

ECoC as an Opportunity for Economic Growth: A Case Study of Similar Cities

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Abstract

ECoC projects are usually seen as an opportunity for cultural development and a possibility for higher visibility of the city that hosted the ECoC title. Yet, hosting the title can also be a great opportunity to bring money into the city and support economic growth. In fact, the ECoC projects have one specialty when compared to other cultural projects and that is a construction of new cultural facilities or a reconstruction of the old ones in the city or the region. In 2015, Pilsen will host the ECoC title, thus it is logical to examine what this title could bring the city and its region from an economic perspective. For that reason three cities similar to Pilsen (and former the ECoC title holders) Linz, Pécs and Maribor were selected for the analysis of economic consequences of the ECoC events, using chosen indicators. Results of this analysis suggest how the ECoC title could affect Pilsen from the economic point of view.

Key words: ECoC, economic consequences, culture

JEL Classification: R58

1 Introduction

There is no discussion that ECoC projects are very beneficial for cultural development of a designated city. However, they do not affect only a culture, but also other similar fields, such as tourism or hospitality, thus also the whole economy of the city or the region.

Pilsen will become the ECoC in 2015, so question is how these cultural events organized during a whole year will affect the city and its economy. To answer this question in advance, it is advisable to look on the cases of former title-holders that are similar to Pilsen and compare their funding, investments and economic consequences. For this purpose Linz, Pécs and Maribor were chosen and their ECoC projects will be analysed. At first, the chosen cities and their ECoC programme will be introduced, then an analysis of these ECoC, focusing mainly on the financing will be made and then the Pilsen project will be introduced and its possible consequences resulting from this analysis will be summarized.

2 Introduction of the Analysed Cities

Three cities, that became the ECoC for one year, were chosen for this comparison: Linz (ECoC 2009), Pécs (ECoC 2010) and Maribor (ECoC 2012). These cities were not chosen randomly for this analysis, but due to their similarity to one of the future ECoC - Pilsen, that will become the ECoC in 2015.

Linz, Pécs and Maribor are similar in many ways: in their population, their importance for their country during the history, their industrial history and problems that happened after the industrial decline in 1990s (or 1970s and 1980s in case of Linz). They are also not capitals, but some can be designated as an economy centre nowadays. Yet, it is not always appropriate to generalize, thus there will be a short introduction of each city.

Linz, the ECoC 2009, is the third biggest city in the north of Austria and has a population of 190 000 people. It also has a long history, because its creation started in the ancient times (McCoshan et al., 2010). Pécs, which was the ECoC in 2010, is situated in the northwest of Hungary and it is the fifth biggest city in the country. Its present (2012) population is about 156 800 people and it was founded in c. 2nd century AD by Romans (Pécs Portál, 2014). Maribor was the ECoC in 2012 and lies in northwest of Slovenia. It is the second biggest city in the country and its population is about 119 000 people. The oldest traces of human settlements in the territory of today's Maribor come from the Stone Age (Maribor Pohorje Tourist Board, 2014).

Pilsen is the fourth biggest city in the Czech Republic and it lies in the west of the country. It has population about 170 000 and was founded in 1295 (but of course the settlement here was much sooner).

Also all four cities were important centres of some kind over the time. Pécs became a centre for Christianity and education in the Middle Ages (the university was founded; nowadays one of the biggest universities in the country with 29 000 students) (Rampton et al., 2011). Maribor was as the city founded in 1254 and became the trade centre thanks to a port and especially after 1846, when the railway from Vienna to Terst was built (Maribor Pohorje Tourist Board, 2014). Also Linz could benefit from its position on the river Danube and became an important trade centre during the Middle Ages (McCoshan et al., 2010). Pilsen does not differ and has a rich history. It was an important trade centre located on the crossroads of two trade routes to Nuremberg and Regensburg (Oficiální informační server města Plzně, 2014).

An integral part of the history of each city is an industry. In Pécs it is the mining industry (Rampton et al., 2011), in Maribor the textile industry (Maribor Pohorje Tourist Board, 2014), in Linz at first the commercial sector and later the heavy or rather armaments industry during the 2nd world war (McCoshan et al., 2010). In Pilsen, heavy industry played also an important role in the history of the town, namely since 1859, when future Škoda works was founded (Oficiální informační server města Plzně, 2014). Unfortunately, all cities had problems when there was a decline in these industries and they had to face the problems and find solutions. In Pécs this happened during 1990s, when the city had to find new directions of development and focused mainly on providing services (Rampton et al. 2011). In a similar period also Maribor had to deal with it and also recent economic crisis had some negative impact on the city development. But

Maribor has moved its concentration to tourism and started its development as logistic, academic and cultural centre (McAteer et al., 2013). Linz had to deal with industrial decline as well, but in a different period than other two cities, it happened in 1970s and 1980s during the steel crisis. Since then, Linz had gradually changed from the heavy industrial centre to an advanced city focused on high-technology sectors and a culture as well (McCoshan et al., 2010). Regarding Pilsen, industry had very strong position in the city, which did not change significantly during the 1990s (when the restructuring of the economy after the fall of the communism took place) but also Pilsen had to find new ways of development and focused on the tourism and culture.

