to an external background structure and/or portrayed as a pervasive macro-economic condition of contemporary urbanism, and state restructuring. For this deterritorialized conceptualization, competition – together with mobility and innovation – is imagined as one of 'grand narratives' and pervasive conditions of globalization and neoliberalism (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006). As presented in the previous sub-section on neoliberalism, increasing inter-urban competition is seen as the pervasive macro-structural condition of neoliberal urbanism and state restructuring: the historically-specific outcome of an international and far-reaching economic and political realignment is routinely deployed as a borderless, deterritorialized force out there confronting contemporary cities.

Thus, critical urban studies are dominated by a separation – and at best the interplay – between a territorial and macro-structural understanding of competition. Competition has multiple insides and outsides. It is a polymorphic phenomenon – not just place-bound and macro-structural – but a relational ensemble between the 'in here' and 'out there', and in between the 'in here' and 'out there'. This interplay between 'internal' and 'external' is also crosscut by trans-local networks of policy and flows of knowledge production.

Out of the wider body of work on urban entrepreneurialism, neoliberal urbanism and state restructuring, a literature on urban policy mobilities – focused on the circulation of policy knowledge and policy models as inter-scalar and inter-urban phenomenon – has emerged in the last decade. For these authors, a territorial and relational understanding of neoliberalization processes has enabled the critical investigation of 'policies-in-motion', 'urban policy mobilities', and 'fast policy' that connect and interpenetrate different places and scales[28] and that make possible processes of inter-urban competition and the day-to-day governance of cities (Cook and Ward 2012; Cochrane and Ward 2012; McCann 2011b; McCann and Ward 2011; Peck 2011b;

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[28] This movement is not entirely new as seen in the spread of the nation-state form, women's suffrage and Keynesianism (to give just few examples). What is distinctive about the current cross-border and inter-city policy mobility is "its rapidity, its wide geographic reach, and its conjoining of political and economic reform" (Dobbin et al. 2007, 450).

Peck 2003; K. Ward 2006; Peck and Theodore 2015; McCann 2008). Urban policies and policy models have spread tremendously around the globe and seem almost ubiquitous, ranging from urban branding, place marketing, regeneration of historical centers, waterfront redevelopment, leisure and entertainment, iconic architecture, cultural tourism, festivals to cultural and sports mega-events.

Complemented by insights from the 'mobility turn' (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006; Urry 2007), and from a governmentality approach (Foucault et al. 1991; Larner 2000; Larner and Laurie 2010; Larner and Le Heron 2004), the work on policy mobilities has attempted to clarify how policies are relationally (re)produced and how cities are influenced and formed by the spread and speed of policy models, knowledge and expertise. It has delivered valuable insights regarding the role of various types of policy actors, experts and private consultants in assembling the urban by shaping the 'flows of knowledge about urban policy and in transferring policies themselves' (McCann 2011b, 4), both for global and 'ordinary cities' (Robinson 2006). Inspired by the neo-Foucauldian literature on governmentality, it has offered insights into the politics and apparently mundane practices and techniques – such as referencing, benchmarking and comparison – are practices through which contemporary cities and processes of inter-urban competition are constituted. They are practices through which urban governance and policy mobilities are achieved. Moreover, mundane activities like conferences, summits and policy tourism practices (study visits, fact-finding trips) are important arenas in and through which urban policies can travel (or not), and can be immobilized or embedded in a particular direction. These policy practices are replete with models to emulate and characterized by an atmosphere of learning about 'successful' cities and policies in an instrumental way, in order to apply their 'lessons' to other places.

Taking cues from work on policy mobilities, and building on relational thinking in anthropology, sociology and urban geography (Massey 1991; Emirbayer 1997; Amin and Graham 1999; McCann and Ward 2010; Jacobs 2012; Monterescu 2013; Monterescu 2015; Desmond 2014), I am arguing that inter-urban competition is neither territorial nor structural, neither 'urban' nor 'global' but relational and inter-scalar (Swyngedouw 1997) operating in between places, scales and wider policy networks.

Hence, a processual and relational conceptualization of contemporary inter-urban competition premised on a relational conceptualization of scale and place enabled – and can enable – researchers to transcend, or at least complement, territorial and place-bound understandings of competition by proxy, and structural and encompassing character of inter-urban competition. This relational conceptualization of places and scales facilitates – and can facilitate – practices of research that incorporate the insights about the interconnectedness of urban governance and about (dis)connections between places and scales. It enables researchers to ask new questions and propose new answers beyond on the one hand 'territorial' and place-bound approaches in urban studies – that neglect the process of inter-urban competition and at best understand it as a sum of local-bound processes –, and on the other hand 'deterritorialized' and structural approaches – that relegate competition to a macro-structural condition or to global, general feature of globalization, neoliberalism and contemporary urbanism (for mobility see Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006).

Concomitantly with analytically isolating cities, focusing on the urban as territorial arena, and deterritorializing inter-urban competition in critical urban studies, there is a disregard for a relational theorization of place and scale and a lack of empirical attention to relational connections between cities, linkages, flows, (dis)connections and (im)mobilities which crosscut places and scales (Massey 1991; McCann and Ward 2011; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006; Robinson 2013; Jacobs 2011; Amin and Graham 1999; Peck 2002; McCann and Ward 2010; K. Ward 2010). Crucially, a processual analysis to inter-urban competition should be premised not on a territorial but on a relational perspective to places and scales (Amin and Graham 1999; McCann and Ward 2010; 2011). It is not productive to conceptualize inter-urban competition neither as a force 'out there', nor to analytically isolate cities or to dismiss or downplay linkages, mobilities and (dis)connections between cities and scales.

Inter-urban competition – just like competition between nation-states or regions – is neither a 'global', 'abstract' logic nor a 'territorial' competition between different entities as it is usually described (Cheshire 1999a; Budd 1998; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Brenner 2004) but a relational ensembles of processes and dynamic arenas; it is premised by default on relationality, interconnectedness and asymmetrical interdependencies and pervaded by (im)mobilities, failure and success, winners and losers. Urban governance, competitive bidding, and processes of

competition between cities are permeated and crosscut by trans-urban and inter-urban circuits of policy knowledge (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996; Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck 2003). Through the mobilization of these fast and seemingly repetitive urban policies, both cities and processes of inter-urban competition are relationally (re)constituted. Cities are shaped by the spread and speed of urban policies and policy models around the globe, and this concern with the 'serial reproduction' and mobilization of policies has emerged as a central problematique in both critical urban studies and critical policy studies (Harvey 1989; McCann and Ward 2011; Peck and Theodore 2015; Clarke et al. 2015).

Yet, a processual, relational understanding of inter-urban competition has not received sustained theoretical and empirical attention. Very few studies (McCann 2004; K. Ward 2007; Cook and Ward 2011), have dealt with how – through what practices, labor, expertise, and broader working conditions – actual processes of inter-urban competition are produced and (re)constituted relationally from place to place and how these processes are actively produced, contested and negotiated across cities, scales and wider policy networks.

A profound reconceptualization of inter-scalar relations is needed beyond mechanical, hierarchical, nested renderings of the relationships between scales (when the 'higher' level influences the other in a unidirectional manner) and beyond additive approaches to scale (e.g.: multi-level governance). Simply adding more scales while isolating and controlling for 'levels' cannot capture the sometimes surprising process and effect of inter-scalar interactions: how specific forms of inter-urban competition are (re)produced, transformed and created through flows, mobilities of policies and the interaction of different scales. While the comparative approach has been insightful in highlighting the effects of differently scaled institutional frameworks (e.g.: nation-state, regional, European) and the divergent state-led pathways of urban governance (Brenner 2004; Brenner et al. 2003; K. Ward 2010), it cannot adequately capture how scales and places intersect and mutually influence each other to transform and create surprising effects and processes, or how inter-urban competition might entail hybridized or interstitial conceptions of scales. The use of synthetic words like 'glocalization' or 'glurbanization' is not vital: putting the spotlight on the 'glocalization' or 'glurbanization' of inter-urban competition does not tell us much about inter-urban competition as an actual process; scales and interactions between scales are important for understanding processes not by

themselves. Still, a relational conception of scales that bypasses methodological territorialism and territorial, nested conceptions of scale is needed for a solid understanding of inter-urban competition and other contemporary political-economic processes.

This sub-section highlights the lack of attention paid to (im)mobilities, (dis)connections and inter-scalar relations in critical urban studies. Yet, connections and flows underlying of processes of inter-urban competition are both structured and dependent on their territorialization. Territories, structures and flows are not oppositional but are relationally intertwined and mutually constituting. Competition is not a 'space of flows' which supersedes the 'space of places' (Castells 1989); it is not power-free, borderless, unobstructed, friction-less movement but a process in which power is both reflected and reinforced in relation to (im)mobilities and interconnections (Massey 1991; Franquesa 2011; Peck 2002; Cook and Ward 2011). As such, this processual, relational approach to inter-urban competition does not exclude considerations regarding the territorialization and state-led engineering of inter-urban competition. Rather, it includes them within a relational approach, while emphasizing the (im)mobilities, (dis)connections, and practices unfolding in and between cities, scales and wider policy networks that make possible processes of inter-urban competition.

1.2. Relationality of Epistemic and Symbolic Boundaries: A Processual, Relational Approach to Expertise and Policy

A relational approach to places and scales is attentive to (dis)connections and (im)mobilities within, between and across different places and scales. Relationality between cities and scales does not translate to connections and mobilities between 'Lego blocks', between discrete territorial entities and distinct scales. Rather, relationality involves a profound reconceptualization of place both 'within' and 'in-between': places are not bounded, whole and coherent but open and "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey 1991, 521) in and across different scales.

Thus, a relational approach to places and scales implies a profound reconceptualization of multiple and intersecting socio-spatial relations and processes underlying relational assemblages

of competition. Relationality has to be premised on and linked with a relational approach to social processes and relations, particularly a relational approach to policy and expertise which I present in this sub-section.

In the first part, I criticize how the concept of 'interests' functions as an elusive 'black box' in analyses of inter-urban competition and urban policies. Instead of focusing on *why* competition and entrepreneurial policies are mobilized and *who* benefits, it is more productive to study *how* competition is constituted and the practices that make it possible. Then, I propose a widening of analysis to include not just interests but also aspirations and emotions.

In the second part, I propose a relational and processual approach to expertise. First, I discuss how expertise is not a thing but a social relation. It is an enactment, the bringing together of (im)material infrastructures, concepts and actors in alignment in order to facilitate processes of competition. Then, I present how the elements of this relational theorization of policy expertise that focuses on interstitiality, social and symbolic boundaries, and contestation. Afterwards, I look at how processes of inter-urban competition and the enactments of expertise that make them possible are shaped by the constitutive tension between on the one hand, co-production and on the other hand, the (re)production of epistemic and symbolic 'boundaries' among professionals and between experts and non-experts. After, I underline how these enactments are not just shaped by the dialectical relation between cooperation and competition but are also a site of conflict and contestation.

1.2.1. Competition as 'Black Box', Interests as 'Black Box': The Mutual Interactions between Competitive, Cooperative and Conflictual Social Relations

Just like neoliberalization (K. Ward 2006), inter-urban competition is a 'black box' in critical urban studies. This is noticeable in how the concept of 'interests' tends to function as an elusive 'black box' in analyses of urban policies and inter-urban competition: even though we can identify *why* inter-city rivalries happen and *who* benefits, we are left in the dark regarding *how* competition is constituted and the practices that make it possible.

Identifying the coalition of interests or the multiplicity of agendas represented or served through inter-urban competition or other policy processes – usually place-bound, territorial interests and local elites (Molotch 1976a; Cox and Wood 1997; Oancă 2010) and business/corporate interests (C. M. Hall 2006; Tarazona Vento 2016), but also the interests of mobile experts, elite professionals and 'transfer agents' (McCann 2013; Tarazona Vento 2015; Oancă 2015; D. Stone 2004) –, does not explain the sometimes surprising processes of competition between cities or mobilization of urban policies. Social reality can and does unfold "behind the backs of 'city makers'" (Peck 2014, 397), "behind the backs of or against the wills of even the most powerful actors" (Ferguson 1994, 18). Although it is interesting and politically useful to specify whose interests a policy promotes (or who benefits) to the detriment of others, inquiry should not stop there. Pinpointing the 'interests' benefiting from competition processes or particular manifestations of policies does not explain the multiple and intersecting socio-spatial relations and situated practices enabling processes of inter-urban competition, and in some cases making them impossible. A processual analysis of inter-urban competition needs to pay attention to the mutual interactions between competitive, cooperative and conflictual social relations which facilitate – and sometimes hinder – inter-urban competition.

In the studies on urban entrepreneurialism, neoliberalism and urban policy mobilities discussed in the previous section, there is an over-reliance on the concept of 'interests' as an explanatory shortcut. It functions as a 'proto-concept', as a term insufficiently theorized and used in a self-evident manner (Swedberg 2005). For the neo-Marxist approach to neoliberalism and policy (and to a lesser extent for neo-Foucauldian perspectives), the notions 'interests', 'vested interests' or 'coalitions of interests' are central, overused and overgeneralized. This privileges the exploration of cooperative social relations in competitive contexts – among elites, and between elite and non-elite policy actors – over conflict and contestation. It also downplays competitive social relations, particularly among (im)material workers, knowledge workers or professionals, and other non-elite actors.

Notions such as 'vested interests' or 'coalitions of interests' tend to be deployed in a non-relational, substantialist manner as a thing, as an attribute that actors naturally possess, without interrogating the relational process of interest formation, the plurality of interests even within the same 'category' of actors, and the contestation and resistance within and beyond that coalition of

interests. Furthermore, taking for granted the (self-)interests of actors – to maximize their profit, influence, gain, benefits, etc. – as driving or shaping inter-urban competition and urban policies leads to a crypto-rationalism, to a subtle reproduction of economism and the 'homo economicus' assumption of self-interest maximization. Inadvertently, this gives more unity, intentionality and awareness to coalitions of interests than it is the case.

Building on insights from post-structuralist development studies, I consider that the notion of 'interests' does not constitute an adequate level of explanation (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Escobar 2011). As Tania Li mentions in her excellent analysis of *The Will to Improve*, though they are part of the story, interests should not be the 'master term' of analysis: "the rush to identify hidden motives of profit or domination narrows analysis unnecessarily, making much of what happens in the name of improvement obscure" (Li 2007, 9). Analyses which over-rely on 'interests' – of the elite, experts or the powerful – as an explanatory shortcut end up reducing inter-urban competition and urban policies to ideological mystification and fantasy, to "just ideologies or misrepresentations of what developers are "really" up to" (Escobar 2011, 131; Ferguson 1994). Like a detective, the main goal is to identify why and who is *behind* it all, including those lurking in the shadow: who are all the various interested agents that are involved and that benefit from inter-urban competition and the mobilization of policies. By identifying the concealed, hidden intentions of various actors, inter-urban competition is not conceptualized as a social process but reduced to an ideological mystification or rhetorical strategy used by business interests or territorial interests.

In their analysis of urban governance, proponents of urban regime theory like Stone (1989) model territorial elites on the 'homo economicus' model, on the rational choice approach: elites are considered to pursue their individual rational self-interest consciously and rationally in the face of patterns of costs and benefits. Their 'interest' concept is associated with rational action (Berezin 2005; Berezin 2009), an action in which interested agents employ means to obtain specific goals, usually – but not limited to – economic[29]. The informal arrangements between public bodies and private interests, and the involvement of a broad area of interests beyond

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[29] Historically 'interests' emerged as the term used to describe the 'rational' pursuit of economic gain in the market economy; passions and appetites for money-making were replaced with 'interests'. Even though moneymaking was formerly considered a vice, vulgar and immoral, the pursuit of economic gain became a virtue, 'the calm passion' (Hirschman 1977 qtd. in Berezin 2005), it became 'rational'.

business interests – "labor-union officials, party functionaries, officers in nonprofit organizations or foundations, church leaders" (C. Stone 1989, 7) – is explained through 'selective incentives', means-end rationality oriented towards achieving a goal, and the calculation of costs and benefits (Painter 1998; C. Stone 1989; Fainstein 1994). According to their liberal model of social co-production, urban regime formation is about rationality, negotiation and compromise, and the meshing and management of a plurality of elite interests (K. Ward 1996). For urban regime theory and its proponents, the main mechanism of urban governance is the 'civic cooperation' among local elites, and not competition, control or conflict.

By contrast, critical urbanists inspired by political economy do not rely on rational-choice theory about elite behavior and urban governance but explain the predominance of business interests in coalition and alliance formation as a structural effect of capitalism. Place-bound interests, urban transformations and/or state restructuring are shaping coalition formation. Following the Marxist concept of interest, common economic interests are an expression of class and objective social conditions. Even though class can be theorized relationally, the concept of 'class interests' is more problematic since it is based on the "assumption that actors within the same class category (to the extent that they are a "class-for-itself") will act in similar ways even when differentially situated within flows of transactions or relational settings" [30] (Emirbayer 1997, 290). Authors tend to reify class interests and assume a fixed, taken for granted view of interest formation (Fainstein 1994). In the literature on urban entrepreneurialism, the 'reality' and social conditions driving alliance formation, cooperation and competition among capitalists and elites are obvious. For Logan and Molotch (1987) and for Cox and Mair (1988), ruling-class interests are driving urban governance and are its primary beneficiaries (Boyle 1999). The actors most involved in inter-urban competition, branding and other entrepreneurial urban policies – such as real-estate developers, local rentiers, locally dependent businesses and other auxiliary actors interested in the maximization of rents and profit – represent their own specific interests in increasing exchange value as the general interests of the city. Moreover, local politicians and representatives of the local government structures are predisposed to join these coalitions

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[30] Emirbayer argues that even though Marx was a relational thinker, the concept of 'class interests' exhibits substantialist tendencies, "most notably in his reification of class interests, in his assumption that actors within the same class category (to the extent that they are a "class-for-itself") will act in similar ways even when differentially situated within flows of transactions or relational settings" (Emirbayer 1997, 290).

because they are dependent on local rentiers and local capitalists for funding and support, and because of their "interest in increasing jobs, tax base, and their own careers" (McCann 2013, 12). 'Local dependence', 'immobility' and 'interest in growth' are seen as overarching frameworks through which coalition formation, urban governance and competition should be explored. Thus, the intertwined interests of place-bound, immobile capitalists and politicians are driving entrepreneurial and competitiveness policies.

Within the literature on entrepreneurialism, Cox (1993), Hubbard and Hall (1998) and Jessop (1998) put forward more inclusive definitions for urban coalitions which potentially might include other interest groups like trade unions and universities, the economic interests of local residents, workers or citizens (Cox 1993, 55), and even non-local or non-locally-dependent actors (Jessop 1998) but which are still characterized by a primacy of economic interests. Urban political economists – Metro-Marxists – working on neoliberalization and state restructuring are similarly rejecting market versus state dichotomies, and emphasize that the state – because of its own self-interest in preservation and accumulation – is an agent of capitalist interests, an agent that tends to privilege capitalists' economic interests over others (Jessop 2002; Brenner 2004). States, at various scales, influence urban governance and inter-urban competition.

As such, urban political economy has emphasized urban transformations and state restructuring rescaling from 'above', from 'elites' (Bunnell 2015). For authors working on urban entrepreneurialism and neoliberalism, the primary mechanisms of urban governance are on the one hand, the formation of coalitions of locally dependent interests and/or multi-scalar ruling class alliances, and on the other, the inter-scalar operation of urban governance. Furthermore, this co-operation among elite actors in competitive contexts has negative socio-economic effects on cities, such as social exclusion, increasing inequality and greater segmentation (Leitner and Sheppard 1998; Fainstein 2001).

The analytical predominance – and omnipotence – of political-economic, ruling class interests over other interests (knowledge, activism, community, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) has been criticized both by comparative urban governance studies (Fainstein 1991; 1994) and by post-structural, neo-Foucauldian perspectives to neoliberalization and policy (Larner and Le Heron 2004; England et al. 2007). In contrast to interpretations of economic interest as the only 'objective social interest' to be maximized, Fainstein (1991; 1994) underlines the importance of

community, race, and gender – and autonomy and consumption – as potential factors for the construction of viewpoints.

Prompted by the conceptual critique of neoliberalism and the neo-Foucauldian approach, the literature on policy mobilities has extended its analysis beyond the political-economic, ruling-class interests usually present in the literature on urban entrepreneurialism and neoliberalism to include a multiplicity of interests and policy actors, particularly coalitions of powerful actors including (im)mobile policy experts, professionals, private consultants, technocrats, bureaucrats, architects etc. (to give but a few examples, McCann and Ward 2011; Cook and Ward 2011; Temenos and McCann 2012; Prince 2013; Baker and Temenos 2015; Peck and Theodore 2015; Tarazona Vento 2015; Baker et al. 2016). This research has been insightful in highlighting the workings of expert-led urbanism: the active cooperation of professionals and experts in the global mobilization of urban policies, and in shaping urban governance. For example, in his work on policy practices underlying the model of Vancouver, McCann argues that it "aligns with and serves certain interests – from journalists (always looking for an evocative shorthand) who have facilitated its recent proliferation, to the planners, architects, designers, and engineers whose work is encapsulated and valorized by its popularity, to the politicians who both support the policies to which it refers and also bask in its reflected glory, and, of course, to Vancouver's powerful development industry who in part funded the exhibit" (2013, 896). In a different work on the 'mundane practices' of drug policy transfer, McCann (2008) refers to other policy actors beyond politicians and professionals, more precisely to grassroots activists.

Even though the literature on urban policy mobilities continues to emphasize elite actors and neoliberal urban transformations from 'above' just like urban political economy, Bunnell welcomes the decentering of elite actors from analyses of the mobilities and mobilization of urban policies (Bunnell 2015), to accounting for the multiplicity of 'policy actors' involved, such as activists and city residents (McCann 2008; Purcell 2008; McFarlane 2011a), 'middling', mid-level technocrats (Larner and Laurie 2010), 'street-level bureaucrats', frontline workers, and other intermediaries (Lipsky 1980; Peck 2005; England et al. 2007; England and Ward 2007).

Thus, for authors working on urban policy mobilities and critical policy studies, the main mechanism of urban governance and global-urban policy-making is the co-production and co-operation between elites and experts, and between elite and non-elite policy actors, in

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competitive contexts. Thus, the mobilization of urban policies is understood as the interplay between competition and cooperation.

While the inclusion of a multiplicity of interests is commendable, this inadvertently reproduces some of the problems associated with the notions 'interest' or 'coalition of interests'. Albeit I am not proposing to abolish them completely from this dissertation or generally from our studies, we need to interrogate more closely what is obstructed from our view when we are overrelying on this vocabulary.

First, analyses privilege cooperation among the coalitions of interests over resistance, conflict and contestation; even though the possibility of contestation is widely acknowledged, research tends to emphasize support, participation and complicity, thus compliant, accommodating subjectivities within the coalition, and lack of conflict among and beyond policy actors (see McCann 2008; 2011a). But urban policies are also sites of contestation (Shore and Wright 1997). Rather than highlighting cooperation and the uniform, complementary 'interests' of policy actors (class interests, knowledge interests, etc.), we should also pay attention to contestation, contradictions and fractures.

Subjectivities are not just compliant and accommodating but ambivalent, reflexive and skeptical, and can question the way their subjectivities are being molded by institutions (Shore and Wright 2011). The meaning-making processes of policy are never complete and can be contested; actors are not passive 'puppets' but can 'talk back' to power and contest various policies, their webs of meanings and effects. Actors can potentially contest, subvert and/or appropriate urban policy processes both from 'inside' the territorial boundaries of the city (McCann and Ward 2010) but also from the 'inside' of inter-local, multi-scalar coalitions. Moreover, this emphasis on the coalition of interests driving urban policies obfuscates conflict and resistance from 'outside' the inter-scalar coalition, contestation which might be within a territory (or not) and which might shape and impact urban policies and processes of inter-urban competition. As urban social movements and activists questioning an urban policy are also shaping and impacting processes of inter-urban competition, attention to contestation offers a possibility of reimagining cities in relation to multiple insides and outsides, and a window onto the relational constitution between the 'outside' and 'inside' of coalitions operating in between cities, scales and policy networks.

Second, terms like 'coalition of interests' gives more intentionality and strategizing to urban governance and inter-urban competition than it is the case. As Jenkins argues, even if we accept that

> *interests are variable, it is very difficult to imagine how an 'interest' can be anything other than something which actors consciously pursue. The only alternative involves the detached social scientific observer deciding what actors' interests are – and hence what is in their interests. (…) the use of the word 'interest' imports into the analysis either an unavoidable dimension of conscious, calculative decision-making or an indefensible epistemological conceit* (Jenkins 2002, 87).

The problems are thus not just related to subtle crypto-rationalism but also to epistemological and methodological concerns, especially when dealing with actions which might appear as 'disinterested' or 'genuine' (Painter 1998).

Third, 'interests' are reified as attributes: they are understood as an individual or group attribute which is taken for granted, as a thing which elites, experts or policy actors naturally possess, without paying attention to formation of interest, nor to how actors from the same class or occupation might act differently in a different relational setting (Emirbayer 1997, 290). Within this individual-attributes approach (E. O. Wright 2009), interests and other 'class-relevant attributes' – like education, occupation and income – are defining 'elite', 'professionals',' experts' and/or the 'middle class'[31].

Instead of reifying interests as homogenous attributes of individuals, groups or classes, it is more productive to investigate the situated practices and social relations through which multiple and contradictory agendas are constructed, recognized as (un)'worthy', and translated into action (Ferguson 1994; Fainstein 1994; Fainstein 1991; Painter 1998). For example, the economic interests in the 'growth' of the city are not as straightforward as they might appear at first, since different alternatives could be pursued by local capitalists and territorial alliances beyond land-use and economic 'growth' – e.g. anti-growth measures which could increase property values and benefit some property interests, grants and public spending instead of the 'growth' of the private sector, either tourism or manufacturing-based growth, etc. (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996; Cochrane 1999; Kevin Fox Gotham 2011), but also austerity measures. Similarly, the city

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[31] The debates about the class position of intellectuals, professionals, and experts and/or whether they formed a 'new class' are too extensive to be discussed here but see Wright 1976; Kurzman and Owens 2002; Eyal and Buchholz 2010.

as an urban growth machine is seen as complementary with 'expertise' as an 'expert growth machine'. The interests of experts or professionals in the 'growth' of their influence are assumed to follow naturally from their education, cultural resources, social connections, etc., even though growth might not be the primary motivator of experts, professionals, or occupations/professions in different relational settings.

In this dissertation, I will not focus on whether an action was interested or disinterested, as that will implicitly (re)produce a conceptual dualism between 'interest' and 'disinterest', or between 'interest' and 'indifference' [32]. Rather than assume a hidden agenda (Li 2007), it is more productive to take at face value how policy actors narrate their (non-)involvement or partial involvement in inter-urban competition and urban policies, and investigate the situated practices and social relations which make possible processes of inter-urban competition. Following Painter, interests and

> *the use of rationalist calculation must be seen as something to be explained, rather than itself constituting the explanation. In this view, actors take up positions in relation to a regime for a variety of reasons and motivations, some of which may be contradictory. Involvement in regimes can be motivated by emotion as well as reason and by altruism as well as self-interest* (Painter 1998, 264).

Crucially, processes of competition should not be reduced to (only) a hierarchic and repressive project that operates through the interests of political-economic elites, or through authority and domination in a top-down manner from the state and/or elites to the 'masses'. Rather, power is not only hierarchic and repressive aspects but also 'facilitative' and 'productive', unfolding through the interests, aspirations, and emotions of policy actors (Foucault et al. 1991; N. Rose 1992; J. Scott 2008; Carr 2010; Appadurai 2004). As "a collective property of systems of co-operating actors" (J. Scott 2008, 28), power does not operate only through domination and authority but also through seduction, persuasion, inducement and other modes of power that work alongside domination, authority and coercion (Allen 2003). Process of inter-urban competition and the mobilization of policies also unfold through seduction and persuasion, through the interests, aspirations and emotions of a variety of policy actors.

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[32] For Bourdieu (1998), indifference – not disinterested acts – is the opposite of interest since actors intend to gain symbolic capital for acts which appear or are narrated as disinterested.

Emotions play an important role not just in resistance and contestation[33] (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2000; Gould 2009) but also in the contradictory and uneven reproduction of power and governance. Emotions, especially negative emotions like anger, are particularly visible to scholars of social movements or to scholars of critical policy studies when the 'target' population are rejecting a particular policy and the construction of particular subjectivities (Goodwin, Jasper, and Poletta 2001; Verhoeven and Duyvendak 2015; Larner and Heron 2005). Yet, seduction and persuasion, aspirations and emotions operate as well alongside other modes of power such as domination and authority to maintain hierarchy, stratification, and the reproduction of power. For Collins, "what operates to uphold stratification (are) hierarchical feelings, whether dominant, subservient, or resentful" (R. Collins 2004, 103). I would add that aspirations and positive emotions, like optimism, hope, and pride, can also contribute to the reproduction of power and governance, and to the construction and maintenance of legitimacy. Optimism, hope, and pride are emotions which are activated when subjectivities are being constructed in a way which is responding to or matching the constructions of self of actors and their own visions of their role and place in society. Interests are not the 'master term' of analysis of inter-city rivalries (Li 2007). Aspirations and emotions are crucial for understanding processes of inter-urban competition, as they are inseparable from the (re)construction of subjectivity through policy.

1.2.2. Symbolic Boundaries in Conflict: Towards a Relational, Processual Theorization of Expertise

Critical urban studies have contributed to our understanding of the practices and effects of elite-driven urban transformations from 'above', and of the connections between urbanization and capitalism (McCann and Ward 2011; Bunnell 2015). In their focus on 'coalitions of interests', 'local corporatism' and 'public-private partnerships' of economic and political elites, these

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[33] Compared with critical policy studies, scholars on social movements have already acknowledged and worked extensively on the central function of emotions in the political order and the state, particularly on the relationship between emotions and social movements (Jasper 1997; Goodwin, Jasper, and Poletta 2001; Flam and King 2007; Gould 2009). Therefore it is no surprise that emotions came to the attention of critical policy scholars through a focus on protest and social movements and through the work of some of these authors; see Clarke et al. 2015; Verhoeven and Duyvendak 2015.

bodies of work have questioned the traditional separation between the state and the market, and produced a commendable output on the movers and shakers of entrepreneurial, speculative urbanism, and cultures of power in cities. Moreover, critical urban studies has shed light on the commodification of public places, increased inequality, and other negative consequences that resulted from the pursuit of economic growth and cooperative social relations among elites, experts, and elite policy actors in competition with other elites (Logan and Molotch 1987; Gough 1992; Fainstein 2001).

This exploration of elite-driven urban transformations from 'above' and of the practices and interests of the elite, experts, and the powerful in urban politics and governance – 'studying up' as Laura Nader (Nader 1972) would say – is praiseworthy. Yet, it does not acknowledge nor resolve some deeper ontological and epistemological problems – about elite formation, expertise and power – that are created by 'studying up' and the implicit use of dualisms such as 'up/down', 'above/below', 'elite/mass', 'expert/lay', 'expert/non-expert', 'powerful/powerless' (Shore and Nugent 2002; Bunnell 2015).

Even as critical urban studies have come to center on policy experts and their practices, the terms of 'expert', 'elite', 'consultant', or 'bureaucrat' are often used as straightforward labels, and reified. Because of this designative trend of labeling an actor as 'expert' (Boyer 2008) or as a 'transfer agent' (D. Stone 2004), expertise appears to be synonymous with expert actors who are conceptualized as embodying or representing expertise (Larner and Laurie 2010; Peck and Theodore 2010). McCann and Ward note that much of the urban policy mobilities work is characterized by dualisms – "clean and neat divisions of things into opposing categories, described as A/not-A" (McCann and Ward 2015, 828), such as success/failure, presence/absence, and mobility/immobility – but they do not deal with the implicit dualisms about experts, elites, and power running unquestioningly through the wider body of work on urban policy mobilities, entrepreneurial urbanism and state restructuring: 'elite/non-elite' and 'expert/lay'. These implicit dualisms should be seen neither as 'substances' nor rejected by default but instead examined relationally (Emirbayer 1997; McCann and Ward 2015).

The anthropology of policy (Shore and Wright 1997; Wedel et al. 2005; Shore and Wright 2011) and the anthropology and sociology of expertise (Boyer 2005; 2008; D. R. Holmes and Marcus 2008; Carr 2010; Eyal and Pok 2011; 2015; Eyal 2013) provide fertile conceptual ground for

relational, processual theorization of expertise, policy, and inter-urban competition. Science and technology studies (H. M. Collins and Evans 2002; H. M. Collins and Evans 2007; Hackett et al. 2007) are also useful for their discussions of the practices that (re)produce the symbolic boundaries of science. Thus, I propose a relational, processual theorization of 'expertise' and policy, attentive to symbolic 'boundaries' in conflict, and to the interplay between competitive, cooperative and conflictual social relations underlying expertise and inter-urban competition.

Three aspects are important. First, bounded, stable concepts of expertise need to be rejected, as an imagery of interstitiality, hybridization and of 'space between fields' captures better contemporary forms of policy expertise that are making possible processes of competition (Eyal and Pok 2011; Eyal 2013; Eyal and Pok 2015).

Second, boundaries between elite and non-elite, between elite and experts, and/or between expert and lay, are neither absolute nor impermeable and undisputed (H. M. Collins and Evans 2002; H. M. Collins and Evans 2007; Hackett et al. 2007). There is a dialectical, constitutive relation between on the one hand, the creation and maintenance of 'boundaries' and 'differentiations' and attempts of bounding and controlling expertise, and on the other hand, co-operation and co-production with different experts and non-experts in order to actually *do* expertise and facilitate processes of inter-urban competition and competitive bidding. Moreover, 'elites' are differentiated and stratified (Higley and Pakulski 2012); the concept is also elastic and relational, shifting when actors are "differentially situated within flows of transactions or relational settings" (Emirbayer 1997, 290).

Third, analysis of policy expertise should bring conflict back in the usual accounts of co-operation and co-production among elites, experts, devices, and/or publics: contestation, critics and protestors are not just separate 'spheres' shaping how the other 'spheres' of inter-urban competition and expertise are enacted but they are part and parcel of these dynamic processes-and-practices.

In contrast to a substantivist approach to expertise that focuses on the attributes and essential traits of professionals (education, occupation, worldviews, interests, autonomy, and institutional forms of recognition, licensing and credentialing), critical studies on policy and expertise have

similar concerns with the mundane practices of policy expertise and with what experts do, not with what experts 'possess'.

Expertise is not about the specialized knowledge or the skills experts possess but it is a social relation. Expertise is not a thing or a possession of an individual but a social relation and a persuasive or performance of expertise (Kuus 2014). Rather the enactments of policy expertise – bringing together (im)material infrastructures, concepts and actors into alignment (Shore and Wright 2011) – facilitate the mobilization of policies. It involves the "participation of objects, producers, and consumers of knowledge, and (…) is implicated in the evolving hierarchies of value that legitimate particular ways of knowing as 'expert'" (Carr 2010, 17; Eyal and Pok 2011; 2015; Eyal 2013). While some are recognized as experts, it also means that others are seen as non-experts.

Thus, expertise is not a thing but different enactments or performances: it is the capacity to do something, to accomplish a task. Expertise as capacity to enact or to align is inherently relational and network-like as it involves "connecting together actors, devices, concepts, institutional and spatial arrangements" and bringing them into alignment (Carr 2010; Shore and Wright 2011; Eyal and Pok 2015, 38). As Eyal and Pok note:

> *(i)f expertise stands for the capacity to accomplish a task (…) it is not enough to focus on the actors and their skills. Clearly, a full account of anything but the most rudimentary task must include, at a minimum, the tools and devices used in the performance of the task, the contributions made by other experts, front-line workers, perhaps even lay people, the institutional and spatial arrangements (including regulatory agencies and standards) that foreground certain problems, making them observable and actionable while obscuring others, and the concepts that organize the observations and interventions of the experts. Expertise, therefore, is better analysed as a network connecting all these diverse elements* (2015, 46-47).

Likewise, authors like McCann and Ward are understanding policy expertise relationally and look at the "complex assemblage of people, concepts, models, initiatives, and techniques" and mundane practices that facilitate the mobilization of urban policies (McCann 2008); they underline co-operation and co-production among elites, experts, discourses, and devices, and secondly the struggles over expertise (McCann and Ward 2011).

As elites occupy "the 'command posts' at the top of the central institutional domains in a society" and have control over formal rules and institutions, allocation of resources, and agenda-

setting (Brint 1990, 364; Brint 1995), they are necessary element of a relational understanding to expertise and of its (de)territorialization and institutionalization. Authors like Scott (2008) and Wright (2009) completely subsume expertise under domination and modalities of elite power – and conceptualize expertise as a knowledge-based authority through which elites or the ruling class exercise domination, and experts as the direct carriers of domination. I consider that expertise is all too often depicted as a 'servant-of-power' (Brint 1990, 364; Brint 1995), as a straightforward tool of elite domination and a 'secure accomplishment' (Li 2007; Prince 2013). Of course, expertise is not a free-floating and disinterested realm (Eyal and Buchholz 2010) but it is neither simply a tool that operates in a top-down, hierarchical manner from elites and experts to the 'masses'.

Additionally, not just cultural and creative work but also knowledge work has increasingly become synonymous with the experience of precariousness (Fabiani 2014; Murgia, Maestripieri, and Armano 2016), making problematic the blanket inclusion of experts as elite but which fuels the view of expertise as a tool of ideological domination working through the actual subordination of precarious knowledge workers. Nonetheless, even though expertise is clearly implicated in power relations, power can be exercised in a variety of modalities beyond domination, authority, and monopoly but also through seduction, negotiation, persuasion (Allen 2003), 'co-production' and 'power-as-generosity'[34] (N. Rose 1992; Eyal and Pok 2011; Eyal 2013; Eyal and Pok 2015).

Therefore, in addition to the relations (in) between elites, expert actors, objects, instruments, statements, informational and institutional infrastructures (Eyal and Pok 2015; Carr 2010; McCann and Ward 2010; McCann 2008; Shore and Wright 2011), the relational theorization of policy expertise and inter-urban competition I put forward pays attention to the following aspects: interstitiality, social and symbolic boundaries, and contestation.

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[34]While drawing on Rose (1992), Eyal and Pok use 'generosity' and 'co-production' to mean power through extension, mobilization and transfer; in Eyal's terms 'generosity' means "a network of expertise, as distinct from the experts, becomes more powerful and influential by virtue of its capacity to craft and package its concepts, its discourse, its modes of seeing, doing, and judging, so they can be grafted onto what others are doing, thus linking them to the network and eliciting their cooperation" (Eyal 2013, 875–76). They argue for distinguishing between 'experts' and 'expertise' as two separate modes of analysis.

First, inter-urban competition and competitive bidding, just like cultural and urban policies, are made possible by an interstitial, hybrid form(s) of expertise, by the collaboration between differently trained professionals, and the mobilization of different types of skills and knowledge. In contrast to the 'boundedness' of traditional occupations and professions (Abbott 1988; Abbott 1993; Abbott 2001), urban policy expertise does not have a 'space'/ 'field' but it is fundamentally interstitial, usually characterized by "qualities of permeability, under-regulation, weak institutionalization, hybridity and ambiguity" (Eyal and Pok 2015, 44). But together with the potential opportunities conferred by in-betweenness and interstitiality of expertise, there come precarity, anxiety and contingency. As such, the opportunities of interstitiality are unevenly distributed and benefit institutions and actors who have enough material and immaterial resources to navigate these ambiguous in-betweens. In a context marked by increased professional insecurity and the rise of flexible work and self-employment, fragile forms of expert labor have emerged; more and more of highly trained, 'new' policy professionals are in fact 'vulnerable experts' relying on uncertain, intermittent employment (Fabiani and Theys 1987), 'anxious analysts' (Boyer 2008) trying to make sense of contingent fields of work. For Boyer, we should challenge the crypto-rationalist orientation in our work on expertise and policy, and deal more seriously with "the place of desire, fantasy and anxiety in the production of expert knowledge" (Boyer 2008, 43).

Second, while co-operation between differently trained experts is required in order to actually do expertise and make possible competitive bidding, there are also attempts to 'bound' and control expertise, and to create and maintain 'boundaries' and 'differentiations' between different forms of expertise but also between experts and non-experts. Expertise necessarily involves the "casting other people as less aware, knowing, or knowledgeable" (Carr 2010, 22), the creation of distinctions, hierarchies, and asymmetries between people and between experts and the objects of expertise. Even as a capacity and enactment, expertise exists only in relation to non-expertise and does not make sense without its counterpart, without laities. As such, the social and symbolic boundaries of expertise and their intertwining and mutually constituting relations need to be examined.

These distinctions are both among different experts and also between experts and laypeople (e.g.: between experts and clients, between experts and the target population/the governed). According

to Abbott (1988; 1993; 2001), professional actors compete with others groups in order to gain 'jurisdiction' or control over actual work processes; these jurisdictional disputes between different professions over the boundaries of expertise are, according to Abbott, the main feature of professional and occupational life. Yet, in contrast to this territorial, nation-state boundedness of professions advanced by Abbott (1988; 1993; 2001) or to the nation-centric fields proposed by Bourdieu (Perre Bourdieu 1993; Buchholz 2016), inter-urban competition and competitive bidding do not involve a well-defined epistemic jurisdiction, monopoly, or bounded field of expertise within the nation-state.

Rather, it involves a space in-between fields, an interstitial space. Moreover, Lamont and Molnár note that expertise boundaries are resulting "not only from interprofessional competition á la Abbott, but also from disputes with subordinates at the workplace" (2002, 178); thus not only from competition but also from conflict. Expertise – even interstitial, network-like expertise such as the one facilitating inter-city rivalries and policy interventions – is still shaped by exclusionary mechanisms, control, markers of differentiation, and the drawing of social and symbolic boundaries, even though these symbolic boundaries are not necessarily co-terminus with territorial, administrative borders.

