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# Stepping Out of the Shadows: Legacy of the European Capitals of Culture, Guimarães 2012 and Košice 2013

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**Abstract:** The European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) is the most ambitious cultural, collaborative programme in Europe. Up until 2000, ECOC projects were hosted by several national capitals and principal cultural cities in Europe. In the second phase, the programme also began to discover second-tier and less well-known cities hidden in the shadow of the cultural capitals. This paper focuses on assessing different ECOC strategies (traditional versus radical) and the corresponding legacies of two medium-sized cities: Guimarães (ECOC in 2012, Portugal) and Košice (ECOC in 2013, Slovakia). Cultural heritage is identified by the capacity of culture to change development trajectory and to boost the economy of cities. The strategies and legacies of Guimarães and Košice have revealed themselves to be comparatively different, especially due to their differences with respect to UNESCO cultural heritage. While Guimarães partially succeeded in enhancing its position as a tourist attraction and the visibility of its historical cultural heritage, the industrial city of Košice is an example of more radical and dynamic culture-led form of development, overcoming the provincialism of the city. Most importantly, and due to the strengthening pride of the locals, both ECOC cities have stepped out of the shadow of stronger cultural capitals in their countries. This joint research offers the possibility of a first-hand comparison of traditional and radical approaches and an in-depth interpretation of their legacies after a period of five years, explaining the mechanisms of forming different legacies in two types of ECOC cities. The results can help future ECOC cities to set their strategies in relation to their desired cultural and economic development.

**Keywords:** European Capitals of Culture; mega-events impact; cultural legacy; second-tier cities; urban transformation

## 1. Introduction

The European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) programme was officially created by the European Union (EU) in 1985, following the suggestion made in the early 1980s by the Greek and French Ministers of Culture [1]. In an ECOC-awarded city, cultural events with strong European ties are organised during a given year. Since then, this programme has progressively become the most ambitious, cultural, collaborative project performed in Europe [2,3]. As claimed by [4] and [2], it is also one of the oldest, most rewarding and representative cultural initiatives implemented in the EU by its institutions, countries and people. It is the third most important mega-event hosted in Europe, following the Olympics and the World and European Football Championships [5]. No other cultural project has had as high a budget as the ECOC [3]. Therefore, it is crucially important to examine the immediate and short- and long-term effects the programme brings to ECOC-awarded cities.

Although in its origin, it was considered to be a purely cultural programme [2], several hosting cities have treated their ECOC selection as an opportunity to regenerate the spaces where the mega-event takes place [1,6,7] and to foster social and economic restructuring and development [2,8–11]. ECOC selection can also be observed to be a tool for promoting the hosting city's visibility and image at an international level, as well as for reinforcing or improving its image vis-à-vis its inhabitants and enhancing community pride [8,9,12]. These expected contributions, such as enhancing the cultural dynamics of the city, promoting the city as a tourist destination and boosting development through culture have been corroborated by several studies commissioned by the European Commission [3,13].

Cities considering bidding for ECOC selection propose objectives that correspond to the local circumstances. These should nonetheless be in line with the ECOC programme, embodying European values both in terms of its cultural unity and diversity. Historically, two EU countries have been chosen to select potential capitals each year. However, after 2021, every three years thereafter there will be three capitals, and the scope will be extended to the European Economic Area. The process starts with a call for applications from the relevant national authority. The selection process always consists of pre-selection and final selection. The government of the chosen Member State formally announces the designated city as the European Capital of Culture and notifies the EU institutions. The actual guide for bidding cities [14] states who can bid and emphasises its distinction from the UNESCO heritage label. The award-winning cities are not selected based on cultural heritage but are targeted for tourism development, which raises a certain contradiction in relation to the title. The main emphasis of an ECOC title is on its citizens, who expect benefits from the project for a period of time beyond the ECOC year. Slogans of the ECOC cities currently embody topics of opening, change and diversity (e.g., Pilsen 2015 “Open up”, Aarhus 2017 “Re-think”, San Sebastian 2017 “Cultures of Coexistence”). Therefore, it is not only crucially important to assess the programme success, but also the persisting and induced effects, which result from the overall city opening up, overcoming the historical path of dependence and leading to higher attractiveness in competition with already established national and European centres.

After being hosted by the leading cities of each country (from 1985, the date of its creation, to 2000), medium-sized cities have also begun to capitalise on the opportunity to host this mega-event to regenerate their city space and boost their economy and attractiveness. This has become particularly important for cities located in more peripheral territories, such as Guimarães (ECOC in 2012) and Košice (ECOC in 2013). It is therefore of interest to examine the impacts of hosting the ECOC, to verify the sustainability of the changes made and the promoted path of renewal.

The ECOC legacy of two different cultural strategies (traditional versus radical) is studied in terms of the different starting positions and the goals of the two cities under analysis (to utilise better the existing historical cultural heritage in comparison to overcoming provincialism and remoteness). Based on this, we have decided to investigate the following research questions:

- (i) What are the development and regeneration impacts of hosting ECOC projects with regard to two different strategies in two medium-sized cities: Guimarães (Northwest of Portugal, 2012, traditional cultural strategy) and Košice (Eastern Slovakia, 2013, radical cultural strategy)?
- (ii) How does cultural heritage explain the capacity of the culture to change development trajectory and to boost the economy of cities?
- (iii) What is the capacity for hosting the ECOC in terms of rebranding the city, increasing pride and enhancing its tourism industry?
- (iv) How is hosting the ECOC capable of bringing new dynamism and expanding the cultural programmes supplied by cities?

The remainder of the present paper is structured as follows. Section 2 clarifies the concept of the ECOC as a mega-event, its impacts and its legacies, including its role in promoting tourism in the hosting cities. Section 3 explains the methodology, followed by a brief characterisation of the two cities

selected. The empirical results are presented and discussed in Section 4, and conclusions are presented in Section 5.

## 2. The Key Impacts of ECOC Projects

Since the start of the programme in 1985, the ECOC has become recognised as Europe's most ambitious, cultural, collaborative programme in both scope and scale, and it is endowed with a larger budget than any other cultural event [2,3,9]. At its conception, the Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri had the idea of supporting the purely cultural goals of spreading the culture of cities among European citizens and, simultaneously, building a common cultural space from the variety of cultures in European countries. The original concept, as time has gone by, has been adapted to the needs and ambitions of each city hosting the event [6,8,9]. Besides promoting Europe's rich cultural diversity, mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue, the ECOC has also become a unique opportunity to expand the dynamics of the city's cultural life throughout the year and to enhance or change its image. In addition to the manifestation of culture and city promotion, elements of culture-led urban development [6] are already expected to be embodied in the preparation of such projects today. Cultural activities are seen as the catalyst and engine of urban regeneration and image renaissance [1,6,7,10,15]. This has been experienced in iconic models such as Bilbao (effect of the Guggenheim Museum), Glasgow 1990 (first economic impact assessment) and Liverpool 2008 (the Impacts 08 research programme). There is fierce competition among European cities to become more and more visible at the national and international levels [16–18]. As highlighted by Richards ([11], p. 121), "the European capital of culture has become one of the most sought-after tools for urban regeneration and promotion, providing a branded platform for image change, employment generation and cultural resurgence". Paradoxically, although the enthusiasm for the concept of culture-led development in literature is overwhelming, little is known about how the mechanism works [19]. Current theories on the developmental role of culture are mostly linked to the recognised economic potential of cultural and creative industries [15,19]. In the economics of post-industrial cities, the developmental role provides a link between cultural activities and participation [14]. The ECOC programme has adopted both approaches and has included them in the project application requirements for bidding cities. However, hosting a mega-event is not a panacea for solving a city's economic and social problems [20]. In the case of Liverpool, Liu [9] explicitly concluded that Liverpool's success with the 2008 ECOC was linked to a long-term cultural development strategy, namely in the synergies attained for urban regeneration, community development and education. The ECOC is a mega-event [9,21,22], which is defined as a relatively large-scale planned event that lasts for several months to one year and receives international acknowledgement [23]. Its legacy is perceived as the tangible and intangible structures that remain after hosting the event [24]. Some of those impacts can be of a positive and others of a negative nature [25,26].