Therefore it is clear, that these cities, once successful industrial centres, had to adapt to new conditions and all of them started to focus on providing some kind of services. That is the reason why the ECoC title could help each of them in their development by allowing them to obtain the image of cultural centre, supporting the local investments and consequently the tourism and hospitality.

In next paragraphs the attention will be paid to those ECoC that had already taken a place, their brief introduction and especially their infrastructural investments, incomes and expenditures and economic impacts which is represented by analysed indicators.

3 Introduction of the ECoCs

Each ECoC is specific, but they also have something in common. That is a number of cultural events that take place during the year and the construction of some new infrastructure or the renovation of the old ones that should serve to the purposes of the programme.

Programme of Linz ECoC 2009 was divided into three main categories: music, performing arts and projects. For example highlights of the programme were focused on history, exhibitions or science. According to the Cultural Development Plan of Linz, new cultural infrastructure was constructing here since 2000, but during the ECoC project, 17 cultural and urban projects with large investments also took a part there (McCoshan et al., 2010).

In case of Pécs it was about 650 projects that contained 4 675 events during the 2010. These were various arts festival and major events, but also music, theatre and dance events as well as scientific programmes or literature events. Regarding infrastructure projects, Pécs had very big plans and it was almost able to fulfil them in time. New concert hall and regional library was built, the former factory was rebuild and used as a place for culture and public places and museums were renovated (Rampton et al., 2011) Although these infrastructural projects were very ambitious and financially demanding, it is a big success, that almost all of them were finished in time for the year 2010 and are still functional nowadays (according to their websites).

In Maribor there were 308 programmes and projects divided into four main strands. During the year there were events related to music, film, theatre, literature, architecture, but also to ecology or history. Regarding the infrastructural projects, Maribor had also ambitious plans (for example building an art gallery or a city library) but unfortunately these plans were not implemented (not entirely due to lack of money, but rather because of disagreements and inability of responsible

people) and organizers of the ECoC had to find alternative places for the programme that should have taken the place in planned buildings (McAteer et al., 2013).

Thus it is clear, that all three ECoC at least planned to make new infrastructure or renovate the existing ones, but some did not succeed. However all three ECoCs invested a lot of money into the programme and some into the infrastructure according to available data.

4 Financing the ECoC

The ECoCs projects are always very expensive and each has some specialty in funding. Yet it was possible to compile a table No 1 using the data from Ex-post evaluations comparing the finances of the three ECoCs at once (their funding source and expenditures). Unfortunately the report for Maribor 2012 was compiled at the time, when all financial data were not available, thus it covers only three years and it is not fully comparable with two others. Also some data had to be aggregated for purpose of the comparison and some cities have their own categories of finances that other two do not. The most important data, such as expenditures on programme or marketing are available and can be compared. Table also does not include funding of infrastructural investments.

It is clear that highest budget (if infrastructural investments are excluded) had Linz with almost €70 million, the second highest Pécs (€35 million) and then Maribor (€28 million). If these numbers are compared to numbers of the ECoCs 1995-2004 showed in the Palmer report (2004), it is obvious, that expenditure of Linz is a bit higher than usual, but not the highest. From the analysis of financial data from the Palmer report (2004) results that the average operational expenditure of the ECoCs 1995-2004 is €44 million, the lowest was €8 million (Reykjavik 2000) and the highest €155 million (Copenhagen 1996). Mostly the operational expenditure is about €30 million. Thus Maribor and Pécs did not exceed the average operational expenditure and Linz did. Linz was also the city that spent the most financial sources for the cultural programme (see the lower part of the Table No1), almost three times more than Pécs. Pécs generally spent less money on cultural programme and more on marketing or investments (by these investments it is meant Improving institutional structure, networking and New Jobs for Success programme) than other two cities. On the other hand Maribor gave most of its fund (77 %) to the cultural programme and only 9 % on marketing (which is the least of all). Still, the table is not fully comparable because of missing data for Maribor.