Moreover, the social and symbolic boundaries created between experts and laypeople are neither natural nor absolute (Evans and Collins 2007; Hackett et al. 2007) but created and sustained through 'boundary-work'[35] (Gieryn 1983; 1999; Lamont and Molnár 2002). Gieryn developed the term boundary-work to define a rhetorical style and discursive practices by which "scientists construct a boundary between the production of scientific knowledge and its consumption by non-scientists (engineers, technicians, people in business and government)" with the goal of protecting autonomy and achieving "immunity from blame for undesirable consequences of non-scientists' consumption of scientific knowledge" (Gieryn 1983, 789).

Not just scientists, but also policy experts need to employ mundane boundary-work practices and "strategic practical action" (Gieryn 1999, 23) in order to differentiate themselves from 'lesser' experts or non-experts. These practices are also necessary in order to establish credibility and more importantly to exempt themselves from bearing responsibility for the consequences of their

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[35] A spatial vocabulary of power (Allen 2003) is underlying the concepts of 'boundary work' and 'jurisdiction.'

work, usually by putting the blame on non-experts, clients, or 'lesser' experts. The high stakes and zero sum nature of processes of competitive bidding make this boundary-work even more critical for expert labor and survival. Yet, in spite of the drawing and deployment of symbolic and social boundaries among professionals themselves, and between professionals and non-experts, the co-operation and participation of citizens is necessary in processes of competitive bidding and inter-urban competition. These processes are enabled not just by the compliance and consent of citizens but also by their co-operation, active participation and non-remunerated, unpaid labor as interns, volunteers and 'ambassadors' for '*their*' city (Baum and Lockstone 2007; K. Bennett 2013).

Third, both co-operation, and symbolic and social boundaries between expertise and laypeople are also permeated, reworked and contested, and can involve conflictual social relations (Lamont and Molnár 2002). As such, relations with non-experts, clients, laities, target population, contesters and/or critics shape expertise and make possible competitive bidding and inter-urban competition, and at times impossible. Analysis should not be limited to recognized professionals and those who can make viable claims to expertise but also to critics, contesters, 'non-experts', laypeople and others who can facilitate or block the fields of intervention.

There is a constant interplay between co-operative, competitive and conflictual social relations in the enactment of expertise and processes of inter-urban competition. Inter-urban competition and competitive bidding are shaped by the dialectical, constitutive relation between on the one hand, the need to control the work of competitive bidding, the 'boundaries' of expertise and the 'borders' of the city, and on the other hand, the need to collaborate with different experts and non-experts in order to actually do expertise, represent the city vis-à-vis other cities and facilitate inter-urban competition.

Yet, enactments of expertise are dependent and constituted not just through the dialectical relation between co-operative and competitive social relations but also through conflict and contestation. Conflict and contestation further complicate and reconstitute the tension between boundary-work and co-production underlying expertise and processes of inter-urban competition. Thus, processes inter-urban competition and the enactments of expertise that make them possible are also a site of conflict and contestation, not just the dialectical process between cooperation and competition.

In the relational and processual approach to competition I put forward, it is important to pay attention to the interplay between interests, aspirations and emotions, and the mutual interactions between competitive, cooperative and conflictual social relations underlying enactments of policy expertise and processes of inter-urban competition.

While looking at the European Capital of Culture programme and the Spanish bidding process for the 2016 title, the next chapters aim to explore how inter-urban competition is constituted, the practices that make it possible, and its effects.

2. Engineering Competition: Policy Infrastructures and the Trajectory of the European Capital of Culture Programme

Competition among cities is a historically-specific process that is made possible by the (re)production of policy infrastructures and institutional frameworks. Competition is neither 'natural' nor 'typical' but an uneven ensemble of socio-spatial policy processes that attempt to foster competitive relations and processes, while affirming at the same time that competition is and has always been the fundamental tenet of everyday life under European capitalism. The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is among the EU programmes that have made great efforts to extend a competitive paradigm. This competitive paradigm is currently dominating EU policies (M. Garcia and Judd 2012) and subordinate the so-called cohesion policies of the EU.

In this chapter, I analyze the shift in the selection system of the European Capital of Culture programme from 'political decisions' to 'expert-led competitions'. The decision to launch the European City of Culture programme in 1985 – later known as the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) – was made at an informal meeting between the Ministers of Culture within the broader European Community (EC). As the story goes, the idea for the ECoC was proposed by the then-Minister of Culture of Greece, Melina Mercouri, during a conversation with her French counterpart, Jack Lang, while in – perhaps unsurprisingly – an airport layover in Athens. Jack Lang was a strong supporter of an initiative meant to safeguard and promote culture and heritage, as he previously had defended the exclusion of cultural goods – 'cultural exception'[36] – from commercial negotiations (Littoz-Monnet 2007); the other politicians were also interested in this idea. Even though culture was not yet part of the legal of the EC, establishing an inter-governmental agreement like the ECoC was a decision which the Ministers of Culture could take informally and unilaterally, without the other institutions of the European Community (Myerscough 1994).

Just like the Commission, the Council of Ministers was operating "a de facto cultural policy long before the Maastricht Treaty gave it the legal right to do so" in 1992 (Shore 2000, 46). It became one of the first cultural initiatives developed by the Community. In an interview in 1985 with

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[36] For Jack Lang, cultural goods should be an exception to the rules of the market, as they "are not goods like others": "Refusing to abandon the price of cultural goods to the destructive laws of the market, such is one of the Government's concerns, for books as well as for other cultural activities" (Lang 1981 qtd. in Benhamou 2015).

Deutsche Welle, Melina Mercouri – herself a former actress and singer – explained the reasons behind this initiative as promoting communication among artists and the 'intelligentsia' of Europe (Myerscough 1994): "I believe in cultural exchange and I think we shouldn't just have a community of potatoes and tomatoes, but that there should also be an exchange for artists" (qtd. in Riegert 2011). She also argued – in a widely circulated quote – that "it is time for our (n.a.: the Ministers of Culture) 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". But with time, the voice of the technocrats became the loudest. Currently the ECoC is under the authority of the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission. Concurrently, a logic of competition took hold in its rule regimes[37]: the procedures for the designation also shifted from 'political decisions' among politicians/ministers of cultural affairs to formalized standards of competition, evaluation and monitoring.

In this chapter, I focus on how competition was mobilized in the case of ECoC, and on the effects of this translation. After dealing briefly with the beginnings of the ECoC programme, I analyze the formation of the policy infrastructures that facilitated the mobilization of the competitive paradigm (models, reports, experts, etc.). I document how this infrastructure has emerged, mutated and transformed from territorial and relational connections with a very particular case (Glasgow) and with a very particular national context (UK). After, I analyze how the engineering of competition operated through the interests and aspirations of professionals and experts, and with what contradictions and effects. Then, I focus on the wider effects of this promotion of competition.

2.1. 'A Community of Potatoes and Tomatoes': The Beginnings

The ECoC was established in a period when 'culturalist' approaches became part of the toolbox of European integration (Shore 2000): just like the cultural policies designed by the European Commission, ECoC was considered necessary for the integration and identity-building of the

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[37] By 'rule regimes' (Peck 2002), I mean an interstitial, transnational system of governance operating in between different scales and wider policy networks, composed of the European Commission, EU institutions, the Ministries of Culture of member states, and transnational networks of policy expertise.

members states of the European Community not just through economy and politics but also through culture (Sassatelli 2009; Lähdesmäki 2011; Lähdesmäki 2012). M. Gold and J. Gold (2005) mention that the programme expressed the spirit of the 1980s, when "the community looked for ways to relaunch the European project after the stagnation of the 1970s, that member states renewed discussion about culture with any vigor" (2005, 222). The ECoC was imagined as a top-down tool meant to create cultural coherence and promote a sense of belonging and awareness of the common history, culture and value of the EU member states: "to bring the peoples of the Member States closer together" through culture, more precisely through a programme in which cities celebrate their status as cultural centers of Europe (EC 1985). Although dismissed as a 'symbolic initiative' or as an 'empty honor' for the chosen city (Sassatelli 2009), the ECoC became a dominant policy paradigm for culture-led development at the European level, and "perhaps the most newsworthy of the European Community's actions in the cultural field" (Myerscough 1994, 20). Due to the mobility of the initiative and the high number of cities nominated for ECoC since its emergence in 1985 (more than 60 cities from more than 30 countries have been chosen so far), the ECoC is considered a success and a 'brand' of the EU (European Commission 2009; 2014).

The first five cities which held the European City of Culture title were already established cultural centers like Athens, Florence, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris (Richards 2000). The programmes were concentrated on fine arts and were "primarily summer festivals staged for domestic audiences with little international marketing" (Gold and Gold 2005, 223). After Athens held the first title, the other cities were chosen in a sequential order among the member states based on negotiations between politicians as representatives of national authorities[38] (usually between the ministers of culture or secretaries responsible for cultural affairs). In contrast to the Spanish competition or more recent developments in ECoC, at that time the choice and nomination of the city were not always determined together with the city council but were initiated by national authorities (Myerscough 1994). In the first report that evaluated the first ten years of ECoCs and that was funded by the Commission, Myerscough (1994) paints a picture of the designation as part gentlemen's agreement, part petty politicians haggling with each other:

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[38] The Commission was partially funding the event during this time, while the permanent staff at the Council were overseeing the decision process.

In the process, some states were keener to volunteer than others. Italy wished to secure an early place in the sequence and the Dutch Minister of Culture was personally an early enthusiast for the ECC concept. After Florence[39] was moved from 1985 (owing to slippage of Athens from 1984 – the original idea – to 1985), they found themselves competing for 1986. The Council of Ministers left this to the two member states to resolve alone. For Germany, 1988 was accepted although it was not ideal from Berlin's point of view. France had staked its claim to 1989 because of the planned bicentennial celebration of the French revolution (Myerscough 1994, 2).

Before the 1999 Decision, there were no 'hard' selection rules. As the former chairman of the Luxembourg ECoC 1995 mentioned in the minutes of a meeting, "political decisions are always political decisions" (Dockendorf in ECCM 2000, 15). In case of more than one suggestion and/or lobbying from different candidates, the minister and national authorities were taking the decision based on 'political' considerations (e.g. West Berlin in 1988 and not Munich or Bonn; Madrid in 1992 and not Salamanca or Granada in order to maintain the dominance of the capital city vis-à-vis Barcelona's Olympics and Seville's Expo).

The rationale of the ECoC – including its selection logic – changed through its translation and mobilization: from cities with an already-acquired cultural prestige to cities in the pursuit of 'collective symbolic capital' (Harvey 2002) and from negotiations between European politicians and decisions by national authorities to a competitive model. In the first ten years of ECoC, Glasgow was the only city that was chosen after a competitive process organized by the UK national authorities.

Starting with the nomination of Glasgow as an ECoC for 1990, the concept of ECoC was extended to aspiring cities, and non-capital cities: it was increasingly used as an entrepreneurial strategy for urban redevelopment, especially by urban coalitions representing cities facing deindustrialization (Herrero et al. 2006). After the enlargement of the EU and the inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries, the aspirations of the coalitions applying and hosting ECoC revolved around 'modernization' and 'Europeanization' together with culture-led urban redevelopment (Tölle 2013). Currently, coalitions from capital cities and European hubs tend to gravitate towards the Olympic Games, World Expositions or Worlds' Fairs, or creating their own

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[39] During this time (and not only then), the term of 'culture' is understood in terms of high culture and civilization, replete with elitist assumptions about the meanings of culture and with ethnocentric considerations regarding the world. As Florence followed Athens as ECoC 1986, the mayor argued that "if the roots of European civilization lie in classical Athens, the modern world, which put man back at the centre of the Universe, was born in humanist and renaissance Florence, and based itself on the re-discovery of Greek civilization" (Myerscough 1994, 6).

flagship events, while the ECoC has become established in the EU as a mega-event among post-industrial, post-socialist and smaller cities, among second-tier and third-tier cities looking to boost their cultural tourism and image.

2.2. The Building Blocks of Competitive Bidding: Glasgow, from the Athens of the North to the Model of the ECoC programme

Glasgow is generally portrayed as a turning point in the trajectory of ECoC due to its focus on culture-led urban redevelopment, although this narrative was nuanced by some. Calligaro and Patel argue that "urban regeneration, which the existing literature identifies as an innovation of Glasgow's tenure, was already an important concern in Florence four years earlier" in 1986 (Patel 2013b, 10; Calligaro 2013). Despite these antecedents of policy actors concerned with urban regeneration and tourism, Calligaro mentions that "(t)he choice of Glasgow certainly initiated a sharp change of approach at the European institutional level", since Florence was 'a famous city of art', and Glasgow was 'a symbol of post-industrial urban decay' (Calligaro 2013, 100).

Simultaneously with becoming a symbol of post-industrial transformation and a feel-good 'comeback' story, the mobilization of ECoC to Glasgow became known for its competitive process. In the first ten years of ECoC, Glasgow was the only city that was chosen after a competitive process organized by the UK national authorities, more precisely by the then Office of Arts and Libraries, and not through political decisions of the national authorities and negotiations between EU's Ministers of Culture. Nine District Councils submitted proposals (Bath, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburg, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, and Swansea), with Glasgow selected as winner in 1986 after visits from the staff of the Office. It is important to note that national authorities and the Council of Ministers still have to agree with the result of the competition, and officially designate the city as ECoC. The possibility of rejection of the results of the competition existed and continues to exist, although – as it can be expected – this is not something that it is widely circulated.

Glasgow, the city that was imagined by Mercouri as the 'Athens of the North' (Fischer 2015), became *the* model of ECoC: in the beginning of the 1990s, it was heralded at a European level as the quintessential model of a successful renaissance through the newly-established European City of Culture action. In the Glasgow programme, the regeneration goal was central with ECoC seen as an urban redevelopment tool for a 'gritty', post-industrial city and its transformation in a cultural city. The local authorities of Glasgow sought to use the event in order to "demonstrate a new face as a European post-industrial city geared to growth and a commitment to using the arts as a means of communicating its renaissance" (Myerscough 1991:3). Urban redevelopment and tourism became central for Glasgow and also for the whole ECoC programme.

The event was criticized and opposed by urban movements and academics for sanitizing the history and image of the city, excluding workers from urban imaginaries, and creating a more unequal, dual city (Boyle and Hughes 1991; Boyle 1999; Mooney 2004; Mooney and Danson 1997). Contradictory evidence was subsumed under the 'mythology[40]' of Glasgow: the 1990 programme improved the public image of Glasgow away from dirt and the 'mean city' image associated with football and gang violence (GlasgowLife 2011).

Due to the general favorable reporting of the achievements of ECoC 1990 to help the regeneration of Glasgow, both the 'model of Glasgow' and the importance of the ECoC programme were established. From ECoCs as primarily dull summer festivals, Glasgow 1990 "changed the scale of the event and showed what could be achieved by a city not usually associated with the arts" (Gold and Gold, 2005: 225). The model functioned and continues to function as 'evidence' for what the ECoC can achieve, and for its positive benefits. But with the constant referencing by other urban coalitions, the experience of Glasgow 1990 is departicularized.

The particular example of Glasgow as ECoC 1990 was a 'success' in a particular context characterized by the intersection of three mutually reinforcing trends: the incipient mobilization of US-style urban entrepreneurialism, state-led competitive bidding, and the spread of calculative expertise in the cultural sector.

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[40] As Li argues, something is a myth "not because it lacked any empirical base but because it became axiomatic: a conceptual framework so powerful that it subsumed contradictory evidence" (2007, 49).

First, the regeneration of Glasgow was not just a result of the ECoC 1990 programme but was part of a broader urban entrepreneurial strategy that started in 1983 with the 'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign, together with the smiles of Mr Happy; this image-boosting campaign was directly inspired by the 'I ♥ NY' campaign, a state-centralized branding coalition led by the NY State Department of Commerce in late 1977 (S. V. Ward 1998a; Greenberg 2009). S. Ward refers to the Glasgow's Miles Better campaign as the first major manifestation of 'American-style' urban entrepreneurialism led by municipalities, and its international diffusion of place-marketing ideas and policies (S. V. Ward 1998a). Likewise, Glasgow 1990 was modeled on the redevelopment initiatives of American industrial cities like Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia but also on the preparations of Barcelona for the Olympics (Patel 2013a).

Second, the internal competitive process organized by the UK national authorities for the ECoC programme was part of a broader state-led turn towards injecting more competition into the public sector, and towards asserting competitive bidding as model of resource allocation for a wide range of programs, including for regeneration and 'City Pride'. As P. John and H. Ward argue, "(t)he U.K. Conservative governments of 1979–97 introduced competitive bidding for public funds for a range of programs, starting with a small number, such as City Challenge, extended it to urban regeneration as with the challenge funds, and then introduced competition more generally across the public sector" (John and Ward 2005, 72). The creation of competitive bidding initiatives and funding mechanisms was meant to encourage competition between cities and the creation of a competitive urbanism, seemingly liberating public bodies from the 'dependency culture' (Stewart 1996; Oatley 1998; John and Ward 2005; Oatley 1995). Stewart (1996) argues that the institutionalization of competitive bidding led to a more centralized state. John and Ward (2005) also note that competitive bidding has remained a constant in the UK public sector even after the governmental change in 1997.

Third, Glasgow 1990 was influenced by wider trends associated with the increasing instrumentalization of the cultural 'sector' and the proliferation of cultural statistics and calculative systems in the UK (Belfiore 2009; Prince 2013; Prince 2014). The late 1980s and early 1990s were a period marked by the proliferation of policies associated with the 'cultural industries', creativity and culture, and by the constitution and spread of 'calculative cultural expertise' (Prince 2013) or comparative cultural expertise, particularly data-driven, quantitative

studies about the economic impact of the arts became significant. As a consequence, "there have been some 200 reports into that year, to say nothing of hundreds of articles" (Palmer qtd. in Leadbetter 2015): the Glasgow year was the most 'well-documented' among the pre-2000 ECoCs.

The publication in 1988 of *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* which included a case study on Glasgow – was key moment in this constitution of calculative, comparative expertise in the UK sector. Its author, John Myerscough, became a leading figure in the instrumental analysis of the arts based on its contribution for jobs and image promotion. After this study, Prince notes that an 'avalanche' of data that was generated on arts and culture as "the subsidised cultural sector increasingly mobilised itself around the government's stated need for 'evidence-based policy-making'" (Prince 2013, 2). Elena Belfiore (2009) argues that research on the socio-economic impact of the arts was mostly done for the sake of advocating for increasing the funding of the cultural sector: thus, "value-based (and therefore value-laden) arguments are couched in the apparently politically neutral language of 'evidence-based policy'" (Belfiore 2009, 350). She goes on to note that this advocacy-friendly research:

> *has often focused on asking* how *the presumed positive social impacts of the arts might be measured or enhanced, rather than in asking* whether *the arts have social impacts of the sort claimed for them,* if *these impacts can be expected to be positive and, more generally,* whether *it is possible to generalize people's experiences of the arts within art forms, across art forms and across the very diverse population represented by those who engage with the arts* (Belfiore 2009, 353).

These value-laden arguments – and its consequences – are also characteristic of the main ECoC reports, which emerged within the same context of increased commodification and instrumentalization of the cultural sector in the UK and with the same purpose as advocacy-friendly research on the contributions of the arts: to quantify and monetize the socio-economic contributions of the arts/ECoC. The infrastructures of the ECoC programme – experts, consultancies, networks, models, concepts, and reports – emerged from relational connections and disconnections with the very particular case of Glasgow 1990, and were driven by the spread of calculative expertise in the UK cultural sector.

As Robert Palmer, the director of Glasgow 1990, mentions in the minutes of the ECCM Network,

I had been working for many years with John Myerscough, in Glasgow; he had worked with me for almost ten years on the whole issue of economic impact of the arts and I proposed to the Network that perhaps the Network should instigate a study looking at the previous cities from 1985 Athens through to 1994 Lisbon (Palmer in ECCM 2000, 7).

As these elements later contributed to the eventual mobilization of competitive bidding, and to translation of the Glasgow model and of the UK experience for the whole ECoC, it explains why most of the well-known experts and advisors working on the ECoC are UK-citizens or UK-based: they were either involved beforehand in these fields connected to culture-led development, cultural industries, assessing the socio-economic contributions of the arts, etc., and/or have a 'structural affinity' with the changes implemented within ECoC.

2.3. Infrastructures of Competitive Bidding: Experts, Models, Report, Decision, Report, Decision, and so on

The policy infrastructures – that made possible the promotion of inter-urban competition, and facilitated this alignment between the European Commission, transnational experts, reports, models, and decisions – emerged and mutated from a very specific context, Glasgow as ECoC 1990, characterized by the confluence of three trends: first, the translation of 'US-style' urban entrepreneurialism to initiatives led by UK municipalities; second, the turn towards competitive bidding as model of resource allocation in the public sector led by the UK Conservative government; third, the increased instrumentalization of the cultural sector, and the spread of calculative, comparative expertise in the arts and culture in the UK. The institutionalization of competitive bidding modeled on this particular case has led to an enlargement of the roles and powers of the Commission and transnational experts, and to a translation of US-UK (Anglo-Saxon) style of entrepreneurial, competitive urbanism to the whole ECoC programme.

But this departicularization of the model of Glasgow – just like the formation and maintenance of other policy infrastructures – does not arise naturally or by default but happen through the enactments of expertise[41], through the mutually reinforcing alignment between actors, models,

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[41] It is important to note that these infrastructures do not only consist of material and traceable elements (like reports, experts and transfer agents) but also immaterial, performative and representational components (Robinson 2013), like reference cities, model-cities to emulate, everyday performances of expertise, etc.

reports, legislation and mundane activities. Even though this expertise might appear neutral and universal, it is in fact ideologically partial and politically specific: this work of departicularization and alignment is done "(t)hrough the labor of those in the policy mobility 'business' or 'industry'" (Cook and Ward 2011, 140). Moreover, policy infrastructures are constructed, mobilized, and maintained not only through the mundane activities of the 'expert', but also through the alignment of their activities with reports, concepts, legislation, etc.

2.3.1. The Myerscough Report and Decision 1999: Comparative, Calculative Expertise and Legalism

After publishing *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain*, Myerscough led the impact analysis of Glasgow's year as European City of Culture, *Monitoring Glasgow 1990* (1991), and he was the author of a 2011 report "commissioned by Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life and part-funded by Creative Scotland, (…) (that) its status as cultural capital was confirmed" (GlasgowLife 2011).

As hinted in the previous section, Myerscough was the author of the first large-scale report on ECoC, which became known as *the Myerscough Report* (1994), a report which reasserted the positive impact of Glasgow 1990 and the value of the ECoC programme. This report commissioned by a network of ECoC directors – that later became the European Cultural Capitals and Cultural Months Network, or the European Cities of Culture Network (ECCM) – that was founded by Robert Palmer, director of Glasgow, who also acted as the project director and advisor on the Myerscough Report. According to Patel, Glasgow 1990 "epitomized the qualities the Myerscough report was soon to stress: professional planning, urban regeneration, cultural tourism and a rather procedural understanding of the 'European dimension'" (Patel 2013a, 544). The same approach to (urban) cultural policy was illustrated, that culture is a tool for post-industrial urban redevelopment, and that its economic benefits can be measured.

The Myerscough report, just like others that followed it, was an advocacy-friendly research study as it argued for a stronger role for experts and professionals, formalized standards of competition, monitoring and evaluation, and for standardized knowledge and statistics for each

ECoC. The reduction of 'confusions' – equated to 'political decisions' – could only be achieved by increasing the presence of experts, and improving the competitive elements that were modeled on the only competition undertaken at that time (Glasgow). The competition process was imagined as 'manageable' and 'professional', as part of a 'professional' approach to the policy, that would allow that the ECoC title "not something that you should get somehow but you should really deserve it. And to deserve the title, there are some conditions" (ECCM 2000, 15).

It was advocating for increasing quantification in order to tackle the 'poor documentation' of the ECoCs. This calculative, comparative, and quantification impetus of the report was at least partially successfully translated. Comparison and calculation became key practices within the ECoC programme. As one former director of ECoC mentions:

> *every city, after the Myerscough report, has had some written report on their experience; we commissioned the same John Myerscough in '95 to make a report on the economic, cultural and tourist impact of the Cultural Capital... all the cities afterwards had someone or a board of people to write a report* (ECCM 2000, 14).

In this context, at the end of the 1990s – beginning of the 2000s, the creation and development of a wealth of reports and consultancies can be witnessed inspired by the Myerscough report.

The DG EAC did not commission but it did fund the report (together with national and local authorities), just as it supported and financed the meetings of the network which delegated the study. The Commission was an enthusiastic supporter of the conclusions of the Myerscough report, as it "shows that the event has a positive impact in terms of media resonance, the development of culture and tourism and the recognition by inhabitants of the importance of their city having been chosen" (1999). Based on this evidence for the benefits of ECoC, a co-decision procedure was initiated by the Commission, that led to a change in the legal framework (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 1999). With Decision 1999, the ECoC ceased to be an inter-governmental initiative between Ministers of Culture and became a community action and therefore became more integrated in the EU policy-making process. This shift was also facilitated by adoption of the Maastricht Treaty (1992), as treaties are generally "both the Commission's claim to legitimacy and its most effective instrument for obtaining power" (Shore 2000, 134). At the recommendation of experts and of the report, a rotational system for EU countries for 2005-2019 was implemented. After the decision, the competition

takes place within the same member state, based on the slot to which it was assigned to beforehand.

This new decision taken in 1999 included rules regarding the production of monitoring and evaluation reports and stricter rules for the designation of cities as ECoC: the designation needed to be made by a selection panel composed of "seven leading independent figures who are experts on the cultural sector" (1999), and not through the negotiations between the Council of Culture Ministers as it was the case until that point. They also needed to choose between cities that present "a cultural project of European dimension, based principally on cultural cooperation" (1999, 4).With this decision change, experts and consultants were given a prominent institutionalized role in all the phases of the ECoC policy [42]. With the introduction of a competitive bidding process (within a particular member state), experts became more involved in the designation process.

Prior to 2004 (when the decision came into full effect), the decisions were taken by the Council of Ministers based on the applications they received from all over EU member states – and some non-EU countries –, and on negotiations between the representatives of member states. For the year 2000, the Council of Ministers could not reach an agreement and instead ended up nominating all 9 competing cities. As one expert mentions,

> *they did what politicians very often do, they did not take any decision and they waited (…) there were nine cities that wished the title, and nine cities received the title, although it's been developed into a symbolic action for the millennium* (ECCM 2000, 9).

The same delay in decision-making happened for the 2001 title that should have been taken with at least 2 years before. The greater involvement of experts in bidding was not achieved just through the Myerscough report but also through the mundane activities of the experts by politicians and technocrats before the approval of the new decision. In the minutes of ECCM, the director of Luxembourg 1995 mentions that:

> *(t)here was no decision for (ECoC) 2001 and no one knew (…) So we decided to visit the seven cities – candidates for 2001. (…) There was Rotterdam and Oporto – the two cities*

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[42] As other policies, the ECoC process is described in a linear narrative: the writing of the bid application, the bidding process itself, the preparation for the ECoC year, the cultural management of the whole year (or the management of failure after an unsuccessful bidding competition), to post-evaluation studies of a particular ECoC year, policy recommendations and studies assessing the ECoC programmes done for the European Commission and other institutions, and policy-making and policy change regarding the ECoC.

that finally got the title, but there was also Riga, Basel, Lille, Valencia and Genoa. And we visited 24 hours for each city – it was a marathon and, I must say, it was totally foolish idea, but it was extremely thrilling and it taught us a lot of things. (…) So we met all this people in charge of (competing for) 2001 and then we invited them to the meeting, as Bob (Robert Palmer) said, to have the 7 cities present, the Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee just to make up their minds and just to give everybody the same opportunities to present themselves" (ECCM 2000, 14).

Through these activities in a situation when the 'political' decision was stalling, these experts were acknowledged as authoritative by politicians and technocrats. This successful performance has contributed to the change in the decision and the promotion of expert-led competition.

If during this time (prior to 2004) there was a feeling of 'no rules, no regulations' (ECCM 2000), it would be wrong to see it as a cutthroat competition between different European cities that were all trying to lobby the EU institutions and out-lobby each other. Rather, the number of applications was small and inexpensive, as national authorities were submitting maximum one application that was not as demanding and extensive as it is expected nowadays; crucially, the main mechanism of these political decisions was mutual benefit, agreement and compromise (along the lines of 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours'). If Rotterdam and Porto were the two cities that received the title in 2001, Basel and Riga got the Cultural Months title, while the losers, Lille, Genoa and Salamanca were awarded the title in the coming years. This designation process had its own informal mechanisms of resolution. Due to the formation of policy infrastructures and the alignment between the European Commission, transnational experts, reports, and models, this low-key situation changed after Decision 1999 – and later after Decision 2005 and 2006 – was developed and came into place.

It is no surprise that the initiation of the process associated with Decision 1999 came from the Commission, as "legalism permeates all aspects of the Commission's work, including its approach to policy" (Shore 2000, 132–33). Competition was engineered through the alignment between policy infrastructures and legalism. Once the ECoC initiative became a 'community action', the competition started having its own magnified dynamic, acquiring an aura of institutional authority and seduction.

2.3.2. The Palmer Report and Decision 2005 and 2006: The 'Bible'

The Palmer report (2004) was also followed by a change in the legal framework (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2006; 2005). It was commissioned and funded by the Commission.

It was the second major report on the ECoCs from 1995 until 2004, and it was led by Robert Palmer, the director of Glasgow 1990 and Brussels 2000. Palmer is considered the 'star' expert of the ECoC, and the only person that was in charge with two ECoCs. His mundane activities (re)produced that model, to which his professional life and identity are intertwined. Pre-ECoC his profile was revolving around cultural management and cultural events: at the time of the nomination of Glasgow, he was working as the Drama, Dance and Touring Director at the Scottish Arts Council in Edinburg (1980-1987); after the event, he worked as Director of Performing Arts and Venues at the Glasgow City Council (Palmer 2012). In 1990, he organized in Glasgow the first meeting of past, present and future directors of the ECoC, the ECCM Network, but which no longer exists. The meetings of the ECCM network were funded by the Commission. Moreover, he has been an advisor for numerous bidding cities, invited to conferences and lecturing extensively on the topic of ECoC around Europe and globally, especially from the position of the successful practitioner. After Brussels ECoC 2000, Palmer then went on to bid to a 'restricted' invitation to tender for a major study which – unsurprisingly – he won (Palmer and Palmer/Rae Associates sprl 2003).

In line with the UK policy debates regarding the economic contributions of arts and culture, and the emergence of calculative and comparative cultural expertise, the Palmer report build on and reasserted an impetus for evaluation and monitoring reports, commissioning studies, standardized information and statistics for each ECoC and for the importance of comparability between the experiences of cities. It emphasized the need to produce more exact measurements for the impact assessment of the benefits of the ECoC title:

> *Developing useful frameworks for the economic assessment of major cultural events, ECOC included, is long overdue. It is surprising that the ECOC event, subject to many claims about its value and importance to local and regional economies, and which began 20 years ago, and which may continue for another 20 years has not inspired specialists to work more comprehensively on more accurate forms of measurement. Perhaps the EU,*

through one of its existing programmes, can offer incentives for work in this area (Palmer 2004, 106).

Alongside experts and local actors from ECoC cities, academics became increasingly involved in the production of reports and studies on the ECoC programme: in the Palmer team alongside practitioners, academics such as Greg Richards (Richards 2000) and Beatriz Garcia (García 2005) were included that offered new perspectives beyond the economic contributions of the arts – such cultural legacies and cultural tourism – but which were compatible with the approach on the socio-economic *benefits* of the ECoC title.

It solidified the positive evaluation of the title, now considered canonical: the efficacy of ECoC as "a powerful tool for cultural development that operates on a scale that offers unprecedented opportunities for acting as a catalyst for city change" (Palmer 2004, 188), while also highlighting the important short-term impacts and long-term benefits of the title (the increase in the number of tourists, the improvement in the competitiveness of the city, and the positive transformation of the city's image, etc.). Moreover, according to the report, EU institutions should become more involved, especially through their financial contribution and through facilitating the (re)producing of policy infrastructure. The importance of comparative and calculative expertise in the culture was a common point.

As with the Myerscough report, the Palmer report was also followed by a change in the legal framework. In the 2005 and 2006 Decisions, more power was given to the Commission and to experts in the designation and monitoring process, as was recommended in the Palmer report. The order of the countries which will host an ECoC is decided beforehand. The competition is organized at the national level and the selection should be made with 5-6 years in advance. Starting with 2007, two cities are usually hosting the ECoC programme, one from Eastern Europe and the other one from Western Europe. Decision 2006, on which the Spanish competition was based on, argues that the city should be selected by a panel composed of 13 members (6 national experts and 7 'European' experts). These experts should have "substantial experience and expertise in the cultural sector, in the cultural development of cities or in the organization of a European Capital of Culture" (2006). They will be appointed by state (Ministry of Culture) or European institutions to act as 'national' or 'European experts'.

After these changes in the legal framework, the competition started developing its own dynamic with personnel mobilities between selection panel members and consultants employed or commissioned by local authorities for reports or advice.

2.4. Competition and Cooperation among Professionals: Symbolic Boundaries and Differentiation

The alignment between the Commission and transnational experts has actively contributed to the enlargement of both their roles and powers. But it did not go seamlessly or equally. The engineering of competition has also been shaped by rivalries and competitive social relations among the professionals, and has influenced the (re)constitution of epistemic and symbolic boundaries among the professionals. There were also disagreements and rivalries over the shape and scope of their roles and activities among the experts. Transnational experts have competed – and continue to compete – in order to define the direction and scope of their activities and roles. The effects of these rivalries have permeated and (re)defined who is an 'expert' and who is a 'non-expert', and influenced the shape of the ECoC programme.

There is a dialectical constitutive relation between cooperation and competition in expertise. Expertise is not about the specialized knowledge or the skills experts possess but it is a social relation, an enactment (Kuus 2014; Carr 2010; Eyal and Pok 2015). The people that are positioned and recognized as 'experts' are not just individuals but they are "implicated in the evolving hierarchies of value that legitimate particular ways of knowing as 'expert'" (Carr 2010, 17): while some are recognized as experts, it also means that others acknowledge them as authoritative and that other actors are seen as less authoritative or as non-experts. Now we turn to the mutually reinforcing relation between co-operation and competition underlying expertise: symbolic boundaries and differentiations were created and maintained around the competition paradigm.

The ECCM Network, the European Cultural Capitals and Cultural Months, was formed in 1990 and composed of directors and representatives of the 'past, present and future' ECoCs. It was organized in order to exchange and compare information, and "to pool experience" regarding the

problems each city encountered (Ministers of Culture 1990). Comparative learning practices were the main reasons for attending the meetings of ECCM but also for asserting and maintaining a particular model. Thus, it was a mix between comparative learning, persuasion and indirect lobby. These tendencies of combining comparative learning with the promotion of models and reference cities are disequilibrating. At the beginning there was a strong *esprit de corps* among the professionals but this sense of brotherhood and sisterhood diminished over time until the dissolution of the network, due to disagreements regarding the meanings of the ECoC and the roles of the professionals.

Cooperation within the network was geared towards information sharing and networking among the directors, organizers and bidders for the ECoC. With the publication of the Myerscough report in 1994, it became the main forum of knowledge production and exchange regarding the ECoC programme. With the report and the change in the legal framework of ECoC, the importance of the network increased. Yet, the status of the Network as a knowledge production forum – and its monopolistic claims – was challenged by the increasing number of actors representing newer ECoC cities and new bidding cities, and the increasing production of smaller reports by other experts.

Moreover, there were disagreements and rivalries among the experts themselves regarding the future role, vision and objective of the ECCM Network and regarding their own role. There were at least two conflicting tendencies within the Network and among the experts regarding the meaning of ECoC and the meaning of their work, at least as early as 2000.

One part of the Network emphasized the value of the information they were having for future bidding cities, and their role as consultants based on their professional experience. This 'techno-political' camp focused on the production of knowledge, and on the sharing and selling of information: it emphasized the importance of 'practical' issues – such as grants, sponsorship, and marketing – over grand political projects of the unification of Europe. This camp supported the role of experts as active knowledge producers and providers; the meaning of expertise laid in the identity of the experts as practitioners and advisers that have practical experience in organizing large-scale events such as the ECoC. This tendency can be noticed in Palmer (Glasgow), Beck and Dockendorf (Luxembourg), Aufischer and Hofmann-Sewera (Graz) and others. They were

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also de-emphasizing the importance of the European dimension of ECoC, while focusing on its urban regeneration dimension.

The other camp was emphasizing the European integration function of the ECoC, the memory of ECoC, and the legacy of Melina Mercouri. This memorialization – Europeanist camp, or the 'Greek guard', was spearhead by Spyros Mercouris (the brother of Melina), Rodolfo Maslias and Ingo Weber (Berlin 1988). These people were interested in preserving the legacy of Melina Mercouri, the image of Athens as the first and eternal ECoC, and as the place where ECoC and 'Europe' started. It was 'Greek' for these reasons, but not all of its supports were Greek nationals. They were mainly directors of early ECoCs. These differentiations along the practical or Europeanist orientation were obvious as early as 2000:

> *the reason why this Network exists is to serve the idea and the concept of the Cultural Capitals of Europe and Cultural Months. It is not only what each city is doing ... but it is about what all the cities are doing to assist, help and contribute to a real unification of Europe by listening to the cultures of Europe... that is the purpose of the Cultural Capitals. It is not a Festival that each country or each city is doing. It is – it should be anyway – a meeting place for exchange of ideas, for communication between various cultures of Europe... That's why it is important not mechanically, not technically to go on with this. But the new cities have to believe in this idea, in this project* (Spyros Mercouris in ECCM 2000, 11–13).

But the representatives from the 'new cities' did not believe in this idea. The other 'techno-political' camp proved to be more successful in the long-turn, in influencing the trajectory of the ECoC programme and in being considered more authoritative by the 'new cities'. The 'Greek' faction – concerned with the memorialization of ECoC, with a nationalist and Europeanist agenda, and with an elitist understanding of culture (Fischer 2010) – was successful in gaining control of the Network in the early 2000s, but it was a short lived success. The support and participation in the ECCM started to falter. Criticisms started appearing as early as 2005 and the Network collapsed formally in 2010 and informally years earlier.

The main reason the ECCM Network dissolved – and why these actors pursuing a memorialization, Europeanist trend were no longer successful after 2004 – was due to the seeds it itself has sown: the creation of policy infrastructures; these infrastructures were instrumental in modeling the rationale of ECoC into a competitive bidding initiative and an important tool for urban regeneration. The Myerscough Report and the Glasgow model promoted a discourse that

became institutionalized and codified into legislation through the 1999 Decision. This Decision came into effect after 2004, when the ECCM Network started collapsing. Besides Glasgow, the early ECoCs and their representatives could not live up to these new standards that ironically were encouraged within the network but that emerged from territorial and relational connections with the very particular case of Glasgow 1990 and the UK cultural sector.

In short, the competitive paradigm made the Network *passé*. Most of the representatives of ECoCs selected through political decisions – such as Athens, Florence, Berlin, Amsterdam, and so on (1985-2000) – were no longer recognized as 'experts', except for those that had connections with Glasgow 1990. Actors from 'new' cities perceived the Network as too formal and as an 'old men's club' which could not respond to the needs of the newer ECoCs that needed to compete and to participate in an extensive application writing process in order to get the title (Fischer 2010).

A new '*ECoC Family'* emerged on the ashes of the former network. Representatives from new cities like Liverpool 2008 (UK), Linz 2009 (Austria), Essen Ruhr 2010 (Germany), Pecs 2010 (Hungary), Turku 2011 (Finland) preferred to organize informal meetings without the old members. Schmidt from Essen Ruhr 2010 claimed that "he has nothing to learn from previous European Capitals of Culture. At the same time, he argues the new network is much more efficient as it is orientated towards the needs of the newly designated cities which need to share experiences in order to know how to face the demands of that one year" (Poiein kai Prattein 2010). The relative lack of comparative learning practices of ECCM alienated some of these actors, together with a memorialization trend that overemphasized the importance of Athens and early ECoCs as 'eternal models'. Moreover, in this situation, the ECCM Network was not a suitable place for promoting their own models, reports, and expertise.

Both Liverpool and Essen were modeled on Glasgow and later emerged as models themselves, partially due to the extensive selection process in which they participated: at time of their unfolding the German competition for ECoC 2010 (10 cities) and the UK competition for 2008 (12 cities) were characterized as "the most rigorous and fiercely contested selection process to date" (Griffiths 2006, 419), compared to Glasgow's (9 cities). The construction of these examples as models was also due to their separate production of comparative, calculative expertise. These 'new' cities became involved in the separate networks of knowledge production,

e.g.: extensive reports and impact studies, like Impacts 08 – the impact study for Liverpool 2008 – or the ECoCs Policy Analysis Group. The Impacts 08 was a research programme commissioned by the Liverpool City Council and jointly developed by Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Liverpool to assess the long term cultural, social, economic and environmental impacts of Liverpool as ECoC 2008. The goal was to establish Liverpool 2008 and Impacts 08 as 'models' to be followed by other cities. The value and benefits of ECoC for urban redevelopment, tourism promotion and image improvement were further solidified, and a new model, the Liverpool model, came into town. After doing a Glasgow, Liverpool became the new Glasgow in the worlds of the ECoC policy.

Beatriz Garcia, one of the academics working on the Palmer report (2004), became more and more central in the production of knowledge around ECoC, particularly associated with the 'Liverpool model'. Garcia worked as director of 'Impacts 08 – The Liverpool Model' (2005-2010), and is the editor of the more recent large-scale report on ECoC[43] (García et al. 2013), that was also followed by a decision change (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2014). Prior to the Palmer report, Garcia worked as a Research Fellow (2002-2005) at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Glasgow, where she was looking into the long-term cultural legacies of Glasgow – of course. She argued that long-term cultural legacies are more significant and more sustainable than economical and physical benefits "but that they have not been properly assessed over time and are often dismissed as purely anecdotal, partly due to their subjective nature" (B. Garcia 2005, 843). By saying that cultural legacies are more important long-term than economic benefits, she was challenging the established narrative of Myerscough and Palmer of ECoC as a tool for urban regeneration but only partially. For Patel (2013), the fact that Garcia became part of the team and her line of research was incorporated into the report was indicative of the fact that "in the small world of ECOC expertise, the various players seem to find pragmatic compromises" (2013, 82). But Garcia's arguments did not challenge head-on the positions of the Myerscough reports (1991, 1994); rather, she was complementing them and enlarging the potential benefits of ECoC to include image changes and legacies, media and personal narratives. By looking at intangible long-term cultural legacies like

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[43] The Garcia Report was commissioned by The European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education. I will not deal with this report or with the recent decision in this dissertation, as the Spanish competition was carried out according to Decision 2006, before any of the decision change and before the report.

image changes, Garcia enlarged the scope of the potential benefits of ECoC; her work became increasingly associated with the cultural legacies of Glasgow and with the 'Liverpool model'.