The most-mentioned positive economic impacts of hosting a mega-event (in the before, during and after phases) are the increase of income, employment and retail opportunities, the opportunity to diversify the local economy, the opportunity for more advertising for the products and services provided (those from the host city and from the country as a whole), the creation of new cultural facilities and infrastructures and the increase in living standards [21,25–30]. This generally happens due to the attraction of new investments [7] and more visitors, as connected with the development of the tourism industry [10]. The economic, socio-cultural, environmental, political and image changes that arise as a result of holding a mega-event should be particularly evident. The positive economic impacts have been well documented. Yet, negative effects can also occur, such as a rise in the prices of goods, services and property. This is, generally speaking, an increase in the cost of living [25,30]. The sociocultural impacts, such as the increase of community pride and self-esteem, are less quantifiable [9], considering the contributions to building regional or national identity, strengthening/preserving endogenous resources and local cultural values and traditions.

The overcrowding of more visited spaces and equipment and the potential increase of criminal behaviour are among the most documented negative impacts. In addition, conflicts between visitors and residents can occur [31] if the residents are not committed to the hosting of the mega-event. The environmental impacts tend to be more negative and usually less well documented. While one can find greater concern with the preservation of the built heritage, the creation of protected areas and the increase in public safety, there is also a danger of degradation in both the physical and natural environment, e.g., traffic congestion and parking problems; graffiti damaging buildings; increases in waste, noise, visual and atmospheric pollution; pedestrians' destruction of vegetation [32]; and increased rail and air traffic [31].

The political and image impacts are among the leading motives to apply for hosting mega-events such as the ECOC. In fact, politicians can profit a lot by regenerating the built environment and public places [11]. The city also achieves the benefit of gaining cultural status and a grant of €1.5 million [13] for supporting the organisation of the event. However, the European Commission grant only makes up a small part of the funding of the cultural programmes, which can vary between €6 and €100 million in total. The amounts invested in capital expenditure, coming in part from structural funds, have reached between €10 and €220 million [33]. Even after being held for more than 30 years [9], only a few studies are available on the ECOC's legacies and its contributions to urban development. Studies that have focused on mega-events typically collect data in the periods before, during and after the event in order to assess the short-term effects and compare the expected and verified impacts [26]. The evaluation of legacy requires a sufficient time lag to see the transformation of the urban and regional space [34–36]. Accordingly, a few years after hosting the ECOC, two medium-sized cities (Guimarães and Košice), from two countries located on the western and eastern edges of the European Union and endowed with distinguishing social and cultural backgrounds, were chosen to approach the issue of the ECOC legacy.

The European Commission (EC) started to claim the visibility of the positive impacts of ECOC projects even in the post-hosting period and, according to Decision n° 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament, the projects should contribute to an increase in the quality of life of the city's community. Later, Decision n° 1622/2006/EC made the production of comprehensive assessments of the impacts of the ECOCs mandatory. After Liverpool 2008, many European cities were inspired and created impact studies based on the distribution of questionnaires a year before, during the year of the event and one year after to assess the effects of changes in image, tourism, satisfaction with cultural infrastructure and in cultural offer, etc. Such studies also took place in the cities of Guimarães and Košice and recorded changes during the project's implementation [37,38]. The purpose of this paper is different and novel in its approach and is based on qualitative research, reaching out to cultural and urban development experts to discuss the sustainability and legacy of the programme five years after implementation. An examination of the legacy of the ECOC seems to be fully justified, as a considerable amount of public money (from the European Union and from the hosting countries) is used in its funding [11]. This becomes even more pertinent as doubts have been raised as to the efficacy of the organisational models and projects adopted. In particular, this was mentioned by Koefoed (2013) in relation to the case of Guimarães. Other cases where controversy has been raised regarding the cultural and urban regeneration projects implemented in the aim of the hosting of an ECOC event can be found in the literature (see, for example, the case of Cork, Ireland [7]). The European ECOC programme priorities and selection criteria have changed considerably over time. After a period of national capitals and major European cultural centres (e.g., Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Berlin, Istanbul), the award-winning cities mostly belong to categories of smaller historical cities (e.g., Avignon, Salamanca, Mons, Guimarães) or industrial regional centres (e.g., Lille, Liverpool, Essen, Pilsen, Košice).

The paper is focused on the legacy of two projects representing the two latter city categories—Guimarães and Košice—to understand the context reflected in the formulation of strategic goals, discrepant implementation and legacy. The research hypotheses assume that smaller historical cities with insufficiently developed tourism potential tend to set traditional targets for the growth of

tourism, and the continuation of the strategy aims to follow the previous trajectory and strengthen the brand on the basis of the historical cultural heritage. On the contrary, the industrial regional centres see their ECOC goals in a radical, changing development trajectory, economic restructuring and rebranding on the basis of new cultural impulses as learned from the examples of Liverpool, Bilbao or Glasgow. In addition, the sustainability of the project and the use of the potential of its heritage require opening the cities to citizens, and a global impact regarding the promotion of the city's brand and the enhancing of its overall attractiveness.

Tourism should not be the primary objective, but rather an externality, as is the case with the new requirements defined by the European Commission. Stepping out of the shadow of stronger players in their surroundings (for example, the more developed cities in a country) requires, first of all, overcoming provincialism, breaking local closeness to external influences and setting out effective knowledge pipelines for learning.

### 3. Guimarães and Košice: The Stories and Ambitions

Guimarães is a medium-sized city located in the Northwest of Portugal in the sub-region of the Ave Valley. The city was established in the 9th century and had significant historical importance for Portugal. It is called the birthplace of the Portuguese nationality because of the belief that Portugal's first king (Afonso Henriques) was born there. In addition, the Battle of São Mamede in 1128 (the event that contributed to the foundation of the Kingdom of Portugal), occurred in the vicinity of the city. For some decades, Guimarães was the capital of the county of Portugal. Due to the territory being occupied by the Arabs (Reconquest), Coimbra became the kingdom's capital shortly after the Battle of São Mamede. Nevertheless, Guimarães has an indisputable historical significance due to the role it played in the foundation of Portugal.

Guimarães has 153,995 inhabitants and is the 15th largest city in Portugal today [39]. This is a slight decrease compared with the last census in 2011 (158,124 inhabitants). For centuries, the Ave Valley has been an industrial sub-region mostly focused on a few traditional manufacturing activities—textiles, clothes and footwear. Recently, Guimarães has tried to diversify its economy due to the decline of its traditional industries. Therefore, hosting the 2012 ECOC was seen as a promising opportunity to change this scenario by building on its historical heritage (Figure 1) to increase tourist flow, stir up the creative economy and address the decline in manufacturing employment.



