

Memory protocol of the Athens meeting 2015- Hatto Fischer

30 Years since the Inauguration of ECoCs, 22 and 23 June 2015

The meeting was held at

„Theocharakis Foundation“,

Vassilis Sofias 9 & Merlin 1, Athens

Monday, June 22nd 2015

10.30 to 11.00

Greetings

Dimitris Alexandrakis, Ambassador, Director of Educational and Cultural Affairs Department & Cultural Affairs Department, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Christoforos Argyropoulos, President of the „Melina Mercouri Foundation“

Marianna Vardinogianni, President of the „Marianna B. Vardinoyannis Foundation“

Fotis Papathanassiou, Director of the „Theocharakis Foundation“

First Session: 11.00 to 13.30

11.00 Sypros Mercouris, Director of the Cultural Capital of Europe „Athens 1985“

11.15 Film screening „Athens Cultural Capital of Europe 1985“

11.40 Coffee Break

12.00 Dusan Sidjanski, Honorary Professor at Geneva University, Honorary Director of the European Cultural Centre, special advisor to the President of the European Commission

12.15 Volker Hassemer, President of „A Soul for Europe“

12.30 Guy Dockendorf, Director of the Ministry of Culture of Luxembourg, Network of the Cultural Capitals

13.00 Lunch Break

Second Session 14.30 to 15.45

14.30 Ingo Weber, Cultural Capital of Europe „Berlin 1988“

14.45 Bob Palmer, Cultural Capital of Europe „Glasgow 1990“ and „Brussels 2000“

15.00 Yvonne Feldman, Cultural Capital of Europe „Lisbon 1994“

15.15 Simone Beck, Cultural Capital of Europe, „1995 Luxembourg“

15.30 Max Aufischer, Graz Cultural Month

Tuesday, June 23rd 2015

10.00 Written message from Rudolfo Maslias

10.20 Written greetings from the European Capital of Culture „Mons 2015“

10.40 Francesco Mortelli, Association „Les Rencontres“

11.30 to 13.30 Dialogue between directors /representatives of the Greek candidate cities and former Cultural Capitals of Europe directors / coordinators

Memory protocol by Hatto Fischer

Monday, June 22nd 2015

10.30 to 11.00

Greetings

Dimitris Alexandrakis, Ambassador, Director of Educational and Cultural Affairs Department & Cultural Affairs Department, Minister of Foreign Affairs honoured the legacy of Melina Mercouri and reminded all how this decision came about by gathering at an informal meeting the Ministers in charge of Culture in the respective European member states.

Christoforos Argyropoulos, President of the „Melina Mercouri Foundation“ nearly stumbled onto stage but caught himself in time. It was rather a steep climb up onto the stage and this without some stairs. For elderly people quite precarious but all managed, including the ninety year old Spyros Mercouris. Christoforos Argyropoulos remembered Melina Mercouri as someone who had a vision and who dedicated her entire life to realizing some definite actions. One of them was her engagement to bring down the Junta. That changed her from being a mere actress to becoming a politician.

Marianna Vardinogianni, President of the „Marianna B. Vardinoyannis Foundation“, knew Melina Mercouri personally and described what inspiring personality she was.



Later spoke as well **Christos Tentomas**, President of the Culture Centre of the City of Athens, and where had been kept the Documentation Centre and Archive of European Capitals of Culture.

Fotis Papathanassiou, Director of the „Theocharakis Foundation“ did the introductions and guided all through the two day conference. He paid first of all tribute to **Spyros Mercouris** and thanked him since this gathering of outstanding personalities with international reputation came about thanks to him personally. They are all here in Athens to observe thirty years of European Capitals of Culture.

First Session: 11.00 to 13.30



Spyros Mercouris, Director of the Cultural Capital of Europe [Athens 1985](#)

By all accounts of Spyros Mercouris, his sister Melina Mercouri must have been an incredible personality. She was a figure people loved because she was honest and a fighter at the same time. Unfortunately her last fight was not victorious as it was against cancer.