The 'ECoC Family' is now the dominant policy network, in which Liverpool representatives are part of. While the previous network of past, present and future ECoC organizers was divided over the promotion of competition and the meaning of the ECoC programme, this current network of experts is not challenging the new status quo. In a short time frame, competition has become taken for granted. The competition is the common sense of this network, just like the importance of comparative, calculative expertise.

Before, in the ECCM Network, the divisions between experts and less authoritative experts, between experts and non-experts, were ideological (techno-political vs. Europeanism and memorialization). Now in the 'ECoC Family', the epistemic and symbolic boundaries between experts and followers tend to map onto territorial borders, onto an East-West, North-South divide: the experts are mainly from UK, Germany, France, Norway, Austria and Belgium while the less authoritative experts or clients are from the rest.

2.5. The Confluence between Professional Competition and Inter-Urban Competition: Technocratic Optimism

The promotion of competition should not be reduced to (only) a hierarchic and repressive project that operates through authority and domination in a top-down manner from the state to the 'masses'; rather, the constitution and extension of competition by rule regimes is also operating through seduction and persuasion, through the interests and aspirations of policy actors (Foucault et al. 1991; N. Rose 1992; J. Scott 2008; Carr 2010), through the interests and aspirations of autonomy, merit, and deservingness of professionals.

For professionals, the engineering of competition for the ECoC programme was understood as part of a professional project, as part of the professionalization of the programme, not one connected to European integration. The competition process was and continues to be imagined as 'manageable' and 'professional', as part of a 'professional' approach to the ECoC that should be led by 'professionals'. This appeal to professionalism was not a disciplinary mechanism

promoted by the EU or by employers for the regulation of consultants or experts (Fournier 1999) but rather originated from (some of) the actors themselves as a way to further their own interests, beliefs and aspirations. It was a way to self-regulate and regulate the conduct of other professionals – entrepreneurs. The appeal to professionalism and the promotion of competition were used as epistemic and symbolic boundaries, as markers of differentiation, with other practitioners.

The promotion of inter-urban competition by these professionals can be partially explained by the fact that competition has played a positive role in the lives of these particular actors. It is important to bear in mind that they are the type of (knowledge) worker for whom competition has worked favorably as the fundamental tenet of everyday life (e.g.: competition in the education system, on the job market, as a condition of entry in bureaucracies, etc.). For both EU technocrats and transnational experts, competition – with other professionals and knowledge workers – has been a positive force in their professional life. Similarly, both for EU technocrats and for Spanish civil servants and other member states' functionaries, recruitment is carried out using extremely competitive procedures with small margins of success. These actors are the 'winners' of rivalries with other workers, thus painting an overly positive, lopsided image of competition itself as progress, as fundamentally good, almost a public good.

Even so, the alliance between the Commission and transnational experts in the ECoC programme – that increased their roles and power – was not an equal partnership, nor were its benefits equally distributed. Kuus argues that "(a)s any large bureaucracy, the Commission pursues its own power and corporate interests" (2014, 123): it is doing that through its significant framing power, by developing "the conceptual framework through which any subsequent mandate is articulated" (Kuus 2014, 120). The Commission has expanded its role and power considerably and has succeeded in putting more emphasis on the so-called 'European dimension', by sneaking in and then by carrying out debates with the Parliament and the Council with this concept (See Table 2. Main concepts used in the Decisions of the European Capital of Culture programme). The 'European dimension' concept came at the insistence of the European Commission without explicit recommendations from the experts or reports (Patel 2013b), as both the Myerscough and Palmer reports have a basic, instrumental understanding of European dimension, as in cultural exchanges between artists, and policy actors. Despite that, European experts are currently

considered the ones meant to protect and promote the application of the European dimension to each application, and to make and sell these claims to technical expertise to coalitions.

Furthermore, prior to the adoption of Decision 2006, the Commission promoted the competitive model as a route towards ensuring the proper application of the 'European dimension': in a proposal and an explanatory memorandum about the ECoC, Commission staff argued that it is important to continue strengthening the competition element of the ECoC since "a limited competition system which would impose a minimum of two proposals for each Member State will not guarantee of a stronger European dimension of ECOC events" (Commission of the European Communities 2005, 209102:3). Later in 2012, after the record number of competitors in the Spanish competition, the Commission again

> *rejected the idea of a cap in the number of candidates per country and of a pre-selection at national level. Such a national pre-selection would indeed have resembled the discontinued system for the Capitals between 2005 and 2010 when MS put forward one or more applicants to a European panel. The disadvantages would have been the danger of a much weaker European dimension due to a purely national pre-selection and the difficulty of ensuring genuine competition at national level and equal treatment for all cities. From the experience of the Commission, this would not have optimised quality, transparency and fairness* (European Commission 2012, 22).

	European Dimension	Competition	Competitiveness	Selection	Report	Expert
1985	-	-	-	1	-	-
1992	-	-	-	1	-	-
1999	1	0	-	4	6	1
2006	5	1	-	33	19	9
2014	4	9	1	38	30	25

Table 2. Main concepts used in the Decisions of the European Capital of Culture programme
Source: my own elaboration, based on the official texts of the decisions.

The alignment between legalism and policy infrastructures became an efficient tool in the formation and organization of legitimacy, while effectively managing to reduce resistance. The policy infrastructures of ECoC, particularly its reports, experts and models, became one of the

main reference points for the ECoC policy, used to legitimize local initiatives for bidding. Weeda, the Director for the Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Rotterdam ECoC 2001, notes that: "the Myerscough report was very important in the decision-making in our city, to convince people who were opposing the Cultural Capital plans, to say, well, this is what it is all about" (ECCM 2000, 14). Some of my informants even referred to the Palmer report as 'the Bible', as a persuasive, almost holy text, although it might also mean that it is a text that nobody is reading but everyone is referencing.

The social worlds of the policy are structuring the fields of imagination of the policy actors involved. It is important to note that the official ECoC reports (Myerscough, Palmer and Garcia) also included negative assessments but there is silence on these issues from the Commission or the other EU institutions: the reports became their executive summaries, the reports became Bibles, and were divorced from the negative comments they contained, reinforcing the cultures of institutional optimism and selective silencing characterizing the policy worlds of ECoC. While DG EAC was more than happy to endorse the report and its key findings about ECoC as an important culture-led urban regeneration tool with potential valuable benefits, they also ignored the negative, skeptical or reserved parts of the reports whether it is possible to acquire 'reliable independent data' on the impact of a title such as ECoC (Palmer 2004, 106). The solution from the Commission was to ask for more evaluation reports.

This ubiquity of technocratic optimism is striking: there is an unwarranted institutional promotion of hope and optimism (O. Bennett 2015), and especially an institutional silence or amnesia about failures and about problems *inherent* in the ECoC title. The Commission is more focused on fostering the power of DG EAC, celebrating 30+ years of success of the ECoC 'brand' and protecting its value [44] (European Commission 2009; 2014; 2010). As Palmer mentions, "(t)he Commission excellently did not comment at all about the findings on the cities. Where they were more sensitive is in the role of the European Commission" (qtd. in Patel 2013a, 85). Even though policy actors might discuss about this, there is no sustained discussion at the

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[44] After 'copycat' ECoCs started appearing in Canada, Catalonia, South America, and the Volga Region, the Commission argued that it was risky to include representative from copycat ECoCs into the ECCM Network. These initiatives were seen as risky as they can "inflate the title and thereby reduce its inherent value" (PAcaud qtd. in Fischer 2010). For more on the translation of 'the brand' outside the EU, see my previous work on the lobbying by Perm, the Russian Federation, for the ECoC title (Oancă 2015).

institutional level of problems within 'model cities' or *inherent* issues with the ECoC programme itself (e.g.: its competition model), or of problems for what are euphemistically called 'missed opportunities'. ECoC years are either successes, or they are not mentioned. Similarly, the possibility of discontinuing the action – or removing its competitive elements – is not entertained.

Technocratic optimism is characteristic of the ECoC programme. When problems are acknowledged in the policy worlds of ECoC, they are blamed on the implementation of the process. Institutional discussions within the worlds of ECoC (Rampton, McDonald, and Mozuraityte 2011; ECORYS 2011a; ECORYS 2011b) do not contest the competitive model or other main features of the policy, they are instead focused on technical improvement. There is a tendency to blame difficulties or problems on the design of the programme, namely on 'political decisions', the choice of the panel members, and/or on the insufficient criteria, statistics or reports. Problems with the ECoC programme are thus framed in technical terms, as amenable to solutions devised by experts and technocrats.[45]

2.6. The ECoC as a Window onto Rule Regimes and Scale: Crafting a Post-National Europe?

The worlds of competitive bidding are structured by bureaucracies and organizations, leading to patterned interactions between urban coalitions, rule regimes, and flows of policy expertise. Policy actors need to submit to the written and unwritten 'rules of the game' (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996; Peck 2002), and at most to creatively interpret and mobilize the competitive rules put forward by an interstitial, transnational system of governance operating in between different scales and wider policy networks, composed of the European Commission, EU institutions, the Ministries of Culture of the member states, and networks of policy expertise.

[45] But recent expert-led decisions, like the Spanish competition for ECoC 2016, are fraught with tensions, problems, and failures, even more so than the political decisions of 1985-2004. Despite the technocratic optimism, the competitive bidding processes are fiercely contested in most EU countries – that is one of the main aspects of the 'European dimension' of ECoCs: not just disagreements over the results but an increase in conflict, resistance, struggles and/or organized mobilizations and protests regarding the participation of a particular city in this programme.

These organizations and the relations between these organizations and wider policy networks set up "relationships among people through the allocation and control of resources and rewards": they are channeling "action into certain pathways while interdicting the flow of action into others. Some things become possible and likely; others are rendered unlikely" (Wolf 1990, 590). The settings of the interactions between coalitions and within coalitions (among politicians, civil servants, local professionals, artists, cultural producers, volunteers, citizens, etc.) are controlled thorough these rule regimes that are operating in-between scales, and at the same time remaking scale. This leads to a variety of ambivalent and negative effects that end up reinforcing the worlds of the ECoC programme.

First, the competitive rules of ECoC prioritize and reinforce competitive over cooperative social-spatial relations between cities and urban actors, thus leading to a lack of cooperation within regions and within countries, and to a (provisional) remaking, restructuring of scale.

The rules put forward by the European Commission, the EU, and the Spanish Ministry of Culture allowed participation for a municipality that can represent a region, and imagined the 'region' scale in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the 'urban' scale. These rules enforced and continue to enforce a subordinate, nested relationship between the city (municipality) and its surrounding territory. Moreover, they limit the type of relations that could form between different coalitions to competitive or hierarchical relations: they do not allow for an agreement and collaboration 'equals'. The possibility of a network or collaboration between two or more cities as equal partners is severely undermined.

The rules of the ECoC programme structure the available options to either leader with/without subordinates, or nothing, as it happened for the coalitions representing Córdoba and Málaga. Moreover, explicitly networked application concepts were failed or met opposition from the Commission, such as Görlitz/Zgorzelec 2010 (a partnership between the eastern border German city of Görlitz, together with the Polish city of Zgorzelec, for the German ECoC 2010 competition), or to the 'network city' programme developed initially by Eindhoven, Breda, Helmond, 'sHertogenbosch, Tilburg, and the province of Noord-Brabant for the Netherlands 2018 competition (Richards 2015). When referring to the Netherlands competition, Richards argues that "Brussels (…) insisted that a single city, rather than either a region or a network of cities, had to submit the bid" (Richards 2015, 4). The result of this was that the regional

government of Brabant supported the (already) largest and the most powerful city in the region, therefore reinforcing inequalities within that territory. The formal and legalistic argument used by the Commission against explicitly trans-territorial application concepts between networks or joint bids is the "question of responsibility, as Brussels wanted to know who to hold accountable for the ECoC programme" (Richards 2015, 4). This is line with Shore's arguments about the overarching "preoccupation with the law in all the Commission's formal dealings" (Shore 2000, 133). Legalism and 'brand' control are the determinant motives behind this prioritization and reinforcement of competitive over cooperative social-spatial relations.

These worlds of the ECoC programme create – or attempt to create – new conditions of cooperation vis-a-vis competition in a 'post-national Europe'. As part of a European integration project, it is an attempt to remake scale[46], at least temporarily but no less significantly. The scale of the nation-state is being reimagined and restructured during the ECoC programme, as its current rules encourage competition within the nation-state and cooperation with other EU countries. The patterns of socio-spatial relations during the ECoC programme are the reverse of the way nation-states usually operate[47]: cooperation within its boundaries, competition with those 'outside' (Smith 2008a). They restructure at least temporarily the boundaries of nation-states, the boundaries between inside and outside, and reassert a new compromise between competition and cooperation (Smith 2008a). The same can be said about the local and regional scale, as the ECoC programme involves a particular inter-scalar relation between these scales: the local scale is not imagined as subordinate to the 'bigger' regional scale; on the contrary, the 'region' is imagined to have a supporting role in this game of inter-urban competition, meant to bolster cities which act as stand-ins for the region.

Thus, the effect of the ECoC policy creates highly complex inter-scalar and cross-scalar relations. These are power-laden relations and interactions (in)between scales, that are not amenable to additive thinking a la multi-level governance nor to straightforward nested,

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[46] Scales and the interactions between scales are not fixed nor givens but socially produced, made and remade through socio-spatial relations, practices and policies.

[47] For Smith, scales are "the spatial resolution of contradictory social forces, in particular the resolution between opposing forces of competition and cooperation (…) The boundaries of the nation-state represent a geographical bounding between those places and actors who are prepared to cooperate vis-a-vis certain social requirements and those with whom competition is the determining relationship. In the most immediate sense, most national boundaries were the product of political and/ or military contest, but they were drawn precisely as a means to establish and defend territorial units of a specific economic and cultural definition" (Smith 2008a, 228).

hierarchical scalar thinking (where the global/European influences the national scale, which influences the region, which then influences the urban scale, and so on).

This interstitial, in-between and overlapping configurations efface simple discussions of accountability, power, and responsibility, especially as the legal framework of national governments is still profoundly territorialist and can only deal with 'silos' and containers. The competition and generally the ECoC programme are governed through uncertainty and ambiguity, as its inter-scalar rule regime is formed in-between rules on the one hand, designed by the EU and European experts, and on the other hand, translated and enforced by national administrations.

The EU has institutionalized a competition process between 'cities' that can involve their surrounding 'region' but that does not define precisely what a 'city' or 'region' stands for (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2006). The mobilization of the ECoC competition at the national scale require the formation of a 'Spanish framework' that translated 'city' as 'municipality' (Ministerio de Cultura. 2009): as 'city' is not used in Spain as an administrative term denoting the local government (municipio, ayuntamiento), a harmonization between the Spanish legal base and the ECoC legislation was required. Therefore, national governments need to translate this EU decision to a national context, and define what a city is.

As a consequence, the bid of Palma de Mallorca – Balearic Islands was not accepted in the selection process by the Ministry of Culture because the Asociación Palma Illes Balears 2016 did not have the support of the City Council (it was an application coming from NGOs, consultancies, commerce and hotel federations). After its exclusion, the Association took the Spanish Ministry of Culture to court although the case was dismissed shortly after. As the Ministry is the organization that needed to organize and enforce the competition process in the name of an EU action, it was the first and the main target of criticism. But even though the Spanish Ministry of Culture was the 'managing authority' of the selection process and the organization that mediated between the European Commission and urban coalitions, it was not allowed to limit the size of the competition. Moreover, the applications needed to be reviewed according to predetermined, nebulous EU criteria ('European dimension' and 'City and Citizens') within its predetermined framework (6 'national experts' and 7 'European experts').

Yet, this is not a question of whether the Commission or the national authorities are more 'powerful'. Rather, the competition had simultaneously a 'local' and 'extra-local' appearance, a 'national' and 'European' appearance. It is an interstitial space, a space-in-between, that thrives on ambiguity and uncertainty. According to one interviewee,

> more than five cities that lost have tried to obtain an explanation (about the result) in the National Parliament, through an administrative route, about why they have lost... some even asked the European Parliament but were sent back to the National Parliament ... nothing came out of it.

The EU institutions have declined responsibility for the result of the competition, sending complainers back to the national authorities. But jury members and national authorities were equally unforthcoming. This ambiguity came to surface full force, when the mayor of Córdoba – with encouragement from Burgos, Segovia and Zaragoza – took the matter of the controversial selection of Donostia–San Sebastián (DSS) to court, through a contentious route. The National Tribunal declared that it does not have the legal authority and power in dealing with the decision of a panel formed of 6 national experts and 7 European experts: it explained that the Tribunal settles appeals only regarding "the decisions of ministers and secretaries of the state", not against "a legal body operating in the entire national territory" (El Norte de Castilla 2012; my translation). But after that, the Supreme Court (Calero 2014) contradicted this 'national territory' argument saying that the Court lacks the legal capacity to review a European procedure that is placed *outside* Spanish legal jurisdiction, and that was already decided through a variety of cross-national, cross-institutional collaborations between the Spanish ministry of Culture, EU institutions, and experts.

Thus, rule regimes thrive on and maintain themselves through ambiguity and uncertainty: the very interstitiality, inter-scalar character of the ECoC programme effaces simple discussions of accountability and responsibility about the results, about the quality of work done by external experts, etc.

While expunging discussions of accountability and responsibility, the worlds of the ECoC programme demand and further a post-political, technocratic climate: the rule of elites, the rule of 'European expertise', depoliticization, and the lack of significant debates among politicians, political parties, and residents. Its competitive criteria require the support of the City Council and the consensus among all the political parties represented in the city's plenary (Selection Panel

2010), including the opposition councilors. All 15 Spanish bids respected these criteria. Inter-party consensus and lack of conflict among local politicians and decision-makers are paramount during ECoC competitive bidding. This process of competition thrives on and idealizes party consensus and a lack of significant debate among politicians and political parties; it is basically, a suspension of representative democracy. Moreover, the decisions to compete were taken unilaterally by the City Council without consulting urban citizens, e.g.: referenda (direct or participatory democracy practices were out of the realms of imagination).

Regardless of whether these effects were unintended outcomes or were part of intended planning, it is clear that these effects, particularly the remaking of scale and the promotion of a technocratic rule, are instrumental and strategic for the rule regimes of ECoC, particularly for the European Commission and for 'European experts'. The institutionalization of competitive bidding is structuring the practices of urban coalitions in very restrictive ways.

With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

3. The Techno-Political Work of Comparison: Benchmarks, References and Model Cities in the Imagineering of the European City

Political and economic elites have long mobilized and continue to mobilize around processes of inter-urban competition, competitive bidding, and other strategies of urban development. At the same time, these are labored-over policy processes.

What does it mean to recognize that elite projects need to be labored-over? Instead of looking at competitive bidding and mega-events as phenomena that are reflecting and reinforcing hegemonic ideologies and class interests, it is more productive to focus on the techno-political work that is done to achieve the co-operation and mobilization of 'elites', 'experts', 'workers' and 'residents' around competitive bidding. Although the bid or the image of the competing city can appear as straightforward and mundane, this is an intensive process of production that requires the contradictory but constant participation of a variety of actors (not just 'experts') and the alignment of infrastructures, concepts, norms, and procedures, all of which enable socio-spatial processes of competition.

Inter-urban competition and selling the city require specific labor processes and practices, particularly enactments of expertise in order to produce competitive urban images and imaginaries, and enable the aggressive 'imagineering' of the city. Expertise does not refer just to the work of the imagination and interpretation (Appadurai 1996; Fraser 1987) but also to imagineering that is understood, *pace* Walt Disney, as "combining imagination with engineering to create the reality of dreams" (Paul 2004, 574). Just like for other urban policies and entrepreneurial strategies, the expertise making possible inter-city rivalry involves both the work of 'imagination' and 'engineering'. On the one hand, 'cognitive', 'imaginative' or 'immaterial' labor is required to produce competitive urban images, imaginaries, aspirations of global and/or

European status, and "visions of a future role in regional, national, and even global divisions of labor" (Hope and Richards 2015; Boyle 1999, 59). On the other hand, enacting these visions and concepts within institutional arrangements and the concrete reconstruction of the city is necessary.

Imagineering a city as a European Capital of Culture is not a clear cut processes in which actors apply their skills, specialist knowledge and/or knowledge of the city to create an urban brand and a cultural programme that potentially ends up as better than other programmes. Expertise is not a thing or a possession of an individual but a social relation and a persuasive enactment or performance of expertise (Kuus 2014). Rather, the enactments of expertise – bringing together (im)material infrastructures, concepts and actors into alignment (Shore and Wright 2011) – make possible the mobilization of the ECoC policy and the competitive imagineering of the city as an ECoC.

Whereas it is frequently portrayed as 'technical' or 'apolitical' competence, expertise is political: it has profoundly ethical, material, and political implications – for example, through the production of authoritative, persuasive interpretations of the city that allow coalitions to compete with other cities, pursue certain agendas, and implement concrete changes in the structure of the city to achieve that reality of competitive dreams – and it can become an object of contestation over which view of the city will prevail. Even though persuasive, the alignment of actors, concepts, and infrastructures for competitive bidding is a contested and contestable process, a fragile and provisional process that can dissemble just as swiftly as it was put together.

Inter-urban competition and competitive bidding do not occur as an innocent placement of a city on the map, but rather as a forceful and aggressive carving out of a space for a city, at the expense of other cities, through comparisons with other cities, other scales, and with the 'elsewhere' (Robinson 2013; Cook and Ward 2011; Robinson 2016; Cook and Ward 2010). Inter-urban competition enables and requires 'extrospective' and 'aggressive' practices from policy actors that "must actively—and responsively—scan the horizon for investment and promotion opportunities, monitoring 'competitors' and emulating 'best practice', lest they be left behind" (Peck and Tickell 2002, 394). Policy actors constantly compare competing cities against one another; they constantly frame cities in relation to multiple insides and outsides, and in relation to other cities and scales; for them, inter-urban competition is an inherently comparative

process. The technical and political work of comparison and the framing the city in relation to other cities and other scales are seemingly mundane but essential practices that enable inter-city rivalries and the enactment of expertise in competitive bidding (McCann 2008; McCann and Ward 2011). Thus, a focus on 'elsewhere' is crucial not just empirically (because urban politics and competitive bidding incorporate actors and institutions that are located 'elsewhere') but also imaginatively for how the city and the competition are conceived and perceived.

Monitoring competitors, benchmarks, and emulating reference and model cities enable the alignment of infrastructures, concepts, and actors and the imagineering of the city as a potential European city/cultural city. Thus, in order to understand the workings of processes of inter-urban competition, it is essential to focus on the techno-political work of comparison done by 'European', 'external' experts, local professionals, and 'middling' civil servants (Larner and Laurie 2010) necessary for imagineering the city as a ECoC.

In this chapter, I will explore how comparison works in practice, how it is enacted in competitive bidding, and what are its effects. First, I present the various 'origins' and 'elsewheres' of the bidding for ECoC at the local scale: how the ever-growing list of competitors circulated in mass-media functioned as an ad-hoc qualitative benchmark that extended the ethos of competitive urbanism into different cities. Then, I examine the meanings of the ECoC programme for the policy actors involved, and the comparative learning practices that they carried out with the other Spanish competing cities. After, I discuss how tourism and patterns of uneven development in Spain shaped the comparisons carried out by policy actors. Then, I deal with comparative practices with model and reference cities and look at their enactments and persuasive functions. Last but not least, I analyze the contradictory effects comparative learning practices – and co-operation between policy actors from different cities, scales, and wider policy networks – has in a competitive context.

3.1. 'Arriving in/at': The 'Origins' and 'Elsewheres' of the Competition

There is considerable disagreement about the nature of the impacts and benefits of ECoC. The worlds of the European Capital of Culture policy are celebratory, producing and reinforcing an informational infrastructure filled with congratulatory assessments, mostly for the short-term benefits in attracting tourists and improving the (otherwise elusive) city's image. In contrast, critical urban studies have long been analyzed the ECoCs as projects that mobilize and benefit political and economic elites, that are oriented towards attracting tourists and high-income residents, and have dubious benefits for the local population (Boyle and Hughes 1991; Mooney 2004; Tretter 2008; Tretter 2009). Contrary to much multi-scalar myth-making the ECoC is not a project of 'the city' meant to benefit its citizens ('proyecto de ciudad'), even though it is largely a publicly financed event[48]. In short mega-events have been interpreted as hegemonic projects and as instruments of elite domination (K. F. Gotham 2011; C. M. Hall 2006; Tarazona Vento 2016; Paul 2004), place-bound but also transnational. Regarding costs and benefits, mega-events and other mega-projects seem to inhabit a "fantasy world of underestimated costs, overestimated revenues, underestimated environmental impacts and over-valued economic development effects" (Flyvbjerg 2005, 11).

For Tretter (2008), there is confluence between the interests of local elites and the European Commission, as ECoC serves as an excuse and a justification for implementation of entrepreneurial strategies of development. In my previous work in Sibiu (Romania), I was also arguing that the ECoC programme created "a possibility for the overlapping of agendas between the European Commission and the local level by bypassing the nation-state", and that it increased the influence of the ruling party in the local and regional governmental structures (Oancă 2010, 24). Recently, others have drawn attention to the 'global consultocracy' (Saint-

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[48] Its bidding is fundamentally an attempt to redirect grants from the national and regional government towards a particular city, almost 'a wildcard, allowing cities to jump to the front of the queue for government support' (Muller 2015, 12). Since the financial support from the EU represents less than 2% of the total funding generated for ECoC (Palmer 2004), the public sector (municipal, regional, national) contributes the vast majority of the total funding. This creates a situation where the public sector allocates funding on the base of an EU competition, mainly according to EU-criteria. The ECoC year is a costly enterprise: 20 million € to over 80 million €, with an average of 40-60 million € for the cultural programme and an average of 105 million € for infrastructure projects, renovations, museums, etc. (Dodd, Palmer, and Richards 2011). Later reports reported higher values: an operational budget between 16 and 194 million € with a higher average level of 70-100 million €, and with higher additional investments in infrastructure and capital expenditure up to 140 million € (European Commission 2012; European Commission 2014).

Martin 2000), the 'transfer agents' (D. Stone 2004), or the policy 'business' or 'industry' (Cook and Ward 2012; Oancă 2015; Dodd, Palmer, and Richards 2011) that emerges and benefits from inter-urban competition, mega events and territorialized forms of entrepreneurial policies.

Unsurprisingly, political and economic elites have mobilized to participate in the Spanish competition process. In the city of Córdoba (Andalusia), the idea of competing for the ECoC originated with the Confederation of Businessmen (sic) of Córdoba (CECO, Confederación de Empresarios de Córdoba) before its members persuaded local and regional politicians and administrations to embark and finance the preparations for what later became a nine-years long process met with 'defeat' and 'failure'. As one public servant mentioned,

> *CECO, the hotel and tourist sector, and the Bodega Campos restaurants had a lot of weight at the beginning to boost the participation in the competition and convince the mayoress. Tourism and hospitality were the most important and the most supported during the candidacy.*

Likewise, in Burgos (Castile and León), the competition for the ECoC was advanced by local and regional companies, more precisely by the Regional Federation of Hospitality Businessmen(sic), Federación Provincial de Empresarios de Hostelería, within the Association for Strategic Planning of Burgos – described in a interview as "a public foundation with a private opening". Local and regional business actors, particularly the hospitality, commerce, and horeca sectors, would undoubtedly benefit from an event that it is geared towards increasing tourism, consumption, and entertainment[49]. In Donostia-San Sebastián (Basque Country) as well, the idea for the bid originated in the Donostia-San Sebastián Office of Strategy, a public structure that functions as a forum between public representatives from local, provincial, regional and central governments, and private actors from universities, trade unions, confederations, and companies, including as you may have guessed already the Regional Association of Hospitality Businessmen (sic) of Gipuzkoa, Asociación de Empresarios de Hostelería de Gipuzkoa. I am being pedantic with these translations but the wider point stands that these are male-dominated clubs. It is surprising how unsurprising these masculinist forms of public-private decision-making and elite networking are nowadays in Spain and in Western Europe, and not just for the ECoC, operating

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[49] In their thesis on the city as an entertainment machine, Lloyd and Clark (Lloyd and Clark 2001) are claiming that nowadays consumption and entertainment are driving urban policies and urban politics, not the other way around.

in an interstitial space both 'inside' and 'outside' the local government and inter-scalar coalitions.

'The elsewhere' is shaping cities and constituting inter-urban competition (Cook and Ward 2011; Robinson 2016). The competitive quest can also be driven from 'elsewhere' and from 'outside' public institutions or public-private partnerships, by 'external' experts that try to sell their products and services. In Tarragona (Catalonia), the proposal came from the International Bureau of Cultural Capitals (IBOCC), which in spite of the official sounding name is in fact a private consultancy based in Barcelona (Catalonia). This consultancy has promoted and sold the idea of the ECoC to other regional and inter-governmental institutions, establishing new initiatives like the American Capital of Culture (since 2000), the Capital of Catalan Culture (since 2004) and the Brazilian Capital of Culture (since 2006), in this way selling their labels and services and extending their areas of expertise to regional and non-EU territory[50]. The idea of competing for ECoC came with the initial offer from IBOCC for their private-led Catalan Capital of Culture that was at first rejected by the mayor (Being Catalan and European is important) but after Tarragona entered in the first stage of the ECoC competition, the title of Catalan Capital of Culture 2012 (Capital de la Cultura Catalana 2012) was offered (again) and accepted by the local authorities.

Moreover, 'the elsewhere' is a constitutive element not just because urban politics incorporate actors and institutions that are located 'elsewhere' or 'outside' but also because the city and the competition are conceived and perceived in relation to other cities and scales and to multiple insides and outsides. The ideas of competing 'creep in' also through mass media channels, circulating traces and non-human elements. As it can be seen in Figure 1. Distribution of ECoC-related newspaper coverage for each country, by year – in percentage, the Spanish bidding process had a higher percentage of ECoC-related newspaper coverage in Spain in 2011 (the year of the final selection) than the coverage of Liverpool as ECoC 2008 in the UK.

The articles constantly written about the ECoC in local, regional and national media functioned as non-human 'transfer agents' (D. Stone 2004), as non-human elements in the labors that constitute competition at a distance. As Robinson (Robinson 2015) notes, there are moments

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[50] Currently the IBOCC is trying to establish the U.S. Capital of Culture and the Spanish Capital of Culture.

when "the trajectories of policy ideas cannot easily be known" as the ideas are already 'there', they have already arrived. The idea of 'culture' is potent, with local media as its watchdog:

> *Politically it is badly seen not to support a cultural project, nobody can be against it. If you do that, it comes out tomorrow in the media* (Málaga, City Council).

> *When they voted for it, I think they did not really realize what it means to compete, especially in terms of resources, time and personnel... who can say no to their city being a cultural capital? It sounds so nice and important... What politicians can actually say that their city should not be a European Capital of Culture? You can imagine how the press would turn against them...* (Burgos, External expert).
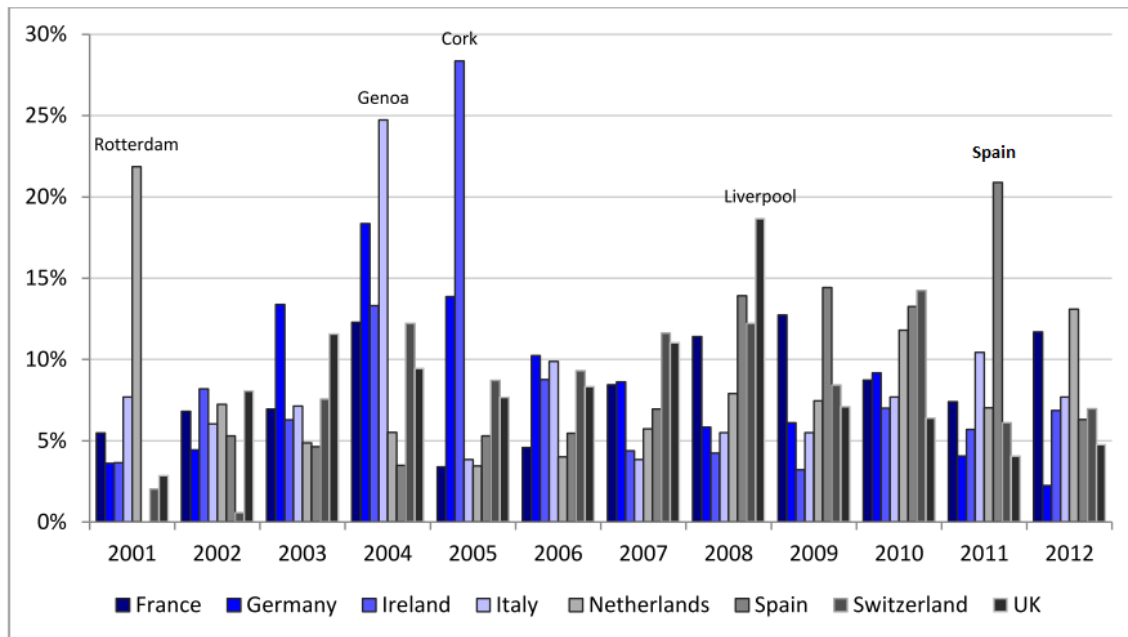
Figure 2. Distribution of ECoC-related newspaper coverage for each country, by year – in percentage
Source: ICC analysis, Lexis Nexis Digital Clippings (2011-2012) qtd. in Garcia et. al 2013, 125

In the case of Alcalá de Henares (Community of Madrid) and Málaga (Andalusia), the provenance of the ideas of competing is (rendered) ambiguous, with the City Council or the mayor as its formal representative. Alcalá de Henaras is a city located in the external periphery of Madrid's metropolitan agglomeration that partially functions as one of its bedroom towns; moreover, it is among the Spanish municipalities that has experienced a steep growth in unemployment and has one of the biggest immigrant population after the capital city, particularly

Romanians and Bulgarians (Cronica Madrid 2014; Palomera 2015). For two interviewees from the City Council of Alcalá de Henares,

> *when we saw that list, all those cities that announced their involvement, we realized that we had to compete... Alcalá is also a World Heritage Site (UNESCO), we participate in the same meetings for the World Heritage Site as Córdoba and Caceres... When we started seeing who was competing, it was like 'I come here so I do not look bad', it was a necessary marketing tool for us; we couldn't not be there. (…) Only the fact of being there and competing with Santander, Donostia, Burgos, Caceres or Córdoba, it was already a pleasure for Alcalá;*

> *there were other partner cities from UNESCO in the selection already... it was worth entering the process, at least for the advertising. The idea was to compete and make Alcalá known, for the publicity, not for a real competition. We did really not think we will win.*

For the policy actors of Alcalá like for those of other cities, the magic ever-growing 'list' of competitors circulated constantly through mass media functioned as an ad-hoc but persuasive 'benchmark' (Larner and Le Heron 2004). It encouraged policy actors to think of cities as comparable and of the ECoC competition as commensurable to other policies like the World Heritage Site (WHS) designations. It encouraged them to think of the list of competitors as comparable to the list of WHS: more than eight of the competing cities are having WHS designations, with coalitions relying on the staff that prepared the technical application for UNESCO. This comparative gesture had profound disciplining effects. This ad-hoc reference point functioned as both standard of excellence and warning: it was the primary tool exercised 'at a distance', through which policy makers were both disciplined and persuaded, motivated and coerced to compete, even when starting to experience austerity measures and welfare cuts.

The 'list' as an ad-hoc qualitative benchmark extended the ethos of competitive urbanism into different cities, leading to a catch up behavior and enrollment in the selection process. Its main effect was adherence, not necessarily the improvement of performance during bidding. Representatives from the City Council of Alcalá de Henares – known as the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes and marketed as the City of Arts and Letters – felt compelled to participate in the competition when they compared their city with others, even without any hopes of winning and with only an 'austere', internal application:

> *Alcalá is a modest (humilde) city, we spent only around 100-300 000 € only for the translation, formatting and communication; we did not hire any consultants like Caceres*

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or Burgos, which anyway lost (300 000 €was the smallest among the Spanish participant cities).

This is in stark contrast with the increasing bidding costs for the ECoC: €1.5 million, what most coalitions were considering a minimum required for bidding in 2011 (Dodd et al., 2011). The "commitment to control and cut down the public expenditure so as not to increase the debt of the Town Hall" of Alcalá (Ayuntamiento Alcalá de Henares 2010, 16) did limit significantly the expenditures with the application and the size of the bid team (composed of only City Council staff). But this "commitment to austerity and management efficiency" did not dissuade local policy makers from competing. For a coalition 'betting' on its proximity to Madrid and on Madrid Summer Olympic Games 2016, their involvement in the ECoC competition was maintained even after the significantly-better funded coalition representing Madrid lost in 2009 the competition for the Games.

Similarly the comparison with the other competitors and by what they called 'an institutional inertia', also motivated and compelled coalitions from Murcia, Oviedo and Alcalá de Henares to participate at least with internal, less expensive applications, only with local civil servants and/or local professionals, and without any outside help from 'external experts'. In Tarragona (Catalonia) and Pamplona (Navarra) too, the candidacy was pursued "for a bit of publicity" with an 'austere' budget of 300 000 €and respectively 600 000 €and a mostly 'internal' team formed of local and regional civil servants, local professionals, and artists, although external consultancy was also hired for particular tasks. As one interviewee from Pamplona put it:

> *Neither the mayoress nor the councilor believed we can win, it was more about participating for inertia and for the other cities, and because it would not have been elegant to discontinue a project assumed by the previous government* (Pamplona, Local Professional).

Proposed to the previous mayor by a priest from Torun (Poland) serving in Pamplona, it seems the ways of the ECoC are infinite.

3.2. Simply the Best, Simply the Neediest: Comparison and the Monitoring of Competitors for the Imagineering of the European Cultural City

But discussing the vested interests of politicians, business actors, and 'external experts' and the 'origins' of the competition – or how the ECoC policy 'arrived' in or was 'transferred' in a particular territory – can only take us so far in a processual, relational approach to competition that aims to understand the labor practices that enable it. It is not enough to point fingers at 'puppet-masters' or at 'greed'. As Mann argue, "(d)oing so may satisfy a sense of fairness, while indulging in the comfort of a black-and-white politics that identifies 'the' enemy" but unfortunately it does not make sense of the 'complicity' and of the dilemmas people find themselves in (Mann 2013, 33). Elite projects also need to be labored-over. As one interviewee from the municipality of Burgos mentioned,

> *The hotel business federation proposed the idea to the mayor… in fact first the idea was approved in the Association for Strategic Planning, since the federation was part of the association, and then they proposed it to the mayor and to the other political groups … but they did not anything. 'I have an idea, I say it, and now others have to do work'.*

In its most straightforward description, competing for the ECoC title involves designing a (successful) bid, attempting to create a cultural programme and a contribution to the ECoC 'brand' (European Commission 2009; European Commission 2014) that are considered better than your competitors'. The cultural programme needs to be specifically designed for the year of the event, not simply a collection of already-existing local and regional cultural events, and should include new events and initiatives. Moreover, for coalitions betting on winning, elaborating a strategic plan on culture and long-term strategic plans before or in parallel to the ECoC bid seems to be the new minimum.

The bid is elaborated either within the City Council (as in Alcalá de Henares, Murcia, Oviedo, Pamplona) or within a separate organization specifically formed for the competition (foundation, association, consortium, public company, etc.), usually a foundation (as in Burgos, Córdoba, Santander, Zaragoza). Some coalitions have chosen a mixed system (Cuenca, Segovia, Tarragona), composed of an association/ foundation and the City Council (Prado Alegre et al. 2010). Moreover, organizational structures can also change during the competition: Donostia-

San Sebastián's bid was at the pre-selection phase under the authority of the municipal structure, and then a separate Foundation was established.

Although the operating units of competitive bidding can take different shapes and forms in different local contexts or in different phases of the competition, the municipal government plays a central role: even within a Foundation, most of the financing comes from the City Council, and the mayor/mayoress is formally the head of the coalition. The foundations – as formalized inter-scalar, multi-scalar coalitions operating in-between the city, the region and/or a wider policy network – were usually composed of representatives from the City Council, opposition parties represented in the City Council, provincial council, regional government, universities, cultural institutions, business federations, chambers of commerce, etc. They functioned as a public-private partnership with private presence but mostly financed with public funding. The structure of the coalition is common also for less formalized networks, as the support of other actors and institutions beyond the City Council is essential.

The worlds of competitive bidding are structured by bureaucracies, organizations and institutions, one the one hand, by the European Commission, EU institutions and the Spanish Ministry of Culture , and on the other hand, by City Councils and Foundations. Policy actors need to submit to the written and unwritten 'rules of the game' (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996), and at most to creatively interpret and mobilize the competitive rules put forward by the rule regimes (Peck 2002) of the ECoC, the Commission, the EU institutions, the Spanish Ministry of Culture, and networks of policy expertise. Policy actors also need to navigate the 'rules' of multi-scalar coalitions and urban politics.

Just like other bureaucracies, City Councils are based on a well-defined hierarchy, and on hierarchical control and management; upon entry, civil servants need to follow principles of conduct based on "hierarchical obedience (...) except in cases in which action may be detrimental to citizens and the proper use of public resources" (Gobierno de Espana and Ministerio de la Presidencia 2010, 227). Similarly, the city council, foundation and/or informal team – as the main operating units of competitive bidding at the local scale – can and do control the settings, the interactions, and the potential results of the interactions among and between politicians, public servants, experts, artists, cultural producers, volunteers, citizens, etc. Thus, these coalitions were based on a hierarchy, although of a more 'leaner', network-like variety as they

assembled coalition members with multiple interests and goals, diverse jurisdictional boundaries, and from diverse specializations or departments, including volunteers and residents, and actors and institutions that were located 'elsewhere', or that were from 'elsewhere' (e.g.: consultants, advisors, regional governments, etc.).