**Figure 1.** One of the more symbolic parts of the city centre in Guimarães. Source: Photo taken by the authors on 28 April 2015.

The city used to be primarily a domestic tourism destination, and the main motivation to visit the city was its important tangible heritage, as well as its position as the birthplace of the Portuguese nation. The tourism industry began to grow due to the UNESCO certification of the well-preserved historic centre as a World Heritage Site in December 2001. Thus, the ECOC title in 2012 was already the second approval of the built heritage, gothic elements and buildings from the 15th–19th centuries, representing Portuguese architecture.

Hosting the 2012 ECOC was inevitably understood by most of its citizens as another approval of the value of the compact and charming centre and as a second boost to tourism growth. Secondly, tourism has been understood, to some extent, as a chance to diversify the local economy and overcome the decline in traditional manufacturing industries. Indeed, in the tourism industry, the Guimarães municipality has had a dominant role in the wider Ave NUTS III region: In 2015, there were 1983 lodging beds available, representing 54.1% of the sub-regional accommodation capacity [40]. It is a question of whether the mechanism of using the tourism industry as a source of economic diversification and rising employment was that straightforward. Following the bidding phase, the city broadened its strategic targets more towards citizens, expanding the cultural portfolio and making a more detailed formulation of economic development.

Košice obtained city status in 1241 and became the second most important city in the Hungarian Kingdom. Its Gothic cathedral (Figure 2) is the easternmost of its kind in Europe. Accordingly, the location marks the city as the eastern corner of Western European culture. The fortified city was significant until the end of the 18th century, and its new prosperous period began again in the late 19th century. Being the centre of Eastern Slovakia, its population grew from 70,000 (1930) to 150,000 (1970) and, later, to 240,000 (2016).



**Figure 2.** Historical city centre of Košice. Source: Košice city archives, 2015.

The economy of the region (except the city of Košice) was the weakest in former Czechoslovakia. Historically, the broader region has suffered from high unemployment and emigration.

Under the socialist government of Czechoslovakia, the former agrarian region underwent “forced industrialisation”, following the regional policy of bringing work to the people. The collapse of communism in 1989 and the following transition to a market economy caused an industrial decline within the newly formed Slovak Republic.

The modern city history is associated with heavy industry and the processing of metals, which comes from the period of central planning in socialist Czechoslovakia. The state-run metallurgic complex of the East Slovak Ironworks built in 1959 brought thousands of jobs to the Košice region, counting 20,000 employees in its peak period, and contributed to the modernisation, reconstruction and infrastructure development of the city. After privatisation by the American company US Steel in 2000, employment in steelworks fell below 10,000 in 2016 and continues to have a downward trend. The preparation for the ECOC project came at a time when the long-term development trajectory of the city was marked by de-industrialisation, a struggle with shrinking and declining industrial employment and concerns about the future.

The key to understanding the city is its openness, transnationality and urbanity. This has roots in the 1920s when Košice was a major European centre of modern and avant-garde art. That new golden era also gave birth to the Košice Peace Marathon, the second oldest in the world after that of Boston. This urban and cultural trajectory was interrupted by the Second World War, the Communist overturn and the massive influx of the rural population. This explains why the slogan of the ECOC project has become “Forward to the Roots”, symbolising overcoming the industrial and rural sedimentary deposits from the second half of the 20th century.

Tourism did not play a major role in the dynamics of the city before hosting the ECOC. Visitors were mostly related to business and congress tourism, with the main visiting months being June and September. There was a slight increase in overnight stays in the year of the ECOC in 2013 (+10% in comparison with 2012).

#### 4. Methodology of Research

In order to evaluate the aftermath effects, that is, the legacy and induced impacts, semi-structured interviews about the ECOC legacy were carried out during 2016–2017 to capture the opinions of local and regional stakeholders in Guimarães 2012 and Košice 2013. The script for the semi-structured interviews was developed by the authors (see Supplementary Material Interview Guidelines for Guimarães and Košice). The interviews were audio recorded, and their narratives were transcribed. The semi-structured interviews consisted of several key questions about the anticipated strategies and legacies of the second-tier cities, depending on the presence of cultural heritage. This approach allowed us to depart from the questions, as well as providing the necessary flexibility in order to trace the ideas of both the interviewee and interviewer. A guide containing 12 questions divided into five sections was used. The interview guide was identical for both cities with the exception of three added questions in Košice related to the receptivity of citizens to new cultural formats and city–region conjunction. The research made it possible to get expert opinions on two main themes:

1. General impact and legacy from hosting the ECOC five years after the mega-event and its capacity to form a new cultural and economic strategy.
2. A change of the city’s image in the eyes of the citizens and visitors, the transformation of the visitors’ profile and opinions on hosting a similar event in the future.

In the analysis, it was also necessary to take the personal characteristics of the interviewees into account, such as their role, commitment or position towards the organisation of the ECOC, their academic qualifications and occupations and their affiliation of any sort with the cultural or social institution of the cities. The interview panels consisted of key local and regional actors, as well as representatives from the national culture in Košice. A judgmental sample selection took into consideration their connection with the ECOC project and gender to build sufficient representativeness of the sample. It turned out that all the groups of interviewees had been motivated, whether as

part of organising the project and the events, ECOC project benefit users or experts, watching the developments from a distance. All the interviews were done in the office of the respondents, and each interview took around one hour. A pre-test consisting of two interviews was conducted in each city, Guimarães (May 2016) and Košice (November 2016). A total of 12 interviews took place in Guimarães (May 2016–February 2017) and the same number in Košice (November 2016–April 2017). In Guimarães, all the invited persons agreed to being interviewed, which was the same for all the local experts in Košice. The selection of the two external experts qualified to assess the recent changes in Košice urban development living outside Košice city took more time. The profiles of the two panels are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Profiles of the interviewees in Guimarães and Košice.

| Connection with European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) | Guimarães |        | Košice |        |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                                     | Male      | Female | Male   | Female |
| ECOC organisation                                   | 1         | -      | 1      | 2      |
| Cultural organisations                              | 2         | 1      | 2      | -      |
| Local/national government                           | 1         | 1      | 2      | 1      |
| Tourism agents                                      | 1         | -      | 1      | 1      |
| Consultants                                         | 2         | 1      | -      | -      |
| Socio-economic agencies                             | 2         | -      | -      | 2      |
| Total                                               | 9         | 3      | 6      | 6      |

Source: Interviews performed with local and regional/national actors in 2016–2017.

The two panels of 12 local, regional and national experts were set up to cover different positions in relation to the ECOC project: those involved in its organisation and those working in cultural organisations, tourism, public administration, consulting or socio-economic agencies. Table 1 shows the connection of the interviewees with the ECOC, as well as the gender distribution of the experts. The thematic analysis for analysing the semi-structured interviews aimed at identifying patterns of themes in the collected interview data. The comparison of the two cities was based on the hypothesis of a different strategy and legacy resulting from the different situations with respect to possessing UNESCO historical heritage. The objective of the thematic deductive analysis was to identify the different nature of the cultural strategies, as well as the different impacts of the ECOC projects predetermined by the factor of cultural heritage. An essential part of reviewing and naming the themes was to constantly take into consideration whether the interviewee had been involved in the ECOC organisation or not. As is customary with qualitative research reporting, a summary of the findings is presented, as well as two case studies presenting quotes from the participants in order to demonstrate the findings and enable comparison of the cities.