One anecdote Spyros loves to tell is after Athens had received the designation of being the first European Capital of Culture, they had but six months to prepare. According to his account, Melina went first of all to West Germany to get support for the event in Athens. There she met with Genscher and asked for his support. She wanted the opera, theatre companies like the Schaubühne with Peter Stein and naturally many other things, including dance companies, symphony orchestras etc.. After she had given her long list, Genscher pondered out loud how much that would cost, and then said 'yes'. Melina went immediately over to him and without saying a word gave him a kiss. Genscher turned around and said to the assembled press and other persons present in the room, "gentlemen you have just now witnessed the most expensive kiss!"

Spyros Mercouris went on to tell the story about how preparations went ahead and how especially the theatre of the rocks came about. When Peter Brook arrived in Athens to inspect the stages in various theatres, he was not satisfied with anyone of them. Thus Spyros took him to a quarry and showed him the possibility of constructing there instead a stage and seats for the audience. Peter Brook was immediately for it but stipulated that the seats for the audience should not exceed 999 for then they could no longer concentrate on the play.

Spyros Mercouris went on to tell what happened when two weeks later Peter Stein arrived in Athens. He too was dissatisfied with the stages he saw and also wanted the same kind of theatre being prepared for Peter Brook. Only now Peter Stein wanted more than 2000 seats. It was for his Orestia a theatrical piece lasting more than six hours.

He will show now a film which is but a tiny cut out of what took place in Athens '85. It was a gathering of the best theatre companies not only from Germany, France, UK but elsewhere; likewise dancers, musicians and many other artists came and they all interacted with the people.



Film screening „Athens Cultural Capital of Europe 1985“ showed that at the opening up on the Acropolis Mitterand came up the stairs together with Papadopoulos, and there were Andreas Papandreou together with Melina Mercouri. Interestingly enough she continued her work and wanted to gather Ministers of Culture the very next day up in Olympia, but only two ministers showed up. Nevertheless she continued her engagement for culture and unfolded her idea that Europe is not only an economic or political union, but can be brought together through its diversity of cultures.

The film screening showed extraordinary theatrical, musical and dance performances. There was a well street theatre, jazz, a rock festival and extraordinary exhibitions with one about Greece and the Sea. In the end the film showed what special Ancient ships had been reconstructed for the occasion with one of them being sailed all the way to Cyprus while another huge war ship was rowed.



After the coffee break



Dusan Sidjanski, Honorary Professor at Geneva University, Honorary Director of the European

Cultural Centre, special advisor to the President of the European Commission.

He started off by apologizing not to be speaking in Greek, but also French is not here allowed, so he will speak in English.

As a political scientist who has also advised Barrasso, he knows what fateful decisions are made when culture is excluded and only geopolitical considerations play a role. He asked Barrasso before making the decision to exclude Russia from the wider concept of European Neighborhood Policy, if not Dostoevsky and others like him do not belong to our common European culture in the same way as Spyros Mercouris would cite Shakespeare, Dante, Victor Hugo and others as being European figures of all? Barrasso did not listen and decided otherwise. Today we have the conflict in Ukraine and an unstable Eastern Europe due to this exclusion policy of Russia. That is not Europe but a strand of cold thinking which divides and seeks to exert influence rather than base relationships on cultural cooperation.

About changes in characters in politics, he wishes to draw a parallel between Napoleon and the finance minister of Germany. When Napoleon started out, he was naturally very efficient in a military sense, but otherwise he gave himself as if a modest man. Only once he became Emperor, he showed his true character. He became an overpowering figure. Naturally there were certain achievements which cannot be overlooked such as the Code de Napoleon. He set up the first administrative order in Europe. Unfortunately he turned into more and more someone who wished to impose his will and thereby continued what the French Revolution had started, namely the creation of the nation state. Napoleon persecuted especially one figure who was truly European. Once she was no longer allowed to live in Paris, she went everywhere, London, Rome etc. and wrote her observations. She would gather around her thinkers when in Geneva as she was very influential. It is most telling that someone like her was sidelined while Napoleon dominated as a new imperialist who did not bring liberty but suppression.