Thus the coalitions of actors and institutions collaborating and supporting the participation in the competition were extensive (and intensive and expensive as well). At the same time, the core 'bidding team' is small, with less than twenty people. Mayoral involvement in competitive bidding, or generally politicians' or corporate actors' involvement, is usually limited to official representation and delegating work to civil servants and/or 'external' experts. But increasingly the daily political work of mayors and elected officials in Europe is not limited to territorial 'politics' and rivalries with other local politicians but has started to revolve also around urban 'policies': this 'going global', extra-local activities (Beal and Pinson 2014) are part and parcel of legitimacy strategies and electoral competition, and include "involvement in transnational city networks, and study visits to partnerships and exchanges, conferences, industry fairs that build the city's profile abroad and bring together its city councilors, administrators, employees and residents with their counterparts across the world" (Beal and Pinson 2014, 303). Even though mayors, politicians, or business actors initiate or shape the direction of urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989), a particular project such as the ECoC is usually put together by a mix of actors and institutions.

Most of the day-to-day, mundane work of competing is done by a multidisciplinary and inter-departmental, team composed of civil servants (mostly City Council 'technical' staff from different departments but also staff from public universities, and from provincial and regional governmental bodies), local professionals (planners, architects, lawyers, consultants, academics, etc.), and/or in most coalitions, experts and advisors commissioned specifically for the competition ('external experts', either 'Spanish' or 'European'), and less often artists and cultural producers (writers, designers, etc.). These actors were either part of the central team working on the bid, or were part of advisory boards working on short-term contracts or tasks. As the cultural programme needs to be specifically designed for the year of the event, cultural institutions, artists, and cultural producers need to support the bid; in some cases, they participate more actively in the competitive bidding process but it depends on the city hall or foundation.

Moreover, the City Council and/or Foundation, and the 'technical' staff had at their disposal a considerable number of interns and volunteers that were essential in performing some of the banal but indispensable tasks of competing, e.g.: distributing flyers, appearing in promotional pictures, supporting the organization of cultural events, etc. All these policy actors were part of processes of competitive bidding, although to different degrees and with variations between different cities regarding the composition of coalitions. It is important to note that whereas the operating units of competitive bidding operate partially through domination and authority (Wolf 1990), seduction as a mode of power works alongside them: as "the possibility of rejection or indifference are central to its exercise" (Allen qtd. in McFarlane 2011a, 120), making other forms of power such as seduction just as successful in enrolling actors, and in motivating policy actors to voluntarily participate and intensively labor in the competition for ECoC. Overwork, intense working hours, deadline pressures, and tense working environments are common for policy actors involved in competitive bidding, and work hand in hand with excitement, passion, and hope. Particularly the core team has to work ungodly hours during the 'long-distance sprint race' that is competitive bidding.

The main roles of the 'bidding team' and of policy actors is two-fold: to translate different ideas and devices, and invent new programmes and concepts (to design the bid and sometimes the cultural strategy of the city), and to align and assemble different actors and institutions behind the process of competition and behind the process of production of urban imaginaries and imagineering, even though these actors might have divergent interests and motivations. Co-operation, co-production and alignment between experts, non-experts, and politicians (as 'boss' and/or client) make possible processes of inter-urban competition and competitive bidding.

Whereas Italo Calvino's traveler can dream everything imaginable, policy actors' imagination and imagineering are highly structured by territorial politics and by inter-scalar rule regimes. The fields of imagination are also structured by the relational worlds of competitive bidding, and by the networked worlds of the ECoC policy.

Crucially, comparison has become a key practice in inter-urban competition. The enactment of expertise is structured not just by territorial politics but also by relational comparisons with the competing cities and with other cities, models, reference cities, etc. (K. Ward 2010; Cook and Ward 2010). Comparisons have become a veritable 'native's point of view' for the policy actors

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inhabiting the worlds of competitive bidding and inter-city rivalries: policy actors enable these worlds through the work of comparison; they experience and make sense of these worlds though an 'emic' vocabulary of best practices, models and reference cities.

The work of comparison is part and parcel of attempts to carve out a space for the city among the competitors, and to make a contribution to the European Commission and its ECoC 'brand' (European Commission 2009; European Commission 2014), and a niche for European cultural tourists in an oversaturated field. While the EU encourages the "dissemination of good practices (…) of former official European Capitals of Culture" (2006, L 304:1), the imagineering of candidate cities as ECoC is not just relationally constituted through models and reference cities but also through the tacit monitoring of competitors, and through an implicit work of comparison with competing cities from the same region and the same country.

In the ECoC competition, best practices, models and reference cities are usually from 'elsewhere' and 'outside', thus prioritizing cross-national cooperation within the EU, while Spanish cities became adversaries to be monitored and evaluated. This 'elsewhere' is also influencing the imagineering of cities as ECoCs and the competitive bidding process. In order to limit the monitoring and 'scooping' of ideas by competitors (at least until the pre-selection), work processes are kept in the office and in a closed network, and characterized by secrecy and confidentiality agreements —that end up also limiting public participation and public engagement with the bidding process. Despite this widespread tendency towards semi-secret office projects, there is a latent comparison with competitors in order to implicitly position the city against other Spanish cities.

Policy actors considered this work of comparison to be necessary for carving out a space for the city among the other Spanish competitors: what is the distinguishing feature of the city, why does the city need the ECoC more than the other cities, what can the city offer 'Europe' that the other cities cannot offer, what niche/contribution can the city make for the ECoC 'brand'. The language used by policy actors was comparative but also bellicose and/or entrepreneurial with discussions about 'weapons', 'comparative advantage', 'instruments':

> *We had to find our difference, our comparative advantage compared to the other 14 cities. Let's really see out what Málaga stands out with, what are its strengths, and that*

was the international character of the city and that it is a very open city, with more 100 nationalities, the most international after Madrid and Barcelona (Málaga, City Council).

Every city uses the weapons it has, for us it was our proximity to Madrid and its bid for the Olympic Games 2016 when Alcalá was supposed to act at its cultural center; the fact that we could both have these events in the same year and in the same area, something like 1992…. We also promised an austere but decent year in line with the times (Alcalá, City Council).

During the process of competitive bidding, policy actors continued to compare cities according to their 'cultural weight' and 'heritage' even though now the purpose of the title is to raise the profile and 'collective symbolic capital' (Harvey 2002) the city through a cultural event, and to attract grants, investments and tourists. Now, in principle, the philosophy of the ECoC is not to reward the cultural history, traditions or achievements of an already-established cultural city but rather to organize a nation-based competition between different cultural programmes that have a "European dimension, based principally on cultural cooperation" (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2006), and that focus on contemporary issues of interest for 'Europe' and for the EU. Before, in the 1980s the ECoC action was meant to celebrate and reaffirm the cultural weight attached to already established cultural centers of Europe like Athens, Florence, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris (Richards 2000; Gold and Gold 2005).

Even though the rationale of the policy changed significantly starting with Glasgow 1990, policy actors still think of cities in terms of their cultural weight and heritage: cultural prestige remains an important lens through which they make sense of the world. Although in this current competitive model of ECoC, cities are meant "to raise their quotient of collective symbolic capital and to increase their marks of distinction" (Harvey 2002, 103), policy actors feel overwhelmed by the 'symbolic capital' of other cultural cities (and sometimes even their own), and by their cultural symbols and marks of distinction, particularly of Córdoba (Andalusia) or Donostia – San Sebastián (Basque Country), but also by their more advantageous position within networks of expertise and by the staggering investments the coalitions of these cities or the 'bank-city' of Santander[51] (Cantabria) were making in the process of competition:

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[51] For the pre-selection, the coalitions that have lost representing Santander spent €4.5 million, Cuenca €0.8 million (Dodd, Palmer, and Richards 2011), Alcala €0.3 million, Málaga €0.7 million, Tarragona €0.3 million, Pamplona €0.6 million (data from interviews and/or bid documents). Regarding the cities that have passed to the second stage, Donostia–San Sebastián spent €4 million in the pre-selection, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria €2.5 million, Segovia €2 million, Burgos €1.5 million (Dodd, Palmer, and Richards 2011). Between 2009 and 2011, Córdoba spent €4 million

Every city uses the heritage it has; Córdoba offered its great historical and artistic heritage... each one offers its strengths.... Each project offers its comparative advantage. There are a lot of tourists who come to Málaga for its cultural offer, not just for the beach. our museums and internationalism; we have a lot of museums here, the Picasso Museum, the Picasso Birthplace Museum, the Thyssen, the Automobile Museum. (…) But how one can compete with the Mezquita (Mosque) of Córdoba, or with the Bahía de La Concha of DSS or with the many international festivals it offers for the last 30 years, it has not much sense... (Málaga, Local professional).

Very conservative decisions were taken in the candidacy... we stayed with the safe. The mosque does not fail, patrimony does not fail, the 3 cultures cannot fail. It was a model of culture about exhibitions, heritage and tourism (Córdoba, Local professional).

You cannot really compete with cities like Córdoba, DSS, or with the bank of Santander, or even with Caceres... with their investments, the time since they started working on it, and with their external advisors... we had nobody to tell us the tips and tricks of the application (Alcalá de Henares, City Council).

Even though most actors were aware that the competitors were not 'equal' or did not have an 'equal' starting point (and thus trying to distance themselves from the process), they actively and enthusiastically participated in the competition while "evoking its hope-generating capacity (even if through resentment)" (Jansen 2009, 59). Policy actors felt compelled and inspired to gamble in an uneven playing field, enthusiastically and not necessarily because of hierarchies within public administrations. Albeit some of them already recognized in our discussions the impossibility and the contradictions in the promises of the ECoC programme, this policy was not just fantasy but their work environment: hope and optimism were "the only way to survive and make headway in the bureaucratic machine" (Nuijten 2003, 175) (see next chapter for a discussion of emotional labor, hope and optimism). The experiences of competitive bidding are fraught with contradictions: detachment and hope, cynicism and optimism, morality and aggressiveness, passion and resentment.

While the bidding process is imagined by the European Commission and the Ministries of Culture as an 'expert-led', technical and meritocratic competition between different innovatory cultural programmes based on cultural cooperation ('the socially acceptable story', as one of my interlocutors put it), at the same time for the policy actors I interviewed the ECoC competition should be a 'moral', 'fair' competition that rewards the deserving city, the worthy city that needs

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for the operation budget of bidding (running costs, promotion and personnel); additionally, €14.5 million were spent for festivals and events programmed under the heading "Córdoba in 16 Mode" in 2009-2011 (Córdoba2016 2010a, 58).

the ECoC the most and has the most potential to change. The city that has great social, cultural or economic 'needs' for the title should be selected, not the one which is an-already established cultural city; also, most of my informants shared the opinion that cities that have already hosted a different mega-event should be excluded from the competition (e.g.: the Expo 2008 on Water and Sustainable Development was hosted in Zaragoza). Thus, for my interviewees, the meanings of ECoC lie in the unwritten promise that cities that need change or lack that extra economic and 'symbolic capital' should be selected, and in the unwritten promise that the ECoC title is a 'motor of change' that can transform and develop the city towards a 'new' cultural city and a 'new' cultural tourist destination of Europe. Seduction and persuasion were even more effective than domination, authority and coercion in motivating policy actors to intensively labor in the competition for ECoC (Allen 2009). Even if through resentment and disagreement, policy actors continue to evoke and reproduce the ECoC policy:

> *The ECoC is about choosing projects that are capable of transforming the city and how much... not only that the city that had a good project but it should be given an opportunity for change. A city that can transform has more right than a city already transformed. Its capacity of self-improvement is bigger; this is about helping cities and territories... why Barcelona does not present itself for the ECoC competition? Because it's already a cultural city, it does not need it! Better a city that needs it. Donostia-San Sebastián does not need it more than other cities, like Burgos, Segovia or Las Palmas. It is more a scholarship than a prize for excellence* (Burgos, policy actor).

> *Donostia is a city with an impeccable cultural management, with many international festivals; they did not need another prize to add to their collection (…) Before the crisis, Málaga had a boom in construction and there were lots of empty plots left in the city, and we believed that we can use culture as a solution to fill these urban vacuums, to close the open wounds of the city* (Málaga, local professional).

As such, the ECoC is imagined as a scholarship or as a solution for the deserving city, not as a prize: these hope-generating, almost moral, meanings of the competition are accompanied by an understanding of the ECoC policy as a tool. Awarding the title to the best technical project or the most innovative cultural programme is not sufficient but should be complemented by an assessment regarding which cities 'thirst' for it more, and have the capacity to change. In his study of Liverpool, Bunnell also notes that "Liverpool's 'need' was imagined as greater than that of its British rivals (…) The Liverpool bid was likened to a 'scholarship'" (Bunnell 2016, 170). For the actors involved, the meanings of ECoC lie with its promissory nature and supposedly transformative capacity. Although not acknowledged at the formal level as such (The European

Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2006; European Commission 2009), for policy actors the philosophy and concepts of candidacies focus on need while the selection should be based not only on merit and innovation, but also on need and urgency. The ECoC 'brand' has acquired an image of a supposedly progressive, 'social' mega-event, meant to help cities, citizens, and their urban economies. It is seen and promoted by policy actors almost as an 'improvement scheme' (Li 2007), as a technical solution that promotes the pursuit of symbolic capital and urban competitiveness. Moreover, as one interviewee mentioned, policy actors seem to be caught between the identification of deficiencies and their framing in technical terms:

> *The Capital title is not for the heritage or for cultural institutions, but for showing our weaknesses so that in a couple of years they can be surpassed (…) you have to say how bad you have it, but at the same time that you have all the means to achieve it, it was a bit paradoxical* (Málaga, City Council).

The comparative vocabulary and comparative practices of policy actors do not refer just to strengths and positive features but also to the 'needs' and 'wounds' of a city that are compared to another one's and used as instruments in inter-city rivalry. This identification of problems and deficiencies through implicit or explicit comparison (with competitors and model cities) is critical. In order to sell the city, problems and deficiencies need to be emphasized as the defining feature of the city, but also framed as feasible and manageable with ECoC as the solution (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Fraser 1987). The emphasis is usually on existing patterns of socio-economic development within territories and on the supposedly contributions that the arts, culture and tourism could make to redressing urban economies.

That is one of the reasons why the 'political' selection of Donostia–San Sebastián and of its 'culture for coexistence' ('culture to overcome violence') project was so controversial and resented by policy actors representing the more 'economic'-oriented applications from the coalitions of Córdoba, Burgos or Málaga. The coalition of Donostia was promoting an ECoC project focused around the promotion of culture as an instrument for coexistence and peace and for ending violence and terrorism (or rather, the rebranding of DSS away from its association with the Basque conflict and separatist terrorism) and were boldly claiming – and selling – the political character of the application. Terrorism, violence and peace became weapons in inter-city rivalry:

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At the beginning we were thinking that it is does not need to be political, that seemed attractive… Everything but not about the ETA conflict… but now we can say clearly that our project is political, as we deal with conflict and violence. It was a learning process to understand that not only strengths should be presented. In the end, how does one know Donostia? How does the world know it? (DSS, City Council Staff).

The meanings of the 'political' accusations from the other coalitions are various, the most common interpretations being that the selection of DSS was a result of back-door politics, dictated and enforced by the central government in order to gain the support of the Basque regional government, appease the Basque conflict and campaign for independence, and further the peace project and pacification of the ETA terrorist and separatist group (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, Basque Homeland and Liberty), that at the time of the competition, was either active or had declared a (permanent) cease-fire but not cessation, disbandment or disarmament. In these prevalent criticisms towards the Spanish state, people actually were continually calling national sovereignty into existence, and thus constituting themselves as nation-state subjects (Jansen 2009), not as European citizens.

Many felt vindicated in their suspicions that the selection of DSS as ECoC was 'political' and enforced by the national authorities when a couple of months after the selection, an international peace conference was organized in DSS (The International Peace Conference of San Sebastián) aimed at starting a resolution process to the Basque conflict and when after three days, ETA announced a "definitive cessation of its armed activity" (Gara 2011). Other actors – particularly those influenced by a commitment to Europeanist laws and principles, and an 'ethos of professionalism and independence' (Shore 2000, 127) – argued that the DSS project and its selection were indeed 'political' but not because the national government decided: rather, the panel members, particularly the 'European experts', found the project innovative and daring, and were fascinated with the idea that culture – and the expert themselves – can solve or contribute to the peace process[52].

Frustrations with this irregular and 'political' decision were widespread among the actors that represented Córdoba, and beyond. Preparations for the competition started in Córdoba as early as 2002, nine years before the final selection and six years before DSS. For them, the ECoC should

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[52] Recently, other coalitions from conflict-ridden areas have also used narratives of peace and conflict for the competition for ECoC, for example in Nicosia (Cyprus), Belfast (Northern Ireland), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzergovina), or Londonderry (Northern Ireland) for the UK City of Culture.

function not as a technical competition for the most innovatory project or a prize for the already advantaged cities and regions of the Spanish state but as a 'scholarship' meant to repair existing urban and regional inequalities, and help redress North-South uneven development:

> *Culture is an instrument for redevelopment; it is an economic opportunity... Córdoba is a city that also needs to be encouraged. The south seems forgotten, it is caused by a bad, unfair redistribution for many many years; even all three European Capitals of Culture were never here, in Andalusia, only in the 'north'* (n.a.: Madrid, Salamanca and Santiago de Compostela). *It was meant to be the moment of the South. When compared with San Sebastián, they really did not need it* (Córdoba, artist).

> *The jury did not want to see or did not know the reality of Spanish cities, that San Sebastián does not need the title. Culture is a motor of change and a factor of social and economic development. San Sebastián did not need the title; it has one of the highest wealth indexes in the whole Spain* (Córdoba, local professional).

For these actors that were part of the failed efforts of Córdoba 2016, the 'need' for the ECoC is mostly defined as an attempt to redress through 'culture' and 'tourism' existing patterns of Spanish uneven development and help change regional inequalities that were manifesting along a North-South dichotomy[53]. The regional inequalities between North and South became an instrument in inter-city rivalry, but only in the second phase of the competition, after the failure of the coalition that represented Málaga, another Andalusian city.

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[53] As Palomera presents (2015), these regional inequalities between North and South first crystallized with the partial industrialization of Spain in the 19th century when the Basque Country and Catalonia emerged as two industrial centers in a largely agrarian economy, and were later reinforced with the Stabilization Plan and the so-called Spanish 'economic miracle' of the 1960s, largely based on heavy industries in the north (a second industrial revolution), plus tourism and agriculture in the South and the Mediterranean coast. Later with the Fordist crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, the industrial sector in the north and Basque Country was severely affected and underwent closure, privatization, restructuring programs and workers' mobilizations, together with other industrial areas on the Atlantic coast of Spain like Asturias, Cantabria and Galicia.

3.3. Spanish Uneven Development, Tourism, and the Global Crisis

Some brief pointers about the patterns of uneven development in Spain would be useful here to make sense of our story. At the time of the competition Spain was and continues to be a tourist state[54]: one characterized by a 'mass', sun-and-beach (*sol y playa*) tourism heavily concentrated in the Canary and Balearic Islands and in the Mediterranean coasts of Andalusia, Valencia and Catalonia (Garrido 2007; Murray Mas 2015). This significant shift towards tourism, banking, real-estate, and construction happened in post-Franco Spain, although there was a significant reorientation towards tourism and construction starting with the 1950s long before the dictator's death[55] (Palomera 2015; Murray Mas and Pallicer Mateu 2016; Aguilera and Naredo 2009; Pack 2006). Tourism has potentiated and become closely interlinked with real estate and construction, with the economy of 'bricks' and 'cement' (Aguilera and Naredo 2009). Moreover, international tourism has a lesser preponderance in the north and the inland, as it can be seen in Figure 2. Distribution of International Tourists according to Autonomous Community, 1997-2007.

Yet, this should not be interpreted as negative. Sol y playa tourism – characterized by geographical and seasonal concentration of a high number of all-inclusive packages sold by transnational tour operators and international tourist companies – causes high environmental and socio-economic costs such as low wages, low local incomes, precarious seasonal (un)employment, high public maintenance costs, high levels of public debt, etc. (Murray Mas 2015; Observatorio Metropolitano de Madrid 2013; Espinosa Segui 2013; Palomera 2015).

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[54] Tourism was and continues to be the main pillar of the economy for Spain (the third most visited country in the world), with a new record of 68 millions foreign visitors in 2015 and more than 13% of the labor force working in tourism (Jansa 2016).

[55] There was a significant shift towards the tourist 'industry', even before the dictator's death, motivated not just by economic considerations but also by the political concerns, diplomacy, and legitimacy concerns of the fascist Franco government (Pack 2006). Starting with the 1950s and especially with the IMF-backed Stabilization Plan (1959), the state implemented a strategy of *developmentalism* (*desarrollismo*) a la Marshall Plan but one mainly based on the tourist sector and closely linked to real estate and construction (Palomera 2015; Aguilera and Naredo 2009).

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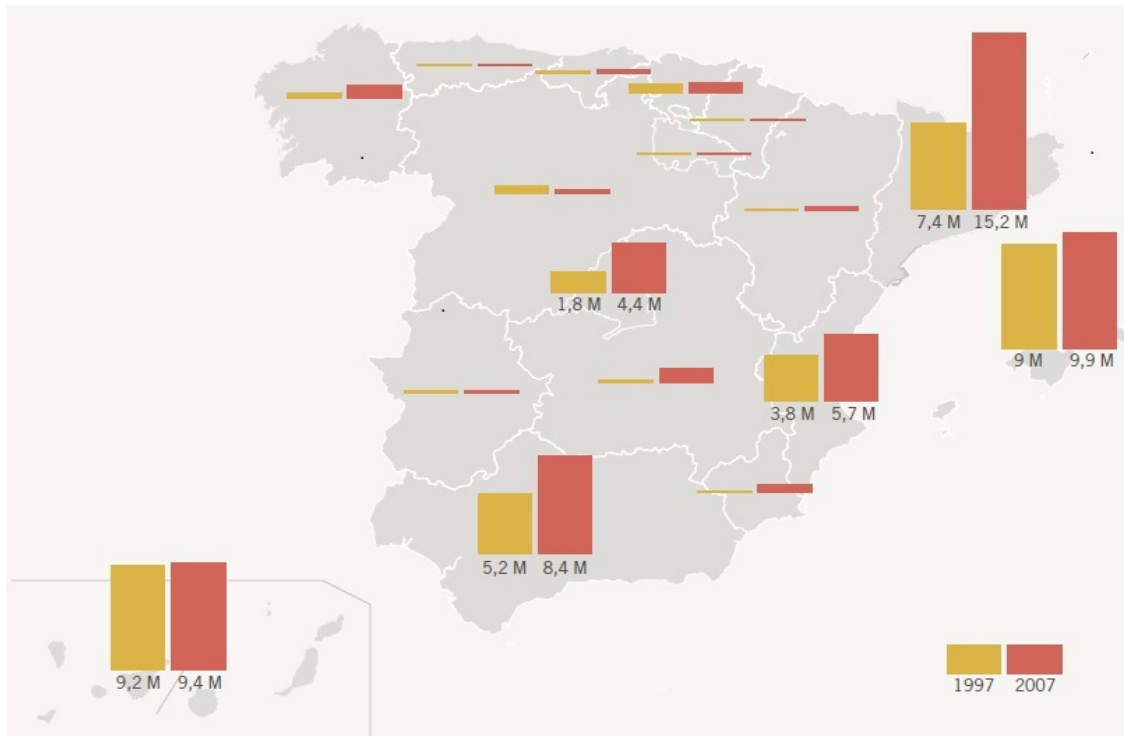
Figure 3. Distribution of International Tourists according to Autonomous Community, 1997-2007
Source: Murray Mas 2015, 215

Urban cultural tourism represents an exception and an expansion to the regional centralization of 'mass tourism', although not necessarily an exception regarding the negative effects of the so-called 'quality', 'small-scale' tourism (Harvey 2002; Tretter 2009; Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas 2014; Morell 2009); moreover, the state-led decentralization of touristic policy and emergence of urban cultural tourist destinations is heavily concentrated to nine cities (Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Valencia, Granada, Córdoba, Bilbao, Donostia-San Sebastián, and Toledo) that represent more than 70% of the visitors (Garrido 2007, 316). See for Figure 3 and Figure 4 for an illustration of this concentration based on the number of visitors staying in hotels in between 2006 and 2015.
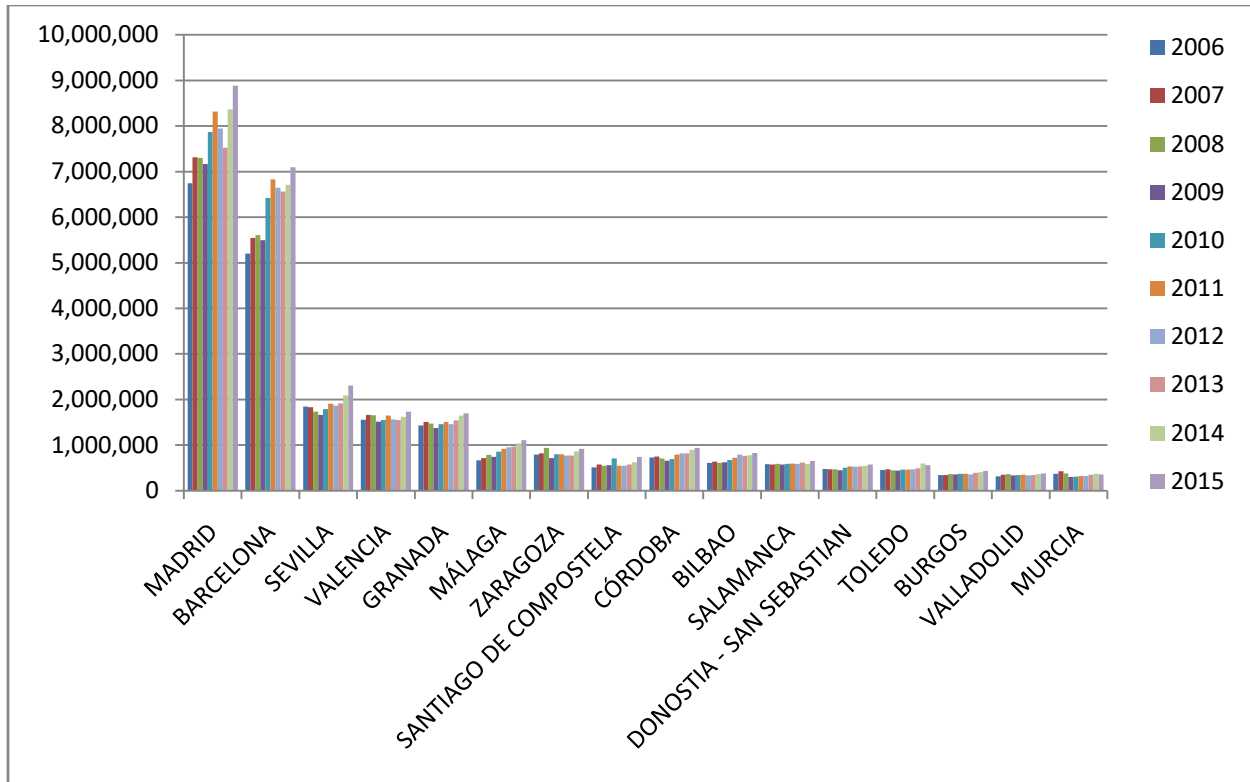
Figure 4. Number of visitors staying in hotels, 2006-2015
Source: Prepared by the author with data from the National Institute of Statistics, INE, and the Tourist Observatory of Córdoba (2011; 2016)
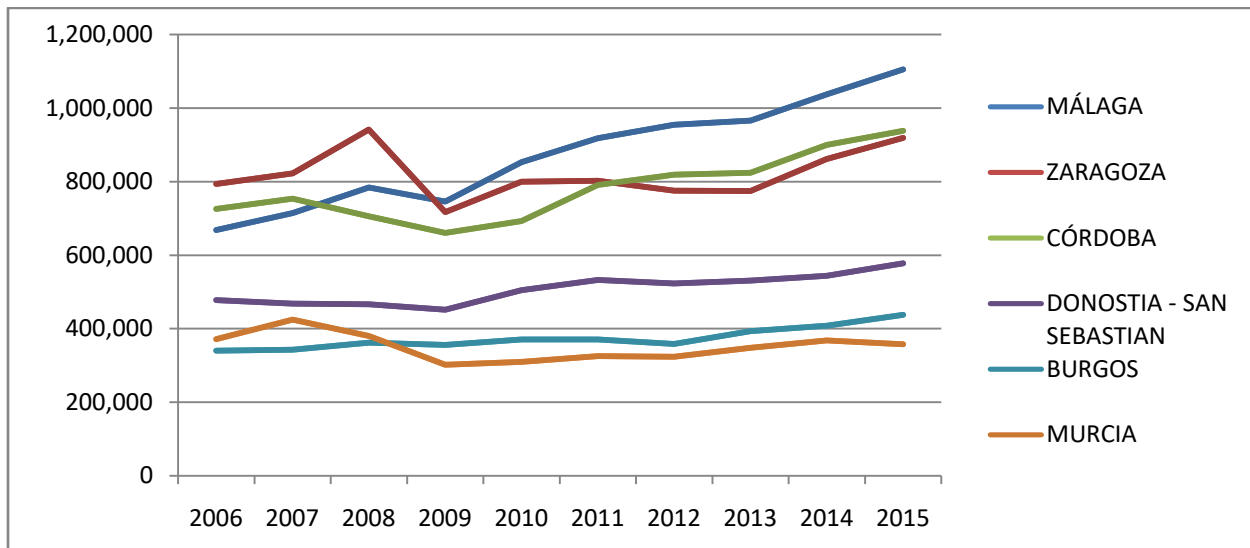
Figure 5. Number of visitors staying in hotels in six of the Spanish ECoC competitors, 2006-2015
Source: Prepared by the author with data from the National Institute of Statistics, INE, and the Tourist Observatory of Córdoba (2011; 2016)

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While also being one of the main poles of littoral tourism (Málaga for Costa del Sol), the region of Andalusia was also the main receiver of domestic, inland tourism[56] ('turismo de interior') in 2007 (Murray Mas 2015, 225), concentrated in the 'golden-triangle' of Seville, Granada, and Córdoba.

In the North, the Basque region – together with other northern Atlantic regions and the islands – is among the least visited regions by other Spaniards (Murray Mas 2015), even though its 'cultural capital' is dependent on tourism and the service sector. Compared to Bilbao, Donostia – San Sebastián has never been a "manufacturing city but a centenarian touristic center", starting as the summertime capital of the Spanish aristocracy and bourgeoisie at the end of the 19th century (Garrido 2007; Larrea et al. 2012, 69; my translation).

The San Sebastián of the *belle époque* (1890-1920) was a playground and symbol of beauty for European and Spanish elites, and had the currently coveted small-scale *'luxury tourism'* ('turismo de calidad'/'quality tourism') even before it was named as such (Garrido 2007; Larrea et al. 2012). Tourism in Donostia – San Sebastián , just like the city, underwent a period of relative stagnation, and took a back seat during Franco's reign (Pizzolatto Konzen 2013) – mainly because of and because of state policies of assimilationism, authoritarianism and centralism[57] (state repression of Basques and ethnic violence), and also because of the state-led promotion of the sun-and-beach model along the Mediterranean. Tourism experienced a relative revival afterwards, partially motivated by its cultural attractions and festivals, and alternative *'playa fria'* model ('cold beach').

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[56] Murray Mas argues that this high rates of inland tourism are partly due to high rates of emigration out of Andalusia (Murray Mas 2015, 225).

[57] I will paint in broad strokes this very complex issue. The repressions of the 1940s and 1950s were harsh (taxation, language, naming, folklore, etc.) and discouraged overt political mobilizations, leading to small acts of resistance in the private sphere and the so-called internalization, 'privatization of nationalist politics' (Sabanadze 2010). But over long term, Franco's assimilationism, authoritarianism and centralism were counterproductive in the Basque Country. ETA was formed in 1959 by "young nationalists increasingly disappointed with the passivity of older generations in the face of ongoing "de-basquization" of their country and with the wholesale privatization of nationalist politics" (Sabanadze 2010, 132). Its actions led to more repressions, which led to more actions, and so on. In the post-France period, PNV – the Basque Nationalist Party, a moderate and Christian Democratic – reemerged as the main political force in Basque nationalism, and they were the ones that negotiated and approved the Basque Statute of Autonomy. Nationalist terrorism did not diminish after the autonomy and became alienating even for citizens favoring Basque autonomy and independence (Lewis 2005): this heightened nationalist tensions led to more punitive measures and the criminalization by the Spanish state with the support of the mass media and main political parties of other nationalist leftist political organizations beyond ETA, of other *izquierda abertzale*/ nationalist left parties, newspapers, and non-governmental organizations (Pizzolatto Konzen 2013). It is in this pro-Franco context that DSS became identified as the 'fortress' of ETA, as a 'space of darkness and enclosure' (Lewis 2005), and continues to evoke images of nationalist terrorism even with the revival of tourism (Pizzolatto Konzen 2013).

Despite that, the city holds ambivalent imaginaries in post-Franco Spain: while "people recognize the beauty of San Sebastián's natural and built environments, as well as its significance within Spanish, Basque, and European artistic and cultural life, such recognition, however, is accompanied by sharp perceptions of San Sebastián as 'other[58],' as opaque to rational comprehension, as *independentista* and terrorist" (Lewis 2005, 344). The competition for ECoC and its implementation is part of a long-term project for – what Odón Elorza, DSS's mayor from 20 years from 1991 until 2011, called – 'glamour is returning' (Zuber 2006); it is an attempt to re-brand the city away from an association with terrorism and violence, both within Spain and Europe but also for North American visitors[59]. This further beautification and return to glamour will create even more problems for its urban citizens that are already dealing with the highest land-use prices and prices for living in the Spanish state, and lack of affordable housing (Borja and Muxí 2004; Caso 2008; Matesanz 2014). The 'collective symbolic capital' of Donostia has already yielded 'monopoly rents' even before the ECoC competition and selection, and before ETA's announcement (Harvey 2002).

Moreover, as Borja and Muxi argue, "San Sebastián faces the risk, like Barcelona, of converting into a city-theme park, of quality, but a specialization/monoculture which is economically vulnerable and socially exclusionary" (Borja and Muxí 2004, 228), and reinforcing already existing patterns of uneven development and inequality within the city. Both the implementation of ECoC 2016 and ETA's definitive cessation of its violent activities and disarmament will make the city considerably more amenable to commercialization and commodification which will make it even more unaffordable to immigrants, working class, and middle class people.

Beyond tourism, it is important to note that before the onset of the current crisis, more than 90% of the major 'Spanish'/ transnational companies had headquarters in only four autonomous communities: Madrid (57.54%), the Basque Country (11.83%), Cantabria (10.87%) and Catalonia (10.11%) when taking into account the exit of FDIs (Murray Mas 2015, 181); this was due to Madrid's power as a financial-corporate center while Santander (Cantabria) and Bilbao (Basque Country) were the headquarters for the two main Spanish banks (Murray Mas 2015).

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[58] The competition and its results actually reinforced these perceptions of DSS as other, as fundamentally different from the other Spanish cities. Some of my interlocutors reframed the competition between cities as a struggle between 'Spain' vs. Basque (that were supported by Catalans), between 'Spain' vs. separatist regions.

[59] Almost 1.3 million US citizens visited Spain in 2012 but most went to Catalonia, Andalusia, Madrid, Valencia and the Islands.

The main Spanish companies and more 'productive' sectors have and continued to have headquarters mostly in these autonomous communities: Madrid, the Basque Country, Cantabria, and Catalonia. Furthermore, in 2011 the final year of the ECoC competition, the Basque country had the highest regional PIB, 34.5% higher than the Spanish average, while Extremadura (Caceres) and Andalusia had the lowest (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica 2012). While autonomous communities have generally competence over land-use, tourism promotion, and/or main aspects of educational and cultural policies, the Basque region also has a "regime of fiscal autonomy[60]. This regime of fiscal autonomy enabled the Basque government to set and retain most of the taxes collected in the territory of the Basque Autonomous Community" (Prytherch and Huntoon 2005; Sabanadze 2010, 144). Although also affected by the crisis, Donostia – as the sole representative of the Basque country in the ECoC competition – had and continues to have a more favorable financial situation than the other cities.

Broadly speaking, the regions of Andalusia (Málaga, Córdoba), Madrid's metropolitan region (Alcalá de Henares), the Canary and Balearic Islands (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Palma de Mallorca) and other Mediterranean regions (Murcia, Tarragona) experienced higher rates of growth in the boom-before-the-bust, when compared with the Basque Country and other Atlantic regions (Palomera 2015). That was due to the higher preponderance of construction, real estate, tourism and leisure in their economy (Palomera 2015; Murray Mas 2015), that were fast growing sectors during the boom.

Culture and cultural urban tourism were an integral part of this real-estate bubble and construction fervor: in the pursuit of tourism, culture-led development and of different combinations of creative/cultural policies/industries/cities/clusters, considerable public funds were spent for the construction of cultural centers and tourism infrastructures, leading to what Santiago Eraso, the former cultural director of the Donostia-San Sebastián bid for ECoC 2016, called the 'cultural bubble' (Eraso 2008), before joining the Donostia coalition.

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[60] These extra functions were achieved through negotiations between the government and Basque parties in 1979 in order to keep the Basque Country into the fold, after the parliament rejected Basque demands for the recognition of their national sovereignty and after the Basques rejected the proposed constitution (Sabanadze 2010). The form the Constitution took is a source of frustration not just for other Spaniards and other regional governments but also for Basque nationalist movements and for Basques citizens favoring independence.

This speculative undertaking in the field of culture has produced an excessive amount of expensive and underutilized infrastructures, a 'cultural rust belt' (Fabiani 2014), particularly of museums or centers of contemporary art. Moreover, 'white elephants' are a characteristic feature of mega-events (Zimbalist 2015; Muller 2015), even for a smaller mega-event such as the ECoC.

During this pre-crisis period of growth and speculation associated with tourism, culture, and construction, the preparations for the ECoC competition started in Córdoba (2002), Málaga and Caceres (2004), Zaragoza, Tarragona, and Segovia (2006) and Burgos (2007). Most official commitments regarding the participation in the ECoC competition were made in mass media before the onset of the crisis. As such, the coalitions of Alcalá de Henares and Pamplona felt compelled to continue participating and maintain the cultural prestige of the city and the political status of its mayors, politicians, and local councilors, even though the socio-economic situation drastically changed and austerity measures and harsh budget cuts started becoming the norm.

In Córdoba, the ECoC was the cultural bubble, which violently burst with the failure of the bidding process (2002-2011). For the competition or with the competition as 'excuse', the regional government heavily financed a variety of cultural and tourist infrastructures while the City Council was the main financing body for the operating expenditures of the bidding process and for 16 grand festivals and events for ECoC 2016 (Jiménez and Medel 2012). The imagineering of Córdoba as ECoC was a combination of the work of 'imagination' and 'engineering' to attract more tourists and to create a stronger heritage tourism destination with an accessorization of contemporary art: on the one hand, a 'Future has roots' application based on the already existent Andalusian heritage and on a future-oriented, speculative commitment to contemporary art; and on the other hand, grand festivals and underutilized cultural infrastructures.

The Center of Contemporary Creation of Córdoba (after renamed as C3A, Center of Contemporary Creation of Andalusia – see Figure 5), was financed by the regional government and constructed by FCC[61] in between 2008 and 2013 with a final price tag of 28 million €that exceeded its initial budget by almost a third. It was opened only in December 2016, three years after the finalization of its construction. Although meant for cultural creation, it functions as a museum and is described as an exhibition and consumption-oriented 'art center' by its famous Spanish architects (Sobejano and Nieto 2014).

These same architects also designed the extension and restoration of the San Telmo Museum of Donostia – San Sebastián between 2006 and 2011 (Sobejano and Nieto 2013); see Figure 7. Museum of San Telmo in Donostia-San Sebastián. Similarly with C3A in Córdoba, an International Centre for Contemporary Culture – Tabakalera (2008-2015), a former tobacco factory – was part of the imagineering efforts of the Donostia 2016 coalition but one consonant to its rehabilitation and aesthetic imperatives (belle époque with a modern hint). It was open with a couple of months before the inauguration of ECoC 2016 year in Donostia. But despite these differences (new building or renovation; failure or success with the bidding process), both the new contemporary centers in Donostia and Córdoba struggle with using the large spaces at their disposal and lean heavily towards exhibitions and consumption rather than creation.

[61] During this pre-crisis period of growth and speculation, seven of the ten largest transportation infrastructure companies were 'Spanish'/transnational, including ACS and FCC (Guillén and García-Canal 2010; Aguilera and Naredo 2009). These companies – which appeared during Franco's period – often won against global competitors because they were highly subsidized by state funds. Later, they continued to be subsidized by state funds or receive grand infrastructural from the state financed with public money and EU funds. The main contracts for the construction and rehabilitation of cultural centers went and continue to be distributed to these transportation/construction companies, particularly to ACS and FCC: ACS/Dragados – first place (Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia, Auditorium and Ópera of Tenerife, Enlargement of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía de Madrid; Enlargement of the Museo Nacional del Prado de Madrid), FCC Construcción – second place (Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Córdoba, Musac Museum of Contemporary Art in Leon, Auditorium Leon, Museum of Art, Science and Oceanographic Park in Valencia), Ferrovial – third place (Guggenheim Museum Bilbao), Abertis – fourth place, OHL – seventh place, Sacyr – ninth place (Museum of Málaga), and Acciona – tenth place. This is an incomplete and exploratory list I put together based on available information on the companies' websites. Less than 2% of the total projects of ACS/Dragados are cultural centers (Dragados 2016), most are housing real-estate, offices and administrative buildings. While I am not discounting the profit they make out of cultural projects, I would argue that museums, theaters, and other cultural centers rather function as branding and long-term investment for these companies: prizes of architectural excellence, famous Spanish and international (star)architects (Tarazona Vento 2015), public recognition, etc. For transportation and construction companies, the significance of cultural centers lies well beyond that of a simple revenue source.

