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Gendering Cities of Culture.
**City/ Capital of Culture Mega-events and the Potential for
Gender Equality.**

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By
Barbara Grabher
B.A., University of Vienna.
M.A., Utrecht University/ University of Granada.

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Abstract

In the context of the transformative ambitions of event-based, culture-led urban regeneration, this thesis interrogates the production of cultures of gender equality in *City/ Capital of Culture* mega-events. Inspired by Donostia/ San Sebastián as *European Capital of Culture* in 2016 and analysed in detail in Hull's celebration of the *UK City of Culture* in 2017, the investigation seeks to understand the relevance of socio-cultural values in the celebration of art, culture and heritage in the urban context. The investigation analyses the *City/ Capital of Culture* mega-events through a conceptualisation of their socio-cultural significance, which is informed by liminal and carnivalesque event characteristics.

Relating to the politics, practices and perceptions of gender equality in mega-events, the research is based on an ethnographic study of six equality-themed events in the field sites of Hull and Donostia/ San Sebastián. The analysis develops from a relational reading of the two sites: due to its strong emphasis on negotiations of socio-cultural values, Donostia/ San Sebastián informs my research focus in Hull.

Through this study, I argue for an understanding of *City/ Capital of Culture* mega-events as 'contested spaces' (O'Callaghan, 2012: 201), in which socio-cultural values and, in particular, cultures of gender equality are negotiated. My analysis highlights that the investigated mega-events embrace the complexities of the production of cultures of gender equality as they give voice to different meanings. Rather than a singular notion of equality, cultures of gender equality are celebrated in their plurality through the *City/ Capital of Culture* framework. I also interrogate the role of audiences as crucial contributors to the meaning-making process of festivals, events and celebrations. Encounters and dynamics with equality are central to the negotiations of socio-cultural values in *City/ Capital of Culture* mega-events. Beyond audience engagements and content productions, my investigation explores how infrastructures frame the celebrations of equality and can determine the contested spaces of *City/ Capital of Culture* mega-events as sites for negotiations of socio-cultural values and productions of cultures of gender equality.

Resumen

Esta tesis investiga la producción de culturas de igualdad de género en los mega eventos de las *Ciudades /Capitales de la Cultura*, en el contexto de los objetivos transformadores y de regeneración urbana que promueven las actividades culturales. Basada en la obtención del título de *Capital Europea de la Cultura* por Donostia/ San Sebastián en 2016 y centrada especialmente en las celebraciones de Hull como *UK City of Culture* en 2017, la investigación tiene como objetivo estudiar la relevancia de los valores socio-culturales en la celebración del arte, la cultura y el patrimonio en el contexto urbano. En el análisis se conceptualiza el mega evento por su significado socio-cultural, que viene determinado por sus características liminales y carnalescas de celebración.

Atendiendo a las políticas, prácticas y percepciones de la igualdad de género en los mega eventos, la investigación realiza un estudio etnográfico de seis actividades culturales de temática relacionada con la igualdad en localizaciones de Hull y Donostia/ San Sebastián. El análisis se articula sobre una comparación entre los dos sitios; el gran énfasis de las negociaciones sobre el valor socio-cultural de Donostia/ San Sebastián determina mi enfoque sobre Hull.

En mi estudio, propongo una interpretación de los mega eventos *Ciudad/ Capital de la Cultura* como ‘*contested spaces*’ (O’Callaghan, 2012: 201) en los que se negocian los valores socio-culturales y, en particular, las culturas de igualdad de género. Mi análisis pone de manifiesto que los mega eventos investigados abarcan las complejidades de la producción de las culturas de igualdad de género y ponen de manifiesto diferentes significados. En vez de una noción de igualdad única, las culturas de igualdad de género se celebran en cuanto a su pluralidad en el marco de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura*. Por otro lado, estudio el papel del público y su contribución al proceso de construcción de los significados de los festivales, eventos y celebraciones. Los encuentros con y las dinámicas de la igualdad son cruciales en las negociaciones de los valores socio-culturales en los mega eventos de la *Ciudad /Capital de la Cultura*. Además de la implicación del público y de la producción de contenidos, mi investigación explora cómo las infraestructuras dan forma a las celebraciones de la igualdad y determinan los espacios de contestación de los mega eventos de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* en cuanto a sus valores socio-culturales y su producción de culturas de igualdad de género.

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List of Abbreviations

AF	Assemble Fest
BP	British Petroleum
CA	Cultural Actor
COC	City/ Capital of Culture
CPPI	Culture, Place and Policy Institute
DSS2016	Donostia/ San Sebastián European Capital of Culture 2016
DSS2016 Foundation	Donostia/ San Sebastián European Capital of Culture 2016 Foundation
ECOC	European Capital of Culture
FF	Freedom Festival
FG	Focus Group Interview
Hull 2017 Ltd	Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Limited
Hull2017	Hull UK City of Culture 2017
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual
LGBT50	Name of the commemorative event in celebration of the 50 th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales.
OP	Observing-Participant
PA	Political Actor
SKIN	Name of exhibition SKIN – Freud, Mueck and Tunick.
UKCOC	UK City of Culture
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
WOW	Women of the World Festival

Introduction

Gendering Cities of Culture



Figure 1: 'Change is Happening' at Humber Street/ Fruit Market.