As for the return of the Parthenon marbles, that is not a Greek but a European matter. Just as much the reunification of the marbles on the frieze of the Parthenon requires a diplomatic effort, likewise Europe needs such an unification. He does not believe in going the legal way as advocated by some famous international lawyer, that is by barrister Amal Clooney. For once a court takes a decision and not in favour of Greece since we know the big countries like the UK shall always win the case, then the marbles will be lost forever. (Note: the Minister of Culture **Nikos Xydakis** turned down the proposal by A. Clooney on the very same grounds, namely that "one cannot go to court over whatever issue. Besides, in international courts the outcome is uncertain". See report by BBC <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-32735410>)

Besides there is a copy right issue. Lord Elgin did not make these sculptures and yet if you go to the UK, they are constantly referred to as the Elgin marbles. Also the document saying that he had the permission from the Ottoman authority to take with him the marbles is not proven. The only document available from that time is interestingly enough written in Italian as it was issued by the Italian embassy in London. This document does not reveal any evidence of Lord Elgin having been granted the permission to take with him the marbles.



Volker Hassemer, President of „A Soul for Europe“ and who was Senator of Culture when Berlin was European Capital of Culture in 1988.

In his presentation he explained that Berlin followed cities such as Athens or Florence, while he represented but West Berlin. At first, he wondered what can be done, but then the simple idea came to show what changes are possible. Not the past, but the future was important. To do that, some power is needed. He says that not only as politician but in view as to what has been happening since Melina Mercouri launched this idea of European Capitals of Culture. A lot has gone wrong since and he wonders what Melina would say today as to what ECoCs have turned out to be.

If something is important, then the focus on something small, just a detail is crucial to notice and to support for it can gain over time in substance. This was the case of the European Film Festival launched in 1988. Ever since it happens every year. It reminds no longer of Berlin having been ECoC in 1988, but definitely it is its child.

Although it took place in 1988, and without foresight as to what was to come the next year, a driving thought was to link Eastern and Western Europe. Naturally those in East Berlin participated differently in the events but nevertheless they were thought of.



Guy Dockendorf, Director of the Ministry of Culture of Luxembourg, Network of the Cultural Capitals underlined what was really great in the case of Luxembourg 2007. They had many proposals, too many, but fortunately they had the curator Grazia who managed to make out of four or six proposals one big project. This allowed the concept of being together to gain in substance.

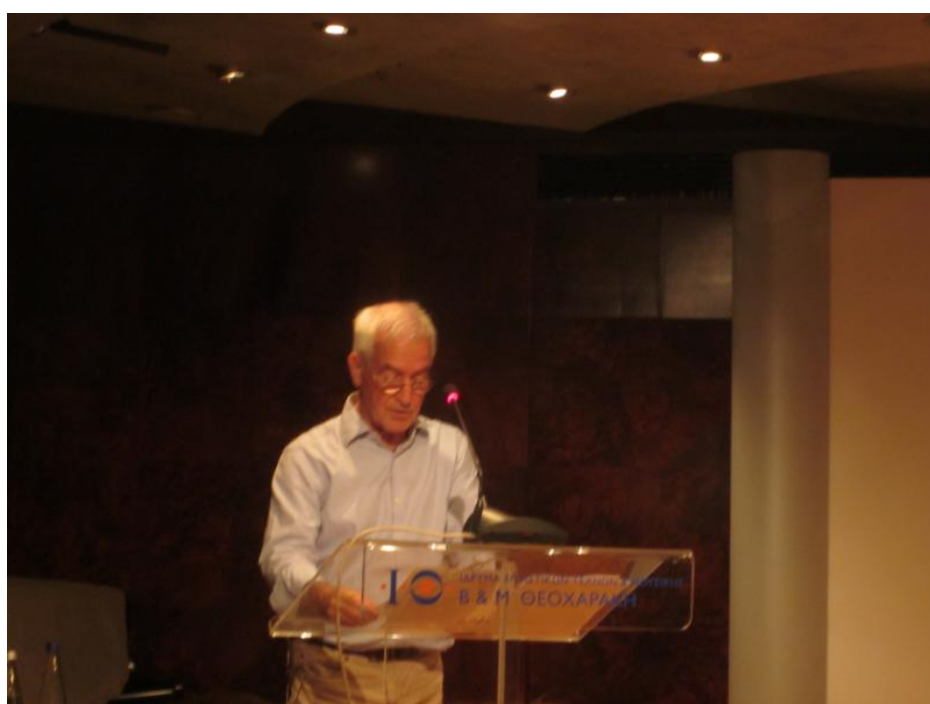
He emphasized that Luxembourg benefited greatly from having Nicosia as cultural month at the same time. It made everyone aware that there is a part of Europe where exists still a dividing line.