The following section explains the different starting points of the historical and cultural situations in both cities. This accounts for the previous trajectories and the subsequent assessment of urban changes brought about by the mega-cultural event.

## 5. The Legacy of the ECOCs: Discussion of the Results

### 5.1. Two Cities: Motivation, Strategies and Desired Effects

The historical economic basis of Guimarães has been the manufacturing sector (textile, clothing and footwear). This experienced a serious decline in the 1990s due to increasing global competition. In the bidding process for the ECOC title in 2012, Guimarães resolved similar dilemmas as other historically significant but smaller ECOC cities such as Mons, Avignon or Salamanca. In particular, Guimarães stated that it was looking toward a future direction of development from a combination of tourism (attractiveness) and economic restructuring (new appropriate economic base). The characteristics of its cultural activities were related to music (including folklore) and museums.

Its citizens were endowed with high pride in the city and its history, related to it being the cradle of the nation.

Following the recent certification of its historical centre by UNESCO (2001), the recognised heritage has increased the hopes and expectations for expanding the tourism industry and increasing its attractiveness for visitors. Guimarães aimed to be more visible nationally and internationally and to come out of the shadow of the nearby tourist-significant city, Oporto, as well as to compete with its close neighbour rival, Braga. Beyond tourism, several other goals were laid down in the bidding phase of the ECOC: empowering the local community with new human resources and professional expertise, converting the local economy by evolving creative industries and opening the urban space to new and surprising cultural experiences.

The population is higher in Košice (240,000) in comparison with Guimarães (under 154,000). Košice has had a higher level of employment in manufacturing than Guimarães (including the dominant US Steel factory). At the same time, it has a higher number of theatres, which demonstrates a reasonable local demand for classical culture. As the rural population prevails in the wider region with a distinctive folk culture and folklore, a cultural background has been formed on the mutual tolerance or interaction with the urban classical and folk cultures and entertainment.

Despite its well-preserved historical centre, Košice has not been an important tourist destination, although it has served as the economic and social metropolis of the wider East Slovak region, with a population of almost 1.7 million. In comparison, the historic city of Guimarães enjoys greater interest from tourists thanks to the preservation of its medieval UNESCO World Heritage Site and historical importance for Portugal. After the division of Czechoslovakia, in which Košice had a strong position and relation to Prague, many people found it hard to bear the city's new subordinate position to the new capital Bratislava. Therefore, the ECOC programme was great motivation to get out of the shadow of Bratislava and to show the power of the city as a strong independent European metropolis.

The two studied cities represent different histories and evolutions, environments and cultures. Whatever the goals were for Guimarães, the public's expectations have been linked to the traditional strategy of tourism development based on the city's historical heritage. In the case of Košice, there were unrealistic expectations from the population for a massive increase in visitors, considering that the ECOC year was a magnet for tourists from all over Europe. The radical culture-led strategy of the city transformation has created a dramatic conflict between goals and expectations. The objectives were not to support the existing cultural offers of classics and folklore but to portray a modern European culture aimed at the style of the younger generation.

Therefore, it is interesting to study how the programme and objectives of the ECOC project have been set in relation to a city's situation and what changes in urban development the project has brought to these two cities around five years after they hosted the event.

A strong motivation for both cities was achieving amplified visibility and increasing the pride of the city population. The citizens in both cities had great expectations of many visitors and future high tourist attractiveness. Despite the great similarity of their ECOC project objectives and attractive historical heritages, their path dependence, different types of strategies and inconsistent expectations by the public have diverged the cities in different directions and brought different legacies within the five-year gap.

The factors that have influenced those legacies can be explained by the differences of strategy (path dependence or creative destruction), implementers (existing institutions or newly created teams), cultural profile (cultivation of the immobile sources or promotion of change in urban development), brand building (cultural destination or change and mobilisation), internal disposition of residents (closeness or openness) and public expectations (more cultural heritage tourism or more tourism on the grounds of the ECOC title). Diverse adoption of the programme goals and local public expectations have consequently induced different effects and structural changes in the local economies.

### 5.2. The Legacy of the ECOCs: Results of the Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with local and regional stakeholders were used as primary sources of information to capture the views on the Guimarães 2012 and Košice 2013 ECOC hosting and legacy. A guide containing 12 open questions was used. The first group of questions dealt with the ECOC hosting and its impacts and legacies, while the second group focused on the possible change in visitor profiles and opinions on hosting a mega-cultural event in the future. The third group collected personal data to identify the role of the respondents in relation to the ECOC, affiliation to a variety of institutions of the cities under analysis and other personal details important for understanding the context of the opinions. The legacy of the ECOC in terms of the experts' opinions (2012 in Guimarães and 2013 in Košice) is explained in four dimensions.

### 5.3. Guimarães: The ECOC legacy

#### (i) Restructuring the City and Regeneration Impacts

In general, the interviewees agreed that the mega-event made a relevant contribution to the growth of the tourism industry by contributing partly to the diversification of the economic basis of the city and reinforcing its development. The increase in the number of visitors is the most visible face of that. However, with regards to daily life in the city, a few believe that little was achieved in the local economy. The following narrative is representative of this shared perception: "The ECOC was an opportunity that has no second chance [ . . . ]. In concrete terms, in industry, tourism, there was a significant investment increase, but, rigorously speaking, the results are quite scarce" (Head of the Local Chamber of Commerce and Industry). From a much more optimistic perspective, an ex-member of the local government in charge of the office of culture highlighted that the ECOC was an opportunity to create several new businesses, such as restaurants and bars, most of which "go on operating". She added that "the rate of occupancy of hotels and other accommodation units is very good, ensured mostly by foreigners". She concluded her statement with the claim that "we knew that a European Capital of Culture is a single moment; mobilising resources which are, themselves, exceptional" (ex-member of the local government, political head of the Department of Culture).

A commonly shared feeling among the interviewees was a particular frustration resulting from the high expectations raised in the pre-event moments: "Everything went well. It was possible to create a special attraction [ . . . ]. The period preceding the hosting raised high expectations. People were waiting for much more" (Head of the local tourism office). Bringing the political dimension to the ECOC legacy debate, the ex-member of the local government, political head of the Department of Culture, highlighted that "for making an adequate assessment of the European Capital of Culture legacy, one has to remember that Portugal was facing a deep economic crisis and subsequently implemented national policies. There was an approach following a trend contrary to the success of the ECOC and of its envisaged positive impacts [ . . . ]. In this context, it is not surprising that what was achieved is less than expected before".

With regard to the economic restructuring of the city and municipality economic bases and the regeneration of the city in connection to the equipment built, another interviewee claimed: "the ECOC has given a push regarding what already existed, as illustrated by the Couros urban quarter and the Arts Platform [ . . . ]. That part of the city would not have been reconverted without ECOC. This is not enough for achieving the restructuring of the economic basis of the city" (JC, a member of the official assessment report team). Following the same approach, another assessment report team member (FCC) told us that "from the economic perspective, the results we got in the assessment report point out to a positive result. In referring to the financial results, they are less positive [ . . . ]. I believe that it made sense to host the ECOC, but it was not managed in the way it should have been to get better results". This statement corresponds to the general feeling captured that it made sense to host the 2012 ECOC. There is a debate on the benefits gained by the city in terms of the economic and urban

restructuring legacy. In any case, no one claimed the aims stated in the application had been achieved. Far from that.