In Hull, claims of occurring change scream in green letters from back walls facing an alleyway in the Fruit Market area of the city's Marina District. The announcement by Wykeland Development¹, *Change is Happening*, characterises the aspirations and perspectives upon which the city in the North of England capitalises. In response to over 70 years of economic decline, transformative spirits shape the city's ongoing ambitions for development.

In 2013, through the publication of the *Hull City Plan*, the City Council initiated the transformative strategies in which the re-imagination of the city for its future was outlined (Culture Place and Policy Institute, 2018). With an emphasis on Hull as a hub for green energy and a world-class visitor destination, the city's celebration of the *UK City of Culture* (UKCOC) in 2017² was driven by aspirations of regeneration. Liverpool's and Glasgow's successes as *European Capital/ City of Culture*³ (ECOC) in 2008 and 1990 characterised the *City/ Capital of Culture*⁴ (COC) movement as a catalyst fostering event-based, culture-led transformation (García & Cox, 2013). As a national interpretation of the European title, the Department of Culture, Media and Sports established the UKCOC award in 2009 and inspired the transformative ambitions for Hull, as 'a city coming out of the shadows' (Hull City Council, 2013: 4).

Strategic city development underpins the impetus for Hull2017; however, one of the most visible manifestation of the mega-event is the celebration of '365 days of transformative culture' (Hull 2017 Ltd, 2015: 14). Within a yearlong programme of arts, culture and heritage, gender equality was a key area for the celebration. Major festivals including the *Women of the World* festival, the commemorative *LGBT50* celebrations and the annually reoccurring *Freedom Festival* place the city's transformative process in a gender-sensitive, equality-themed agenda.

Observing Hull's ambitions for change through the event-based regeneration model, the research project, *Gendering Cities of Culture*, seeks to understand the transformations that the celebrations of a COC mega-event

¹ Hull-based Property Development Company with a large involvement in the regeneration of the Humber Street, Fruit Market area of the city (Wykeland Development, 2019).

² Subsequently referred to as Hull2017.

³ In the later referenced administrative changes of 1999, the title was changed from the original 'European City of Culture' to the current 'European Capital of Culture.'

⁴ While I am aware of the COC mega-events as a global phenomenon (S. Green, 2017a), in this outline, I concentrate mainly on ECOC and UKCOC as the main initiatives of interest in this study.

enable. I concentrate on the ideological and political dimension of culture and its transformative potential within event-based, culture-led regenerative processes. Understanding COC mega-events as ‘contested spaces’ (O’Callaghan, 2012: 201), I question how socio-cultural values are negotiated and expressed in the celebration of 365 days of arts and culture. Within this broad interest on cultural transformation and the production of socio-cultural values in COC mega-events, I focus on the negotiation of cultures of gender equality in the celebratory setting of programmed activities during the COC mega-event of Hull2017. My research is driven by an emphasis on the socio-cultural significance of events, which is expressed in celebrations’ capacities to produce meaning.

Donostia/ San Sebastián’s tenure of the ECOC title in 2016⁵ inspires my research interest. With the slogan, *Culture of Co-existence*, the city’s application for the title embraces the socio-cultural potential of COC mega-events. Encouraging explorations of the ways in which humans live together in the specific context of Donostia/ San Sebastián and the Basque Country, but also in the broader context of the European and global community of nations, DSS2016 contributes to the re-evaluation of the capacities of COC mega-events. Acknowledging DSS2016 as an important contributor, Immler and Sakkers (2014: 22) observe a ‘(re)programming’ trend of the aims and objectives of COC mega-events. Hereby, attention of COC mega-events shift from economic regenerative perspectives towards cultural transformative ambitions. Inspired by DSS2016’s ambitions, I question the cultural transformative potential and the production of cultures of gender equality in the context of COC mega-events. Hence, the project of DSS2016 frames my investigative lens for the research in Hull2017.

Beyond the research context, in this introduction, I address the research questions as well as the research methodology, design and analytical approach. Furthermore, I frame the research context with a focus on urban development/ regeneration, event and gender studies. The final two sections of this introduction provide definitions of key terms such as ‘event’, ‘culture’ and ‘gender’ as well as an outline of the thesis’ structure.

Research Questions

The investigation is guided by my general interest in the potential of COC mega-events to produce socio-cultural values. I introduce this overarching research

⁵ Subsequently referred to as DSS2016.

question in reference to DSS2016 in chapter 4. In the chapters 5 to 7, I refine my main research question and the focus on the mega-event of Hull2017:

How are cultures of gender equality produced through the programme of the COC mega-event of Hull2017?

According to the analytical approach and its emphasis on the audience engagements, content production and infrastructural conditions, I interrogate the data in relation to the following sub-questions:

- 1) In what ways are audiences engaging with produced cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017?
- 2) In what ways are cultures of gender equality performed through the programmed activities of Hull2017?
- 3) What kind of infrastructural arrangements accommodate the production of cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017?