See also [Presentation by Guy Dockendorf](#)

13.00 Lunch Break



Second Session 14.30 to 15.45



Ingo Weber, Cultural Capital of Europe „[Berlin 1988](#)“. Like all previous speakers, Ingo Weber than first of all Spyros Mercouris for making possible this gathering in Athens. He underlined again like all the others how great a feeling it is to be once again in this city with the Acropolis. From here started the idea of the European Capitals of Culture, and which has become one of the most successful projects of the European Union. But not only thanks are due to Spyros for this initiative, but for keeping up a spirit so badly missing in these times. As Honorary President of the ECCM network he continued the ideas of Melina. He recalls how they gathered in 2005 to discuss the future as being network of networks since the idea of European Capital of Culture was spreading to other parts of the world. They gathered finally at **Pnyka** the birthplace of democracy on Oct. 16th 2005 to express the ideas about the future of Europe (see [ECCM Network](#)) And even if the ECCM network failed to continue to exist, the idea behind it was the right one, namely to foster exchanges of good practice between former, current and future ECoCs.

It is remarkable how complex such an idea can become once allowed to unfold, and definitely there are differences between Athens '85 and the other EcoCs which followed, but we in Berlin '88 tried to make a difference by showing what brings about change.

In his report “Berlin in retrospect” (2005), he said it already that for “West Germany (to) nominate the Cultural Capital this was a chance to show Berlin as belonging to a large extent to the Federal Republic of Germany and hereby also to the European Economic Union (now EU).” It was a political act but created opportunities to start off something like workshops: Werkstätte e.g. Hebbel theatre (see [Berlin in retrospect - Ingo Weber](#))

At times, certain things are not done with a deliberate intention or purpose, but to let go of the past was already a sign of readiness for the new, for changes to come. It is his hope that this continuity change through culture shall remain an outstanding feature of Europe, and therefore, all the thanks Sypros and his sister Melina for having initiated such an idea.

Bob Palmer has been involved in „[Glasgow 1990](#) “ and „[Brussels 2000](#)“ recounted his 13 lives with Ingo Weber claiming afterwards that he skipped one life and therefore got all of them wrong. To this Bob replied quietly he knows best his lives.

His first life started off with being asked to be artistic director for Glasgow in 1987. His second life started when they asked him to the same for Brussels 2000.

In the case of Glasgow he saw it was impossible to do the same as had been done in Athens and the other previous EcoCs, so he went to Melina Mercouri in 1987 and asked her for advice. After some moments of hesitation, he got a very strange answer from her and which preoccupied him still once he had returned to Glasgow. For she had said simply that Glasgow should become the Athens of the North, but don't forget you are on your own!

His third life started when the European Commission asked him to write a study about the cities which had been European Capitals of Culture so far. That study was published by the European Commission in 2004 and is still available on the official website.

His fourth life started when he was asked to preside over culture for the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. Then he learned Europe were not only the member states, but extended much further. After these seven years of intensive work, he thought his time with European Capitals of Culture was over, but more and more cities asked for his advice.

Guy Dockendorf mentioned his involvement in Luxembourg 2007. That was another life.

Other cities followed and in his other lives he advised such cities as Plovdiv in Bulgaria which really did something amazing, namely to overcome a fragmented city.

He also advised Matera 2019 and was most amazed when the Minister of Culture announced in Rome that Matera had received out of 21 one Italian cities competing for the title the designation of the title.

Now that he has arrived at his 13th life, he looks back upon his life and sees that it includes as well being for a spell director of the jury which selects ECoC cities. Now he no longer wishes to be involved so much in a particular sense but rather advise on a general level.