The upper part of the table shows funding sources of each ECoC. Share of these sources is very similar, the ECoC is mostly funded by the country where it takes part, then by a city and other components are not so significant. In Pécs there was an exception of project-based funding associated with the ECoC, which was €6.27 million. In all cases the funding sources mostly covered the expenditures (they are not equal even though the table indicates it).

Table 1 Funding sources and expenditures of selected ECoCs

Funding source	Linz 2005-2010		Pécs 2007-2011		Maribor 2010-2012	
	mil. euro	%	mil. euro	%	mil. euro	%
National Contribution	40	58%	15.29	43%	15.21	54%
Municipal Contributions	20	29%	11.3	32%	11.28	40%
EU	1.5	2%	1.5	4%	0.84	3%
Project-based funding	0.9	1%	6.27	18%		
Sponsorship	4	6%	0.91	3%	0.99	3%
Merchandise and ticket sales	1.6	2%	0.04	0%		
Other	0.6	1%			0.08	0%
Total	68.6	100%	35.31	100%	28.4	100%
In kind contributions	6.5		1.13			
Expenditure	mil. euro	%	mil. euro	%	mil. euro	%
Cultural Programme	42.4	62%	14.59	41%	21.88	77%
Marketing	13.3	19%	7.64	22%	2.59	9%
Personnel	8.4	12%	2.91	8%	1.84	6%
Operating Expenditure	3.1	5%	2.49	7%	2.01	7%
Investment	0.6	1%	5.66	16%		
Reserve	0.8	1%	0.52	1%		
Other			1.57	4%	0.07	0%
Total	68.6	100%	35.38	100%	28.4	100%

Source: McCoshan et al., 2010, Rampton et al., 2011, McAteer et al., 2013

Also infrastructural investments cost a lot of money, according to Palmer (2004), the average cost of known infrastructural investments of the ECoC 1995-2004 is ca €122 million. In case of Linz €323 million was invested into cultural and urban projects related to the ECoC (McCoshan et al., 2010), Pécs spent ca €140million on development of key infrastructural projects (Rampton et al., 2011) and although Maribor planned to spend similar amount of money in this area, these plans were cancelled and almost no money was spent in this area. Maribor generally had problem with funding and had to adapt the programme to available money. According to McAteer et al. (2013, pp 62): “the final programme budget was around half the level of that set out in the original application.”

All three cities fulfilled the conditions for winning the Melina Mercuri Prize of €1.5million(in case of Maribor this number is not showed in tab. n. 1 due to incompleteness of the data) and could use this source to fund the programme. Regarding the finance it is clear that the ECoC projects can bring a lot of money, not only into the culture, but also into other sectors through the construction of new infrastructure.

5 Visitors of the ECoCs

One of the most important indicators of success of the ECoC is the number of visitors. These numbers are very difficult to find and if they are known one has to take into account, that they are mostly estimations. According to Palmer (2004) the number of visitors of the prior ECoC (1995-2004) varies from 1 to 7 million and mainly depends on the population of the region.

Linz, that invested €42.4million into the cultural program and provided 7700 events, was able to attract nearly 3.5million of visitors during the years. The most visited events belonged the Exhibition Art on the Rooftops of Linz (272 860 visitors) or the International Linz street art festival with 210 000 visitors (McCoshan et al., 2010).

The ECoC 2010, Pécs, was able to offer 4 675 events for ca €14.59million. These events were visited by 124 050 people in 2010, but there are no available numbers of total visitors during all years connected to the ECoC. But from numbers of the most visited events such as opening ceremony (ca 20 000 people) or exhibition of MihályMunkácsy's Christ Trilogy (70 000 visitors) (Rampton et al., 2011) it is clear, that the attendance was lower than in Linz.

Although Maribor had to face the lowest budgeted from all (according to the available data), it managed to allocate €21.88million on the cultural program and create 5 624 events that visited 4.5million people overall (3.1million in 2012). The most visited was Lent festival, that attracted around 700 000 people or Festival of Arts and Heritage (100 000 visitors) (McAteer et al., 2013). Thus Maribor 2012 was the most visited ECoC from these three and it was able to attract visitors even if the budget was not so high.

6 Supporting Economy through Culture

From the data above it is clear, that the ECoCs has positive effects on the economy. At first, money invested into the cultural programme, marketing, personnel etc. of each ECoC represents inputs for several sectors and these investments are then multiplied in the economy. Also mentioned infrastructural investments represent huge positives for the economy, because these investments are also inputs for many sectors (thus also multiply) and mainly inputs for sectors that have nothing in common with culture. Therefore these investments can employ many people in various fields, produce many different goods and of course support creativity.