Figure 6. C3A, Center for Contemporary Creation of Andalusia, Córdoba
Source: Sobejano and Nieto Architects, 2014

Figure 7. Museum of San Telmo in Donostia-San Sebastián
Source: Sobejano and Nieto Architects

The Center for Contemporary Creation in Córdoba was actually constructed in order to transform the riverside of the Miraflores Peninsula – Campo de la Verdad (see Figure 8. Map of Campo de la Verdad – Miraflores, Córdoba, Spain) into a 'cultural riverside' and extend the historic center. Star-architect Rem Koolhaas was also supposed to design a congress center in the same riverside area facing the historic city center, Miraflores Peninsula, in order to "unite the two Córdobas, the Mosque with the modern Córdoba, the north with the south, to develop and regenerate the south of the city"; the Koolhas congress center was canceled with the crisis and with the failure of the bid as it was "a project of a time of economic well-being" (City Council staff).
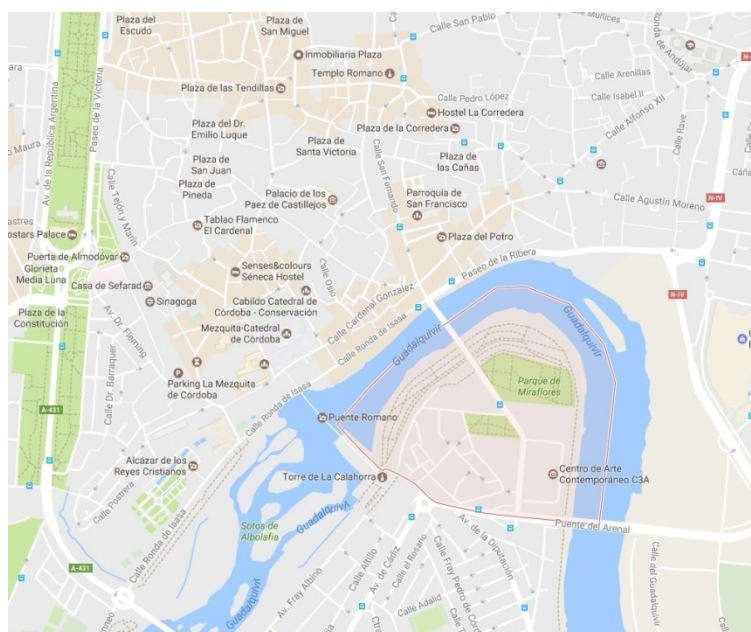
Figure 8. Map of Campo de la Verdad – Miraflores, Córdoba, Spain
Source: Google Maps

In Málaga, the municipality together with the regional government has made significant efforts to expand the *sol-y-playa* tourism of Costa del Sol towards cultural urban tourism, museification and major events and infrastructures[62]. The city had now more than 30 museums, most of them opened since 2003, and constructed and financed with public money – such as the Picasso Museum, the Centre for Contemporary Art, and the Carmen Thyssen Museum, all three

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[62] Similar tendencies towards state-led or policy-driven tourism strategies – accelerated by other EU policies, such as the URBAN programme – are also documented in other coastal cities (Morell 2009; Franquesa 2011; Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas 2014; Herrera, Smith, and Vera 2007), such as Palma de Mallorca (Balearic Islands), Valencia (Valencian Community), and Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Canary Islands).

inaugurated in 2003. Just like for the participation of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in the ECoC competition and for the heritage tourism policy of Palma de Mallorca, "(t)he set strategy was not aiming at the substitution of mass tourism for a more 'small-scale tourism' based on 'nature' and 'culture'. Instead, tourism had to expand by incorporating new brands and models into the prevailing mass tourism industry" (Morell 2009, 349). The participation in the competition for ECoC (2004-2010) fit 'perfectly' into the further touristification and museification of Málaga and into the 'bet' on culture pursued by the local and regional governments in order to diversify its current offers. These investments in big infrastructures, some of which are underutilized and of doubtful quality, are accompanied by major events like the Festival of Cinema of Málaga, while the cinemas of the historical centers are disappearing (Sguiglia and San Juan 2009). High levels of public debt, lack of public cultural infrastructures, heavy cuts in subventions for artists and cultural producers as part of its austerity commitments, are one of the consequences of an almost compulsive privileging of culture for the sake of consumption, exhibition and spectacle. But the museification strategy did not end with the competition or with the onset of crisis, just slowed down. Building on the model of Bilbao's Guggenheim, the municipality is – again – opening big cultural institutions; it is recently trying 'to pull a Bilbao' and recreate the so-called Guggenheim effect, as they have recently opened two foreign museums branches of the Pompidou Center and of the St Petersburg Museum in Málaga.

The competition for ECoC 2016 was symptomatic of the pre-crisis period of growth, museification, and speculative, entrepreneurial urbanism, and of its aftermath and slow shift towards austerity and its contradictions. The ECoC both fed on the cultural bubble and fueled its bursting. The unevenness in industrial and financial-corporate power and the very dependence of Andalusia and other regions on the monoculture of tourism, construction, and leisure led to more-bust-than-boom. It led to higher levels of unemployment, unemployment growth, and public debt in Andalusia and other Mediterranean regions compared to the Basque Country and other Northern Atlantic regions (Palomera 2015), and a reinforcement of regional inequalities with the current global crisis.

The mobilization of the ECoC programme in Córdoba, Málaga, Donostia San Sebastián and other Spanish cities was "structured by past and existing patterns and processes of development within territories" (McCann and Ward 2011, 75), mainly by the overreliance on the tourism

industry and the service sectors. Its embeddedness in particular territories and in particular territorial contexts has constrained, inhibited, or influenced what actors and institutions can and cannot do (Wolf 1990) during processes of competition.

In spite of these regional inequalities (or indeed because of them), inter-urban competition trumped intra-regional cooperation in Andalusia (Córdoba and Málaga) and in Castile and León (Burgos and Segovia). The coalitions of Córdoba and Málaga were both from the 'South'. Similarly, Burgos and Segovia were 'competing siblings', both part of the autonomous community of Castile and León ('competidores hermanos', the mirror image of 'ciudades hermanas'/'twin or sister cities'). While Córdoba could claim to represent the 'South' in 2002 at the beginning, "after Málaga announced its candidacy in 2004, that caused the regional government of Andalusia to switch from an explicit support to an 'active neutrality'" (Jiménez and Medel 2012, 222; my translation).

In the case of these cities and regions, entrepreneurial urbanism trumped 'entrepreneurial regionalism' that Prytherch and Huntoon (Prytherch and Huntoon 2005) claim is characteristic of Spanish governance, more precisely characteristic of the governance of cultural regions and historic nationalities such the Basque country, Catalonia, and the Valencian Community. There have been rich discussions about the emergence of a 'new regionalism', a 'Europe of regions', city-regions, regional cities, entrepreneurial regionalism, in Western Europe (Deas and Ward 2000; MacLeod 2001; Prytherch and Huntoon 2005; Keating 2001). In this dissertation I prefer to use the concepts of 'urban entrepreneurialism' or 'entrepreneurial urbanism' instead of regionalism, even though regional institutions play an important role (sometimes, a determinant role) in urban governance and redevelopment in Spain. There are three main reasons for this.

First, even though regional governments, regional actors and other non-local actors are frequently involved in these processes (sometimes even initiating or leading them), 'the city' is the commodity that is being sold and marketed, or the place that is being fought over in urban mobilizations against its 'selling'. What is being imagineered vis-à-vis others? 'The city' is the object of entrepreneurial policies and inter-urban competition. Moreover, this involves a particular inter-scalar relation between the urban and regional scale: 'the region' usually has a supporting role in the game of inter-urban competition, meant to bolster capitals or major urban centers which act as stand-ins for the region and for regional identity. This can be noticed even

for particular cultural regions and historic nationalities where there are 'synergies' between cultural regionalism and economic entrepreneurialism (Prytherch and Huntoon 2005): at most it can be said that 'entrepreneurial regionalism' can be typical for autonomous regions in Spain with strong identity and significant political autonomy such as the Basque country, Catalonia, or the Valencian Community, but even then capital cities such as Bilbao, Barcelona and Valencia (at most, other major urban centers) are the platforms and icons for place marketing initiatives carried out by regional governments.

Second, scale and the interactions between scales are not fixed but socially produced, made and remade through social practices. 'Urban' coalitions, 'urban' entrepreneurialism or 'urban' mobilizations are not limited by administrative boundaries, but include a variety of actors, institutions, concepts, devices, policies from elsewhere that shape them. Different scales are embedded and co-present in one place; scales are encountered on the 'ground'. Different places and scales are embedded and co-present in one policy.

Third, competition and competitiveness are engineered and promoted by EU institutions or inter-scalar rule regimes both for the 'Europe of regions' and for the 'Europe of cities'. Whether inter-urban competition or inter-regional competition (or both) is being promoted depends on the particular rule regimes and on the interrelations between organizations within the EU and other systems of governance. Whether the city is imagineered vis a vis other cities, and/or the region vis a vis other regions can be also interpreted as an empirical question. The point stands that competition between territories is neither natural nor a structural effect: it is not limited to a particular territory but rather something that is engineered through an uneven ensemble of policy processes across different territories. This creates highly complex inter-scalar and cross-scalar relations, not amenable to nested, hierarchical scalar thinking (where the global/European influences the national scale, which influences the region, which then influences the urban scale, and so on).

3.4. Problematization through Comparison: 'Expert' Need Interpretation, References and Model Cities

The process of inter-urban competition and the form it took cannot be explained only as a direct and necessary expression of territorial politics, regional inequalities, or patterns of uneven development within the nation-state. Rather, the relations, (im)mobilities and (dis)connections between cities, scales, and wider policy networks shaped profoundly the bidding process.

As discussed, the competition was also structured by inter-scalar rule regimes and the competitive rules put forward by the Ministry of Culture, the European Commission and EU institutions that significantly contributed to this lack of inter-urban cooperation and intra-regional cooperation among coalitions. The system of governance of ECoC limits the type of relations 'cities'/coalitions can have to each other to competitive or hierarchical relations: they do not allow for an agreement and collaboration between 'equals', only for a subordinate, nested relationship between a city that represents a region. Disagreements between politicians and other coalition members representing Córdoba and Málaga (Jiménez and Medel 2012) mainly stemmed – unsurprisingly – from each not wanting to be in a subordinate position towards the other in a joint-ECoC bid but the leader of a potential 'Southern' bid. An agreement was never reached and the two coalitions representing Córdoba and Málaga participated as separate entities; they worked (and spent) separately, with each undermining the other, and claiming its 'competing sibling' is the favorite of the regional government and of its politicians and civil servants. As a result, Córdoba's coalition could argue that it represents the needs of 'the South' only after Málaga lost the pre-selection in 2010. It was only after this that the regional inequalities between the North and the South became an instrument in inter-city rivalry.

The interpretations of cities' 'needs' and 'wounds' (Fraser 1987) – such as, 'the moment of the South', violence and terrorism, urban vacuums – is structured by past or existing patterns of socio-economic development and by inter-scalar rules regimes but does not flow directly from them, nor it is a direct expression of historical events or competitive rules. They are not seemingly 'natural' responses to processes of change, or patterns and processes of development within territories. Rather, it is a labored-over process of production during competitive bidding that requires the identification of problems, needs, – or emergent advantages –, and the

mobilization and alignment of a variety of actors, institutions, devices, and concepts from a variety of scales around that interpretation of the city's 'needs', and around that competitive imagineering. The identification of problems and deficiencies emerge processually with the enactment of expertise (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Carr 2010): the messy realities of cities and regions are translated into a 'problem' that is framed as amenable to the ECoC 'solution', and that becomes an instrument in inter-city rivalry.

Political questions of socio-economic inequality can thus be solved through a project promoting urban tourism based on Andalusian heritage and multicultural history. The negative effects of the real-estate bubble are framed as manageable through cultural interventions in the empty plots left unused as a result of speculation, or in the empty buildings, and ruins of the historical center of Málaga. And the thorny political problems of the Basque conflict and the separatist violence of ETA (and its association with Donostia) are framed as amenable to be solved through cultural and educational programmes that promote "the ethical superiority of non-violence, underpinned by the idea of positive peace – the rejection of war = terrorism = all other forms of violence" (San Sebastián 2016 2010, 93).

These problems were selected and translated from the messy realities of cities and regions during the competitive bidding process. They are presented as manageable through technical interventions and solutions (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007) – in this case, ECoC –, even though there are no straightforward 'solutions' to uneven development, real-estate speculation, or separatist violence that would not require a challenge to the status quo or changes in the structure of political-economic relations. All these problematizations are all political through their anti-politics (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007). With its cheeky wordplay on 'Revolution' and its red-colored application, the work from the Foundation Burgos 2016 is the most obvious example for this enactment of expertise that identifies 'problems' and (dis)advantages through comparison, depoliticizes, and frames them in technical terms: its story goes that the ECoC and culture provide an opportunity for evolution, not revolution, for a city dependent on the car manufacturing industry and other industrial sectors. The philosophy of the application revolved around the concept of 'R-evolution' (with the 'R' logo) as a play on words between 'revolution' that is understood as urban and socio-economic development, and ECoC as a potentially transformative moment, and 'evolution' to emphasize gradual change and the importance of the

Museum of Human Evolution of Burgos and of the Archaeological Site of Atapuerca in the province of Burgos (which contains the earliest known fossils in Western Europe and was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site), hence 'R' and 'R-evolution' with a hyphen. Policy actors advanced the idea that Burgos's industrial profile was a 'problem', even though its reliance on industry was one of the keys to its economic stability before and after the crisis. As Burgos was – and continues to be – one of the most industrial cities in Spain and among the competitors with 26% of the population working in industries and almost twice the Spanish average of residents employed in the industrial sector (Burgos2016 2010, 164; INE 2015), the application advanced the idea that a cultural-led transformation for an industrial city that is facing or might face deindustrialization and outsourcing. Revolution here also pointed to a different connotation than the one associated with industry and (de)industrialization: as Burgos was the capital of Franco during the Spanish civil war and the seat of the rebellious military government ('nationalists') that was fighting against revolutionaries and the leftist revolution ('republicans'), it was ironic that a coalition – representing a city that was the seat of the counter-revolution during the Spanish civil war – was talking about revolution as R-evolution, and using it as an instrument in inter-city rivalry with other Spanish cities. While the selection panel saw the logo of 'R-evolution' as courageous "given the history of the city" (Selection Panel 2010), it think it is rather more telling of how experts are trained to identify problems (e.g.: deindustrialization), depoliticize them, and frame them as technical problems with technical solutions (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Fraser 1987).

These problematizations – such as North-South inequalities, violence and terrorism, urban vacuums, deindustrialization – are 'expert' needs interpretations or 'expert' enactments (for brevity's sake), even though it involves more than 'experts', but also models, concepts, devices, etc.; the legitimacy of 'experts' is never complete and is often contested and contestable. Enacting expertise in competitive bidding – just like becoming competitive or entrepreneurial – is not general or natural but implies learning, translating, and mobilizing the different written and unwritten 'rules' of different policy processes of inter-territorial competition. As one 'external expert' working for the Foundation Burgos 2016 mentioned:

> *From the very beginning, they (n.a.: the City Council and the Association for Strategic Planning of Burgos) wanted to make a bid which emphasized the concept of evolution since they had Atapuerca close by, basically to focus on primordial history, on what*

happened millions of years ago, although this is of no importance to contemporary issues and happenings. It took a lot of convincing to make them understand that the bid should focus on contemporary issues and on 'what we need' instead of 'what we have already'. And in these debates, in this whole convincing, we got to the idea with 'R-evolution', to the fact that Burgos needs to change and to address its position as a city. Also, the R-evolution was an important idea since Burgos is going through deindustrialization, with industry moving to Eastern Europe and even further, and with the need to switch to service-oriented economy. Basically, the city participated in the bid because contemporary issues and contemporary identities were needed to be addressed, not because Burgos has an archeological site of primordial history (External expert, Burgos).

While prior to – and after – the ECoC competition, policy actors tend to appraise cities in terms of their heritage, cultural weight, and collective symbolic capital, participation within ECoC involves unlearning to showcase strengths, or better said learning to showcase in a particular way: offering a compelling narrative of pressing problems, feasible solutions, and positive results (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007); thus, a bid presents – or should present – a linear story that is compelling but also feasible and amenable to be solved through the ECoC and other 'technical solutions.' Their claim to the title partially depends on their capacity to diagnose problems so as to match the ECoC programme. Moreover, this story should be compelling not just to its coalition and to 'the city' but also to the selection panel that at that time were composed of seven 'European experts' designated by EU institutions and six 'national experts' chosen by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. As one 'external expert' working for the bid of Burgos mentioned:

The foundation identified what the city needed, what Spain needed, but they did not really identify what the Commission wanted. I suggested that it is good to be seen that: a. They are aware of all the different policy strands going through the Commission, and b. That they could connect to those in some ways and bring some of those ideas and debates to the city, basically, to channel the debates from Europe in the city.

Connections or disconnections with centers of influence and persuasion (Peet 2002), or with centers of calculation (Jöns 2011; Prince 2013) such as the Commission and its 'best practices' shape profoundly the bidding process. The enactment of expertise is not a clear cut process in which policy actors or 'experts' apply their skills, specialist knowledge and/or knowledge of the city or of the ECoC policy but requires both learning to compete and a complex alignment between cities, scales, and wider policy networks. This is where comparison comes into play.

Comparison and comparative learning practices are key practices in processes of inter-urban competition. Competitive bidding is made possible through multi-faceted practices of learning,

performance, and persuasion though comparison (Painter 1998; Cook and Ward 2011; McFarlane 2011a), involving other official bids and reports, strategic planning documents, strategic plans on culture, study trips, models, references cities, best practices, mobile consultants, etc.

There are two interrelated functions for comparison and comparative learning: first, policy actors are conceiving competitive imaginaries and generating problematizations and needs interpretations through comparison, and second, they are tools of policy legitimatization, persuasion, seduction, and reassurance.

First, problematization and 'expert' need interpretations are shaped by and in relation to multiple 'elsewheres' and 'outsides', through implicit or explicit comparison with competitors but also with references and model cities. Cities are compared against one another (both direct competitors and models and reference cities) in all manners in order to see how claims can be made about a particular city, and to carve out distinguishing features, according to a variety of indicators, statistics, etc.

Second, models, reference cities and other comparative learning practices are also tools of legitimation, seduction, and persuasion for within the coalition and beyond, not just inspiration for how policy actors make sense of the world and imagine a particular city in relation with other cities and scales. Practices of comparison give legitimacy to bidding efforts, while also allowing policy actors to carve out a space for the city among other ECoCs and among other Spanish and European cities. Policy actors were not simply born with a belief in the potential of the ECoC policy or in the potential of inter-urban competition, as for most policy actors – particularly for local-based policy actors – these are "new practices of governance that themselves have to be learnt" (Painter 1998; Cook and Ward 2011; McFarlane 2011a). Rather they are "socialized and acculturated into this belief through a complex suite of social, cultural and political processes" (T. Hall and Hubbard 1998, 256), more precisely, through comparison. For most local policy actors, the ECoC was most of all a process of learning: even though only one city won, this very learning process and the newness of the experience seduced policy actors, particularly technical staff of the city council, to get involved, and overwork themselves during the competitive bidding process in the city, without promises of extra pay.

'Middling' civil servants and local policy actors (Larner and Laurie 2010) contrasted the tediousness and boredom of daily work in the bureaucratic machine (Graeber 2012; Graeber 2013) with the excitement, enrichment and rewards of learning and working for a 'new' activity, and for 'the only city project' their city developed (Córdoba, artist). The ECoC policy was imagined as "the ghost in the machine – the force which breathes life and purpose into the machinery of government and animates the otherwise dead hand of bureaucracy" (Shore and Wright 1997, 5): As one interviewee mentioned,

> *It was a new project, different, very exciting. I have been working for almost xx years as a technical staff in the municipality, always wanted to get involved in the public service of the city. For me, it was a new challenge. Not only the old administrative part of writing reports or organizing events or exhibitions, something new, this was a much more novel experience* (Zaragoza, City Council).

The phrase "It was *the* project of my life" was frequently uttered by interviewees, irrespective of the city. The internationalist and cosmopolitan orientation of ECoC was also contrasted with the 'intoxicating' character of living within the same medium-sized city (Burgos). Local policy actors enact processes of competition on the ground partly due to this fascination with the comparative learning process itself associated with learning new practices of governance, and with the newness of inter-urban competition (and its related promises of development). Practices of comparative learning involved a form of seduction and inducement through learning-based rewards (Allen 2003; McFarlane 2011a) for the policy actors involved in the coalition.

Due to their persuasive power, models and reference cities function as discursive formations that seduce practitioners and provide mutual understandings on which policy actors can build upon. They also provide legitimacy for the bidding efforts. These aspirational antecendents function as objects of desire, holding the space open for the fantasy of urban transformation. Practices of comparison with models and reference cities have profound long-term political consequences for cities, beyond inspiration and their actual mobilization, and beyond the coalition, in that they become embedded in political debate and urban politics, and impact the imagineering of a city. They can influence already existing urban policies, urban governance, and materialities, and also produce new policies and materialities. Comparative practices allow policy actors not just to imagine visions of transformation but also to persuade themselves and others, and to imagine and engineer the city towards those visions.

During my fieldwork, it was interesting to see how much and how univocally Barcelona and Bilbao pervaded the language and imagination of policy actors. For my interviewees, both the hosting of the Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona (1992) and the opening of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1997) were reference points and role models for what other Spanish cities can achieve with a mega-event, iconic architecture, and/or culture-led development: they provide legitimacy for what Spanish politicians and policy-makers would like to do, or for what they are already doing (Gonzalez 2011), stirring and shaping the urban aspirations of policy actors even before the competition.

These cities were referenced because they were imaginatively positioned as antecedent to or 'above' the other Spanish cities (Bunnell 2015), ultimately reinforcing the urban hierarchy, the mental map of 'best' Spanish cities, and the collective symbolic capital of these referenced cities. Of course the mobilization of these models is quite common transnationally (Gonzalez 2011; Gómez and González 2001; Degen and Garcia 2012), but in the cities involved in the Spanish competition for the ECoC Barcelona and Bilbao functioned in a more diffuse, subtle manner as national icon, and 'dream cities' (Robinson 1998; Pile 2002). These cities were widely mobilized as both model and reference cities during the Spanish competition for ECoC, not just stirring and shaping the urban aspirations of policy actors but functioning almost as historical allegories that pointed to the realm of possibility for the transformation of Spanish cities. These models were taken for granted and functioned as shortcuts in conversations and as an embedded common sense for cultural urban policymaking across the competing Spanish cities. Their use and deployment was unquestioned and did not require justification among policy actors, mass media or the wider public. As an interviewee stated, this role of 'elsewhere' is crucial because, since "sometimes a city needs strong outside energy in order to get better, to become more authentic, to prove its worth, like in the case of Bilbao with the Guggenheim museum" (external expert).

Bilbao's titanium-clad museum and urban regeneration have inspired and continue to legitimize the Spanish municipalities' craze with big arts complexes, big cultural infrastructures and museification, as it can be seen in the case of Málaga, Córdoba and Donostia San Sebastián. As Zulaika argues, Bilbao's Guggenheim is imagined in a "dialectical opposition to the rusty, silent, imposing, dramatic, empty Altos Hornos blast furnaces of Sestao, just a few miles down the riverfront, turning Gehry's masterpiece into the architectonic equivalent of a Dantean song"

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(Zulaika 2013, 13–14). The new, current Bilbao is imagined in an opposition to the abominations of the dark satanic mills of yesteryear. Bilbao as a reference city, just like other models, is impressionistic: it is painted without detail but with bold, political statements about the inadequacy of industry and 'unaesthetic' neighborhoods, and the fantasy of a clean shinny metropolis that thrives on tourism, culture, and services. It is an opposition that seduces and invites policy actors to imagine visions of urban transformation that are linked to dark thoughts of demolishment of what are framed as a city's ruins and deficiencies:

> *What does the Southern Sector need? The South sector needs to be demolished. Why? Because it is a neighborhood built in the 50s only in order to give housing to people because people were living on the street and we had ended a war and the civil war destroyed thousands of living places. The neighborhood was constructed carelessly and hastily, a neighborhood that did not have conditions and services. We have to regenerate it (…) This has to serve as in Bilbao. Where the Guggenheim exists now, before it was only shit, dark chimneys heavily fuming in the middle of the city; the river was dirty. The Guggenheim was made to change the physiognomy of the city. The capital title has to serve for the same, to arrange the surroundings of the city, the opportunities for making investments for example in a park; for this you have to expropriate, in short, it is the excuse to regenerate the city physically and economically* (Córdoba, corporate actor).

This opposition and surpassing of a supposedly dark past and a city's industrial ruins are politically-charged, just like urban interventions and policies that are referencing and are modeled on Bilbao, even though they are framed as apolitical in the name of a general improvement.

Barcelona has also inspired urban redevelopment aspirations among the coalitions participating in the Spanish competition for ECoC 2016, functioning as a 'proof' for what mega-events and urban tourism can achieve. It was also very common to hear policy actors preface their arguments with: 'we did like Barcelona', 'just like Barcelona.' It was a reference city for the positive legacies of the Olympics, and culture-led transformation, and used as a model not necessarily for the ECoC bid but for the long-term cultural strategy of the city (e.g.: in Burgos and Málaga). This demand and mobilization of the Barcelona and Bilbao models (just like for other models) went hand in hand with the hiring of Barcelona-based companies and consultancies (Gonzalez 2011), such as Interarts for Córdoba, or Fundacion Kreanta for Burgos. Similarly, the Xabide Group, based in the Basque Country, was involved in the bidding of

Burgos, Caceres, Segovia, DSS, Pamplona, and Zaragoza in different stages of the competition process.

Just like Barcelona Olympics 1992 and Bilbao's Guggenheim 1997, the experience of Glasgow as ECoC 1990 was referenced as an almost 'historical' model for what the ECoC can achieve. In contrast to other more recent models, 'policy tourism trips' (Gonzalez 2011) were not made to Barcelona, Bilbao, or Glasgow. In fast policy worlds underscored by a compulsion towards 'presentism'[63], speed, policy fads, and the search for 'innovation' (McFarlane 2011a; Peck and Theodore 2015), these events are almost historical.

Policy actors do not rely on a single model but rather carry out 'multiple individualizing comparisons' with different cities in order to emphasize the uniqueness of the place they are representing (Nijman qtd. in Cook and Ward 2010, 10). Associating a city with various models and reference cities is symbolically beneficial for mega-events bidding. As one local professional mentioned:

> *Always, to do things well, we look at what others do, we are copying what is good, improving it and apply it to us. Benchmarking and good practices are part of our work. Some years ago, we were talking about being like Barcelona, but we stopped doing this, we want to be like Málaga but improved. Today we no longer have such inferiority complex. We look at many examples of cities "can this be applied in Málaga, yes or no?" But we do not have only one or two models. Depending on the theme, we use several models* (Málaga, local professional).

But modeling and inter-referencing comparative practices, hiring 'external experts', or taking study trips are treacherous waters to navigate: due to this institutional promotion of hope and optimism and the lack of a sustained, realist discussion in the reports commissioned by the European Commission of the inherent problems of the ECoC policy and its competitive model, policy actors end up relying on 'word of mouth', prestige, and 'noise' and on their position within networks of expertise in their choice of models and 'experts', thus reinforcing their

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[63] While McFarlane critiques the 'presentism' of critical policy studies, fast policies themselves wrap time, and are characterized by adherence to policy fads and present-day models (McFarlane 2011a; Peck and Theodore 2015). In the case of the ECoC, the European Commission is encouraging this presentism and a focus on very recent 'best practices'.

prestige. Straying from safe choices might lead to a 'model' or an 'expert' that are not recognized as such[64].

Comparisons were primarily carried out with Liverpool ECoC 2008 (UK), Marseille 2013 (Provence, France), and Essen 2010 (Ruhr area, Germany). Incredibly, these comparisons were common for all the Spanish cities. Some coalitions also carried out other comparisons, such as Stavanger 2008 (Norway), Luxembourg 2007, Sibiu 2007 (Romania), Plzen 2015 (Check Republic), Lille 2004 (France), and Salamanca (2002). This was usually influenced by the external experts and advisers which were part of the bidding team. These more recent ECoCs were also modeled on previous models, and other best practices, particularly on Glasgow 1990. These models are not transferred intact or completely but mobilized, sometimes partially: through their very circulation, even off-the-shelf policies mutate and (mis)translate (McCann and Ward 2011; Müller 2015a).

Comparative practices (models and study trips) were essential for persuasion and legitimizing the bidding effort. Study trips are used both for study and ideas and for seduction and persuasion (Cook and Ward 2011). Activities like conferences, meetings, summits and policy tourism practices (study visits, fact-finding trips) bring actors from elsewhere into a geographical, relational and ideational proximity. They are the arenas in and through which models, best practices and imagineering can be mobilized and transformed in a particular direction:

> *I always say that in order to learn and understand how the ECoC works, go on a trip! We went in 2007 to Sibiu with the city mayor and the representatives of the regional committee and of the opposition. The mayor of Sibiu is a very charming, charismatic person... They saw that ECoC is a golden opportunity for the development of the city through culture, it provoked a change of vision among the politicians... Burgos is an industrial city 91% in the mentality if not in reality... If you do not like this, what is the alternative?!* (Burgos, Local professional).

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[64] Policy actors are not passively accepting or transferring the reference cities and models endorsed by inter-scalar rules regimes or by transnational experts. Attempting to find niches and gaps within the network of ECoCs is done not just by emulation or by elimination, as actors filter and transform models depending on what they are looking for. They also make their own interpretations of the impact and legacies of models and other ECoCs, sometimes critical evaluations. Policy actors are criticizing other ECoCs, the competition, or the programme, but this critique or criticism is not valued or encouraged in official bidding documents or official communication. In the end, the cities which are included in documents are not criticized or dismissed. 'Innovation' is encouraged through optimism, positivity and self-improvement/self-criticism, but without the stain of criticism and critique towards rule regimes, the state, other ECoC cities, or towards the ECoC policy. Potential debate is foreclosed. A programme which prides itself on its 'professionalism', it is actually missing an essential component: criticism.

'The city' is shaped through the 'elsewhere': bits and pieces of other cities become part of urban governance and urban politics. Other cities are used instrumentally in order to align different actors behind the competition, and in order to carve out a space for the city among other ECoCs or European cities. Policy actors were attempting to find the uniqueness of their city or of the city they were representing through other cities, and sometimes even at a distance while in study trips:

> *Marseille was the great model, it had many points in common with our bid. We also looked at other cities, at Liverpool and Lille. They where cities with similar characteristics... we were also interested in the social and economic regeneration... These winning cities were the mirror in which we were looking at ourselves* (Córdoba, cultural producer).

But comparative practices are fraught with tensions and frustrations, since competitive motivations and competitive social relations are motivating these forms of co-operation between cities. Although at first it appears that these learning practices between policy actors from different European cities are based on inter-urban cooperation, these comparative practices and co-operative social relations are routes towards increased competitiveness, and instrumental tools in inter-city rivalries. The search for 'innovation' and for niches through comparisons in an overly saturated field can be frustrating[65]:

> *We looked at Marseilles and we tried to appear like them at first, a port city, a Mediterranean city but it did not work, that project was already taken, the relationship with Maghreb, Morocco was also already taken. That opportunity was burned by another city, even though we already have relations with Morocco! Then we thought we should focus on the relationship between Málaga and South America, but Caceres was doing that!* (Málaga, City council)

Impressionistic, reductionist descriptions – such as "Essen/ Marseille/ Liverpool/ Manchester (sic)/(insert city name) was nothing/dead before, it was a disaster before" – are too frequently marshaled, even in order to critique the ECoC policy or the result of the competition. Referencing and modeling practices do not encourage a systematic, consistent and empathetic knowledge of different local, regional and national contexts. Comparative practices do not

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[65] These 'frustrations' reflects a series of institutional characteristics in the social worlds of the ECoC policy: its rule regimes are characterized by an institutional silence about failures and 'negative models', an institutionalized culture of optimism, and the suppression of criticism and contestation. Thus, it constrains, inhibits, and influences what actors can and cannot learn and compare. It makes one wonder, how can 'innovation' be produced with only models, reference cities, and optimism?

manage "to bring the peoples of the Member States closer together" (EC 1985), at least not in co-operation but in competition and conflict.

Furthermore, even though comparison or comparative learning practices appear mobile, immobilities and partial mobilization are an integral part of the policy worlds of ECoC (Müller 2015a; Franquesa 2011). There is a differential access to particular comparative practices and policy infrastructures of the ECoC programme (McCann 2008; Cook and Ward 2011), such as experts, consultancies, centers of calculation and persuasion. While some comparisons and comparative learning practices are more accessible, non-monetized, and can be performed 'at home' without major investments (such as access to bids, official reports, documents, models, etc.), learning practices that bring together actors, models, devices, reports from elsewhere into a geographical and ideational proximity (such as participation in study trips, fact finding trips, organizing conferences, networking or hiring 'gurus', consultancies, or renowned European experts, access to centers of calculation and persuasion) require considerable investments, and already-existing 'collective symbolic capital' (Harvey 2002).

These practices based on the geographical proximity between 'external' experts and local-based policy actors are a form of indirect lobby: they signal to other experts and policy actors the seriousness of the bidding effort and of other culture-led initiatives. Beyond the mandatory events organized by the Ministry of Culture and the Commission, the bidding team of Alcalá de Henares, Murcia and Oviedo were limited to city council staff and/or local professionals, and did not have access to any other face-to-face activities; none of these coalitions made it to the second round.

Hiring 'external' experts is not a guarantee for success but not hiring any seems to be inviting certain failure in competitive bidding. 'External' experts are a motley crew of disparate disciplines, specializations and professional experiences: a. experts that worked before as consultants or managers in ECoC processes (cultural managers, academics, artists, policy advocacy, etc.) were hired by the foundations in Burgos, Caceres, Córdoba, DSS; b. cultural managers of Spanish contemporary art centers, museums and foundations were hired in Córdoba, DSS, Santander; c. Consultants for other mega-events bidding and hosting (Expos, Olympics, etc.) and other events were hired in Málaga, Tarragona, and Segovia; d. specialists in cultural policy, urban planning and communication in Burgos, Córdoba, DSS, Zaragoza; and more.

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Comparative learning practices are structured: they are limited by the investments of competing coalitions, and by their positions within networks of expertise.

Co-operation between cities, scales, and wider policy networks are commodities used to imagineer the city and build an ECoC 'brand'. Co-operative social relations between urban policy actors are becoming increasingly commodified and contractualized within the growing industry of the ECoC programme.

This should not be read as a manifesto for eliminating comparative learning practices between urban actors. Rather, the dilemma is how to encourage comparative practices and learning practices that are based on cooperation and promote cooperation, and that do not lead to competitive, speculative urbanism and commodified urban futures. Cooperation should be more than a route towards increased competitiveness and the reproduction of urban hierarchies. It makes us wonder how cooperation and solidarity beyond attachments to urban competitiveness and/or to 'contractualism' would look like.

They tell this tale of its foundation: men of various nations had an identical dream... This was the city of Zobeide, where they settled, waiting for that scene to be repeated one night. None of them, asleep or awake, ever saw the woman again. The city's streets were streets where they went to work every day, with no link any more to the dreamed chase, which, for that matter, had long been forgotten. New men arrived.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

4. The Uses and Abuses of Emotional Labor: Assembling Hierarchies and Divisions in Projects of City-Making

The work of problematization through comparison – discussed in the previous chapter – is necessary in order to attempt to carve out a space for the city among the competitors, to create a niche in an oversaturated field, and a contribution for the EU and its ECoC 'brand'. Comparative practices, particularly models and references cities, are essential tools for persuasion and seduction and for the alignment of a variety of actors, institutions, and concepts. While comparison and the role of elsewhere make possible inter-urban competition, the serial reproduction characteristic of urban policies and the 'very narrow path of innovation' (Harvey 1989; Peck 2014) make the boundary between possible and impossible elusive and slippery, even non-existent.

For policy actors, the work of problematization through comparison and the framing of a city's needs for a competitive process are littered with frustrations, tensions, and conflict: which problematization will prevail?; how can a 'need' be contrasted with another?; which one is the more urgent?; why is x more important y?; etc. There is a productive tension between the meanings of fairness of professional policy actors, and entrepreneurial, competitive subjectivities, as the competition should not be decided only on innovation and pure meritocratic principles but on a comparison of cities' needs, problems and capabilities.

Crucially, processes of competitive bidding are a space of rivalry among 'righteous' interpretations of different cities' needs (Fraser 1987). As such, dominant ethical arguments about a city's needs sustain and are integral to the order of innovation, "competitiveness, cost-and-effect calculations, profitability, and other free-market commandments" (Bauman qtd. in

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Muehlebach 2012, 55). Optimism, hope and morality are not in opposition to the competition (Muehlebach 2012) but integral to its functioning. There is an intimate connection between optimism and aggressiveness, between hope and resentment in inter-urban competition.

The hopeful and aggressive framing of needs and problems is not self-evident but a political process that is necessary for participating in bidding for ECoC; it makes it possible, although the boundary between possible and impossible needs constant work, and remains elusive and slippery.

Bidding wars are largely wars among 'needs' and 'problems', even against 'needs.' Through their size, they become a war against 'needs.' Competitive bidding for ECoC is a political process that decides among different cities' need interpretations that themselves are political processes and that (can) have rival interpretations of a particular city's problems. It is no wonder that there is always disagreement regarding the competition and the results of competition at the local, national and European scale.

Neither it is surprising that there are widespread contestations and urban mobilizations, particularly among artists and cultural producers. As the interpretation of a city's needs is itself a political process, competitive bidding can also be an arena of conflict between rival interpretations of a particular city's needs and interests (Fraser 1987; Boyle and Hughes 1991; K. F. Gotham 2011). Dominant claims to interpret and represent cities' problems and interests reinforce the "highly problematic view of cities as socially and economically homogeneous" (McCann 2004, 1926); as it reifies cities as agents with unitary needs, it can entail conflictual social relations regarding the framing of problems, not just a rivalry among different cities' dominant claims.

Pressingly, dominant righteous claims to interpret and represent a city's needs vis-à-vis other cities needs enables the actors involved in the competition to "disidentify with what's aggressive about his pursuit of desire and interest in all spaces and to see himself as fundamentally ethical because he means to have solidarity with some humans he knows" (Berlant 2011, 181), or with some 'city' he (sic) claims or is hired to represent. None of my interviewees said that another city deserved it more. The city that deserves and needs it the most is their city or the city they represent.

Inter-urban competition and competitive bidding do not involve just innocently putting a city 'on the map', but forcefully and aggressively carving out a space for that city at the expense of other cities and at the expense of the actors themselves. It is not just a rivalry among different cities' dominant claims or among different place-based elite interests but it is also an uneven, unequal process of production of those claims within unequal working environments, and an arena of conflict between rival interpretations of a particular city. Thus, competitive bidding is not about promoting a particular city in general, but about selling the 'best' city, the 'needy' city: at the cost of other cities, at the cost of 'your' city and its contending interpretations, and at the expense of those doing the selling.

Now we turn to emotional labor, another labor practice that is making possible processes of inter-urban competition, and to the cruelty of the institutional promotion of optimism characterizing the worlds of the ECoC policy.

In this chapter, I will explore how emotional labor works in practice, how it is enacted in competitive bidding, and what are its effects. First, I analyze what emotional labor is and how it is performed in inter-city rivalries. Then, I deal with the centrality of European expertise, and with the divisions and hierarchies this centrality (re)creates in the city and in the inter-scalar work environments of competitive bidding. After, I analyze how emotional labor is enacted in unequal work environments in order to reconcile the hierarchical structure of coalitions with an outward, extrospective projection of harmony, unity and consensus necessary for inter-city rivalries. Then, I look at the gendered and classed aspects of the management of emotions in processes of inter-urban competition and city making. Last but not least, I analyze some of the other effects and contradictions of the enactment of emotional labor practices in competitive processes with other cities: the uneven distribution of costs and benefits of emotional labor, the instrumentalization of the introspective management of emotions for extrospective purposes, and the harm it brings to policy actors.

4.1. Emotional Labor: The Management of Emotions in Unequal, Inter-Scalar Work Environments

Emotional labor is making possible processes of inter-urban competition but at great cost to the policy actors performing it. Competitive bidding is a complex process in which a variety of actors and institutions are involved which have multiple and sometimes contradictory goals, aspirations, and interests. It fosters situations that call for the management of emotions, for sustaining optimism, hope and pride, suppressing anger or dissatisfaction, for keeping social life and the coalition running 'smoothly', at least temporarily. Emotional labor is not residual for expertise but a labor practice that is central to enactments of expertise and to its work of alignment and assembling.

Despite that its centrality to policy expertise, there is a lack of explicit attention paid to emotion and emotional labor in critical policy studies and critical urban studies, even though anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, and political scientists working in these interdisciplinary fields have criticized the rational choice model underlying mainstream policy studies and assumptions about policy "as a legal-rational way of getting things done" (Wedel et al. 2005, 30). Verhoeven and Duyvendak (2015) note that emotions are understudied in interpretive policy analysis, while Clarke et al. (2015) argue that critical policy studies associated with the interpretive turn have yet to fully deal with policy and the dimensions of emotion, affect and feeling.