Yvonne Feldman, Cultural Capital of Europe „[Lisbon 1994](#)“ gave a very short statement as to what happened in Lisbon once named ECoC 1994. The city needed to escape the ghosts of the past and begin to transform public spaces in which the arts play another role. One example would be the art tube stations of the metro both during the transition during construction, and thereafter. Another focus was on the daily dynamics of a city perceived in terms of city centre and outskirts. There was an attempt to restore some nostalgia by re-creating the romantic past. At the same time, sculptures moved into public space again while public buildings were revamped by being painted in fresh colours. Naturally the city was at a pivot point of Portugal which had entered the European Union for lack of a better term a rather strange phenomenon with no one really sure what it shall entail for the future of the country. Like Greece, Portugal has gone in 2015 through quite hard times with state deficit requiring the application of austerity measures which produce more unemployed than art work allowing a glimpse of the future.

See as well [Presentation by Yvonne Felman Cunha Rego](#)



Simone Beck, Cultural Capital of Europe, „1995 Luxembourg“ underlined what Guy Dockendorf had said already about being in between Belgium, France and Germany. While in [Luxembourg 1995](#) stress was put more on improving cultural infrastructures, when it was the turn again, [Luxembourg 2007](#) focused more on cooperation with the adjacent countries. Guy Dockendorf had already mentioned this advantage of being located at the heart of Europe and in having some of the European institutions located in Luxembourg, but now there was a willingness to embrace a larger realm. It meant overcoming for joint projects many administrative hurdles but it worked out in the end.

Max Aufischer, Graz Cultural Month, considers that this arrangement of being a capital for a month was really good as it allowed the city to prepare for the next bigger step. He thought this was a good thing for Graz.

Some interesting things are happening in a city like Graz. There are many newcomers from Serbia, Bosnia, and many other Balkan countries. They all come to Graz and adopt with time what is called strolling through Graz: a kind of leisurely walking but not wasting time necessarily, just enjoying in being there, in that city at that time. This has set off quite an interesting mixture of patterns of behaviour.

He is also thankful to Spyros Mercouris for initiating the ECCM network through which he made a lot of good friends and thanks to them he learned a lot.

He has been asked after the cultural month was over to help the city of Graz to prepare once more the bid to become a European Capital of Culture. This bid was successful as the city became [Graz 2003](#) which brought many good changes and attracted a lot of people. There was only one problem. Any city has a life before, during and after, but if things are not budgeted for the after, then tourists come to the city to see something, but nothing has been prepared for them to see. This is clearly a deficit and he recommends strongly that other cities budget as well for the time afterwards because the one year has made many more curious and who wish to come if they could not come during that one decisive year.



Tuesday, June 23rd 2015

Fotis Papathanassiou, Director of the „Theocharakis Foundation“ read out a message from Rudolf Maslias, former coordinator of the ECCM network and advisor to Kaklamanis, former mayor of Athens. During that time (2007-2009), Rudolfo Maslias helped to set up the Documentation Centre ECoCs. After Kamenis won the municipal election in 2009, the Documentation Centre closed.

Rudolfo Maslias suggested in his address to the conference that the real person to be thanked for 1 Europe has this most successful project of European Capital of Culture should not be Melina Mercouri, but Spyros Mercouris because he was the one who had made this suggestion to her sister.

Written greetings from the European Capital of Culture „[Mons 2015](#)“ by the mayor underlined what great personality has been Melina Mercouri, and therefore the city has named one major street after her. The street leads directly to the Congress Centre where many mayor events during this year with Mons is European Capital of Culture shall take place.



Francesco Mortelli, Association „Les Rencontres“ explained the purpose of the network, namely to gather local and regional authorities with the aim to promote culture and to refine cultural policy. It is the only network in Europe with such a set purpose. It has just held its meeting in Mons where also candidate cities and former, current and future ECoC cities were present. Les Rencontres looks forward to collaborate with the Greek candidate cities. He would like to thank Spyros Mercouris for having invited him to speak at this important conference and Hatto Fischer for having put him in contact with Spyros Mercouris.

Discussion with Greek candidate cities for the ECOC 2021 title moderated by Simone Beck



It was followed by mainly points mentioned by those who sat on the stage, all of whom were directors /representatives of the Greek candidate cities and former Cultural Capitals of Europe directors / coordinators, but mainly Hassemer, Palmer, Dockendorf and Spyros Mercouris spoke. After receiving some initial questions, Guy Dockendorf proposed to gather first ten questions, answer them, and then have a second round of reflections. This was done accordingly.