### (ii) Rebranding the City and Enhancing the Tourism Industry

Another benefit of hosting the 2012 ECOC (the external promotion of the city and establishing its image as a cultural centre) brought general consensus. The increase of visitors experienced in the post-event period can be explained by the change in the city's image, as highlighted by a member of the ECOC chief executive organisation and by the ex-member of the local government in charge of culture. The latter stated that the European Capital of Culture is "a European brand, which attracts a specific audience [ . . . ]. Guimarães has got national and international acknowledgement. Got it making a bet on culture". Similarly, a member of the official assessment report team (RR), stated that "the European Capital of Culture is one of the things that allows a city to turn more visible (notorious)". Located only 50 km from Oporto International Airport, the ECOC title also made it possible to increase the number of visitors thanks to the expansion of low-cost trips.

External investments in infrastructure and the local culture sector capacity (70% of the funding was provided by the European Regional Development Fund) mainly stimulated the local service sector in the city centre. However, the long-term sustainability of the effects of the project was a big question mark at the end of the event year. After a five-year gap, the individual dimensions of change are summarised in Table 2. These point to a conservative branding approach aimed at strengthening the previous image on a solid foundation of historical heritage and related culture that is geared towards visitors looking for historical monuments. We drew on the surveys of the residents and visitors over the duration of the project [38] and then evaluated the changes in the city based on the opinions of the cultural and urban development experts after a five-year gap.

**Table 2.** Changes in the city by dimension 2012–2017.

| Dimension             | Before (Year 2012)                                          | After (Year 2017)                                                                                           |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BRANDING</b>       | Heritage City (Cradle of the Nation)                        | Heritage Tourism Destination                                                                                |
| <b>PEOPLE</b>         | Community strongly attached to the territory and its legacy | Reinforced self-esteem of inhabitants                                                                       |
| <b>ECOC</b>           | Project focus on culture and creative industries            | Reinforced cultural infrastructure and restored/renewed city centre                                         |
| <b>SCALE</b>          | Regional and national                                       | National and European ECOC                                                                                  |
| <b>CITY FLAGS</b>     | 2012 European City of Culture                               | 2013 European City of Sports<br>2018 Eurovision Song Contest<br>2020 European Green City (unsuccessful bid) |
| <b>CORE CULTURE</b>   | Folk and jazz                                               | Jazz, classic and (national and international) folk music                                                   |
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        | Manufacturing exports (textile, clothes and footwear)       | Manufacturing (renewed) and the tourism industry                                                            |
| <b>SENSE OF PLACE</b> | UNESCO World Heritage city centre                           | Enlarged and renewed city centre                                                                            |
| <b>DRIVING FORCES</b> | Local cultural associations Guimarães City Hall             | Arts and Creativity Platform Guimarães arena (Pavilhão Multiusos) Guimarães City Hall                       |

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on interview inputs and surveys of the locals and visitors carried out by the authors during and after the ECOC year.

### (iii) Enlarging the Cultural Programmes and Bringing New Cultural Dynamism

The cultural programme delivered the main theme of the city both past and present. As stated, among the main aims of organising an ECOC event is the enhancement of the cultural programs of the hosting cities and a contribution to their development in the medium- and long-term. Therefore, the commitment of cultural actors in the cities is needed to establish a feasible strategy aimed at a more extended period than one year (Decision n. 1419/1999/CE, of the Parliament and of the European Council). The interviewees did not reach a consensus regarding whether the strategic objectives

established were achieved to this aim, but most of them were not particularly positive in their response. The head of the local tourism office declared that “the ECOC was in the origin of changes in all the areas, that is, we can perceive a few differences between pre- and post-ECOC”. Others were much more pessimistic, stating that “the legacy of the ECOC in terms of the cultural (immaterial) programme of the city and creation of a cluster of creative industries is minimal” (FCC, a member of the official assessment report team).

A more positive assessment of the cultural impact of the ECOC was given by the ex-member of the local government, the political head of the Department of Culture. She claimed it was possible to place artists in textile production companies and to allow the opening of new ‘worlds’ to them: “If there is more work to do, that means more work to perform in the associated activities, too [ . . . ]. The cultural program of the city has ceased being only committed to the City Hall and other institutions have won capabilities and taken new paths”. This statement was largely contradicted by another of our respondents (RR, a member of the official assessment report team). He claimed that “there are equipment and structures, but, in most cases, they keep being managed under the supervision of the local government. The cultural associations, generally speaking, were not strongly mobilised towards the project, which is something we should regret”.

Others have also expressed a similarly pessimistic view: “The cultural associations go on doing what they used to do before the ECOC, and, in some cases, even less than before. The tourists also do not participate much in that. The Vila Flor Cultural Centre (created a few years before the hosting of the ECOC) was more important in enhancing the cultural dynamics of the city than the ECOC, itself” (Professor at the University of Minho, living at Guimarães, closely related to a few local social associations). Similarly, the Head of the Alberto Sampaio Museum and of the Duques de Bragança Palace expressed that “something should have been done in terms of working with the cultural associations [ . . . ]”. And, concerning the legacies, “Where we can identify a kind of change is in terms of organising capacity. There seems to be some kind of legacy”, said FCC, a member of the official assessment report team.

Trying to shed light on what has been going on between the executive organisation committee and the cultural associations, a member of the ECOC executive board declared that “many cultural associations in Guimarães exist but they do not have enough scale and keep rivalry behaviour among them. There will always be someone that believes that it could have been different”. Meanwhile, the head of one of those cultural associations claimed that there was an organisation ASMAV (Associação de Socorros Mútuos Artística Vimaranesa) that was, simply, kept out of performing a role in the official program of the ECOC: “Our projects were simply refused”, he told us.

Meanwhile, the new cultural infrastructure, in a few cases, has not been able to attract enough visitors to be financially sustainable, and the cultural strategy was not clearly defined and is therefore facing difficulties in keeping the path established for the aim of hosting the ECOC.

#### (iv) Legacy: Opportunities and Outcomes

Assuming from the statements collected that hosting the 2012 ECOC could be generally qualified positively, as it became viable to build equipment, both public and private, allowed the hosting city to regenerate its central area, attracted a considerable amount of visitors and promoted the city nationally and abroad as a cultural tourism destination, the interviewees were asked if it would make sense to go on with applications for hosting similar events in future. Once again, we obtained different attitudes to the issue. In general, the 2012 ECOC was highlighted as a major festivity for the city. In the words of one of the interviewees, “The city lived a major festivity. Festivities are always very enjoyable things” (Head of a local cultural organisation, ASMAV). However, he added that, “if we had not hosted the ECOC, we would never know the opportunities we lost”. Another respondent said that “in terms of investment, there is a share that has remained. The immaterial component had some effect, but one could have made better profit from it” (JC, a member of the official assessment report team).

Some assessments were more accommodating such as, “Even if many results aimed were not attained, hosting the ECOC was a plus-value. The European Capital of Culture helped the city to consolidate the bet [on the heritage] it made [ . . . ] and a certain sense of community” (RR, member of the official assessment report team). A similar thought was expressed by the head of the Martins Sarmiento museum and cultural association. He stated that “this kind of event is built at a global level. Knowing this, we can participate or choose to stay out, assuming a status of marginality. This hosting turn around and the cities have to apply for hosting them [ . . . ]. There are interests, including economic ones, associated with these events which turn mandatory their organisation and the associated rotating territorial location.”