This neglect of emotions in interpretive and socially-constructivist approaches to policy is all the more surprising given the interest in meaning-making and in the construction of identity and subjectivity. Clarke et al. (2015) argue that overall critical policy studies has been characterized by an over-focus on discourse and rhetoric, while relations among actors, emotions, materialities, and practices have been neglected. Although critical urban studies and critical policy studies have yet to place emotion centrally in the study of policies, there are of course exceptions (B. Anderson and Holden 2008; Hunter 2010; Newman 2012; B. Anderson 2015; R. Anderson 2015; Verhoeven and Broer 2015). But 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1977 qtd. in Hochschild 1983), 'feeling rules' or the 'emotional labor' (Hochschild 1979; 1983) performed by policy actors in processes of inter-urban competition or competitive bidding have not yet been addressed

extensively (although see B. Anderson and Holden 2008; Boland 2010; K. Bennett 2013; T. Collins 2016b; T. Collins 2016a).

Yet, emotional labor – as a component in the enactments of expertise – brings and especially keeps together actors, institutions, wider policy networks, and urban citizens in alignment with rule regimes and with the dominant imagineering of the city. Moreover, emotion management and its products such as optimism, hope and civic pride have been instrumentalized as comparative advantages in extrospective processes of competition.

In addition to the instrumentalization of the 'extra-economic' (Chapter 5), the imagineering of the city through relational comparisons (Chapter 3), and emotional labor are two labor practices that enable processes of inter-urban competition. Both relational comparisons and emotional labor function at the same time as 'introspective' and 'extrospective' labor practices (Peck and Tickell 2002; McCann 2013; Temenos and McCann 2012), performed both for seduction, persuasion and alignment 'inside' the coalition or the city, and also for 'outside' to sell the competitive city. They are both necessary but the imaginative, comparative work is prioritized, recognized, and better compensated, while emotional labor is considered 'inferior' work. There is an uneven distribution of the need to emotionally labor, which is done by 'street-level' civil servants (Lipsky 1980), by actors in lower hierarchical positions or by actors with unstable working conditions – usually by women but not only – and less by mobile consultants, politicians, or corporate actors.

Inter-urban competition, just like the emotional labor practices that make it possible, is not just classed but also gendered. In short, imaginative aspects of work are relegated to the 'top', while emotional labor is relegated to those on the 'bottom'. Even among actors working professional jobs, not everyone has the same capacity to aspire, or the same capacity to attempt to create those possible futures (Appadurai 2004), however misconceived those futures are.

Processes of inter-city rivalries are dependent on and reinforce lopsided labor practices: on one side, imaginative labor (imagineering the city through comparison with other cities and through the instrumentalization of the 'extra-economic'), and on the other side, emotional labor. Even though the pursuit of urban competitiveness vis-à-vis other cities fosters situations that call for emotional labor and the management of emotions, enactments of expertise are differentially

valorized in inter-city rivalries. The privileging of imaginative labor practices over emotional labor leads to unequal working environments, symbolic violence, and an increase in conflictual and competitive social relations.

Furthermore, the engineering of competitive urbanism and relational processes of competition are more than the sum of competitive subjectivities. These processes are based not just on the (re)production of competitive subjectivities and competitive individualism, particularly in the case of external experts and artists, but also on emotional labor and the sacrifice laboring, emotional bodies need to make for the competition. Competitive urbanism and the 'self'-assertion of the city require the sacrifice and selflessness of others along the way (see also Muehlebach 2012).

Sustaining optimism, hope and pride, suppressing anger or dissatisfaction, and maintaining an alignment between the actors involved is essential for processes of inter-urban competition. In her excellent book, *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling* (1983), Arlie Russell Hochschild defines 'emotional labor' as the "labor that requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild 1983, 7). While individuals working in competitive bidding are not doing a service sector jobs per se, focusing on emotional labor can improve our understanding of "the organization, structure, and social relations" of competitive bidding and similar work environments (Wharton 2009, 149). In competitive bidding, policy actors that emotionally labor attempt to maintain an alignment between all the actors involved, while keeping an optimist, upbeat attitude, where anger and dissatisfaction are suppressed.

The developmental and boosterist discursive practices associated with mega-events can be characterized as "a relentlessly optimistic and corporate enthusiasm with the power of a steamroller" (Gibbons and Wolff 2012, 440). Actors manage emotions in response to these feeling rules and in response to the institutional promotion of optimism characterizing the worlds of the ECoC programme (Hochschild 1983; O. Bennett 2015). Optimism, hope and civic pride are the dominant 'feeling rules' of competitive bidding and urban development strategies (Hochschild 1983), to which they are infrastructural.

Concomitantly, the labor of competing can only make sense for policy actors, particularly for civil servants and local actors, if optimism and hope are maintained, promoted, and encouraged. Thus, emotional labor is also done for the policy actor herself/ himself as it is "the only way to survive and make headway in the bureaucratic machine (…) it leads to a form of 'daily routinised reassurance of the importance of their work" (Nuijten 2003, 174–75). Optimism, hope and pride are not just infrastructural for competitive bidding but also the products of sustained emotional labor.

The work of competitive bidding is carried out – differently and unequally – in coalitions formed of elites, civil servants, artists, volunteers, residents, and/or external consultants hired by political and economic elites specifically for the competition. Most of these actors actively participate in processes of inter-urban competition, and not necessarily because of hierarchies within public administrations but usually willingly and enthusiastically due to the aspirations of urban development of policy actors.

Managing emotions and keeping actors in alignment with rule regimes and with the dominant imagineering of the city is a toll order, when talking into account that competitive bidding assembles coalition members with multiple interests and goals, diverse jurisdictional boundaries, and from diverse specializations or departments, actors and institutions that were located 'elsewhere', or that were from 'elsewhere' (e.g.: consultants, advisors, regional governments, etc.), and also cultural producers, volunteers and urban residents. Overwork, intense working hours, deadline pressures, and tense working environments are common for policy actors involved in competitive bidding. Policy actors have to work long hours and weekends during the 'sprint-and-marathon' that is competitive bidding.

This is a work environment fraught with divisions, hierarchies and inequalities, and that is characterized by and reinforces the differential valorization of (im)material work. Emotional labor is meant to reconcile the divisions, hierarchies and inequalities within the networked-like hierarchical and unequal structure of coalitions. Additionally, as this an inter-scalar, multi-scalar coalition, managing and aligning the emotions of actors from different cities, scales and wider policy networks is a work bordering on the impossible.

4.2. Systems of Competitive Bidding: The Centrality of the Claims to European Expertise

In this techno-political process of competition among cities for the ECoC title, 'European expertise' and its requirements are central. The requirements and rules to win the ECoC title are perceived by the actors involved in the bidding process as external, constraining and imposed from 'above'. Moreover, this perception of requirements as 'external' is linked with their legalism and codification in decisions (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 1999, 2005, 2006).

Crucially, this codification of the competitive rules have led to the creation of a dichotomy between local/national and European experts, and to the setting up of an interstitial, hybrid form(s) of expertise that is under-regulated, weakly institutionalized, and highly ambiguous (Eyal and Pok 2015). Plenty external experts that are hired or commissioned do not have direct experience in the bidding and/or implementing ECoC. Beyond official organizers of former ECoCs, 'European experts' are in fact a motley crew of disparate disciplines, specializations and professional experiences, such as cultural managers (museums, events, festivals, art centers, etc.), academics, artists, specialists in cultural policy, advocacy, urban planning, communication, mega-events management (Olympics, Expos, Pavilions, etc.), and so on, without being an epistemic 'community'. Only the official organizers of former, current and future ECoCs are currently organized into a network, called the 'ECoC Family'.

For Eyal and Pok, experts in liminal and ambiguous situations such as this one are "often attracted to the opportunities and high stakes offered by weakly institutionalized spaces where jurisdiction is blurry and statuses ambiguous (…) There are great advantages in staying liminal and ambiguous" (Eyal and Pok 2015, 44). Despite the potential opportunities conferred by this in-betweenness and interstitiality, these are uncertain and temporary fields of work. The opportunities of interstitiality are unevenly distributed and benefit actors who have enough material and immaterial resources to navigate these ambiguous in-betweens.

Most policy actors participate within competitive bidding processes as a first-time[66], one-time experience, usually connected to their stable employment within city councils, public employment, universities, etc., or to their precarious working conditions as artists, cultural producers, and volunteers. Mobile consultants who participate in more than one bidding process need stable employment elsewhere or stable income sources from elsewhere than the ECoC bidding, as this is flexible uncertain and intermittent employment. Rather, it is usually a side job for mobile consultants.

The worlds of competitive bidding are a winner-takes-all market for its consultants with very few professionals, but the star-experts, are able to – or want to – live only from bidding and short-term contracts. Even though he (sic) appears as the recurrent winner of inter-city rivalries, as a bold, risk-taker 'entrepreneur of himself' (Foucault 2008), acquiring or already having a stable employment or a stable income source is one of the conditions for navigating these ambiguous in-betweens, e.g.: for participating in the multiple competitions as a mobile consultant or for acting as a jury panel member as an 'European expert'.

During competitive bidding, this interstitial expertise is ambiguous and highly contested and contestable: 'European' or 'external experts' sometimes turn out to be 'non-experts'; their advice and consultation can be wrong and does not guarantee results. While hiring 'external' experts is no guarantee for success, not hiring any seems to be inviting certain failure in competitive bidding. It is a double-bind for local-based policy actors. In cities such as Alcalá de Henares – but also in Murcia and Oviedo –there were no actors that could make claims to European expertise; even so, this 'European expertise' remains central in its present absence, through jury members and competitive rules. It functions as a systemizing and streamlining force even in the absence of claims to expertise.

Concomitantly to these ambiguities and intermittent, uncertain employments for European experts, 'European expertise' is imagined as central in this competitive process due to the

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[66] For first timers in mega-events and mega-projects, Flyvbjerg (2005) argues that optimism bias is an explanation for why mega-projects seem to inhabit a "fantasy world of underestimated costs, overestimated revenues, underestimated environmental impacts and over-valued economic development effects" (Flyvbjerg 2005, 18). But this optimism bias no longer stands when dealing with actors, institutions and organizations – such as mobile consultants or external companies – which are repeatedly producing phantasmatic impact studies of mega-events and mega-projects. Rather, overestimation of benefits and underestimation of costs can no longer be explained through optimistic delusion but through strategic deception, although these two factors are often accompanying and reinforcing each other (Flyvbjerg 2005; Flyvbjerg, Garbuio, and Lovallo 2009).

codification of their position within EU-level decisions, and its links to the so-called 'European dimension". The 'European Dimension' is defined as an application that needs to " (a) foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from the relevant Member States and other Member States in any cultural sector; (b) highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe; (c) bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore" (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2006). European experts are currently imagined as the ones meant to protect and promote the application of the 'European dimension' to each application, and of course to make and sell these claims of techno-political expertise to coalitions.

The local professionals and city council staff I interviewed who were involved in the Spanish competition – but also European experts – are usually quite critical, even mocking, of these particular criteria of the competition. They are seeing it as a sort of 'Commission Eurospeak' that they need to talk in order to get the title; some are even critical of the way the ECoC is used for European integration through culture[67] ('to diffuse the European identity with little money'). Even so, the fleshing out of the 'European dimension' – which remains vague – is one of the reasons why external experts are being hired by place-based foundations. As one external expert mentioned:

> *We knew other European experts, we were connected to European networks and could help them with the European dimension, such as topics and activities which address European history, key aspects of European culture, issues of contemporary political relevance, cooperation with other countries – the so-called 'European dimension' of ECoCs. Cities always need help with it* (External Expert, Córdoba).

Even though the idea of the bidding was arrived at and initiated locally, the leadership was given to extra-local experts rather than to city council staff or to local professionals (see Table 3. Main coordinates of the competitive bidding process in Alcalá de Henares, Burgos, Córdoba, Donostia-San Sebastián, and Málaga).

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[67] For one policy actor from Málaga, "the operation of ECoC is very advantageous, very profitable for the EU; with a prize of minimally 1.5 million €, for every year with only 1.5 million you can infect all of Europe or a country, with that objective of unity. It is very profitable to infect the citizens with a common identity."

	Alcalá de Henares	Burgos	Córdoba	Donostia-San Sebastián	Málaga
Result	Lost pre-selection	Lost final selection	Lost final selection	Won	Lost pre-selection
Initiated	City Council	Regional Federation of Hospitality Entrepreneurs/ Association for Strategic Planning of Burgos	Confederation of Entrepreneurs of Córdoba	Association for Strategic Planning of Donostia-San Sebastián	City Council
Core Bidding Team	City Council Staff	UK-born, Norway–based artistic director (former director of Stavanger ECoC 2008) External consultants (ECoC and cultural policy consultants) City Council Staff and Association for Strategic Planning Staff	Spanish, Madrid-based director (cultural manager of contemporary art museums) External consultants (ECoC consultants, Barcelona-based consultancy) City Council Staff Local Professionals	DSS-born, Seville-based director (cultural manager of contemporary centers) External Experts (ECoC consultants) City Council Staff Local Professionals	Spanish, Madrid-based artistic director (Critic, curator and cultural manager) Seville and Madrid- based company; (specialized in Expos) City Council Staff Local Professionals
Predominance of external experts in the bidding (1-5)	1	5	4	3	5
Active Contestation	No	Yes, precarious artists and cultural producers, and contestations about overspending and misspending	Yes, precarious cultural producers and artists – two groups	Yes, the Donostia group of the Assembly against the High-Speed Train; Neighborhood associations for the defense of Basque language, and precarious cultural producers and artists	Yes, precarious cultural producers and artists

Table 3. Main coordinates of the competitive bidding process in Alcalá de Henares, Burgos, Córdoba, Donostia-San Sebastián, and Málaga
Source: author's elaboration

A centrality of 'European expertise' and of extra-local experts can be witnessed in mega-events bidding. This was due to the codification of criteria into decisions, and the predominance of the European dimension as competitive rules. As one local professional mentioned:

> *Burgos and its projects, that we already knew, but it was necessary to know what the European Union is looking for, what are the technocrats of the EU looking for, and that's why it is good to bring people from outside that worked already in other ECoCs in different parts of the project... it is the only way in which one achieve the objective of getting the ECoC, to know the process and know what the jury want* (Burgos, City Council staff).

'European expertise' is ambiguous, not just because it cannot guarantee results but because claims to this techno-political expertise turn out to elusive, changeable, contested and contestable. From 'experts', actors can become 'non-experts' in a particular relational and territorial setting.

Uncertainty and ambiguity are characteristic of these interstitial but profitable claims to techno-political expertise. As one technical staff from the City Council of Córdoba recalls,

> *It was a very strong competition, very diffuse; you never knew what the criteria were and what you have to do. For example, for the presentation we had first hand information that it is important to show a lot of political and institutional unity, that the institutions support the project, that the whole city supports the project, from Bob Scott, one of our external consultants during our visit to Liverpool. Later, the jury valued other things: where are the creators, the artists... the man was an ECoC expert working for Liverpool but in the end his information was wrong... you never know... Nor do they have the guarantee that these are the elements and criteria of the jury. It was very ambiguous, very diffuse* (City Council staff, Córdoba).

Local-based policy actors are in a double bind, between the hammer of the ambiguity of claims to techno-political expertise and the anvil of uncertainty about fleshing out the European dimension without these claims to expertise. Despite this ambiguity and uncertainty, there is a predominance of extra-local experts in leadership roles and in vital consultancy work that defines the imagineering of the city. Concomitantly with their alleged skills and competences in ECoC and the European dimension, external experts – just like the work of models and reference cities – are central for persuasion and seduction at the local scale: for winning over supporters, for averting charges of corruption and nepotism, and for converting skeptics, particularly because of their position as 'external'. Thus, external experts can become a tool of legitimation for city-making projects and inter-city rivalries.

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4.3. Hierarchization of Worth: The Division of Labor, Responsibilities and Benefits

Rule regimes and the codification of competitive rules into decisions have led to the creation of a dichotomy between local/national and European experts. There is power and materiality to this dichotomy: a complex division of labor, responsibilities and benefits reinforce this dichotomy. Immaterial work is hierarchized differently; those considered more 'worthy' and 'valuable' are being given more security, responsibilities, and benefits in their working and living conditions, while others are left out (Lorey 2010; Lorey 2015). Imaginative labor through comparative practices are prioritized, recognized, and better compensated, while emotional labor is considered 'inferior' work, done by 'street-level' civil servants and by actors in unstable or lower hierarchical positions. This differential hierarchization of immaterial work – between imaginative labor and emotional labor – is accompanied by a differential hierarchization of security, benefits and responsibilities.

Regarding the politics of pay, it is important to note that working conditions around competitive bidding are highly polarized: there is an astonishing difference in salary, conditions and prestige between local-based professionals and external (Spanish and European) experts. City council staff that transferred from their usual department to work full-time on the bid did not have an increase in their civil servant salary for working in the bidding process. Others were working alongside their day-to-day workload since they were not working exclusively on this. Most of the times, civil servants were not paid for overtime, especially in cities where a commitment to austerity was a premise for pursuing the bid, like Alcalá de Henares, Murcia, Oviedo, and Pamplona. Also, most local professionals were doing voluntary or underpaid work: at most they were paid a modicum for their involvement in the production of the bid and in the foundation. Similarly, local artists and cultural operators were doing voluntary or at best underpaid work; they were working for 'exposure' or for 'the city' (see more in the next chapter). Interns and volunteers also worked for free. Work environments that make possible competitive bidding have a stark hierarchization of worth, responsibilities and benefits along a local-non-local dividing line.

But the social and symbolic boundaries of 'European expertise' – particularly how they are played out between external experts and local-based professionals – are neither natural nor absolute but created and sustained through 'boundary-work' (Gieryn 1983; Gieryn 1999; Lamont and Molnár 2002), through complex practices of differentiation between different professionals.

Both in Córdoba and in Burgos, external experts were hired in leadership position. In Córdoba, Carlota Alvarez Basso was named as the director of the Foundation; she did not have previous work experience in organizing ECoCs but rather in managing large-scale state-funded museums: head of the A/V Artworks Department at the Reina Sofía National Museum in Madrid, director of the Congress and Exhibitions Hall in Pontevedra, design and management of MARCO, Museum of Contemporary Art Vigo. In Burgos, the two main experts that were hired – Mary Miller and Anders Rykkja – had direct experience in the management of an ECoC as the CEO and Artistic Director and respectively Project Advisor in Stavanger 2008.

In both of these cities where external experts were in charge, mundane boundary-work practices were carried out in order to differentiate themselves and establish credibility. The discreditation of the skills and knowledge of public servants and local professionals was central to the consolidation phase of their own position. The skills and knowledge of external experts in ECoC, in mega-events bidding and in managing an international cultural event or in managing large-scale museums and cultural programs were welcome, but what frustrated some of my interlocutors was the systematic undermining of their own professional legitimacy. A variety of practices were performed in order to create and maintain symbolic 'boundaries' and 'differentiations' and to attempt to bound and control the claims to 'European expertise': the exclusion or marginalization of the work done before the arrival of the external experts, the preference for other external experts selected or brought by the newly arrived, the systematic marginalization of the local experts' knowledge.

As part of these practices of differentiation and boundary work, local professionals and civil servants were relocated away from imagineering the city through comparisons, away from the 'theoretical' justifications and the main directions of the bid, to the 'local knowledge' and to the 'street-level' interaction with cultural producers and volunteers. Moreover, the consolidation phase of the newly arrived experts was characterized by the exclusion of others who were seen as a possible threat to their position or by excluding their ideas, by restricting the hiring practices to

professionals who cannot challenge their authority. The first external experts who arrived in the foundations attempt to monopolize the hiring and collaboration practices and implicitly the imagineering of the city.

These practices were common also for other cities which hired external experts in leadership positions (Málaga, Santander, Tarragona, etc.). Sometimes, this marginalization and hierarchization of worth creates even tenser working environments further accentuated by overwork and deadline pressures. As Boyer argues, desires "to dominate or outflank one's opponents, to see one's expertise translated into social power, and so on – that inhabit and inform expert practices as well" (Boyer 2008, 43). These practices were done in order to maintain the social and symbolic boundaries of 'European expertise' and the hierarchization of worth.

In Córdoba, the foundation had a very negatively-charged working environment between external and local professionals where local professionals and civil servants were constantly marginalized and discredited. Here, the creation and maintenance of boundaries and differentiations between experts and non/lesser experts were characteristic of their work environment. These attempts to bound and control claims to 'European expertise' were reinforcing conflictual and competitive social relations among the coalition.

4.4. Assembling Hierarchies and Divisions: Emotional Labor and Gendered City-Making

Emotional labor was needed in these unequal and hierarchical work environments as it was meant to reconcile the hierarchical structure of coalitions with an outward, extrospective projection of harmony, unity and consensus necessary for inter-city rivalries. A city's reputation and chances in inter-urban competition are seen as connected to the projected unity of the city as a community, and to the supposed harmony of the imagineering of the city.

Despite tense working environments, actors kept a united front for 'our city' and there were no criticism in the local or national mass media. Seduction as a form of power – the promise of culture-led urban development – was successful in enrolling and maintaining actors in the coalition. Concomitantly, the feeling rules of competitive bidding – hope and optimism – are

strong: disagreements, resistance or contestation were seen as anti-the-City. Domination and authority were intertwined with seduction and with optimism: the seduction of achieving the ECoC title was just as successful in enrolling actors and in motivating and compelling policy actors to intensively manage emotions in the competition for ECoC. Policy actors that emotionally labored suppressed their own disagreements and the criticisms of others, and attempted to facilitate processes of co-operation and co-production for 'our city'. For Cordovan policy actors, "the ECoC seemed like the last lifeline (*salvavidas)* that we could grasp". Before drowning – that remained unsaid. After the onset of the crisis, even more resources and especially more work, energy, and emotional labor were invested into the process, particularly to maintain the coalition running smoothly and cooperative social relations, while suppressing disagreements and conflictual social relations within and beyond the coalition. As two policy actors from Córdoba and Burgos recall,

> *There was a lot discomfort in our work environment, but as we were gambling with so much, people were prudent and made a big effort to maintain cohesion, it was a very important project for our city, but it was very difficult because the atmosphere was very tense and the manager was very authoritarian in her gestures, in her behavior, and not always respectful. It was difficult working with that person but we learned how to get around it* (Córdoba, male policy actor).

> *It was more work to soften the relationships and differences... and the feelings of others, it was a sort of peace-making between strong egos, where each wanted to show off* (Burgos, male policy actor).

In spite of this conflict between 'top' and 'down' (civil servants vs. external experts) and in spite of the competition among 'equals' external experts and professionals (battle of egos), inter-urban competition still requires alignment, co-operation and co-production with different experts and non-experts in order to actually enact expertise. Moreover, actors that emotionally labor attempt to create a particular tone for their interactions modeled on collaborative, network-like, creative work.

Policy actors needed to emotionally labor in order to maintain optimism, suppress disagreements and potentially conflictual social relations between the different professionals involved, particularly between city council staff and 'external experts', between the 'top' and 'bottom' of organizations and bureaucracies. For Graeber, "within relations of domination, it is generally the subordinates who are effectively relegated the work of understanding how the social relations in

question really work" (2012, 118). Within situations characterized by an intertwinement of seduction, authority and domination such as the bidding for ECoC, it is generally the subordinates that emotionally labor in order to smooth out disagreements and assemble hierarchies and divisions for 'their' city-making and at their own emotional expense. There is an uneven distribution of the need to emotionally labor, and an uneven distribution of its costs and of the benefits that come with its appropriation.

Co-operation, co-production, and the temporary assembling of hierarchies and divisions within city-making are products achieved through intense forms of emotional labor usually done by policy actors in lower hierarchical positions or with unstable, uncertain working conditions – usually by women but not only – and less by mobile consultants, politicians, or corporate actors. The two male policy actors quoted earlier "ended up doing something very much like traditional women's work: keeping the system from disaster by tactful interventions meant to protect the oblivious and self-important men in charge from the consequences of their blindness" (Graeber 2012, 123). For women policy actors, the management of emotions and the need to emotionally labor were tacit and widespread gender norms, although no less pervasive and even more contradictory. Moreover, as Wharton notes, although "emotional labor is largely invisible as a formal job requirement, (women) who fail to perform it are less likely to be seen as competent" (2009, 153). It becomes visible only when they fail to perform it and are labeled 'unprofessional' or 'too professional'.

Women working in competitive bidding are often forced to perform either emotional detachment or emotional caring, between 'doing professionalism' and 'doing gender' (Wharton 2009). Women working in high-paid jobs, e.g.: as external experts or mobile consultants, tend to perform emotional detachment, although there is still an expectation that emotional labor should be performed as part of the enactments of expertise. Both the female directors of the bids of Córdoba and Burgos – that were external experts – were seen as 'cold', 'distant', 'too professional' by other policy actors; it was also expected of them that they should emotionally labor for the competitive bidding process and that will keep the coalition running smoothly. But I did not notice this emotional requirement and interactional pattern for male directors that were external experts.

Processes of inter-urban competition are gendered. Not just for the 'top' (for external experts), but processes of inter-urban competition are gendered also for other policy actors. It is important to note that only 32.7% of my interviewees were women (see Table 4. Gender of Interviewees). City-making projects like ECoC are characterized by such gendered underrepresentation.

Regarding City Council staff, 30.4% of the interviewees were women; this is lower than the share of women in local administration: approx. 46% of local administration staff were women between 2007 and 2011 (Instituto de la Mujer 2016a; 2016b) – the years when most coalitions were actively competing for the ECoC title. The difference is partly explained by the underrepresentation of women in management positions and in higher ranked occupational groups within public administration. There is a gendered division of labor within the local state: women's public employment is to a higher degree characterized by part-time and short-term work, or relegated to welfare departments (Instituto Nacional de Estadística-INE 2010; Carranza Lopez 2013). Thus, women working in the public administration are less likely to be included in projects like ECoC that recruits full-time personal usually from Departments of Culture, Education, or Urbanism. Furthermore, given the even more limited presence of women in politics, local and regional decision-making structures (mayor, councilors, presidencies of provincial and regional movements), and in the boards of regional and local companies (Instituto de la Mujer 2016b), I imagine my sample would have included even less women if I had access to more politicians and corporate actors.

	Number of Interviews	% Women
Local Civil Servants	46	30.4
Politicians and Corporate Actors	5	40.0
Local Professionals	19	21.1
Artists, Volunteers, Protesters	13	38.5
Regional Civil Servants	6	33.3
External Experts	14	35.7
EU Bureaucrats, Selection Panel Members, Spanish Ministry of Culture	7	42.9
Total	110	32.7

Table 4. Gender of Interviewees

There is another crucial explanation for the gendered nature of inter-city rivalries and processes of competitive bidding, beyond the underrepresentation of women in higher ranked occupational groups within public administration. And it is not because women are not inherently competitive. Rather, the characteristics of competitive bidding tend to be incompatible with their care work responsibilities in the family that continue to be predominantly women's work. As two female policy actors recall their different experiences in competitive bidding processes of different intensities and lengths,

> *I can work until 5, from 5 to 9 I am a mother, and after 9 we can call or Skype and I think we all had this philosophy. It was intense but it was our choice and we liked the work … everyone was involved because it was an exciting work and because we knew that we could, because we did believe in the strengths of Málaga.*

> *It was very exciting, very intense, working always till late.... It made me feel very guilty not being able to spend time with my kids. Evenings, weekends... I knew it was worth it because it was a project for our children and nephews, for their future. I tried to tell them (n.a.: team members), that you know, they were younger or they did not have kids or they liked working till late... We cannot always stay so late or organize our important meetings this late! Anyway, I convinced to change some of the meetings but I was always feeling like I was missing out when I needed to leave, when I was not there.*

Inter-city rivalries and competitive bidding themselves require a 'second shift' (Hochschild 1989), maybe even a third shift for 5 to 12 intense months for the pre-selection, or 2-3 years for the final selection: long working hours, including evenings and weekends, overwork, deadline pressures, etc. This second shift of competitive bidding is largely incompatible with the second shift which women still have to do in their care work and family lives.

For both men and women, the inability to perform care work and to find time for partners, family, kids and/or friends puts extreme pressures on the personal relationships of policy actors, sometimes even leading to decomposition and breakdown of personal ties, hobbies, self-care, etc. Women, generally speaking, have fewer possibilities to even make this 'choice' due to their commitments to care work. If do make this choice, they still 'miss out' and they are given less recognition for their own work within the bidding team.

As one member of the bidding team of Donostia mentioned:

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A good idea has mothers and fathers but in our team there were more fathers than mothers... She wanted to be told she was more important than she was. But in a small team of not even ten people who actually make this thing (n.a.: bid), you cannot say something like this and start talking about position, importance and fairness.

This lack of recognition and hierarchization of worth is due to the predominance of women in 'street-level' interaction with cultural producers, volunteers, and citizens (Lipsky 1980), and less in the imagineering the city through comparisons, 'theoretical' justifications and the main directions of the bid. Women – but also men in lower hierarchical positions or actors with unstable working conditions – were meant to act as 'street-level' civil servants assigned to 'mobilize' the pride of residents, to activate the participation of cultural producers, to convince and interact with cultural producers, organize roundtables, and so on.

The centrality of external expertise and extrospective requirements in the competition do not lead to a stable harmonious relationship among public servants or between public servants and artists. The extrospective nature of the competition leads to a tense relationship between civil servants and local cultural producers and managers. Policy actors that act as the street-level bureaucrats of competitive bidding are the ones who need to both 'dominate' and 'seduce' cultural producers, volunteers and citizens, while politicians and mobile experts do not interact directly, in a non-mediated manner with citizens and/or potential and actual criticism. Politicians and external experts tend to act through city council workers and local professionals, while keeping themselves out of everyday interaction with cultural producers, volunteers or citizens.

Public servants, particularly those that act as street level bureaucrats, are the ones doing the direct work of power: they are both the 'agents' and the (inter)face of the dominant imagineering of the city. In case of organized contestation against ECoC, this tends to translate into a struggle of precarious creative workers or angry citizens with street-level bureaucrats and city council staff – whose positions are also growing increasingly more precarious since the onset of the crisis, due to austerity cuts, outsourcing, contractualization, and privatization of municipal services.

4.5. 'Inferior' Labor but Valuable: Civic Pride as Comparative Advantage

While the management of emotions is an essential component of inter-city rivalries and competitive urbanism, it is one that comes with contradictions. Previously, we discussed how policy actors emotionally labor in order to reconcile the hierarchies and divisions within the coalition. It is meant to assuage the hierarchical structure of coalitions with an outward, extrospective projection of harmony, unity and consensus necessary for inter-city rivalries. While there is an uneven distribution of the need to emotionally labor, there is also an uneven distribution and appropriation of the benefits of it.

Crucially, emotional labor is performed in order to reconcile the hierarchical, non-transparent nature of competitive bidding with a supposed democratization of civic life and social relations, particularly with the legitimation concerns of the local government and with the integration and identity-building project of the EU. It is a form of 'governing through pride' (T. Collins 2016b; T. Collins 2016a), operating both at the local and European scale; it is operating in-between cities, scales and wider policy networks.

The 'participation' of citizens and their civic pride has become part of the requirements for competitive bidding, with the development and codification of criteria into decisions (the so-called 'City and Citizens' dimension). Thus street-level civil servants need to labor to foster 'participation' and civic pride as part of the codified criteria of ECoC and its wider project of improving EU legitimacy. 'Fostering civic pride', 'strengthening a sense of pride in the city by proving that the city can deliver big events successfully', 'strengthening residents' pride in their city and improving the atmosphere of the city' are considered the most important goals of competing for and implementing ECoC when its urban citizens are concerned (Rampton et al. 2012), even though they are intangible goals that cannot significantly improve urban citizens' life.

Concomitantly, emotion management and its products – particularly civic pride – have been instrumentalized as a comparative advantage in extrospective processes of competition; they are used for persuasion and to gain legitimacy for urban governance and even more active participation from other local professionals, artists, volunteers, and residents.

Policy actors generally talk about optimism and hope, and less about pride for themselves; 'pride' is an emotion reserved for urban citizens: (fostering) civic pride is for citizens, for the 'masses', while hope and optimism are 'general'. Optimism, pride and hope are classed. In competitive bidding, the emotional labor done to foster civic pride is not just gendered but also classed. As two policy actors mentioned,

> *We carried out a communication campaign "With you it is possible" with the residents in different neighborhoods. Photographs were taken of the people, they were informed and the photos could be used in our advertising campaigns. The people were very happy, very excited... We had to make the Malagueños (the people of Málaga) proud of their city: we had to inform them that we participate in the capital title and that we are also capable and that we have a lot of positive attributes to present ... we needed them to be involved, at least that they know that we were presenting ourselves for the competition (Female policy actor, Málaga).*

> *The ECoC was the dream and hope of the South. We had a lot of expectations and hopes that it will work out, we had a network of thousands of volunteers that we did not know what do with them... They were very proud that we were competing for ECoC... a lot of collective dreams and lots of collective energy...* (Female policy actor, Córdoba; n.a.: here 'hope' is said as 'ilusión' which can be translated into 'illusion' or 'mirage' as well).

This emotional and (im)material labor of fostering civic pride and involving/informing urban residents was usually performed by female public servants, with assistance from a wide network of volunteers.

As a consequence, citizens can manifest their pride and hope in very circumscribed manners, in a quantitative but not in a qualitative way. In both Córdoba and Burgos, citizens could not participate in influencing the direction and the production of the bid. In Burgos, some artists, cultural producers and some well-informed members of the population participated in brief information and consultation meetings, while in Córdoba the participation of the population was limited to carefully staged performance where their numbers were more important (see Figure 9. Citizens' Participation in Córdoba – La Marea Azul, The Blue Tide), ranging from 6000 to 10000 supporters self-reported by the Foundation. Additionally, cultural producers and managers and citizens were included as numbers and letters of support and not even included in 'public consultations'.

Figure 9. Citizens' Participation in Córdoba – La Marea Azul, The Blue Tide
Source: Fundación Córdoba Ciudad Cultural 2016 (Córdoba2016 2010a)

Civil servants and volunteers, particularly women, were the ones doing this work of informing, convincing, and motivating citizens to participate in these events. While there is an uneven distribution of the need to (emotionally and physically) labor in fostering civic pride, its benefits are appropriated by bureaucracies and organizations, more precisely by the main operating units of competitive bidding and by its rule regimes.

4.6. Failure and Success: The Cruel Optimism of Bidding Wars

The management of optimism, hope, and civic pride are products of sustained emotional labor. At the same with the uneven distribution of the benefits of these 'products' to inter-scalar rule regimes and urban governance structures, there is an uneven distribution of its costs. For both male and female policy actors that emotionally labor, the optimism of competitive bidding is a form of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2011), as they are sustained by promises that end up bringing them harm. The promise of culture-led development and the pursuit of an elusive success end up

bringing harm to policy actors that perform emotional labor as part of enactments of expertise, even though this optimism and hope was the very thing that seduced them in the first place. Inter-city rivalries actually make it impossible for policy actors and for 'the city' to attain the development that was sought after. Civil servants, precarious cultural producers, and volunteers are to different degrees the 'collateral damage' of inter-city rivalries.

The failure of the bidding process brings to sharper focus the complex emotional labor that was done, and that came undone. It brought about an explosion of emotions: the feeling rules of competitive bidding lost their force. After the negative results of a bidding process functioning on a the-winner-takes-all scenario, the claims to 'European expertise' reveal their incompleteness. Carefully produced and institutionally managed emotions – optimism, hope, and pride – stop being managed; a vast area of emotions are taking first seat: hope, desire, pride, fear, frustration, envy, anxiety, anger, puzzlement, sadness, happiness, rage, despair.

Losing bids (July 2010 for the first, and June 2011 for second stage) brings high costs with almost no benefit. For the politicians, it is politically costly and difficult to legitimize the (past) costs for the opposing parties and for the public: even though all parties agreed with the bidding, the bidding costs become a liability for the governing party, especially in a time of rising austerity measures and welfare cuts. After failure in the bidding process, the claims to 'European expertise' are difficult to maintain.

With the failure, tense working environments shaped by the centrality of the claims to 'European expertise' impacted heavily on external experts: their claims to techno-political expertise came under direct attacks from different actors, nor do they have other cont(r)acts with the City Council. For the external experts working as directors for Burgos and Córdoba, their careers continued – or even progressed – as General and Artistic Director at the Bergen National Opera and as Director of the Centre for Contemporary Creation Matadero in Madrid, and the bad experiences of losing the bids were left behind, meaning in Burgos/Córdoba.

Compared with external experts, civil servants and local professionals remained in the same positions in the best case scenario, trying to look for a plan B for the city. As a punishment for the failure, some of these policy actors were moved to a different position or to a different department. Local-bound professionals were the ones most affected by the failure in the

competition, not just in terms of their professional status but also in their burnout, emotional response and sense of responsibility:

> "*They moved away while we stayed behind, I never heard a word from him, not even bye*", "*We have to live everyday with the results and with a lost opportunity*", "*What could have been (but never was)…*", "*It could have been so useful for Córdoba*", "*It was Córdoba's only chance and after the decision (n.a. after June 2011) we realized we were done for. The crisis really came and we had no money left*".

As Mosse (2011) argues, failure has the power to unveil professional identities. Yet, failure in competitive bidding has differential effects on different types of policy actors. For public servants and local professionals, the unravelling of the professional and personal identity comes from the aspirations of urban development held by ECoC, from "the dissolution of optimistic objects/scenarios that had once held the space open for the good-life fantasy" (Berlant 2011, 33). Correspondingly, external experts experience an attack on their professional identities, but their already-existing 'career track' transforms failure into 'experience' and asserts continuity.

A framework of inter-urban competition and the pursuit of competitiveness are reproducing and increasing social divisions. Processes of inter-city rivalries exploit civil servants, street level bureaucrats, and actors in lower hierarchical position in the bureaucracies and organizations – particularly women but not only – while (re)creating strong and growing divisions between a small elite of mobile experts and the rest of underpaid, overworked (im)material workers necessary for bidding (civil servants but also cultural producers, artists, and volunteers). At the same, inter-city rivalries and culture-led development (re)create and reestablish strong and growing divisions between civil servants, local artists, local cultural producers and volunteers.

Last but not least, emotional labor in a situation of inter-city rivalries reduces the ability of policy actors to perform care work, including self care, and puts extreme pressures on the personal relationships of policy actors, sometimes even leading to disintegration and breakdown of their relationships. Post-failure or post-success, the worlds of the ECoC programme are characterized by burnout and streams of resentments crisscrossing cities, scales and networks of policy expertise. Bidding Wars erode social cohesion and potential networks of solidarity in cities and between cities.

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In this city, you were either working for the Olympics, or you were fearing them – there was no middle ground. The '92 Olympic Office, the pre-Olympics Office, the post-Olympic Office and the trans-Olympic Office, were now employing people who in normal circumstances would be the least Olympic of anybody. They had gone from Marxism-Leninism to democratic progressivism, and now to an involvement in the preparation of all the various Olympic events which Spanish democracy would host in 1992. The Fifth Centenary of the discovery of America, the International Exposition in Seville, the Olympics, and Madrid as Cultural Capital of Europe. Anyone who has not spent at least half an hour of their lives preparing for revolution will never know how you feel when, years later, you find yourself employed in preparing showcases for prize athletes from the worlds of sport, business and industry. From the clandestine crossing of frontiers to negotiations with representatives of the world's drinking-chocolate manufacturers who are all chasing the Olympics concession for cocoa.

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *An Olympic Death* (El laberinto griego), 1991

5. 'The City is (Not) for Sale': The Creative Precariat and the Artistic Critique of Culture-Led Urban Development

Inter-urban competition is made possible by the formation, encouragement and instrumentalization of a wide range of labor practices outside of standard employment structures, such as volunteering, internships, free labor, and underpaid labor. Crucially, urban policy actors increasingly valorize and instrumentalize social, cultural and extra-economic aspects in the pursuit of a fleeting success and elusive competitiveness. For Jessop, the extension of economic competition to "a virtual competition between entire social worlds (...) increases pressures to valorize a wide range of previously social and extra-economic institutions and relations" (Jessop 2013a, 11), such as culture, local amenities, precarity, creativity, hope, pride, and other 'soft' social resources.

In order to make claims to uniqueness, authenticity and 'distinction' (Blass and Fabiani 2011), cultural production, creativity, and the arts are frequently used as tools in the competition with other cities. The 'artistic' critique is also increasingly used as an instrument in inter-city rivalries and as a source of innovation and renewal in an oversaturated field (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Bockman 2012; Fabiani 2014). Critique can become appropriated, co-opted, and used as a source of innovation.

But these social resources, relations, and institutions are not amenable to be problematized and rendered fully technical (Mitchell 2002; Li 2007). They are irreducible to economic calculation

and to competition in the 'market' of cities. Moreover, actors can be resistant to these processes of valorization and instrumentalization (Harvey 2002; Jessop 2013a). More often than not, the instrumentalization of these social relations and resources leads to conflictual social relations and contestation: actors – that are positioned in the flux of this valorization – encounter inconsistencies that enable them to acquire political insights and practice oppositional politics. Thus, inter-urban competition and the pressure to valorize the extra-economic are leading to an increase in mobilizations, resistance, and protests.

In this chapter, I look at the urban mobilizations which took place in different periods between 2007 and 2011 in the cities of Burgos, Córdoba, Donostia-San Sebastián and Málaga against the bidding for the European Capital of Culture 2016 title. Even though protests and resistance to ECoC are not widely publicized, they are 'normal' occurrences. This chapter attempts to understand why mobilization and resistance are the new normal for the ECoC. Competitive bidding and imagineering the city can also be an arena of conflict between rival interpretations of a particular city's needs and interests. The interpretation of a city's needs and interests is a political process (Fraser 1987; Boyle and Hughes 1991; K. F. Gotham 2011). Although these struggles against ECoC 2016 had their own local specificities and were not part of a coherent movement, most of these mobilizations were organized by what I – and others[68]– call the 'creative precariat': precarious artists, counter-cultural creative actors, alternative groups, and young urban actors, part of the new/old precariat of 'urban spectacles.' The mobilizations arose from the common, embodied experience of precarious artists and cultural producers.