Volker Hassemer started by explaining in order to be able to do things, one thing is needed: power. Without going into details as to how he would define power, and certainly not in the way Michel Foucault did, but as a former Senator of Culture in a Conservative government in Berlin he is the full politician on the panel discussing with Greek Candidate cities what is needed.

Guy Dockendorf talked about the need to look at the guidelines and especially at the new selection process. They are all very sensible but one should read them carefully. There are six award criteria as follows:

1. Contribution to the long term strategy which requires showing how the development plan for that city shall be enhanced and complemented by the cultural plan for that specific year and beyond;
2. the European dimension which includes promoting cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens;
3. the artistic programme for one year which is expected to be of high quality in terms of both cultural and artistic content
4. capacity to deliver
5. outreach as this entails the support of the local population and where Bob Palmer has made already a distinction between participation and full engagement

6. management or the organisational capacity so that it can deliver the program as set out in the bid

Bob Palmer became very explicit towards the Greek Candidate Cities. Perhaps due to his position bordering somewhat on being a Guru of European Capitals of Culture, he could tell the Greek candidate cities some unpleasant truths. He listed a few mistakes which should not be made.

Mistake one is to think only about oneself and to believe the Jury would be interested to know how many museums, festival halls and cultural heritage the city has, or how beautiful the city is. Wrong, wrong, wrong! Above all it is a European project and that means a city will have to show what contributions it can make to Europe.

It is also not a political but a cultural project.

It should not be owed by the mayor or the Municipal Council, but by all who live in that city. The mayor and the Municipal Council are important but they should not be at the front but get behind the project and give their support.

They should also not aim for a big budget. Especially in these times, budgets will have to be modest and should not be compared to other ECoCs which had at times highly exaggerated budgets, Liverpool '08 with one hundred million perhaps the most outstanding case.

Consequently candidate cities should not become engaged in expensive infrastructural projects which often are not completed on time, but show how existing infrastructures can be used more wisely.

Care should be taken to really claim only what can be done. The Jury will look very carefully at the managerial and financial capacity.

Naturally money can be obtained by applying for European funds in the various programmes of Regio, Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, etc. but it should not be underestimated that they take time. For most of them require partnerships with other countries, that is to have some six to eight other partners from other EU member states. To create the necessary network and partnership, that takes time. Naturally once selected as ECoC some time is available to prepare the ground for such applications.

Ongoing projects already being financed, and especially if infrastructural ones, cannot be included in the bid nor the financing thereof be used as part of the budget presented to demonstrate the financial capacity.

One thing he wishes to say about participation. He would call it not participation but 'engagement'. There is a need to engage people. He has one example in mind. In [Leeuwarden 2018](#) in Holland no one took notice of this small city but which did win finally over larger much better known cities like Eindhoven (see [Candidate Cities in Holland for 2018](#)). One reason for Leeuwarden winning the designation was certainly that the city understood how to engage people, and especially a unique group, namely farmers. Certainly they have no time to attend lengthy meetings. They are daily preoccupied with chores but by going directly to them, and in listening to them, they became not only interested but started to make some interesting proposals of their own. They started to imagine connections between their work and Leeuwarden as European Capital of Culture. So they departed from the premise that food does matter especially nowadays when people heed the need for biological food and other ways of attaining a healthy diet. This has many ramifications for how life can be envisioned as it pertains as well to our understanding of culture linked to agriculture.



Question by a representative from Larissa: if the competition between cities is a good or a bad thing?

Bob Palmer answered with a key concept of collaborative competition since it is not an outright competition per say. Especially in culture there are more common elements than what would separate people. Hence it is important to work out these common elements and ensure that all cities end up in a win-win situation. To this point, Bob Palmer added the information what happened in both Italy and Croatia where all candidate cities got together. In Italy there were 22. They went to the Ministry of Culture, and literally by lobbying, they achieved something. The Italian Minister of Culture set up two budget lines, one for the city which received the designation of the title, in this case Matera 2019, and another budget line for the candidate cities, so that they can continue with some of the projects they have already started and were envisioning to realize if they had received the title. „You have to lobby hard,“ advised Bob Palmer the Greek candidate cities.