In order to complete this sort of assessment, we made mention of the narratives of two of the major protagonists of the mega-event on this last issue. The ex-mayor of the city argued that “there is no doubt that hosting the ECOC was a value added to the city, but it is not easy to maintain the cultural dynamics implemented during the hosting. The hosting of the ECOC was a start. We will never host another”. From his side, a member of the executive board of the structure held responsible for the organisation of the ECOC believed that the “Guimarães 2012 ECOC was a project that could be looked at as a catalytic one to the city and a development to the region process, which had left a legacy [ . . . ] The ECOC came at the right moment, after an effort of rehabilitation of the historic centre which had lasted for 20 years, and the creation of the Vila Flor Cultural Centre. Guimarães will win if it succeeds to densify that strategy.”

#### 5.4. Košice: The ECOC Legacy

##### (i) Restructuring of the City and Regeneration Impacts

Fortunately, the industrial knowledge base of metallurgy and engineering in Košice has been transformed and has reinforced the emergence of a strong information technology (IT) sector. This has grown over 10 years from 1500 to over 10,000 jobs in 2017. The structural transformation has shifted the industrial economic base to finer-related technology sectors while retaining a prevailing synthetic (engineering) knowledge base. The IT sector has attracted a young generation into the city, subsequently exerting pressure on changing the quality of the place. These young and knowledgeable workers are in an open-minded and tolerant environment and exhibit an enhanced demand for vibrant street life, café culture, attractive buildings and natural environments and diversity [41]. The project was in the hands of young people who sensed a chance to transform the city [42,43]. Several of them had already worked or studied in Western Europe (Great Britain, France, Germany, etc.) and brought external European knowledge that accelerated the nascent local buzz.

Most interviewees showed a positive and enthusiastic opinion on the ECOC-invoked change, such as the creation of a strong social capital and the Europeanisation of the city: “It has mobilised creative operators, professionalised the city’s tourism organisation, kicked stone cultural institutions and transformed their minds. In the years from 2009 to 2014, a generation living with art was really living with it and can build on it in the future” (Editor on the art radio). The change is vivid: “The project was particularly important because of getting consciousness and awareness that people can feed on arts and culture, or from their own head, from their ideas” (Head of the Regional Department of Culture and Tourism). An external expert confirms the local opinions by stating that “the key results of the project are the visibility of the city, the strengthening of the local cultural and creative community, the demonstration of the city’s ability to implement such a complex project as well as investments in the restoration of specific cultural objects and places” (Head of Urban Development Ministry of Transport and Construction, Bratislava).

A few thousand young people brought changes into the heart of the city and, de facto, took over the cultural space. High expectations existed in stimulating crossover between the creative and cultural industries and the IT sector. The city has become a living testing laboratory for the examination of Jacobs’s innovation externalities between the creative scene and IT community. Nonetheless, it should be noted that progress is rather fragile and that novel ideas about the future of the city are

not mainstream. In fact, they are often hard-pressed into the predominant industrial mental lock-in environment: “We aim to promote media art, digital, IT and creativity. There is such an umbrella, as we have a geographically materialised potential here and we try to convince different types of thinking about real cooperation. However, this will take about ten years. We will not get rid of this industrial thing for a long time; it is generational” (Director of the Creative Industries Košice organisation).

(ii) Rebranding the City and Enhancing the Tourism Industry

Košice, as a flagship representative of the post-communist provincial heavy-industrial conurbation in Central–Eastern Europe, has been transformed into a European, post-industrial city in only a 10-year period from 2006 to 2016 (Table 3). The following table shows the image changes the city has made according to eight dimensions. We drew on our surveys of residents and visitors over the duration of the project [37] and then evaluated changes in the city based on opinions of the cultural and urban development experts after a five-year gap. The predominantly negative attribute for Kosice dwellers in Slovakia used to be foolish or crazy. The marketing agency (Info centre) has organised targeted activities to transform the negative statements of foolish/crazy into the positive attributes of active/wild (in local dialect from “šal’eny” to “dzivý”).

**Table 3.** Changes in the city by dimension 2013–2018.

| Dimension             | Before (Year 2012)                                                                   | After (Year 2017)                                                                                             |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BRANDING</b>       | Historical centre, the metropolis of Eastern Slovakia                                | Vibrant European creative city                                                                                |
| <b>PEOPLE</b>         | Folksy locals, a distinctive mix of Eastern local cultures                           | Openness, rejuvenation, community pride and reinforced self-esteem of inhabitants                             |
| <b>ECOC</b>           | Project focus on culture and creative industries, a long-term concept of city change | Discovery of public places and cultural events, evolving creative industries and new media arts               |
| <b>SCALE</b>          | Provincial, national                                                                 | Supranational, European                                                                                       |
| <b>CITY FLAGS</b>     | 2013 European City of Culture                                                        | 2016 European city of sports<br>2018 UNESCO creative city of media arts<br>2019 European city of volunteering |
| <b>CORE CULTURE</b>   | Provincial, folk, classic, petty bourgeois                                           | Urban, progressive, European, visual, digital                                                                 |
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        | Industrial, metallurgy                                                               | Post-industrial, information technology + creative                                                            |
| <b>SENSE OF PLACE</b> | Historical main street and cathedral                                                 | Iconic vibrant creative places Tabačka Kulturfabrik, Kulturpark, Halmi                                        |
| <b>DRIVING FORCES</b> | ECOC org.<br>City Hall of Košice                                                     | CIKE (Creative Industry Košice)<br>Tabačka Kulturfabrik                                                       |

Source: Authors’ own elaboration based on interview inputs and surveys of the locals and visitors carried out by the authors during and after the ECOC year.

The cultural assets of ECOC 2013 have continued to be preserved and have subsequently obtained the title of UNESCO Creative City of Media Art in 2017. However, the outcome of the hesitant rebranding process is still uncertain. The city has become addicted to receiving titles. After experiencing the ECOC, it was the European City of Sports in 2016, and thereafter, it was awarded the European Volunteering Capital in 2019. What is important, however, is the clear trajectory of the ECOC inheritance, similar to that of Linz or Graz. The choice of the creative field corresponds to Jacob’s externalities, building a combination of knowledge from both the creative industries and IT.

Tourism was not a major feature of the city before and still is not even after ECOC 2013. A significant change, however, has been air accessibility and the launching of direct air links from other major cities (Cologne, Istanbul, Tel Aviv, etc.). Although the motorway connection to the capital Bratislava is still unfinished, the city has become open to the world through air travel, just as the world has become open to the city’s inhabitants. Košice has become an attractive place for local wines, meals and small breweries, although the trend of increasing visitor numbers is based on changing and strengthening the city image rather than on creating new tourist monuments or events. “The

year 2013 definitely showed a higher number of visitors and their numbers are continually increasing. The visitors are typically urban people coming to discover and spend time in another city for a weekend. The city marketing has improved significantly, but today it has begun to lag behind”, says former founder and managing director of the tourism cluster and Visit Košice Tourist Board. Some interviewees confirmed that there are new, smaller segments of visitors: “Business tourism still makes up about 70%; there is no dramatic change. Beyond average tourists, a new group of well-educated and well-informed visitors has also emerged, as well as adventurers.” (programme manager of the ECOC).