Precarious artists were uniquely situated so as to contest the instrumentalization and commodification of culture in inter-city rivalries, and the unequal working conditions at the heart of competitive bidding. But some of these critiques and mobilizations were co-opted and instrumentalized during competitive bidding, leading to ambivalent effects. Despite that, critique can never be fully appropriated: it ends up undermining the discourses of harmony and unity that are underpinning processes of inter-urban competition and competitive bidding, and their

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[68] These authors use different terms such as the 'artistic precariat' (Bain and McLean 2012), the 'creative precariat' (Arvidsson, Malossi, and Naro 2010; Holt and Lapenta 2010; de Peuter 2014), or 'contingent cultural labor' (T. Miller 2010). I prefer to use the concept of the 'creative precariat' for two reasons. First, it functions as the dark mirror image, as the counterpoint to the much-heralded 'creative class' (Peck 2005). It clarifies what type of creatives is (not) welcomed or encouraged to move, visit or stay in cities. Second, it is concept useful to reclaim the 'creativity' of cultural producers, including of protestors.

framing of the city. Mobilizations rupture the imagineering of the city as homogeneous and its dominant claims to interpret and represent cities' problems and needs.

First, I present how inter-urban competition is premised on the valorization and instrumentalization of artists, cultural producers and of their precarity. Then, I focus on the contradictions intrinsic to inter-city rivalries and to these pressures to instrumentalize everything. After, I analyze the creation of a 'creative precariat' as condition and as political mobilization and then I discuss how socio-cultural and extra-economic practices and resources, including the creative precariat and the artist critique, were instrumentalized, appropriated, and co-opted during inter-city rivalries.

5.1. Selling the City: A World of 'Cultural Operators' and 'Cultural Entrepreneurs'

The widespread engineering of competition and its accompanying ethos of branding, promoting and selling the city have led to pressures to valorize more and more the socio-cultural and extra-economic relations and resources. In order to compete in an oversaturated field, policy actors and urban coalitions are "struggling to compete with reduced financial resources and eroded urban governance structures invest in arts-led regeneration initiatives to spark inter- and intra-urban competition" (Bain and McLean 2012, 23). In the pursuit of a one-time success and elusive competitiveness, artists and cultural producers are called upon to be 'competitive' and 'entrepreneurial', and also to support culture-led development, arts-led regeneration, mega-events and grand festivals, and other various types of urban cultural policies. The precarity of cultural producers becomes instrumental in inter-city rivalries: keeping the cost low for local artists enables the coalition to contract well-known artists from outside of the city (just like the work done by City Council staff and civil servants in competitive bidding enables the hiring of external experts and consultants). This limiting of costs is also enabled by the active encouragement of extensive and inexpensive volunteering networks and the exploitation of their

unpaid labor: volunteers[69] are doing the necessary physical nitty-gritty work of competing and maintaining the imagineering of the city as a cultural city, such as distributing flyers, appearing in promotional pictures, supporting the running of cultural events and more.

The ECoC programme is presented as both an opportunity for the city and its citizens, and for the local artists and cultural producers. Local cultural producers are called upon to support and/or participate in the bidding for ECoC with the promise that this is a golden opportunity for them, either to achieve employment, extend their employment contracts, reputation, global reach, etc. Generally, the premise and promises of cultural mega-events is that they will offer "a *professional* arts sector with positive and substantive legacies, sustained material and financial benefits, or increased national and international profile" (Low and Hall 2011, 131; my emphasis). The institutional promotion of optimism and hope by urban coalitions is a vital dimension for the justifications of the competition and its associated culture-led development. The everyday experience of precarity (Rowan 2010; REU08 2009) disciplines, motivates and compels artists and cultural producers to accept, promote, support and/or participate actively in the competitive bidding for ECoC, and/or in its urban coalition. Precarity tends to circumscribe the action of artists and cultural producers to (tacit) acceptance. It renders acceptance, support and participation in ECoC and in the urban coalition as an opportunity, while inhibiting resistance and mobilization against ECoC. He (sic) is imagined as a 'homo economicus', as an entrepreneur of himself that will naturally and rationally take advantage of the supposed benefits and exchanges with other artists that come with ECoC.

Concomitantly, 'cultural entrepreneurship' is increasingly promoted by local and regional governments in Spain, particularly in Andalusia (Córdoba and Málaga) and Extremadura (Caceres), but also in the Basque Country, as attempts to encourage urban and regional competitiveness, and to accommodate to the rising precarization and 'inherent' flexibility of the cultural sector (Rowan 2010; Sguiglia and San Juan 2009). This promotion of entrepreneurship

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[69] The paid workforce involved in competitive bidding is supported by a large 'reserve' of volunteers who are distributing leaflets, collecting signatures of support, participating in PR campaigns, photos, videos, volunteering in cultural events, festivals, museums, galleries, information tourist centers, etc. Volunteers are an essential part of competitions for mega-events; generally 'volunTourists' (K. Holmes and Smith 2012) are an essential part of tourism, a highly profitable global industry/sector. The promise of ECoC as a golden opportunity appears as the main pull for volunteers. Volunteering at a mega event is typically seen as "a one-off and a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience" (Holmes and Smith 2012, 30), an unique event for the city.

and competition in the cultural sector was initiated during the pre-crisis period of growth and speculation associated with tourism, culture, and construction that I documented in Chapter 2. As we recall, the most preparations for the ECoC competition started in Córdoba (2002), Málaga and Caceres (2004), Zaragoza, Tarragona, and Segovia (2006) and Burgos (2007) in this period of time during the 'cultural bubble' (Eraso 2008). Rowan (2010) analyzes the promotion a policy of 'cultural entrepreneurship' – known as '*emprendizaje cultural*', a neologism created from joining 'entrepreneurial' (emprendedor) with 'learning' (aprendizaje) – in the autonomous community of Andalusia, led by the regional government. The policy of cultural entrepreneurship emerged within the discussions for the Stategic Plan for Culture in Andalusia (PECA, Plan Estratégico para la Cultura en Andalusia) in 2005. PECA proposed to open the Andalusian Institute of Cultural Industries under the authority of the Department of Culture of the regional government of Andalusia (Rowan 2010). Its main objective was "to promote entrepreneurship and the creation of cultural companies" (Rowan 2010, 86; my translation). Through these new policies, cultural producers are meant to learn to become more entrepreneurial and to set up enterprises and companies in the field of culture as a way to undo their precarious condition. Thus, setting up mall cultural companies are considered a solution both for reducing precarity and maximizing flexibility. Moreover, the policy of cultural entrepreneurship presupposes that companies and enterprises represent a better solution to precarity as compared with associations or collectives. The cultural producer is imagined as an enterprise, as a company, not as associations or collectives.

The figure of the cultural entrepreneur is co-joined with that of the trope of the 'cultural operator' of the EU. Artists and cultural producers are present in the written policy documents of ECoC as 'cultural operators' (Commission of the European Communities 2007; The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 1999, 2005, 2006). The 'European dimension' of the bid document and of the ECoC programme is meant to and "highlight the richness of cultural diversity and bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore" (European Commission 2005), and to "foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from the relevant Members States and other Member States in any cultural sector" (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2006). This cooperation is imagined as a multilateral cooperation between cultural producers 'at all levels'. Not just in the policy documents associated with ECoC, but also in the other programmes of the Commission

like Creative Europe, one can witness this prevalence of the 'cultural operator' keyword (it is a keyword which is dominating at this particular moment to broadly denote the people working in the field of culture).

But what does this keyword, this trope tell us about the worlds of the ECoC programme? For Shore and Wright, policy worlds can be better understood if one focuses on how rhetorical devices and tropes, such as 'cultural operator' or 'cultural entrepreneur', are deployed in written policy documents (Shore and Wright 1997). It is telling that the rule regimes of ECoC have institutionalized the term 'cultural operators' and not 'cultural producers' as the Commission, the Council of Ministers, and transnational experts do not prioritize the production dimension of culture but they privilege culture for the economic impacts of the arts and the cultural sector (tourism and spectacle), individualized consumption, and EU soft diplomatic power promotion. Even though this keyword is currently dominating the emerging transnational field of European cultural policy, historically the keyword 'operator' has accumulated other, different meanings and associations: an operator is commonly understood as a person who operates a machine, an apparatus, an instrument (as in machine operator, or telephone operator) or a person who owns, works and/or operates in a company, in an enterprise, in a commercial or industrial establishment (Collins Dictionary 2014). Besides the symbol for mathematical operations, an operator could also be understood as a speculator, as somebody working on the stock market or on currency exchange. Therefore, the composition of this keyword points to a partial inclusion of these parallel meanings. These parallel meanings are partially included in the current popular policy keyword: it points to understandings of culture as an industry, culture as a service while artists and cultural producers are understood for their capacity to operate on 'culture'. Through the combination of these two terms, 'culture' and 'operators', culture is seen as an instrument, as a coherent, closed element; almost like an object. 'Cultural operators' are meant to work and operate on and in culture, while the productive capabilities of artists and their capabilities to constantly (re)produce and change culture are de-emphasized. It connotes particular understandings of culture as something which can be traded on and upon. In cities which promote cultural tourism, cultural operators are linked both semantically and in practice with tour operators: culture and heritage are seen as a commodity to be sold for consumption, leisure, and spectacle.

In organizational studies, 'skilled cultural operators' are entrepreneurs with a skillful symbolic management: they are those who "consider culture less in terms of 'public constraints' that bear down on actors and rather as 'public resources' that they can draw on in order to devise strategies in line with their own interests or those of their organization" (Uberbacher, Jacobs, and Cornelissen 2015, 926). Certainly the keyword 'cultural operator' – as used by EU institutions and by the inter-scalar rule regimes of ECoC – is different from the meaning it has in this organizational analysis but there are some clear communalities: both organizational studies and the keyword of 'cultural operators' denote 'culture' as an instrument to further other processes (e.g.: skillful management for organizations; urban economic development, branding, cultural tourism for the ECoC). It is understood as an asset and resource to be traded upon on.

The keyword 'cultural operator' functions as a condensed symbol which evokes the increasing instrumentalization of culture for urban and regional redevelopment and for its presupposed socio-economic impact and legacies. Although this keyword is dominant among the actors and institutions broadly affiliated with the emerging European field of cultural policy (EU institutions, NGOs, think-thanks, etc.), it is an 'essentially contested concept' (Gallie qtd. in Shore and Wright 1997). This keyword is particularly contested by precarious local artists and cultural producers because this concept and the policy worlds of ECoC paint a homogenous and harmonious picture of the cultural sector, while disregarding the pervasive socio-economic inequalities among artists, cultural producers and artistic communities. Now we turn to the labor done by artists and cultural producers in competitive bidding.

5.2. The Comparative Advantages of Precarity: The Distribution of (In)Security, Selectivity, and the Labor of Cultural Producers

Competitive bidding is a complex process in which a variety of actors and institutions are involved which have multiple and sometimes contradictory interests, goals and aspirations. Despite that, the city council, foundation and/or informal team – as the main operating units of competitive bidding at the local scale – control the settings of the interactions, and can limit its participants. They also can control the potential results of the interactions among and between politicians, public servants, experts, artists, cultural producers, volunteers and/or citizens. Artists

and cultural producers participate in the coalition in the manner marked appropriate by these organizations and bureaucracies. Of course, sometimes there are individual artists or cultural producers within the bidding team, although there are rarer than one would expect in a cultural project; here I am referring to local cultural producers as a 'group' or 'community'. Just as the arena of (in)action for cultural players is determined, constrained or inhibited by these place-based organizations, but their participation – non-participation – is shaped by the rule regimes of ECoC. Nagy (2015) argues that in the decisions of the ECoC programme, both the concept of participation and the participation of artists, cultural producers and citizens are never clearly defined but building on a general assumption about what participation is. Rather, it translates in giving consent and acquiescence to the pursuit of inter-city rivalries.

The participation of cultural producers is ranging from nonexistent to highly instrumentalized in competitive bidding. This is pervasive characteristic of competitions for ECoC and its 'participatory' approach, not just for the Spanish case. It is due to the strategic selectivity of the policy itself (Nagy 2015). At best, artists and cultural producers are considered proxies for citizens' participation: artists were considered citizens, but citizens are not artists, while volunteering is considered as proxy for citizens' involvement. Citizens are more than just artists, cultural producers and volunteers. The Foundation or City Council is the initiator of these selective interactions. When it is deemed necessary and appropriate by the Foundation/City Council, the participation of artists and cultural producers can be described at most as a 'call-for-projects' type of participation, or as a 'copy-paste' type of consultation. Citizens and volunteers are even more rarely involved into these types of consultations, but the patterns of interactions are similar.

Since bidding for the ECoC involves designing a year-long cultural programme specifically for the event, artists and cultural producers are asked to support and propose new events and initiatives besides the already-existing local and regional cultural events, and/or to participate in filling-in the newly created events. This is the call-for-projects type of participation: the projects which are proposed might be included or not in the bid and the cultural programme; they can contribute with their ideas and proposals for the final cultural programme that might be selected by the core members of the bidding team. The cultural programme is partially drawn out of the

applications made (more-or-less) voluntarily by artists and cultural producers, based on the selection the City Council Staff, external experts and/or members of the Foundation.

The other type of participation, the one I am humorlessly calling copy-paste, it is operating on the same principles. Consultations were organized with participants selected by the bidding team; again, members of this team select the parts which they consider valuable. Thus, besides the artists part of the bidding team, local cultural producers were not involved in defining the themes or direction of the bid, but only through the potential incorporation of some of their ideas into the bid, particularly potential cultural projects and/or events. Nor were they involved in participating in the construction of dominant images and imaginaries of the city, as their inputs were filtered. As two of my interviewees from Málaga mentioned, including one critical public servant,

> *In the meetings it was discussed what sort of idea Málaga could present and the ECoC office was deciding which ideas could be included in the final draft of the programme. In the meetings, 'you' were offering some ideas, initiatives and proposals; that idea was developed and maybe those ideas were also offered by a different association. In the final project, the origin of ideas was not marked... The people from the Office selected the ideas presented and discussed* (Málaga, Local Professional).

> *This was not a project of the city. It was an elite project. The round tables with the culture sector were formed only with key people. Methodologically, that is distorting reality: they are key people because they are part of circles of power. Who identifies them as key peoples? The spaces of power. They were people who were moving in the elite of culture. The tables were like: tell me things, I take what I want. It was not a debate, a co-production, but 'tell me and I will pick what interests me in my project* (Málaga, City Council staff).

Authority, domination and strategic selectivity are underscoring these activities: the consultations were decided by the members of the Málaga 2016 Foundation that limited the discussions to representatives of the main cultural institutions of the city. This selectivity is strategic given that the municipality is pursuing a museification and cultural urban tourism strategy around grand infrastructures and major events, meant to diversity its already-extensive sun-and-beach tourism in the Costa del Sol region. This selectivity and privileging of core cultural institutions of the city and region is a situation also characteristic of other very different ECoCs, such as Stavanger (Norway) or Sibiu (Romania), where major local arts organizations and cultural institutions tend to gain the most (Oancă 2010; Bergsgard and Vassenden 2011). Major local arts organizations have a central position: they end up representing the arts and

culture as a whole, as they tend to be more present and better represented in participatory programs, in consultation meetings, and in the organizations in charge of competitive bidding.

Crucially, the immaterial, imaginative labor performed by artists and cultural producers to generate ideas for cultural projects and events was unpaid and unwaged, but selected and appropriated by the core team. Cultural producers who proposed themes or ideas of cultural events were neither materially compensated, nor acknowledged as the authors of those ideas. The issue of authorship and recognition troubled some of my interviews, as some were 'afraid that if they submitted projects, their ideas will be stolen' *(Córdoba, Cultural Producer).*

Even for those cultural producers with copy-left and 'cultural commons' leanings and who were unconcerned about issues of copyright and intellectual property rights, there was something problematic and deeply unfair in the way in which very well paid external experts and/or city council workers with stable working conditions were appropriating the immaterial, imaginative labor of cultural workers who were dealing with precarious working and living conditions. The direction of exchange was one-way: the cultural producers were offering ideas which were selected and incorporated by people with stable working conditions and/or with high salaries, by city council staff, local professionals and external experts:

> *They came and asked for our project ideas. We thought about it, but… "Why should I give you my ideas? Aren't you paid for that?! (n.a.: for developing the bid and project ideas) If you pay me, I will give you my ideas"… Their approach was something like this: even if we approve and keep your project, even if we win, we will cover at most a part of the costs for the project…of course not our labor... they were not even promising to finance the costs completely! A maximum of 50% if we were lucky and all the rest was supposed to come from our pockets* (Cultural Producer, Burgos).

Frustrations and perceptions of unfairness were commonly experienced by local artists, as the imaginative labor of well-paid or permanent staff was drawing inspiration and legitimation from the non-waged, non-compensated, unacknowledged labor of citizens and precarious cultural producers:

> *The consultations helped me a lot. I always say to people that what I did for the final project was a lot of copy paste from here, there, moving things around, and incorporating* (Expert, Donostia – San Sebastián).

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But this incorporation of cultural producers and citizens was not necessarily to their benefit. For Kothari, "the process of participation is also not as transparent as it may seem. The very act of inclusion, of being drawn in as a participant, can perform the exercise of power and control over an individual" (2005, 441). It implies accepting fixed power positions. Participation can result into – what Wood, Cooke and Kothari call – 'political co-option' (Cooke and Kothari 2001) or 'adverse incorporation' (G. Wood 1999; Kothari 2005) that is not necessarily beneficial for the groups as it requires contributions from the participants in the form of ideas, free labor or cash that end up transferring costs on to them.

The immaterial, imaginative work making possible inter-city rivalries is unevenly carried out and unevenly acknowledged and remunerated. Imaginative labor is hierarchized differently. This differential hierarchization of immaterial work is accompanied by a differential hierarchization of security and insecurity: those who are considered more 'worthy' and 'valuable' get protected, while others are left out (Lorey 2010; Lorey 2015). As some of my interviewees noticed, those are considered more 'worthy' and who are being given more security in their working and living conditions are non-local, famous artists:

> *The producers could only submit projects which will be later selected by the Office; there was no discussion of the philosophy of the candidacy.... The model of Carlota (n.a.: the director of Foundation Córdoba 2016) was "give me your project and we'll see. And I'm bringing the relevant people from outside" (*Córdoba, Cultural Producer).

Those artists and cultural institutions which resonate with particular understandings of culture – as an industry, as a service, as a coherent closed element, as a commodity which can be sold for consumption, leisure and spectacle, or as an instrument which can be used to achieve other purposes (urban redevelopment) – are given priority. Fast-paced processes of competitive bidding privileges "an elite cadre of artists and arts organizations who can contribute to market-friendly, 'spectacular' arts and culture events" (Bain and McLean 2012, 23). Despite that, it is important to bear in mind that 'the rest' of local artists, "even if unemployed, are productive for capital: the standing reserve army can be expected to exert downward pressure on the wage that a creative-economy employer is likely to bear, and, thus, raise their return" (de Peuter 2014, 273). Moreover, 'the rest' of local artists are a pool of free or underpaid (im)material labor both for ideas and for implementing the imaginaries of the city, particularly for its festivalization and museification.

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In Córdoba, the coalition[70] pursuing the bid – composed of actors and institutions from the city but also from 'elsewhere' – created and promoted a program of 16 grand annual events in the preparation for the competition for the 2016 title, like Cosmopoética, The White Night of Flamenco, Guitar Festival of Córdoba, etc. These events were part of a larger program called 'Córdoba en Clave 16' (Córdoba Essential 16), a program promoted by Foundation Córdoba Cultural City for the promotion of Córdoba for ECoC 2016 (Córdoba 2016 2010; Córdoba2016 2010b). While the Guitar Festival of Córdoba was born at the beginning of the 80s (1981), the other grand cultural events were established during the process of competitive bidding started in Córdoba (2002-2011): Cosmopoética, a festival of poetry, in 2004, Animacor (International Festival of Animation) in 2005, Eutopía (International Festival for Young Creators) in 2006, Periféricos (Contemporary Creation) in 2008, The White Night of Flamenco in 2008, etc. All these festivals were created in order "to strengthen the cultural skeleton" of Córdoba due to the candidacy for ECoC (Albert 2012).

This emphasis on grand cultural events was complemented by a considerable number of touristic and cultural infrastructures (Jiménez and Medel 2012), both new and rehabilitated: not just the Contemporary Center for Creation C4 (currently known as C3A) but also the Reception Center for Visitors, Sala Orive, Pepe Espaliu Art Center, the Institutional Headquarters of Medina Azahara, and more. During 2002-2011, the cultural and economic sector of Córdoba experienced a cycle of expansion due the considerable speculative investments that were made in culture, followed by a contraction and disinvestment in its cultural sector[71] and beyond after the end of the competition process in mid 2011.

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[70] The main organization in charge with competitive bidding was Fundación Córdoba Ciudad Cultural, although it worked closely with the Department of Culture of the City Council of Córdoba; these two organizations also worked with other municipal departments, with the provincial council, the regional government, the university, local professionals, and with a wide network of Spanish and European experts and consultancies.
[71] This boom-and-bust cycle is similar to be one experienced in Spain during 1986-1993 when the contraction and the effect of the crisis could be postponed for just a bit due to the mega-events of 1992. As Palomera argues, "(i)n 1989 there were steep falls in Spanish stock markets, and in 1990 real estate prices froze, forecasting the end of the boom. The cycle of growth could be sustained for a bit longer due to the marketing of the 1992 events: the Barcelona Olympic Games, the Seville Universal Exposition, Madrid Cultural Capital, and the construction of the first high speed route (Madrid-Seville). However, between 1992 and 1993 the economy severely contracted and almost half the quantity of jobs created in the expansive period was lost. The unemployment rate skyrocketed and reached an all time high: 24%. At the same time, public expenditures continued to grow as a welfare state countercyclical strategy and due to the extraordinary investments around the big events of 1992" (Palomera 2015, 36).

But these considerable municipal and regional budgets for ECoC did not translate into a rising prosperity or wellbeing for local cultural actors but into a rising prosperity in the market of cultural buildings and infrastructures, and into the reproduction of inequality in arts worlds. These buildings – mostly oriented towards consumption, touristification or exhibitions – were empty or underutilized, leaving artists and cultural producers with no improvement in their situation for spaces for production, rehearsals, meetings, etc. Moreover, local cultural producers and artists were called upon to 'engineer' the city through the 16 grand events and more: they were called upon to participate in the city's festivalization and concrete reconstruction of the city. Some of my interviews mentioned that when they were contracted for a festival organized by the Foundation Córdoba 2016, they were paid meagerly and with delay; plus, after signing the contract and before getting paid they needed to sign an agreement that they wholeheartedly support the Foundation for the ECoC title (agreements and names which were later included in the bid application sent to the selection panel); the same situation applied for collectives or organizations that were funded by the municipality.

Coalitions looking to increase competitiveness and pursue culture-led development – such as the coalitions of Córdoba, Burgos, and Málaga – end privileging high profile arts institutions and festivals at the expense of smaller, low-profile arts institutions, community and neighborhood organizations, or self-managed cultural spaces. In all these three coalitions, external experts were hired for the position of (artistic) director of the Foundation. Expertise is contested and contestable; it is not just with the dialectical interplay and temporary alignment between cooperative and competitive social relations. The imagineering of the city is not a-conflictual processes: rather, the enactment of expertise – that involves attempting to bring together (im)material infrastructures, concepts and actors into an alignment – is fraught with conflict, contestations, tensions and frustrations.

This pursuit of competitiveness contributes to the further precarization of already precarious artists and cultural producers: the free labor of local artists and volunteers makes possible the pursuit of comparative advantages through urban spectacles and star-artists, as it keeps these 'unessential', 'uncompetitive' costs low. It also compels them to bet on the ECoC, work for free, invest more and more in this, and to (want to) believe the institutional optimism promoted by its rule regimes. The differential valorization of local artists vis-à-vis outside artists goes hand in

hand with the instrumentalization of precarity. Bidding wars are made possible by the instrumentalization and further reproduction of precarity, and by differential valorization of imaginative and cultural labor.

5.3. Precarity, Precarization, Precariat: The Rise of the Creative Precariat in Cultural Cities

The rise of the 'creative precariat' is one of the contradictions intrinsic to inter-urban competition and to the pressure to instrumentalize everything (Arvidsson, Malossi, and Naro 2010; Holt and Lapenta 2010; de Peuter 2014; Bain and McLean 2012; Mclean 2014). As competition for the sake of tourism, promotion, and spectacle exploits already precarious cultural producers and (re)produces precarization, it also (re)creates the 'creative precariat' (de Peuter 2014; Bain and McLean 2012). The monopolization of culture for spectacle and inter-city rivalries enable the formation of a creative precariat. The unevenness of labor practices, differential valorization of imaginative and cultural labor, and unequal working environments are rendered visible for precarious artists during inter-city rivalries. The state-led promotion of precarity and the privileging of 'the big' become visible and discontent can be articulated.

But what differentiates this current precarity from historical accounts of precariousness as a fundamental part of the experience of artists? Uncertainty and living and working conditions without any guarantees have been the norm for artists and cultural producers rather than a recent exception. The current precarity and precarization of artists is not just the same old story. The precariousness of cultural producers is a new/old situation but the difference lies in state-led instrumentalization of culture for inter-city rivalries, and in the state-led (re)production of precarity: the use of the "figure of the self-reliant, risk-bearing, non-unionised, self-exploiting, always-on flexibly employed worker (…) as a role model of contemporary capitalism" (de Peuter 2014, 263). It points to newer trends associated with the increasing commodification of culture, culture-led development, urban cultural policies, the increasing exchange value of culture, the increasing commodification of culture for economic purposes, cultural tourism, and different mutations and permutations of this story (Tretter 2009; Peck 2005). But this selling culture and selling the city as a commodity "often produces widespread alienation and

resentment among the cultural producers who experience first-hand the appropriation and exploitation of their creativity for the economic benefit of others, in much the same way that whole populations can resent having their histories and cultures exploited through commodification" (Harvey 2002, 108).

The precarity of artists and cultural producers is not just a descriptor of their idiosyncratic working and social lives, a condition of current economic exploitation, or a symptom of culture-led urban development in the pursuit of competitiveness. It can also be a political positioning that enable precarious artists to mobilize and practice critical politics (Li 2007; Bain and McLean 2012; Lorey 2010). It is both a symptom and a convergence point for protesters and various forms of political mobilization (Bain and McLean 2012; Lorey 2010; Lorey 2015). As precarious artists are (re)forged in the frameworks of cultural entrepreneurship as competitive subjectivities, they encounter inconsistencies in competitive bidding and its monopolization of culture that provide critical insights. It creates potentially subversive subjectivities and a potentially subversive discourse.

The 'precariat' is not a sociological category but a political category. It does not refer to a separate class in the classical sense[72] (E. O. Wright 2016), but it is alluding to the proletariat, and used as an emic term pointing to its political mobilization: it is used "as an offensive self-description in order to emphasize the subjective and utopian moments of precarization" (Frassanito-Network 2005). In their manifesto, the protesters of Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba (Invisible Creators) referred to themselves as "the precariat": "We are the precariat of urban spectacles". Precarization, the state-led (re)production of precarity for competitiveness, is that moment from which political positioning emerges.

Only two mobilizations focused its criticism on faults in the implementation of the competition for ECoC: Malversacion/ Embezzlement 2016, by DRY Burgos, *Real Democracy NOW* focused, on overspending, embezzlement and misappropriation of funds, while the Platform for the Professionals of Contemporary Art in Córdoba (PPACC) focused on the lack of artists' participation within the design of the ECoC bid programme which itself is indicative of the

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[72] Wright (2016) argues that in general the precariat cannot constitute a separate class, at most a class faction if it is internally consistent.

position of cultural producers. The rest of the mobilizations that took place in Córdoba, Málaga, and Donostia – but also in Zaragoza and Pamplona[73] – questioned the commodification of the city and of culture, and the very (i)rationality of pursuing culture-led development and the ECoC title in a context characterized by austerity measures and the reduction of grants for cultural producers. With the exception of struggles in Córdoba and Málaga, whose members sometimes acted together, most contestations came into being and developed unknown or irrespective of the protests against ECoC taking place in other cities.

This applies also for those mobilizations which were inspired by and/or were started within 15M, as 15M was a heterogeneous social movement: Malversacion/Embezzlement 2016 by DRY Burgos and the protest led by a group of 15M in Zaragoza. The jury members of ECoC visited the six cities only two weeks after the start of the 15M movement in Spain, and a group part of the Acampada of Zaragoza decided to protest the candidacy of Zaragoza for ECoC and block the exit of the city hall when the jury members were visiting Zaragoza. Around 100 people did a short sit-in in front of the city hall[74], more precisely in front of the entrance to the parking and in that street, chanting mainly 'Culture is not for sale' but also 'Culture is in the streets' and anti-police slogans. This group of protestors did not mobilize previously against ECoC as their protest was decided more or less spontaneously during the occupation of Plaza del Pilar in Zaragoza.

The mobilizations that took place in Córdoba, Málaga, and Donostia, Zaragoza and Pamplona were small local mobilizations were not of a coherent movement but were mainly composed of a heterogeneous group of precarious artists and cultural producers, counter-cultural creative actors, young unemployed or underemployed creative actors, ideologically radical and/or alternative left individuals and groups. In a different time and context, these 'rights holding citizens'

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[73] An unusual type of contestation of ECoC emerged in Pamplona (Navarra), a city which – like Málaga – participated only in the first phase of the competition. After the competition, between October 2010 and April 2014, Iluna Producciones, a company of theatrical production based in Pamplona, created two theatrical plays called "Ramplona 2016. La siesta de la cultura" (Ramplona 2016. The nap of culture) and "Ramplona 2016. Sobrevivir o vivir del sobre" (Ramplona 2016. Surviving or living from the envelope) which are critical parodies of the political sphere and which are poking fun at the participation of the city of Pamplona in the bidding for ECoC 2016 with the "Fiesta de la cultura" motto. The director sees the play as a criticism of the policy of Ramplona and its Kingdom. The two productions proved to be very popular as they were played for multiple times.

[74] When the police managed to remove some protesters who were blocking the parking entrance and the street, other protesters were replacing them and so on, but they were not very successful in swiftly clearing the way for the cars. Later around 20 riot policemen were dispatched to clear the traffic and watch over the protestors.

(Rabinowitz 2014) could have easily been described as primarily young activists from a middle class background, as the culturally and politically discontented rather than the deprived (Mayer 2013). Their mobilizations similarly could have been labeled as middle class rather than as cross-class alliances between the deprived and the alienated (Marcuse 2009). But the discontented became the deprived as well. Because of the precarization of the middle class and of cultural producers (Alonso, Ferreira, and Alonso 2014), easy-made distinctions between the alienated and the deprived, or between the 'social' and 'artistic' critique, are no longer possible.

The critique made by the creative precariat cannot be classified or dismissed as the 'artistic' critique (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), as separate from the 'social' critique. For the creative precariat, the two strands are joined: not just demand for freedom, autonomy and authenticity but also for security, solidarity, and equality (Lazzarato 2011). The official pre-selection and selection timeline for ECoC (2009-2011), took place during contentious times and an increasingly tense social atmosphere with the increasing unemployment and underemployment of young urban citizens and the political emergence of 'the new urban precariat' with the global crisis (della Porta 2015; de Peuter 2014), the 15M movement in Spain characterized by high levels of participation in protest activities[75]. These contentious times can partially explain the relatively high number of mobilizations against ECoC taking place in Spain in 2010-2011 (with Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba mobilizing against ECoC in Córdoba as early as 2007). For example, while the jury visits were taking place in the central areas of the six pre-selected Spanish cities (May 30 – June 5, 2011), the movement of 15M and the occupation of main squares were already in full swing.

In Córdoba, Creador@s Invisibles were active from 2007 until 2011 and functioned as a platform for "people related to cultural production, workers in the cultural sphere and education (musicians, actors, designers, people in publishing, some informaticians, some teachers and educators from the formal and informal sector), supporters and some curious/inquisitive subscribers (20-25 people involved, 10 active, 120 potential supporters subscribing to a mailing

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[75] According to data provided by the European Social Survey and by Johnston, Jacobsson, and Saxonberg (2013), Spain had one of the highest levels of participation in protest activities and the highest percentage of people who took part in lawful public demonstration in 2011-2012 in Europe (18.2%). ESS emphasizes direct action (only lawful demonstrations), lobbying and legislative action, activities like signing a petition and wearing campaign badges and stickers, but excludes the production of alternative knowledge and the implementation of alternative socio-economic practices.

list)" (Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba 2010). This group linked the message of the bidding process with „consume and shut up" and saw it as the propagation of consumerism and of the 'art of spectacle'. They drew attention to "the spectacularization of culture, its reduction to a commodity rather than strengthening its use value, the high budgets seem to be spent always proportionally with the distance travelled by the artist (i.e.: nobody can be a prophet in their own land, or the emigration has to be a mandatory sign of our identity), the abandonment of day-in-day-out cultural work, zero support for the formation of cultural producers" (Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba 2010). The critique of the ECoC and culture-led development made by artists and cultural producers should not be seen as merely intellectual or theoretical but one came from a deeply felt and embodied experience of everyday precarity and precarization.

Creador@s Invisibles were arguing that ECoC was based in Córdoba on a top-down approach led by cultural managers where the foundations of culture ('cultura de base') and its artists and cultural producers were "constantly and repeatedly made more precarious both in a passive and active way" with the emphasis on grand festivals and events and external, famous artists (Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba 2007). For local artists and cultural producers, the ECoC and its culture-led development are managed and promoted as one would "sell a lame/limping donkey to a blind person"/"como vender un burro cojo a un ciego" (Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba, 2007). Even with its high budgets, ECoC is a limping donkey for local, precarious artists: it does not strengthen the foundations of culture, neither of culture in the restrictive traditional sense nor in the anthropological sense.

Protest or activism mobilities exist alongside policy mobilities led by governance structures (Purcell 2008; McCann and Ward 2011). Activists are also scanning the activist landscape for solutions for their own place or issue-specific problems, for forming alliances, and for persuading others. The name and approach of Creador@s Invisibles was modeled on The Invisible of Málaga, also known as La Casa Invisible (The Invisible House), a Citizens' Social Centre, a social and cultural centre for public management. *La Casa Invisible* came to exist in March 2007 as an okupa, a squatted house, when "a network of citizens, residents/neighbors and creators decided to fill with life a beautiful building which was a municipal property and in an advanced state of neglect" (La Invisible 2010; La Invisible 2016). Moreover, in Málaga, there was another Creador@s Invisibles platform of cultural workers, "who operates on the basis of

free, collaborative expression and turn a critical eye on contemporary arts policy" (UNIA AYP, 2010). Both of these platforms were formed in that period of speculative growth in the cultural sphere.

The Invisible of Málaga and Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba were the only groups which collaborated in their mobilization against ECoC and culture-led development. They scaled jumped. Their collaboration mainly started in 2008 in a project of UNIA, the International University of Andalusia (UNIA AYP 2015). Through UNIA, these two mobilizations scaled jumped: they collaborated with other regional actors and critiqued various local governments and the regional government. In 2008 an affinity network was formed between Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba, La Casa Invisible Málaga, BNV Producciones, FAAQ, and other actors and groups from different parts of Andalusia, from Córdoba, Málaga, Sevilla, Granada. As one member recalls, "we decided on a publication and a conference on free/libre culture, on a critique of the current cultural policy and alternative proposals" (Cultural producer).

The main output of the collaboration of this network of affinity in which Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba and La Casa Invisible Málaga participated was a report, Reunion 08[76](REU08 2009), about the material situation and paradoxes of cultural production and its relations with official cultural policies. UNIA sponsored this report; the research of Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba was based on interviews with 'cultural workers', both with workers from the main institutions financing and managing culture (institutional official actors) and also with non-affiliated artists, associations, companies and groups. In the report (REU08 2009), Creador@s Invisibles criticized the bidding for ECoC in Córdoba whereas Sguiglia and San Juan (2009) focused on the 'art of bad governance' of cultural policies in Málaga and Andalusia and the emphasis of the local and regional governments on big events, museums and infrastructures. That was one of the points which discussed within the framework of UNIA: La Invisible organized a roundtable discussion about "Málaga 2016, a debate. Reflections on metropolitan branding and local cultural policy" in which they criticized it as a grand, empty gesture behind which lies "a lack of cultural facilities, policies of outsourcing various functions, public funds diverted to the private sector and increasingly precarious living and working conditions for creative people" (UNIA

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[76] In an ironic twist, the site of Reunion 08 (R08) is currently a website (Observatorio del Litoral) about different coastal cities. Its latest post describes how to spend a weekend in Donostia – San Sebastián.

AYP 2010; my translation). The lack of affordable facilities for local cultural producers was seen as outrageous and contrasted with the museification strategy pursued by the municipality of Málaga; see Figure 9. Málaga: City of Museums, Empty Plots and Ruins, 2010.

In between 2008 and 2010, Creador@s Invisibles organized three annual conferences about cultural management from the perspectives of the needs of cultural producers and artists about a variety of topics: invisible cultural production and management, auto-production, "asociacionismo" and "cooperativismo" in the arts (associations and cooperatives), the privatization of culture and knowledge, intellectual property, feminist cultural practices, and more. The creation of associations and cooperatives was encouraged as a way to combat the widespread cultural entrepreneurship policies led by the local and regional governments.

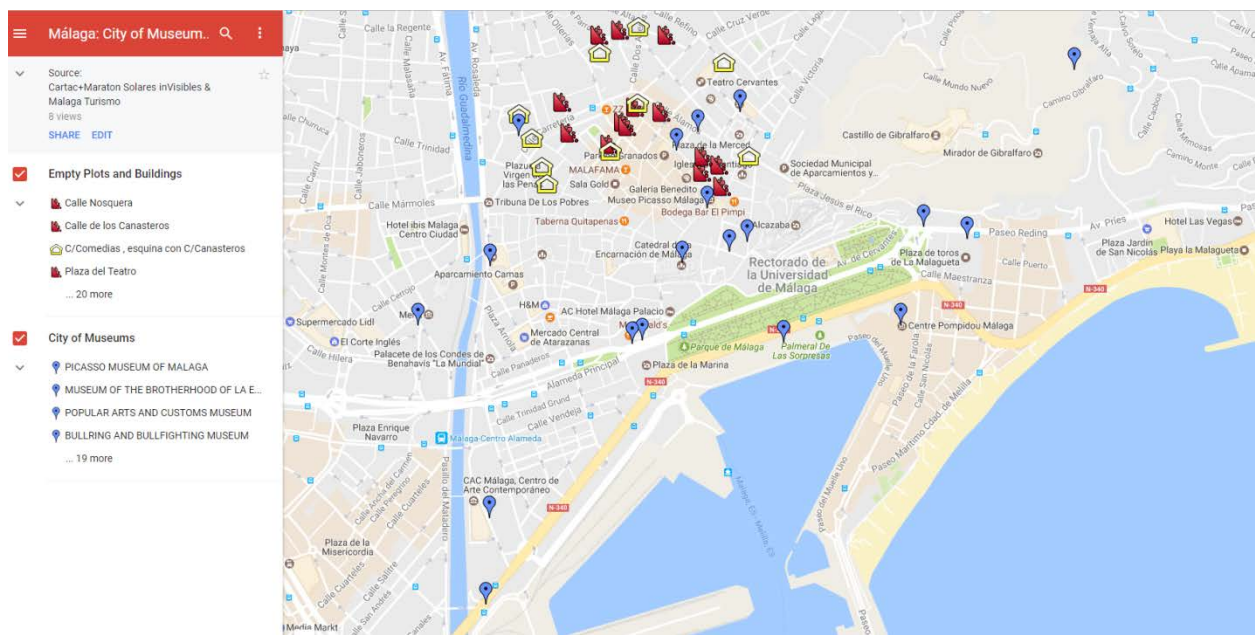**Figure 10. Málaga: City of Museums, Empty Plots and Ruins, 2010**
Source: Author's elaboration, by merging the map of Málaga Turismo (City of Museums) with Empty Plots and Ruins: Critical Cartography by La Invisible (Cartac + Maraton Solares Invisibles)

Talking about cultural labor in Andalusia, Sguiglia and San Juan (2009) mentioned that the "double labor, double life" principle was characteristic of cultural work:

the vast majority of workers in the cultural sector have to seek other sources of income in the local labor market which is characterized by transiency, short-term nature and underpaid salaries. Cultural producers who must abandon their artistic development in order to work in the hospitality and services sector are the majority. Those working for major cultural companies (Espectáculos Mundo and G2 PRODUCTORA are the most recognized large cultural enterprises) suffer extremely precarious conditions in terms of wages and schedules (Sguiglia and San Juan 2009, 86, my translation).

This was an all too common situation for the artists and cultural producers I interviewed. Because of this precarity, they were very critical of people with stable working conditions, such as "city council workers who play at cultural managers" (Burgos, cultural producer). For them,

There was a lot of usurpation of the discourse of artists; they were making a copy of perspectives in order to afterwards apply it to something else but without really representing it or translating it for the long run (...) The project was made by politicians and technicians (técnicos), by civil servants without training in the field of culture, people who were neither producers nor managers... The municipal employee, the civil servant with a monthly wage cannot understand what it's like to be an artist. You can't come and tell us how it's like in culture (Córdoba, Cultural producer).

This display of anger towards *técnicos* or municipal workers was common among precarious artists and protesters against ECoC. Another point of contention was the hiring of 'external experts', particularly people hired as artistic directors or in full-time capacity.

Bidding Wars erode potential networks of solidarity in cities, in nation states and beyond, for example between civil servants and local cultural producers. Competitiveness and a privileging of culture for the sake of tourism, spectacle and urban redevelopment are reproducing and increasing social divisions. A framework of inter-urban competition and a privileging of culture for the sake of tourism, promotion, spectacle and consumption (re)creates and reestablishes strong and growing divisions between city council workers and local cultural producers (but also between mobile consultants and city council workers). It exploits cultural producers and artists and volunteers (but also overworked and increasingly precarious civil servants as discussed in the previous chapter). The broader working conditions in the bidding for ECoC create and reinforce growing divisions between city hall workers in the field of culture (as street level bureaucrats) and local cultural producers, and also among the local artists and cultural producers themselves. It also (re)creates growing divisions between a small elite of mobile experts and famous artists, and the rest of underpaid, overworked immaterial 'workers' necessary for bidding (city council workers, precarious cultural producers and artists, volunteers).