Guy Dockendorf added when you lobby politicians, one thing should not be forgotten: they have to come to understand that is their own idea which they wish to promote.

Aliki Mosche Gauget from Rhodes wishes to propose the creation of a network linking all Greek candidate cities. Her proposal is three fold:

- A) In case of Rhodes winning the title: to invite all candidate cities to come to Rhodes and expose uniqueness of their place during 2021
- B) All 15 mayors to take the initiative to ask for a meeting with the Minister of Culture, in order to see the financial and legal frame of the ECoC
- C) To create a network of all candidate cities so that we can be more effective dealing with current

problems but also after the designation of one city to keep exchanging know how and to have a further cooperation with joint events etc. and also to capitalize out expertise gained through the preparation process and to share it with the rest of Greek cities as there is no such thing as strategic cultural policy and long term planning in Greece.

Maria Strazani from Ioannina seconded her on that and stated likewise they have Ioannina the same idea and wish.

[Anastasia Papis](#) said in reference to what Bob Palmer had stressed before, namely that any ECoC bid should not be engulfed in over expensive infrastructural projects, but focus really on the artistic and cultural programme, that ECoC cities of the past have undertaken much in that direction to revitalize public spaces and as Glasgow 1990 to put even to use a former church for cultural purposes. She would prefer as architect that there is included consideration of the spatial identity of a city.

Ingo Weber had come late to the discussion since he had to spend some time at the police since his mobile phone had been stolen. He picked up on the discussion about whether or not Greek candidate cities shall be able to create a viable network. He reminded in reference to what Simone Beck had said about the ones gathered at this event of 30 year celebration as being the old boys and girls, that they had created indeed the ECCM network which attempted to pass on good practices from former to current and future European Capitals of Culture, but was looked upon more and more as a club of old boys and girls. This led to a counter network which includes only the ECoCs of the last two years and the current and future ones. One reason is that the new cities either implementing their artistic programme during that designated year or else the future ones busy preparing stand under quite another pressure than those who have the year behind them and therefore are more interested in preserving their legacy or carrying on whatever may have been planted during that year.

Hatto Fischer did not comment directly on the network issue although he has written an account about why the ECCM network folded and was replaced by an informal network, for it marks a transition from innovative personalities to cultural managers. The latter came to dominate the discussions within the realm of ECoC related expertise as it is recognized by the European Commission and therefore signals as well a shift away from any substantial cultural policy to more or less economy driven concepts of culture e.g. cultural or creative industries. Rather he wished to add to the discussion something else.

The discussion so far reveals an organisational mess in which culture has been entangled in since those acting on behalf of culture do so almost without any dialogue with artists and cultural workers. His mother said that the world needs artists, but artists people who can listen. Bob Palmer has stressed this fact when he refers to the need for audience creation. Repeatedly cities want to be European Capitals of Culture but are easily over demanded in reality. When Ruhr 2010 smuggled in its concept the 53 cities of the Ruhr region instead of being only Essen, these cities were not prepared when they were for one week the central stage on a rotational basis. For there would arrive six famous writers but the local people did not know what to do with them. That takes preparation if they are to listen and to appreciate what these writers can offer. It is an art to bring together people and to create space without occupying it oneself. After all there is one aspect of sustainability so easily forgotten and left out systematically due to all the needs for public relation exercises in order to convince everyone and especially the politicians the event has been a success. For it drives out an notion of criticism although Michael D. Higgins had said culture is a search for truth. Criticism is what the arts need, it is what sustains artists in their work. This criticism relates to what Andre Breton has called 'the morality of creativity' for anyone straying away will experience a loss in creativity. It matters on how criticism is articulated but definitely for artists it is already an orientation when someone standing in front of their paintings simply say that "they do not like it." That is much better than having no feedback whatsoever.

Artists and culture generally speaking should give people tools to understand the situation they are

and show a way of how to get out of the traps which make them feel defeated and without any courage to stand up to themselves. It is not showing merely what has been achieved in the past and which is celebrated over and over again whether now in symphony concerts or in theatrical plays.