The marketing for the ECOC was not well-mastered at the beginning. The project triggered misinterpretations and unrealistic expectations for cultural tourism inflows during 2013. These have not met the expectations of public opinion or journalists at the end of the day. There have often been hostile and harsh comments: “There is nothing new in the city that would appeal to a regular visitor. Rather, I regard the ECOC as a missed opportunity to promote tourism. It has brought more positive effects to artists” (Director of the City Information Centre). However, the primary objectives in 2013 were set up as long-term objectives in comparison to the slightly simplified general understanding of the project as being a one-year cultural capital visited by a high number of tourists. This shows the serious contradiction between the official communication and project expectations in the media and among citizens. “The image of change is excellent among experts in Slovakia and abroad, but poorly understood by the majority of the population”, explained an interviewed expert on cultural policy.

### (iii) Enlarging the Cultural Programmes and Bringing New Cultural Dynamism

It is quite surprising how quickly the city’s perception has changed. The city’s inhabitants have been activated by the opening of public spaces to culture and creativity. Many new places and events have been designed (Table 4) as a legacy and follow-up to the ECOC project. The largest significant and most visited festival of contemporary art in Slovakia is *Nuit Blanche/White Night*, which attracts tens of thousands of people who want to experience night-time, digital art in public spaces. This initially French concept was even re-exported from Košice to the capital of Bratislava after five years of operation. In the opposite direction, the new cultural infrastructure built in 2013 motivated the organisers of the Art Film Festival to take it from a smaller spa town to Košice. The ECOC has caused “radical change in the level and quality of city thinking and identity, long-term planning, modern concepts, internationalisation and image change” (expert on cultural policy, former vice-president of Culture Action Europe). “In addition to the discovery of public places and cultural events, new and qualified people also emerged such as organisers, enablers and influencers. We are facing a certain type of Bilbao effect or a culture-led urban transformation.”

The authors of the project chose a risky endogenous approach of activating and supporting many activities and creators, while at the same time opening up knowledge flows to progressive European cultural sources to generate the basis for future cultural and creative developments. The number of activities was quite large and presented progressive artistic styles that are unusual in Košice. This naturally triggered discussions about the overly alternative focus of the project on young people. Criticism of events in the media and on social networks focused on missing the main event as a magnet for tourists instead of several smaller events spreading over different places in Košice.

The grassroots approach and involving local people in the decision-making processes has helped successful, promising events and actors survive and grow in connection with building cultural infrastructure: “It made sense in activating local forces. Participants in newly created cultural events were not representing the mainstream culture and entertainment but come [sic] from the rather privileged and active population” (Director of the National Theatre). As the former city marketing centre confirms, “I do not think, the former culture was destroyed, but quite the contrary - the cultural ‘ecosystem’ is more diverse and attracts new audiences, people have begun visiting the public space and new cultural places much more”.

“New ‘creative knowledge’” has been significantly acquired through residence exchanges, visits of relevant experts on the creative economy and urban development, as well as through the returning of personalities from abroad: “Organisers and facilitators have tried to bring best practices, apply know-how from abroad, Western Europe” (director of a tourism agency). “The city has gained a lead over other cities in a broad region and the results will be apparent after a few years or a decade, as its success is future-proof” (editor on the art radio). “Every new institution involved in the program has some kind of foreign co-operation and courage and willingness to take a risk is much higher” (ECOC organiser).

The Europeanisation of cultural production and demand has enabled the city to be defined as ‘glocal’ which means connected to global and European cultural influences whilst keeping its own individuality. It can be said that changing the city would not have been possible without opening the flow of knowledge through brain-return and organising cultural exchanges. Although the half-yearly folklore lock-in has remained for a large part of the population, the latest world cultural trends have also found their place and helped to create a strong community linked to European cultural centres.

#### (iv) Legacy: Opportunities and Outcomes

The questionnaire surveys conducted in 2012–2014 showed a significant change in the positive perception of Košice in relation to the activities carried out under the ECOC 2013 project [37,44]. Positive perceptions were not present at the start of the project in 2012 and changes to the overall image were somewhat secondary to the ECOC project. The ratings went between enthusiasm and overwhelming criticism. However, this indirectly points to the evidence of a change in the city’s development trajectory, raising pride in the city and international acceptance. The project increased the confidence of its inhabitants and brought economic impulses (restaurant and hotel services, private investments around cultural places) to the wider city centre, as well as to the periphery of major urban areas. “Like other post-socialist cities, it is marked by an internal division into a centre and housing, which literally served only to sleep there” (Head of Local Development Agency).

The cultural shift of the city, led by young people, resulted in certain organisational abbreviations, improvisation, defensive marketing communication and disappointment from the older generation and the media. The ECOC stimulus enabled a breakthrough from a bad luck location on the periphery of the eastern Schengen border to a modern, homely and creative urban environment that is attractive to live in. “The Košice example shows that a long-term strategy of this type makes sense. It was the first project in Slovakia where culture and creativity were seen as key elements of economic development. This was followed by all infrastructure projects and long-term concepts of city change”, explains an external expert on cultural policy.

## 6. The Legacy of the ECOCs: Discussion and Comparison

In its beginning, the European Capital of Culture addressed exclusively cultural aims. As time has gone by, it has evolved towards more comprehensive aims attuned to the needs and ambitions of the hosting cities [3,8]. This evolution is evident when looking at the second-tier cities of Guimarães and Košice, which have shown somewhat different original profiles, sizes, project goals, results and, of course, legacies. The research made it possible to identify their mechanisms, likely working similarly in other ECOC or candidate cities.

Both cities have cultural potential in their history, while both have also been industrial centres for quite some time and have faced difficult economic times due to recent socio-economic and political turnovers. Guimarães has a strong national significance to the Portuguese nation and clearly has its main cultural heritage located in the heart of the city. Kosice, primarily an industrial city, is not as connected to national significance, but it defines itself as a unique locality and draws impulses from foreign cultural centres (e.g., Paris, London, Berlin, Linz, Graz).

In both cases, the citizens and media shared the unique opportunity of hosting the ECOC mega-event as a strategic instrument in their renovation and in rebranding themselves as cultural and

liveable cities and tourism destinations. However, this was inconsistent with the ECOC programme set-up and project strategic goals, especially in the case of Košice. The essential attractiveness of Guimarães is in the segment of cultural tourism, partly resulting from the strategic investment made by the local authorities 20 years ago. The nomination of the city as a Cultural Heritage city by UNESCO in 2001 helped a lot in this regard. Košice had not been a typical cultural/historical destination. Rather, the business and congress tourism segments had predominated. The organisers looked to hosting the ECOC 2013 as an opportunity to restructure the old industrial inheritance into an IT-driven creative city, which was confirmed by receiving the title of UNESCO Creative City of Media Art in 2017.

Several factors have been identified in the qualitative research explaining the different trajectories and legacies of two types of cities (Table 4). After five years, there is a clear common legacy for the two ECOC projects—an increase in the pride of the citizens (also due to the previous feeling of underestimation) and the visibility of the cities, demonstrated by higher attractiveness and a substantial increase in the number of visitors. Guimarães experienced an increase in the number of visitors immediately.