In terms of tourism, visitors of the ECoCs can play also an important role. Payment for services they use (accommodation, food, transport etc.) is also money that multiplies thus their increase helps the economy as well. For example in Linz 2009, there was 10% increase in overnight stays compared to the previous year which was a success knowing the economic crises just took place. According to McCoshan et al. (2010, pp. 55) "Domestic visitors were up by 20%, from Switzerland and the Czech Republic by 28% and from Germany by 16%. However there were large reductions in the number of visits from further afield, with Russia down 38.5%, USA down 32%, UK down 30% and Arab states down 27%."

Also in Pécs the number of visitors arose, majority was from the country, but 28% was from abroad and the number increased by 71% compared to the previous year. These visitors were mostly from Germany, Austria, Italy and Romania (Rampton et al., 2011).

Maribor, the ECoC 2012, also attracted more tourists than the city usually does. In Maribor and its partner cities the increase of arrivals from previous year was by 13%, but only thanks to visitors from foreign countries (that increased by 23%). Also overnight stays increased by 12% in

comparison to previous year, but again only thanks to foreign visitors. These foreign visitors were mostly from neighbouring countries such as Austria, Croatia and Italy.

7 Sustainability of ECoCs Projects

ECoC should not be one time event only, but its legacy should live further. Regarding the three chosen ECoC mostly the biggest problem for sustaining cultural events was money and no company/organization that would organize them, because organizations those were in charge of the ECoCs, all stopped their operations and were closed shortly after the ECoC year. Those ECoC, that were able to build some new infrastructure, especially Pécs, can be proud of a functioning library or a concert house, were able to sustain these investments alive. The worst sustainability was probably in Maribor, because there was no new infrastructure. However, some cultural projects continued after 2012, thus only time will show the sustainability (given 2012 was not so long ago). In case of Linz some new infrastructure was built there as well as events that last till nowadays (for example Hermit of the Tower).

All in all there is no guarantee of maintaining the ECoC legacy, but it is easier to sustain infrastructure investments than the cultural events. It always depends mostly on the will of people and of course on money that the city can provide for culture.

8 Case of Pilsen ECoC 2015

Pilsen went long route since the first step to become the ECoC 2015. First important steps happened in 2009, when the town council approved the application of the city, the next on 8th September 2010 when the city won the competition with Ostrava (the second city that could have been nominated for the Czech Republic). Then the non-profit organization “Plzeň 2015, o. p. s.” was founded to manage the project and started the preparation of the programme.

The programme stands on 5 main strands: Arts and technologies, Relationships and emotions, Transit and minorities, Stories and sources and Světovar (Reifová et al., 2012). In time of writing this paper specific programme is still unknown, but it is clear, that there will be more than 50 big cultural events and another 600 activities during 2015. In a genre point of view, it will be theatre, music, expositions, architecture, dance, scientific programmes or performances of alternative arts. Total budget will be around CZK 420 million (ca €16 mil) (iDNES, 2013b).

Since its foundation the organizing company Plzeň 2015, o. p. s. spent only ca CZK 50 mil (ca €2 mil) till 2012 (newer accounting documents are not available).

Regarding infrastructural projects, city of Pilsen planned many infrastructural investments that were later implemented into the ECoC 2015 programme. These investments are based on the strategic plan for development of culture for years 2009-2019. Also in application for the ECoC Pilsen stated, that revitalization of the city centre, renovation of industrial buildings and areas and construction of new cultural buildings will happen. The most important were renovating and using

the former brewery and barracks Světovar as a Cultural Factory, building a new theatre and a new gallery (Havličková et al., 2010).

Regarding the theatre, although there were some problems with funding during its construction (iDNES, 2013a), it was built in time (before 2015) and first performance will be played in September 2014. Although the construction proceeded within the ECoC project, it would probably happen even if Pilsen would not be the ECoC 2015. In Pilsen, there were two theatres that served the theatre company called The J. K. Tyl Theatre in Pilsen. Unfortunately, one of them was in desolate state and a new building was needed. For that reason, city had approved the construction of a new theatre building in the strategic plan for development of culture for years 2009-2019 (Brabcová et al., 2011) and this intention was approved by a town council in 2007 (Usnesení ZMP, 2007).