Eric Antonis as someone no longer around since he died at the end of last year was artistic director of Antwerp '93 and said as a key concept for the city that 'culture is doubt'. That opens up possibilities to create something new. As a result he commissioned twenty new opera pieces, nineteen of which were performed for the first time during that year when Antwerp was European Capital of Culture.

For the Greek candidate cities it is important to respond to the crisis the country finds itself in. For there is no longer a debt but a death trap, the increase in suicides and the increasing tension with migrants but two of many social issues close to over demanding and over burdening the authorities much as individuals who no longer find a way to live what Ritsos had defined as freedom: the freedom to live your own craziness without thereby harming the other.

Since he has lived in Greece since 1988, but always felt in the final end to be cut out when it comes to working together or not, everything should be done to attain a real openness in culture for new ideas and people. Everyone has a Right of access to community, but the real test of a society is if its truth can be upheld by independent sources of knowledge and that a minimum of ethics ensures that it does not remain the land of continuity of discontinuity. Since culture is work of memory, over time consistency becomes crucial when working through contradictions. It should also mean not to chase fake models of success for culture deals foremostly with real failures, including the failure to reach the other and to understand the other's needs and fears. What is missing in these ongoing searches for a deal so that Greece can return to a society which can look forward since there is future are cultural negotiations.

One key failure of Europe in that sense is to take into account cultural differences despite all claims being unified in its diversity. More can be said about the crisis but if there is no change in morality and payments based on honesty when it comes to dealing with money and payments of real work being done as well in the cultural sector, then Greece will always depend upon a past perpetuated as if it already the continuity. Here he disagrees with Melina Mercouri who would say "now as then" as if the continuity does exist. It does not.

What does make a difference is the way memory works and how this work is being understood in terms of the narrative or stories being told as to how in the past they linked past, present and future. Extracted from that are more often the visions but the regularities of life are not really a pattern since the flow of life creates its own forms. That is of importance. Others would speak of being embedded as there was talk about being 'rooted in the soil of the people' or in being 'like a fish in the water'. These metaphorical linkages between knowledge and what people know by themselves but rarely reveal to the upper echelons of power made it necessary for the emperor in China to descend into daily life by disguising himself so that he could learn what the people really thought about his rulership in terms of what they go through and experience.

Most telling about embeddings is what Melanie Levick in Manchester writes about memory work:

Manchester 13.01.2014

Dear Hatto,

"thank you for your very interesting review of the "theatres of memory" book. I have to come clean and admit that I also have a copy of the book, because I thought it may be relevant and interesting for my planned project, but I haven't even started reading it. So I am benefiting from a critical review, which shall keep in mind when reading it myself."

I think I understand what you mean, when you say something is not a memory piece but the entry point into the meaning. I have always been interested in the way something can be or become such an entry point, and meaning making has always been the thing I found the most motivating in any creative activity.

I am also very aware of our, as you call it, memory work with our own children. The meaning making and the grounding of them in a family history and a wider history is very important. They crave to be told certain stories over and over again, about themselves, about other family members - some they have never met.

In a way its funny, but very fitting and very german to call it memory 'work'. I tried once to explain to an English friend of mine how I found the expression 'Trauer Arbeit' comforting, but I could not translate it into English properly. To me the expression meant that it was a tangible thing that could be paced, divided and 'worked' on, rather than just a completely overwhelming mess (which it obviously is), but semantics sometimes help."

Simone Beck finished her moderation by reminding everyone of a German saying, namely that "der Weg ist das Ziel" - the path is the goal! And reminding everyone of what was said by a German poet "with the dream begins responsibility!"

Note:

See as well the position of the European Commission at

How to be a European Capital of Culture

Submitted by Ben Avison on 29th June 2015 - 09:42

<http://www.hostcity.net/event-bidding-news/how-be-european-capital-culture>

Responsibility is a term which Jürgen Habermas has used extensively when criticizing the state of affairs in Europe, insofar as politicians would hide behind technocratic procedures deliberated upon behind closed door but without any inkling whatsoever what would still be in the interest of the whole of Europe and not a mere tactical ploy to advance own national interests. ¹

¹[Jürgen Habermas](#) *Why Angela Merkel Is Wrong On Greece* 25 June 2015

<http://www.socialeurope.eu/2015/06/why-angela-merkels-is-wrong-on-greece/>

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