**Table 4.** ECOC project legacies after 5 years.

| Factor                                            | Guimarães                                                                                | Košice                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ECOC project context and strategy:</b>         |                                                                                          |                                                                                                   |
| <b>Size</b>                                       | Second-tier, smaller, one of the sub-regional centres                                    | Second-tier, dominant in region                                                                   |
| <b>Cultural heritage</b>                          | Compact, nationally significant                                                          | Regional significance                                                                             |
| <b>Spatial focus</b>                              | City centre                                                                              | Spread from the centre                                                                            |
| <b>Atmosphere</b>                                 | Closed, conservative                                                                     | Open to change                                                                                    |
| <b>Public expectations</b>                        | Cultural tourism, visibility                                                             | Tourism, visibility                                                                               |
| <b>National media support</b>                     | High                                                                                     | Mistrust and criticism                                                                            |
| <b>Competitors</b>                                | Braga, Porto                                                                             | Bratislava                                                                                        |
| <b>Strategy</b>                                   | Traditional: destination management and tourism                                          | Radical: urban change                                                                             |
| <b>Wheel of change</b>                            | Strengthening potential                                                                  | Creative destruction                                                                              |
| <b>Organisers</b>                                 | Continuity                                                                               | New kids on the block                                                                             |
| <b>Knowledge</b>                                  | Local and national                                                                       | Supranational                                                                                     |
| <b>Thematic focus</b>                             | History                                                                                  | Future                                                                                            |
| <b>ECOC legacy:</b>                               |                                                                                          |                                                                                                   |
| <b>Raised pride</b>                               | On city history                                                                          | On locality and region                                                                            |
| <b>Focus on structural change</b>                 | Implicit mechanisms: tourism and services                                                | Explicit externalities: creative industries and IT                                                |
| <b>Culture versus creative industries</b>         | Culture persists                                                                         | Clear shift to creative industries                                                                |
| <b>Mega-event continuity in cultural branding</b> | Half-way: European City of Sports, Eurovision National Song context, European Green City | European City of Sports, UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, European City of Volunteering, . . . |
| <b>New tourism brand</b>                          | Culture and history                                                                      | Vibrancy and 'glocality'                                                                          |
| <b>Atmosphere</b>                                 | Charming, quiet                                                                          | Urban, liveable, noisy                                                                            |

In contrast to Košice, Guimarães was able to enhance its tourist attractiveness just after hosting the ECOC 2012. This success was also due to the recent increase in the number of visitors to Portugal. This was supported by the title of Best World Destination 2017 in Europe by the World Travel Awards and three nominations for Porto (50 km from Guimarães) as the best European destination in 2012, 2014 and 2017. There was a fine and sustainable tourism increase even if it lost a part of its cultural

profile; besides tourists motivated by culture and heritage, the city is also attracting another type of visitor: those touring around the cities of the neighbouring territory.

Košice had to wait a few years to be discovered by foreign visitors, supported by the opening of several air connections. The development trajectory of Košice has succeeded in departing from the image of heavy industry. Moreover, the generational change and development of a strong IT industry have led to the rejuvenation of the city and the changing of its image into a modern European and vibrant city. The city's visibility is only partly interlinked to its historical monuments.

However, the comparison of the two projects shows the difference that arises mainly from the existence of historical and cultural heritage. Although the European Commission promotes new cultural dynamics and urban and economic development, cities such as Guimarães are shifted by the expectations of the citizens to continue the trajectory of cultural tourism and the promotion of historical monuments. Further, it might not be easy to overcome local closeness and change the city significantly, for example, into a vibrant creative hub because of the city's smaller size and strong local cultural values and traditions. In the case of Košice, a change in the trajectory, linked to urban development and rebranding, has been made with strong interventions in the structure of the local economy. Naturally, the prerequisites for culture-led development had to already exist in the city, but they would not have been expected if they had not been supported by new people, foreign knowledge and radical strategy.

## 7. Conclusions and Implications

The joint methodology of qualitative research has made it possible to understand the processes that took place in the cities in the five-year period after project completion. In this respect, this study is unique. The research has helped to build two categories of ECOC cities and to understand how the strategies and mechanisms leading to specific impacts and legacies are formed. Following the research questions, several new results can be highlighted.

### Strategies and Cultural Heritage:

It can be concluded that strong cultural heritage leads more to UNESCO's approach to development. UNESCO's cultural heritage is such a strong factor that it is difficult to leave the forthright development trajectory of using heritage in favour of promoting tourism and related industries. The focus on tourism means that eventual culture-led development is hindered by the lack of participation and activism and the economic potential of cultural and creative industries remains untapped. Culture-led development and change of a previous trajectory is more likely to happen in industrial cities with a chance of utilising culture in a different way. In Košice, creative destruction run by young artists and activists created changes leading to a new European image and the expansion of creative industries. A distinctness in the goals (culture-led urban development versus cultural tourism) was identified, as well as in the organisation model adopted.

In accordance with the empirical literature, an ECOC mega-event should not only aim at regenerating public spaces or enhancing social and cultural life [20,45]. In this respect, the presentation of a project as local (independent) or national makes a difference, manifested in increased activity, local buzz and more promotion on the European than the national scene. It allows greater openness to future changes and the expansion and discovery of new cultural sites, not only around historical sites.

### Rebranding, Tourism and Pride:

Neither city has succeeded in attracting greater numbers of visitors during the ECOC year, which should have been an anticipated result [21,46]. The tourism industry has not become a relevant strategic accelerator in changing local economic bases, and its effects are ambiguous and fragile. However, a more favourable tourism boost has been documented in Guimarães, although we can hardly distinguish the multiple parallel impacts of obtaining the status of Cultural World Heritage Site, hosting the ECOC 2012 and the increased tourist attractiveness attained by Portugal. A strong incentive for both cities was getting amplified visibility and increasing the civic pride [9,47].

### ECOC and New Dynamism:

If cities such as Guimarães or Košice can build on their untapped historical heritage, then the ECOC stimulus has a sizeable capacity to overcome the disadvantages of peripheral locations or to empower a city to emerge from the shadow of nearby competitive places. In any case, the opportunity to organise a cultural mega-event given by the Commission has fulfilled the long-term ECOC programme objectives. The interviewed actors confirmed its importance as a strategic instrument, enhancing the socio-economic and cultural development in both cities and promoting their image at a national and international level. As such, they contributed to the visibility of the richness and diversity of European cultures but also to sharing and promoting greater mutual understanding among European citizens.

We are aware of some constraints that arise from performing a thematic qualitative analysis aimed at constructing theories that are grounded in the collected information and data. The assessment of the legacy of an ECOC is a hard and complex issue due to several dimensions, both material and immaterial, and the level of sustainability of the impacts to consider. The option to base our evaluation on a small group of stakeholders from the two cities under scrutiny was one that we believe makes sense. Indeed, the thematic analysis revealed the factors that influenced the formulation of different strategies and brought about different legacies. The results have a clear logic that would not have arisen without comparing the two cities, although relying on a larger panel of actors would have allowed for a more reliable picture of the legacy, the strategy involved and the constraints that have resulted in that legacy. The created research framework can now be applied to a larger group of cities, and a quantitative model on the issues of strategy and legacy can be proposed and tested.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following materials are available online at <http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/5/1469/s1>: Interview Guidelines for Guimarães and Košice.

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