The new theatre will have two halls; one for 500 visitors and the second for 200 visitors including a parking area (iDNES, 2012a). The construction was very expensive and has got more expensive during the time. The first price was around CZK 840 million (ca €31 million) (Usnesení ZMP, 2011), but through time the construction company demanded covering additional costs, thus the price climbed up to ca €37 million. The theatre, which construction started in June 2012 and was finished two years later, will have the name “The New Theatre” (iDNES, 2014a). Regarding this infrastructural investment, there should not be any problem with sustainability, because J. K. Tyl Theatre has a strong tradition in Pilsen and its region and a new scene (The New Theatre) should not have problems with usefulness.

Another big project, reconstruction of the area of Světovar, is deadlocked nowadays and it is not clear if area will be reconstructed and ready for 2015. During the demolition of some parts of buildings, harmful substances were discovered, thus great additional costs occurred and city has to deal with this new unfortunate situation (iDNES, 2014c).

Světovar area which is almost 6 ha large complex of former brewery and military objects, supposed to be rebuild into modern area containing the Cultural Factory 4x4, city archive, modern housing, offices or shops (iDNES, 2014b). Cultural Factory 4x4 supposed to be multi-purpose cultural centre for amateur theatre, music, dance and exhibition and of course the flagship of the ECoC project, because a great part of the programme should have taken a place in here. The original budget for Cultural Factory 4x4 reconstruction was planned for CZK 165 mil. (€6,2 mil) (iDNES, 2014c). Now it is clear, that the cost will be much higher and city needs to find a quick solution of this problem.

The third large infrastructural investment that was originally planned to be build till 2015 was a new regional gallery for CZK 850 million (ca €32 million). Unfortunately, it was clear already in 2011, that the region will not be able to fund that big investment, so the building of new gallery was postponed indefinitely (Archiweb, 2011).

The last big investment promised in application was revitalization of public spaces and a city centre for ca CZK 80 million (ca €3 million). These adjustments took place in 2012, and among the others, promenade or bicycle paths near river confluence were built (iDNES, 2012b).

Overall 2 of 4 projects were finished in time before 2015, one project has big problems and it is not certain if it will be finished in time and the last one certainly will not. The overall cost for these investments is ca €46 million, which is not so much in comparison to the three chosen ECoC, but still a big amount of money that could influence the economy of the region.

Regarding financial sources of these investments and programme, they are mainly from the municipality budget, regional and national contributions, grants, loans (in case of the theatre) or EU funds (Pilsen also won the Melina Mercouri Prize of €1.5million).

9 Conclusions

There are many similarities between the three chosen former ECoC and Pilsen that will be the ECoC in 2015. From presented cases of these three ECoC it is clear, that it depends on the individual city how it is able to use that big opportunity and make the best of it. It is not possible to say which one of the chosen ECoC is “the best”, because each was successful in some points of view. Maribor, which had the lowest budget, was able to give more money into the cultural programme and attracted more visitors than Pécs. On the other hand, Pécs was very successful in infrastructural projects and Linz partly in both.

Expected budget of the ECoC Pilsen 2015 is only ca €16 million, which is much lower than the budget of the three selected ECoCs, but it is not the lowest in comparison to the ECoC 1995-2004 analysed in Palmer Report (2004) and of course one has to have in mind that these assumptions are very often undervalued. Also infrastructural investments for only €46 million seem to be very low in comparison to the other three ECoC (excluding Maribor, where no significant infrastructural investments took place), but in comparison to the ECoC 1995–2004, it is not so unusual and huge investments does not guarantee a success of the programme. The important thing is that this money will be spent in the region and will support its economic growth.

Another important part of each ECoC is visitors and their influence on the city or the region. All three analysed ECoCs prove that the title guarantees their increase, although it has increased their expenses. This is an aspect that will help Pilsen during the next years in its development on the condition that the city is ready for that increase of tourism and local entrepreneurs will be able to benefit from it.

All in all the ECoC title can assure that, besides the growth of the culture, other sectors of economy can be affected in positive ways, too.

Other important aspect of the ECoC is the sustainability of the programme or at least of the new infrastructure. There are several activities or projects in the three analysed ECoCs that are sustained, especially in Linz. Also built infrastructure in Linz and Pécs is still operating. In case of Pilsen there should not be a problem of sustaining The New Theatre, because the well-known local theatre company with a loyal audience will perform there. The big question is the Cultural Factory 4x4, if it is built, because it should offer non-traditional forms of art that is not well established in Pilsen. Big plus for Pilsen is its existing strategic plan for development of culture

for years 2009–2019 as well that is still valid and guarantees the will of the town council to sustain the culture in the city after 2015.

The paper showed the main facts about the three former ECoCs that were similar to Pilsen and the importance of the ECoC title and its possible consequences. I results from these facts that if Pilsen organises the successful cultural programme it will be rewarded by its development not only in the cultural field.

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