In Burgos, the main issues of contention were the high costs of bidding for a 'hypothesis' and the high salaries of experts in times when subsidizes for the cultural sector were almost becoming nonexistent: the crisis was used to cut subventions for the cultural field in Burgos, but these crisis arguments did not apply in the spending made for the ECoC. Austerity measures were applied unevenly. The 'Burgos 2017' mobilization emerged in the early months of 2011 after they became aware of the bidding costs of Foundation Burgos 2016 for January-June. The mobilization of 'Burgos 2017' was also supported by anarchists, alternative and left-wing groups affiliated with the platforms of Diario de Vurgos and Burgosdijital. As the high costs of bidding were mostly paid through public money, 'Burgos 2017' took issue with the way the funds were being spent. The costs and the inflated benefits of the title were one of the most important sources of contestation, together with the secrecy and the undemocratic nature in which these organizations were carrying out their work.

Later, "Malversacion/Embezzlement 2016" started by the *Real Democracy NOW!* Platform in Burgos (DRY - *Democracia Real YA!)* also took issue with overspending and the incongruous manner in which public funds were being spent. "Embezzlement 2016" was organized by the *DRY* Burgos platform – part of the heterogeneous 15M movement – in 2011. The difference was that Burgos 2017 was criticizing the funds in the broader context of the precarization of local and cultural producers, while for Malversacion 2016 and DRY Burgos the ECoC competition was indicative of the general overspending, squandering, and budget deficit of public institutions[77].

According to the mobilization of Burgos2017 (2011), the salaries of the artistic team were the following for the first six months of 2011: two non-local experts employed in the foundation to write the bidding application – €102.000 (two salaries of more than €8.500 per month; each was the equivalent of approx. 6 monthly salaries). Both were involved in Stavanger ECoC 2008 with one as artistic director and the other as project advisor. Three external consultants were paid each

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[77] Members of DRY Burgos were drawing attention to the high costs and corruption associated with the bidding; as the name of the group suggests they targeted the misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds (it is important to note that they did not mean embezzlement only in a legal sense but in a more symbolic manner discussing overspending, squandering and ultimately public debt and budget deficits). If both Malversacion 2016 and Burgos 2017 contested the heavy budget and the high salaries of experts and consultants, Malversacion 2016 took it a step further and investigated also how different budgetary categories were being spent by drawing attention to other instances of misappropriation of public funds like incongruous subventions, travelling abroad without prior announcing the media, paying alcoholic drinks with public money, expensive meals and accommodation, surcharges for transportation costs, etc, which they argued is indicative of the regular mismanagement and squandering of public funds.

with the fees ranging from €5000 to €12000. A third of the bidding costs were paid on the salaries of external experts. By comparison, this amount is comparable with the support for cultural projects, publications and stage productions given for the whole year of 2011by Municipal Institute of Culture (Burgos 2017 2011). The oppositional practices of Burgos 2017 involved the creation of a blog, writing essay and articles, the distribution of leaflets with the costs of bidding and salaries of the bidding team's members, graffiti and irreverent, mocking images. Besides electronic posts, Burgos 2017 printed and distributed a leaflet with the salaries of the bidding team during festivals organized for Burgos 2016. Besides trying to spread awareness and encourage further contestation, Burgos 2017 attempted to give the jury delegation a document about 'The Hidden Face of ECoC 2016 in Burgos' but they did not succeed in getting close to them. The visits of the jury members are much scripted: they have precise routes and cast members, so it proved impossible for members of Burgos 2017 to get close to the jury members.

If the high costs in a period of austerity were the tipping point for Burgos 2017, it was one part of their criticisms. They also referred to the commodification of culture ('Culture is not for sale') but they also targeted the non-sustainability of a mega-event ('Expiration date: see the slogan'). For the 'European Culture of Capital', capital was the main point of interest not culture or the city. Burgos 2017 took issue with the diversion of public funds to private actors and companies, the outsourcing of various functions and events, the austerity measures targeting the cultural sector, the increasing precarization of cultural producers, and with the appropriation of the term "revolution" for urban branding. Moreover, according to the calculations of Burgos 2017, non-local artists organized 90% of cultural events; additionally, 90% of the funding for culture was going to the salaries of management and consultants, while 10% was for grants for cultural associations. This emphasis on grand festivals, big museums, external experts and famous artists has contributed to the precarization of cultural producers.

The precarity of artists and cultural producers is not just a condition of economic exploitation but it can function as valuable political positioning that enable precarious artists to mobilize and practice critical politics. This can potentially lead to subversive subjectivities and a potentially subversive discourse of the creative precariat, beyond the competitive, entrepreneurial artist promoted by the local and regional governments, for example, in their promotion of associations

and cooperatives of cultural producers instead of companies or the lone-individual model. Moreover, the groups which mobilized against ECoC, Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba, Burgos 2017, and La Invisible Málaga, were organized through assemblies and consensus decision-making and were promoting this type of alternative organizational practice for cultural producers.

5.4. Co-optation Strikes Back: Direct Accommodative Reponses of the Creative Precariat

At the same time with the possibility of critical politics and subversive subjectivities, the creative precariat itself can be co-opted and further instrumentalized within inter-city rivalries. Just like the precarization of cultural producers happens both in a direct and indirect manner, its co-operation and co-option can also be achieved both in a direct and indirect manner. These tensions and contradictions are illuminating for understanding the mechanisms of inter-city rivalries and the imagineering of the city.

The direct kind of co-optation is explained by the tensions between accommodative and antagonistic responses among cultural producers, as solidarity in conditions of precarity is severely limited by accommodative responses. The institutional promotion of optimism can reassert itself, even for the creative precariat; its co-optation is created by and recreates divisions of 'impoverished precarity' and 'luxury precarity': between the really-really precarious and the slightly-less precarious among cultural producers. Precarity itself is relational, dependent on interactions and relational settings and on the position of actors within those flows of transactions.

The way co-optation is due to divisions among cultural producers, between 'impoverished precarity' and 'luxury precarity', became visible in Córdoba. By 2011, Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba ceased its activities, and some of its members started being involved in the newly formed Platform for the Professionals of Contemporary Art in Córdoba (PPACC - *Plataforma de Profesionales del Arte Contemporáneo de Córdoba*). PPACC formed in early 2011, with just a couple of months before the final selection. Although they were also criticizing the candidacy of

Córdoba for ECoC and the structural problems of culture and precarity in Andalusia, their profile was different when compared to Creador@s Invisibles or La Invisible Málaga: all of them were linked with contemporary art, and even though they were also facing increasing precarization, they were more well established in the local and regional sphere and did not need to hide behind anonymity and invisibility. Although PPACC criticized the structural problems of culture in Andalusia and the austerity measures targeting contemporary art and the cultural sector, their official contentions of PPACC were not targeting the competition itself but they mainly focused on the manner in which the Foundation implemented ECoC without involving independent artists. For one member of PPACC, the Córdoba Cultural City Foundation:

> *did not count with us in the process of bidding, even though we put ourselves at the disposal of the project... We did not criticize the candidacy itself in public, but the way of working. We were very critical of the way cultural policy was done in the region but we looked beyond our own interests to the interest of the city; we believed in something that can transform and renew Córdoba* (Córdoba, Cultural producer).

Although both PPACC and Creador@s Invisibles criticized the candidacy of Córdoba, they did it from very different positions and perspectives. In the pre-selection, the jury members criticized the team of Córdoba for not involving artists and cultural producers in their projects, more precisely for not having an artist or cultural producer present at the presentation. After these critiques and after PPACC was established, the Córdoba Cultural City Foundation asked PPACC to send a female artist to be part of the team presenting for the final selection (female, to even the gender parity of a male-dominated team). With this, the Foundation wanted to respond to both the recommendations of the jury and the critique of local artists. Two birds, one stone. In response to this request from the Foundation, struggles followed within PPACC between its members. After the discussions, the majority wanted to support the candidacy of Córdoba by sending somebody for the final presentation. As a result, PPACC fractured: the former members of Creador@s left and also some of the other members as well. The presence of one of their members in the final presentation was also used to save face in front of the jury. With this fragmentation, PPACC was co-opted decidedly in the bidding coalition of Córdoba and further legitimized the competition. As one of the members mentioned:

> *One cannot critique and support the project at the same time. We criticized all the aspects of the project but in the end it was supported by people who had expectations of*

work in that field: "if Córdoba wins the title, I will have work". In Creador@s, we knew that this will not be the case (Cultural producer)

The precarization of artists and the appeal of potential employment cut deep into the creative precariat, further dividing it, and neutralizing its critique. This co-optation of PPACC into the bidding machine of Córdoba shows also how entangled mega-events are with promises of economic development, recovery, and jobs. The imaginaries of PPACC and some of its members were linking co-optation in the coalition, their interests with the interests of the city (Caravaca 2011). The institutional promotion of optimism reasserted itself for this segment of the creative precariat. From the very beginning PPACC did not criticize in public the participation in the competition, more precisely the rationale behind participating in the competition in the first place; they asked for an active presence in the process of elaborating the bid programme, because they believed another critique might lower further the chances of Córdoba winning the competition. PPACC was directly co-opted because their imaginaries were not rejecting the idea of culture-led development, of culture as a transformative engine for the city. While PPACC can be faulted for not being radical 'enough' and for getting involved in the process of competition in order to legitimize it, the possibility of non-involvement is also limited.

5.5. Indirect Co-optation of the Creative Precariat: Creative Precariat as Assets and the Limits of Non-Involvement

Non-involvement in inter-city rivalries is severely limited; it is almost an impossibility, due to pressures felt by policy actors to instrumentalize and valorize everything that might give them a comparative advantage vis-à-vis other cities. Although direct co-optation can be actively resisted by citizens, artists and/or counter-cultural activists through principled non-involvement with policy-makers, experts and consultants, the co-optation of the creative precariat, groups or citizens happens often in an indirect manner, when they become incorporated as an 'asset' in inter-urban competition. Thus, the creative precariat formed of alternative milieus has an ambivalent role in inter-city rivalries: while they can be the starting point for political struggles, they can be co-opted in the urban branding and the dominant imagineering of the city as 'cultural assets', as key location-specific instruments in the competition with other cities.

Burgos 2017 was formed as an open platform, as an anonymous digital platform formed of "independent cultural agents and independent cultural managers, without representatives of 'big culture'" (Cultural producer, Burgos). Its assembly decided to remain anonymous and present itself as 'a civic movement for culture' as some of its members were financially depended on the municipality, at least partially. They also feared reprisals from the City Council and more cuts to their budgets, if their critique had been done openly. At the same time, some of its members were involved in activities with the Foundation or in broader activities connected with the competition for ECoC, even appearing in their bidding documents as an 'cultural asset' of the city in inter-city rivalries. But while its members were considered assets for the competition, the inputs of Burgos 2017 were not rendered into instruments. An important part of their channels of resistance involved the creation of parodies and counter-logos[78] in order to counter the slogan and logo of the bidding coalition (R-evolution). The Foundation's "R-evolution" logo was particularly critiqued since:

> *With "R-evolution" they are absorbing our discourse in order to look good in front of others and they are robbing our discourse of any real meaning... it is a political word which they are emptying it of content* (Burgos, Cultural producer).

While the mobilizations in Andalusia – Creador@s Invisible Córdoba and La Invisible Málaga – mainly focused on the production and dissemination of alternative knowledge, the oppositional practices of the platform formed around Burgos 2017, Diario de Vurgos and Burgosdijital were also trying to spread awareness about ECoC but in a more irreverent, disrespectful package. These activists were using humor, irony and parody[79] in protest of social reality not just in their posters and graffiti but also in their imaginaries and socio-spatial practices in which the irreverent is employed in protest of the commodification of culture and of the city. Irony, satire and parody are critical resources for engaging political authority (Boyer 2013; Boyer and Yurchak 2010; Haugerud 2013). Slogans, graffiti and posters that deploy satire, parody and

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[78] Members of Burgos 2017 mocked the logo og "R-evolucion" and proposed instead "Revoluciona" (Revolutionize!), R-acción (R-action!, play on action and reaction), the "r-evolution" of her/his bank accounts, "R-accionaria" (wordplay on reactionary/ conservative and accionariado/ shareholders), and "r-evolcón" (an informal, vulgar word for sexual intercourse; accompanied by an image of two monkeys mating). Moreover, DRY also re-appropriated the official slogan "R" for their own purposes, as part of their own logo and mobilization strategy.
[79] This tactic continued for resistance groups regarding future culture-led development initiatives, such the hosting of the Spanish Capital of Gastronomy in Burgos in 2013 and the urban brand and marketing around 'B': "Smile, it's Burgos", "Devour Burgos", Dare, it's Burgos".

ironic humor are key tools for urban activism and struggles as can be used to offer a political commentary and channel anger, blame, and disillusionment.

Boyer argues that by playing on the ambiguity between humor and seriousness, between serious political commentary and fun, humor and laughter can represent "a deeper, less alienated relationship to life and to truth than serious, sophistic(ated) critique" in an era of cynical apathy (Boyer 2013, 282). As far as ECoC and culture-led development are concerned, 'artistic activism' or 'artivism' has potential but also limitations. Playful ludic critique can laugh in the face of power: satirical, ironic humor and the inputs of artivists are less amenable to appropriation and co-optation in inter-urban competition. But the limitations of this type of activism lie in threats of the illegibility of their messages by other actors outside their particular affinity group. Moreover, while these inputs and the spirit of these practices cannot be directly commodified or translated, for Delgado artivism "masks the deactivation of political activism" and "plays into the commercialization and promotion of cities based on their reputation as centers of creativity and even of a certain non-conformism" (2013). There is a certain irony in the fact that protest and resistance groups produce counter-logos and counter-brands in order to protest competitive bidding and mega-events. Mobilization and resistance has these allotted channels and limited instruments of contestation, since urban coalitions and rule regimes set out the conversation in which contestation can be carried out. They set out the terms and settings in which contestations and struggles can occur.

Similarly, the (de)activation of political activism of the creative precariat are limited by rule regimes, the municipality, legislation, etc. Fear of reprisals was a consideration for members of La Invisible of Málaga and Creador@s Invisibles of Córdoba. As a socio-cultural centre running in a squatted house, the center of La Invisible was in a difficult situation with the City Council of Málaga: its existence itself was seen as a critique of power, including of the cultural policy led by the municipality of Málaga and of the regional government of Andalusia.

Despite that, La Invisible was instrumentalized and incorporated in the bidding documents as a 'cultural asset' of the Málaga in inter-city rivalries. As a civil servant mentioned,

> *La Casa Invisible (The Invisible House) have a role of their own and it would absurd to think that they will get involved into something so institutional as the ECoC (la capitalidad) and that we would start fighting with them. We talked with them but we did*

not expect that they will collaborate... We knew that the existence of La Casa Invisible was giving the city an interesting, counter-cultural vibe; we put some photos in the bid with the center. They did not participate but they were neither collaborator nor enemies... at that time, La Casa Invisible was discussing their public structure arrangements with some officials, in order to stop being a squatted house and sign an agreement, to legalize the occupation of the house... because of that they could not be very critical with the ECoC at that moment (Málaga, City Council staff).

At the moment, La Invisible are still in protracted negotiations over the property they were occupying in the historic center of Málaga, and there were times after the failure in the competition when the possibility of eviction was looming and it was uncertain whether the municipality will allow it to continue its activities in the present location. In Córdoba, another okupa, Pabellón Sur was short lived (May – July 2009), even though it was operating in a more peripherical area of the city. Both La Invisible and Pabellon Sur are responses to precarization but these 'commoning' or 'radical' attempts to go beyond the imperatives of urban cultural policies and culture-led redevelopment are curtailed by legislation, private property law, and official policies. The possibilities of creating and maintaining a collaborative, irreverent creative space are limited by the municipality, legal frameworks, and the lack of affordable facilities in Málaga, Córdoba, Burgos, and beyond.

5.6. From the Creative Precariat to the Artistic Critique: The Instrumentalization of Critical Discourses for Inter-City Rivalries

Co-optation and appropriation loom large. While the critique of culture-led development made by the creative precariat cannot be classified or dismissed as the 'artistic' critique and as separate from the 'social' critique [80] (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Lazzarato 2011), it can be

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[80] For Boltanski and Chiapello, the artistic critique has "first emerged in small artistic and intellectual circles, and (…) criticizes oppression (market domination, factory discipline), the massification of society, standardization and pervasive commodification. It vindicates an ideal of liberation and/or of individual autonomy, singularity and authenticity" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2002, 16). They argue that the artistic critique is the demand for more freedom, autonomy and authenticity while the social critique is concerned with security, solidarity, equality, and that the two critiques are incompatible. Lazzarato criticizes Boltanski and Chiapello for arguing that the artistic critique is "today embodied by people at the top of the socio-cultural hierarchy, university graduates, often working in the creative sectors (marketing, advertising, media, fashion, internet, etc.) or in the financial markets or in consultancy firms; their awareness of what, at the other end of the social scale, the life of a temporary worker or the life of someone who has no interest whatsoever in mobility is like, is virtually nonexistent" (Lazzarato 2011). Lazzarato (2011) counters their interpretation by arguing that all the fields which Boltanski and Chiapello refer to have two

appropriated and translated into one. The social and artistic critique of the creative precariat or of other protester groups can be stripped of its social dimensions and become an instrument in inter-city rivalries. It can be 'defanged', rendered technical and institutionalized. Thus, socio-cultural and extra-economic spaces and resources such as critique, alternative knowledge production, or activist ideas can become instrumentalized and co-opted for inter-urban competition. Through its appropriation and translation, critique can become a source of innovation and renewal for an oversaturated field or for a crisis-prone system (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Bockman 2012; Fabiani 2014). The discourse of the creative precariat is translated into an artistic critique that can become incorporated into the imaginaries of the competitive city. This mobilization and translation of activist ideas into policy ideas is mediated through enactments of expertise and through the mundane active of experts, transfer agents or brokers. Thus, struggles, resistance and mobilizations are shaping and impacting the uneven assemblage of processes of inter-urban competition, and not just the territorialization of competition or entrepreneurial urbanism at the local scale.

Policy experts constantly scan "the policy landscape via professional publications and reports, the media, websites, blogs, professional contacts and word of mouth for ready-made, off the shelf policies and best practices" (McCann and Ward 2011, 175; McFarlane 2011; Rose 1991). Activists also translate and adopt the strategies and tactics of other activists and mobilizations (B. Miller and Nicholls 2013). They are also scanning the 'activist' landscape for solutions for their own place-specific or issue-specific problems: we could say that 'activism mobilities' and 'protest mobilities' exist as well. But the scanning for ideas and the interactions do not happen in parallel and/or undisturbed.

Critical policy studies needs to pay more attention to the relational connections and disconnections between 'activist, protest worlds' and 'policy worlds'. In both worlds, there can be transfer agents, brokers or imagineers who translate ideas from one field to another and transform it through its mobilization (D. Stone 2004; B. Miller and Nicholls 2013). There can be cross-pollination and cross-fertilization, although usually the relations and the mobilization

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extremes between established and precarious, plus endless variation between star-artists and the precarious cultural producers. Moreover, for Lazzaroto the social and artistic are not incompatible, as it can be seen in the case of the creative precariat.

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between activism and policy-making are power-laden and often unidirectional. Activists' ideas are often instrumentalized by policy actors for inter-city rivalries and for other processes, although it has to be institutionally appropriate. How do these translations and instrumentalization happen, and with what effects?

Our story takes us back to connections and disconnections between different cities: Córdoba, Málaga, Seville and Donostia. In 2008, the City Council of Córdoba and the ECoC Office sponsored the second edition of 'The Invention of Cities' conference for which they hired BNV Producciones, an organization that in 2008 became part of the affinity network financed by the International University of Andalusia, when the two mobilizations of Creador@s Invisibles Córdoba and La Casa Invisible Málaga scaled jumped and their critique was targeting both the local and regional scales. Together with BNV Producciones, the City Council of Córdoba also hired Santiago Eraso, the future – now former – director of the candidacy of Donostia-San Sebastián, the city that won the competition. Eraso is a cultural manager and the former director of Arteleku, a Center for Contemporary Art and Culture of the provincial government of Gipuzkoa (Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa), based in Donostia. He was the one referenced earlier from criticizing the 'cultural bubble', the speculative undertaking in the field of culture that has produced an excessive amount of expensive and underutilized infrastructures (Eraso 2008). And later in 2011, during the competition, he was also a consultant and mediator between the City Council of Málaga and La Invisible in their discussions about the status of the squatted house, part of the affinity network of La Invisible.

This conference turned out to be a 'strange' creature to be added to the promotional machine of an ECoC. The main 'star' of this conference was David Harvey (Harvey 1989; 2002), an author critical of culture-led urban development and mega-events, that was referenced main times in this dissertation. His picture survives until presently into the Memory of the activities of the Foundation Córdoba 2016 (see Figure 11. David Harvey and Santiago Eraso at 'The Invention of Cities' Conference in 2008). This was a conference composed of critical authors, ECoC experts, architects such as "David Harvey (City University of New York), Beatriz García (Director of Impacts 08 – The Liverpool Model), Zaida Muxí (architect), Fuensanta Nieto and Enrique Sobejano (architects), Salman Sayyid (University of Leeds), Franco Bianchini (Montfort University, Leicester), Sara González (University of Leeds), Armando Silva (University of

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California) and Manuel Delgado (University of Barcelona)" (Córdoba Oficina Municipal para la Capitalidad Cultural 2009, 20). This turned into a 'critical' conference and a temporary platform for Creadore@s Invisibles Córdoba and other actors to voice their criticisms:

> *The City Council did not appreciate critical thinking. The image which was projected was not positive. They organized a conference where a model was criticized and as a plus, more people were intervening to continue that critique. The city council saw that we were closer to those people than they were and that those people could relate to us, that they were listening to us (…) We worked with Santiago Eraso, we listened to him and we talked a lot with him. He was a quite approachable person. We interacted with him and BNV through UNIA… The model of Carlota (na: the director of Córdoba 2016) and of Santiago (na: the director of Donostia-San Sebastián 2016) were completely different (Córdoba, cultural producer, contestations).*

Santiago Eraso, the organizer of the 'Harvey conference' and cultural manager associated with UNIA and BNV Producciones, became the director of Donostia-San Sebastián 2016 later in 2009.

Figure 11. David Harvey and Santiago Eraso at 'The Invention of Cities' Conference in 2008
Source: Córdoba Oficina Municipal para la Capitalidad Cultural 2009

The critique of culture-led development made by the creative precariat, together with ideas from feminism, critical theory, and ecology, were translated into an artistic critique and instrumentalized in inter-city rivalries. The bid for ECoC of Donostia-San Sebastián was incorporating some of the ideas developed by La Invisible and Creadore@s during their participation within UNIA about participation, "strengthening the foundations of culture" and bottom up development ("potenciar la cultura de base"). The alternative message of these groups – just like feminism and critical theory – became translated into an institutionalized alternativism. While in Donostia, this institutionalized alternativism was considered institutionally appropriate and favorable by the City Council of Donostia and by its charismatic mayor at that time. A fresh upbeat project that has the least amount of politicians and 'ties' was seen as a route to success vis-à-vis other projects that started working up to seven years before the Donostia team (2009).

Alternative knowledge production, affinity networks and critical theory were rendered technical and used during the competition process: the project emphasized the need to work through the 'foundations' or 'base' of culture in order to improve coexistence and heals the wounds associated with ETA terrorism and violence. The application of the bidding team of Donostia-San Sebastián was seen as an 'innovative' idea among the usual projects about economic regeneration through culture. The 'artistic' critique they incorporated into the bid became a source of innovation and renewal in an oversaturated field. That was due to the translation and transformation of the discourse of the creative precariat – about participation and the 'cultural base' – into the Basque context and its incorporation into the policy worlds of ECoC.

For professionals and other policy actors working in competitive bidding, this instrumentalization of critical discourses for inter-city rivalries was seen as a 'Trojan Horse':

> *It has the potential to insert a discourse, a new concept, to generate ideas, to generate synergies, to work as a Trojan horse… Public service is also very important. If one does not work from the inside, it is very difficult to implement those ideas from outside* (Donostia-San Sebastián, City Council staff).

Left-wing, progressive actors were cynical about the value of an event like ECoC but sill became routinely involved in the bidding machine in order to 'contaminate' it with ideas and to steer it. Illouz argues that this sort of cynicism is "a particular structure of feeling which emerges … in late capitalist societies (….) cynicism is the tone one is likely to use when one sees through and

yet feels compelled to the same thing over and over again" (Illouz 2007, 89). As one public servant mentioned:

> *I do not trust nor believe into mega-events. There are no big differences between ECoC and other mega events. I think most of times the ECoC is only about transforming society through the brand, in a very economist and reductionist manner. The discourse of the politicians was going with the dominant discourse of culture as an engine of economic transformation, but the perspective of the civil servants (técnicos) was not like this. We were like Trojans, trying to recover the small and the humanity of culture (Zaragoza, City Council staff).*

From the perspective of these policy actors, the translation and mobilization of alternative knowledge into the policy worlds of ECoC functioned as a 'Trojan virus' or as a 'Trojan Horse', although it is unclear whom Trojan-ed whom: the politicians and corporate actors, or the professionals. It is also unclear who the Greeks were and who the Trojans were in this story, or whether Troy has burned or will burn in the end.

Even if professional policy actors and technical staff see a dichotomy between politicians and themselves, their claims to technical expertise are political. Expertise is techno-political, although it is frequently portrayed as a 'technical' or 'non-political' competence: it has profoundly ethical, material, and political implications. The production of dominant interpretations of the city – including the ones inspired by critical discourses – allow coalitions to compete with other cities, pursue political agendas, and implement concrete changes in the structure of the city to achieve that reality of competitive dreams, that reality that does not benefit everyone equally.

Power does work just through authority and domination but also through the seduction of policy actors, through the optimism of the will and hopes of change. The claim to expertise of these experts in being able to control, steer or influence the bidding machine and speculative entrepreneurial urbanism is a claim to power, although one part utopian, part naive. The artistic critique and the critique made by the creative precariat of the state-led precarization and culture-led development were switch points where "critical scrutiny of governmental programs is absorbed back into the realm of expertise and opening turns into a closure" (Li 2007, 11). Through enactments of expertise and the aspirations of professional actors, competitive bidding and competitive urbanism absorbs critique and uses it as a source of innovation and renewal. Resistance and struggles are largely subsumed and made subservient to the rapacious logic of

competitive bidding and its pressures to instrumentalize more and more extra-economic resources in the pursuit of competitiveness.

But critique can never be rendered fully technical. It can never be fully instrumentalized. The closures of critique into expert enactments are intimately linked with new openings. Even though persuasive for the extrospective imagineering of the city, the alignment of actors, concepts, and infrastructures around alternative ideas was itself a contested and contestable process. The translation of critical discourses into the artistic critique, and their instrumentalization can also be an object of contestation over the view of the city will prevail. It is a fragile and provisional process that can dissemble just as swiftly as it was put together, and that can be contested by activists and protestors.

Actors and groups were also protesting against ECoC in Donostia, with "The Culture of Capital" message. For these groups, ECOC is having more to do with the interests of capitalism than culture (see Figure 12. Images, Logos and Counter-Logos in Donostia-San Sebastián).

Figure 12. Images, Logos and Counter-Logos in Donostia-San Sebastián
Source: Picture 1-3 Donostia 2016; Picture 4 – taken by the author

The illegal graffiti displayed in the forth picture was taken in the central area of the city, made by the Donostia group of the Assembly against the High-Speed Train, also known as "AHT TAV EZ" (TAV NO). The Donostia group of the Assembly against the High-Speed Train is an *izquierda abertzale* group, Basque pro-independence left (or the Basque nationalist left). For them, the high speed train is the paradigmatic example of public squandering, overspending and embezzlement in Spain since it is not a necessity of the population but meant only for a privileged sector of the population and for tourists; moreover, its construction is the most profitable part of it. Their critique of ECoC was focusing on the investments in mega infrastructures for communications and transportation like the metro and the high-speed train,

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especially the Basque Y high-speed network being built between Bilbao, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Donostia-San Sebastián, between the so-called economic, administrative and cultural capitals of the Basque Country. For the Donostia group of the Assembly against the High-Speed Train (now known as 'Mugitu!/ Move'), ECoC was an excuse and justification for economic developmentalism, a means to legitimize and impose a vision of development which emphasizes mega-investments in infrastructure.

Previously to the final competition, they distributed stickers and posters and painted graffiti with 'Donostia Capital of Torture" and 'Culture of Capital'. In April 2010, a demonstration was organized with different committees and associations of neighbors and with groups defending the Basque language. The protest with the message of 'So many messages, so many (2016) lies' was meant to show what were the lies behind the marketing and bidding campaign of the City Hall: the lies that both languages (Basque and Castilian/Spanish) are important and used in the city, that the foundation is counting on and/or promoting citizens' participation, etc. (Ekintza Zuzena 2016). Together with Malversacion/Embezzlement 2016 in Burgos, they were the only mobilizations against ECoC that involved artists and cultural producers but also actors and groups beyond the cultural sphere, although it was short-lived as the group returned to previous patterns of mobilization without continuing to involve associations of neighbors and/or groups defending the Basque language. For example, in 2014, the Donostia group of the Assembly against the High-Speed Train (Mugitu!) replaced the logo of ECoC with their own on a hill close to Donostia-San Sebastián, published a report criticizing Donostia ECoC 2016, and organized a meeting about "Infrastructures, TAV and the Capital of Culture 2016: Cultural Transformation or the Commodification of the City" in which they invited Santiago Eraso, the ex-director of Donostia ECoC 2016, who argued that these investments were not part of the original application but they were introduced afterwards.

Later, in September 2014, 'Culture of Capital' becomes a movement separate from AHT TAV EZ: '2016 DESokupatu' which means 'Donostia is not for sale' and comes from 'Donostia ez dago salgai' in Basque. At the moment of its mobilization, the small group of '2016 desokupatu' group was seeking to question the nature and assumptions of the 2016 programme. In 2016, DESokupatu, the Donostia Assembly against the High-Speed Train, together with other izquierda abertzale groups mobilized again to make a call to contest and protest the ongoing

celebration of the ECoC 2016 programme in Donostia (Ekintza Zuzena 2016). Just like policy actors working for the competitive bidding for ECoC, these small resistance groups also established relations with other mobilizations that targeted former ECoCs or cultural cities, and used comparative learning practices, particularly with Lille and Barcelona, as a coping mechanism and as a tactic of resistance. Even though some recognized the progressive values contained in the application, they argued that does not change the increasing commodification of the city and the further instrumentalization of culture.

Even though small and 'ineffective', even though some are co-opted, appropriated, and translated, these struggles and mobilizations against ECoC undermine the ideology of harmony underpinning competitive bidding and inter-city rivalries. They point to the conflictual and contradictory nature of competitive urbanism and of mega events. Comparisons with other cities and with other urban mobilizations can also function as a tactic of resistance, as a transformative political moment when individuals and groups can articulate critical politics and scale jump in their critique: it can lead to the articulation of a transformative, trans-local movement of the 'precariat' of inter-city rivalries and competitive urbanism.

These struggles and mobilizations, whoever small and seemingly ineffective appear at the beginning, point to openings and cracks in processes of inter-urban competition, and just maybe to possibilities of social change.

Conclusion. Laboring to Compete: The Limits and Contradictions of Processes of Inter-Urban Competition

In this dissertation, I have presented a relational and processual analysis of inter-urban competition and competitive bidding.

Instead of looking at competitive bidding and inter-city rivalries as phenomena that are reflecting and reinforcing hegemonic ideologies and class interests, I argued that it is more productive to focus on how these processes are unfolding and on the specific labor practices that make them possible. Elite projects, just like state projects, need to be labored-over. Selling the city vis-à-vis other cities require specific labor practices, particularly enactments of expertise in order to produce competitive urban images and imaginaries, and to achieve the alignment of actors, institutions, frameworks, and devices around that particular 'imagineering' of the city.

While drawing on a multi-sited research of the Spanish competition for the European Capital of Culture 2016 title, I have discussed the techno-political work that inter-city rivalries require, and its contradictory effects. This research was committed to 'studying through' (S. Wright and Reinhold 2011; Shore, Wright, and Però 2011) and 'following the policy' (Peck and Theodore 2012; McCann and Ward 2011), as it allowed me to trace (dis)connections and (im)mobilities between places, scales, and networks of expertise underlying processes of competition.

In Chapter 1, I have claimed that competition between cities is neither 'natural' nor a 'structural effect' but a dynamic and unfolding ensemble of socio-spatial policy processes that (dis)connect and constitute places, scales, and networks of policy expertise. I have proposed a relational and processual approach to the study of competition based on the one hand, on the relationality of places and scales, and on the other hand, on the relationality of expertise and the interplay between competitive, cooperative and conflictual social relations underlying enactments of expertise.

While analyzing the shift in the selection system of the ECoC programme from 'political decision' to 'expert-led competition' in Chapter 2, I have argued that inter-urban competition is a historically-specific, state-led process that is made possible by the (re)production of policy infrastructures and institutional frameworks. Rule regimes – that are operating in-between

places, scales and networks – are deeply implicated in the constitution and extension of competition between cities. Beyond the ECoC action, the EU, nation-states, local governments and policy networks are institutionalizing more and more practices of competition between cities, regions, schools, universities, etc.; these governance structures are encouraging competition and competiveness, including through competitive bidding as a model of resource allocation in the public sector and beyond.

Yet, this institutionalization of inter-urban competition – and the extension of competition to entities that are not profit-oriented – should not be taken for granted or interpreted as a common good by default. Rather, the effects of applying a competitive logic to entities which are not profit-oriented should require "at least a skeptical interrogation, if not a more radical ideological critique" (Jessop 2013a, 97). Furthermore, the institutionalization and promotion of competition should not be seen as a secure accomplishment but as an ongoing project that needs constant policy work in order to secure its legitimacy. This is not a perfect and coherent top-down promotion of competition by an all powerful state, or by all-powerful bureaucracies and institutions. There are hit and misses, failures, partial mobilizations, and immobilities, but also contestation, resistance, and indifference to policy processes that attempt to foster competition between cities. Constant interventions and constant techno-political work are required for the extension of the reach of competition, for dealing with resistance, and for managing its contradictions.

Crucially, processes of inter-locality competition and the engineering of competitive urbanism should not be reduced to a hierarchic and repressive project that operates through authority and domination in a top-down manner from the state or elites to the 'masses'. Rather, competition between cities – just like the extension of competition to more and more entities that are not profit oriented – are an ensemble of relational processes, functioning not just through authority and domination but also through seduction and persuasion, through the interests and aspirations of policy actors. In the case of the ECoC, the promotion of competition is operating through the 'cruel optimism' and hope of urban development of policy actors (Berlant 2011), including of residents and volunteers. Notably, it functions through the aspirations of merit and deservingness of professionals, particularly through an appeal to professionalism. For experts, a fierce competition process between cities is imagined as synonym with a 'professional' approach to

policy. Professionals and experts tend to support the extension of competition – to the ECoC programme, to cities, and beyond – because they are workers for whom competition has worked out favorably as the fundamental tenet of their professional and social life, for example in the education system, on the job market, as conditions of entry in bureaucracies. These (knowledge) workers are the 'winners' of rivalries with other workers to acquire scarce jobs and make headway in the 'career ladder', thus having a one-sided image of competition as fundamentally good.

While bidding for mega-events or institutionalized processes of inter-city rivalries such as the ECoC may appear as 'unique' or 'special', I have not overemphasized their distinguishing characteristics. Rather, they are a window into contemporary trends such as state restructuring, entrepreneurial urbanism, and state-led competitive urbanism (Raco 2014). They are 'competition' on steroids. Especially for this project, an institutionalized process of competition such as the ECoC actually brings to sharper focus the enactments of expertise and the mundane practices that make possible also the more diffuse, *de facto* processes of competition between cities.

In this dissertation, I have argued that processes of inter-urban competition are made possible through three labor practices part of the enactments of expertise: first, the imagineering of the city through comparative practices with competitors, model and reference cities (discussed in Chapter 3); second, emotional labor and the management of emotions (discussed in Chapter 4); and third, the instrumentalization of socio-cultural and 'extra-economic' aspects in the pursuit of competitiveness (discussed in Chapter 5).

In Chapter 3, I have argued that comparative learning practices with model and reference cities function as essential tools for persuasion and seduction, while also contributing to the alignment of a variety of actors, institutions, and concepts behind the dominant imagineering of the city. While comparative learning practices can also be positive, empowering, and function as a tactic of resistance, co-operative social relations carried out for comparative learning within a competitive context (study visits, modeling, inter-referencing, etc.) are increasingly instrumentalized and commodified. Policy actors are approaching other cities as tools for the imagineering and showcasing of their own city or of the city they represent. This one-sided

instrumentalization also contributes to the reproduction of urban hierarchies. These comparative practices end up fostering tensions and frustrations among different policy actors.

In Chapter 4, I have discussed how emotional labor is performed – as part of the enactments of expertise – in order to reconcile the divisions, hierarchies and inequalities within the networked-like but hierarchical, divided, and unequal structure of coalitions. This labor was necessary not just for the proper functioning of the work environment but also for creating and maintaining an outward, extrospective projection of harmony, unity and consensus necessary for inter-city rivalries. Emotional labor was seen as 'inferior' work done by 'street-level' civil servants or policy actors in lower hierarchical positions – usually by women. Despite that, the products of emotion management – hope and optimism, but mainly civic pride – have been instrumentalized as a comparative advantage in extrospective processes of competition.

I have presented, in Chapter 5, how policy actors increasingly valorize and instrumentalize more and more social, cultural and 'extra-economic' aspects in the pursuit of a fleeting success. For the ECoC programme, local artists and cultural producers and their precarity are the main aspects being used in inter-city rivalries. This instrumentalization leads to conflictual social relations, urban mobilizations, and contestation from actors that are positioned in the flux of that valorization, and to the rise of a 'creative precariat' (Bain and McLean 2012; de Peuter 2014; Arvidsson, Malossi, and Naro 2010). Yet, these political mobilizations had ambivalent effects, as most of them were co-opted, appropriated, and further instrumentalized as currency in inter-city rivalries.

By the end of the dissertation, I have shown how competition itself – as an assemblage of socio-spatial policy processes operating in between cities, scales and wider policy networks – is an inherently unbalanced, divisive, and ungovernable process. Imaginative labor (through relational comparisons and the instrumentalization of the extra-economic) is prioritized and considered more 'worthy', while emotional labor is seen as 'inferior' work although it is still instrumentalized and appropriated. Processes of inter-urban competition are at the same time dependent on and reinforcing this asymmetry between imaginative labor and emotional labor.

A framework of inter-urban competition and the pursuit of competitiveness are premised on the constant privileging of the extrospective over the introspective, and of imaginative over

emotional labor. This asymmetry leads to more conflict, competition, and contradictions in and between places, scales, and networks of expertise. Bidding wars, the squandering of public resources of local governments (in order to get more public resources from the national and regional governments), inefficient and deeply contested results, and an increase in conflict and competition among policy actors – are characteristic of processes of competition between cities. Moreover, inter-city rivalries are messy, antagonistic and cruel for the policy actors that are laboring for them. Competition between cities – and particularly its extension and institutionalization to more and more entities – tends to invite disaster, leading to more problems and more failures, but which invite more 'technical' solutions, more attempts to participate in other competitions, and so on. This is a self-reinforcing logic, needing more interventions and techno-political work to solve the contradictions of competition processes and secure their legitimacy. Yet, I have also shown the openings, and cracks in processes of competitive bidding On the one hand, competitive urbanism and the 'self'-assertion of the city vis-à-vis others create tension in competitive subjectivities as they require the sacrifice and selflessness of others along the way in order to secure urban competitiveness. On the other hand, actors positioned within the flux of this instrumentalization and valorization – particularly precarious artists and cultural producers – can practice oppositional politics that rupture the supposed harmony and unity underlying inter-city rivalries and the dominant imagineering of the city.

There are also productive openings and cracks in this particular dissertation.

First, more work is needed for dealing with the 'engineering' side of imagineering the competitive city and its entanglements with capital. Of special note is the interplay between tourism, financialization, real-estate and construction, particularly the construction of cultural centers and iconic architecture in Spain and beyond by Spanish infrastructure and construction companies such as ACS and FCC (as hinted in Chapter 3). While these companies make most of their profit in real-estate business and infrastructure construction (highways, train tracks, etc.), museums, theaters, and cultural centers seem to function as branding initiatives: prizes of architectural excellence, famous Spanish and international (star)architects (Tarazona Vento 2015; Sklair 2006; Sklair 2013), public recognition, construction of cultural and city icons, etc. For transportation and construction companies, the significance of cultural centers lies well beyond that of a simple revenue source to the (re)production of images of hyper-competitive and

innovative companies potentially associated with urban cultural icons, and to creation of new markets in South America and beyond.

Second, the ECoC programme should be more broadly positioned within the political and economic project of the EU regarding the promotion and engineering of competition and competitiveness to entities that are not profit oriented. A comparison with the regional and urban policy of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy – but also with other EU institutions beyond the Commission – would be an interesting continuation.

Most importantly, more work is needed for incorporating residents and workers with non-professional jobs in a relational, processual analysis to inter-urban competition, attentive both to its engineering and everyday production and also to its consumption (Boyle 1999; Bunnell 2015; del Cerro Santamaría 2013). Moreover, as Bunnell argues, it makes one wonder how are "the aspirations, actions and (often extremely mundane and incremental) transformative effects of city-dwellers" shaped by institutionalized and elusive processes of inter-urban competition (2015, 1996). Processes of inter-urban competition require other labor practices beyond enactments of expertise, such as the constant labor of the community, tourist service providers, construction workers, hospitality workers, and so on, that are required for the everyday performance of the city-brand. Their everyday mundane labor is needed both for the engineering and consumption of the competitive city. When comparing tourism with other industries, a defining feature of it is the constant, non-remunerated, unacknowledged labor required from all citizens. 'The city' needs to shows acceptance and acquiescence, even politeness and enthusiasm, in order for tourist activities, and direct and diffuse inter-urban competition to go smoothly.

It is my hope that a relational, processual analysis to inter-urban competition focused on the previous mentioned aspects or on residents and workers with non-professional jobs might lead to even more productive openings for future work.

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