On the basis of the overarching research theme, my central research question, and following sub-questions, I outline the potential of COC mega-events for the production of cultures of gender equality in the transformative atmosphere that the celebration of the city enables.

Methodology, Research Design and the analytical Approach

In the form of an ethnographic study, I investigate the execution of the 365 days of cultural activities in the context of Hull2017 and DSS2016. Reading the two field sites in relation to each other, I learn from DSS2016's ambitions of cultural transformation and employ these insights in the context of Hull2017. Guided by an inductive approach, the data collection combines the voices of political and cultural actors as well as residents ⁶ who engage with and explore the transformative atmosphere of the COC mega-events and their potential for the production of cultures of gender equality.

Through associated stakeholders, the research design highlights the politics, practices and perceptions of cultures of gender equality in COC mega-events. Politics of gender equality are investigated through political actors, who curate the mega-event's cultural programme. The practices are portrayed through cultural actors such as artists and producers, who engage artistically with cultures of gender equality. Furthermore, residents contribute to the perceptive interpretations of the cultures of gender equality, as produced by the political and

⁶ The perspectives of residents were only considered in the case of Hull2017.

practical perspectives. I borrow this triad from a common understanding of the art market, which refers to the institution, artist and audience as key stakeholders in artistic production, as Hlavajova (2017) summarises. On the level of the research design, I relate the conceptualisation of the art market to my research field. This design, and its focus on stakeholders, works well as orientation in my fieldwork approach as it structures the complex field of COC mega-events. However, in my further analysis, I move away from a focus on stakeholders. In accordance with Hlavajova's (2017) suggestion, I direct my analytical attention towards processes and practices that the investigated stakeholders experience and employ in the celebration of gender equality. Therefore, I translate the research design's focus on stakeholders into an analytical approach concerning the practices that enable a production of cultures of gender equality. While drawing on data collected in reference to the initial triangulation of voices, the analysis focuses on audience engagements, performed content and infrastructural conditions as three practical perspectives.

Contribution to Knowledge

On content and methodological levels, the research makes an original contribution to the study of COC mega-events. Firstly, regarding the content-based contributions of this research, investigations of the cultural dimension of COC mega-events are surprisingly limited in number. While COC mega-events and their urban regenerative potential attract wide academic interests, the canon is dominated by the economic and social regenerative agendas. The explicit attention to processes and practices of meaning-making in COC mega-events is represented only through a few exceptions: these studies predominantly concentrate on the cultural dimension and the production of socio-cultural values in COC mega-events through a focus on the negotiation of national and transnational identities⁷. While I understand and appreciate this focus, I seek a deeper understanding of the cultural productions of COC mega-events. Therefore, I explore how gender equality contributes to the national and transnational imaginary enacted in the celebrations of the investigated COC mega-events. My attention to cultures of gender equality as a socio-cultural value produced in celebrations fills a crucial research gap in the understanding of the potential of COC mega-events and their transformative intentions.

⁷ Further discussion of the research canons is provided in chapter 1: *Situating the Field*.

Secondly, due to an emphasis on a qualitative and relational reading of the research field, this research project contributes to explorations of innovative methodologies. Qualitative and relational approaches are not novel in studies of COC mega-events. However, they continue to be marginalised within the broader research canons of the subject area. In the fundamental report *European Capitals of Culture: Success strategies and long-term effects*,⁸ García and Cox (2013) outline a dominance of quantitative studies over qualitative enquiries of COC mega-events. They argue that due to a lack of appropriate methods, the cultural effects of COC mega-events are rarely researched. Furthermore, in the report's recommendations, García and Cox (2013) draw attention to comparative perspectives and relational understandings of different COC host cities. The scholars point out that research on specific, urban case studies are trending. However, in order to improve learning and knowledge transfer, the authors encourage the investigation of COC host cities and mega-events in relation to each other through comparative studies. Picking up García and Cox's (2013) observations and recommendations, my research approach is ethnographically driven and focuses on the qualitative nature of the collected data and analysis. In support of the scholars' suggestion for knowledge transfer through comparative studies, I work on a relational basis with the two field sites of Hull2017 and DSS2016. Hereby, DSS2016 informs the investigative lens, which I apply in my research of Hull2017.

Therefore, I situate the originality of my research in regards to the thematic explorations of the cultural dimension of COC mega-events with specific attention to gendered perspectives of the event framework. Additionally, this research contributes to the methodological diversity of COC research.

Framing the Research Context

This thesis requires an academic contextualisation that attends to multiple disciplinary influences. In the following sub-sections, I combine perspectives of urban development/ regeneration, event and gender studies. Embracing these academics fields and the complexities that emerge within and between them, this

⁸ This report was commissioned by the European Commission in 2013 in order to create a comprehensive review of the long-term effects that host cities experienced from their designation as ECOC in any given year. Next to the analysis by Myerscough (1994) and the so called Palmer/RAE reports (Palmer/ Rae Associates, 2004a, 2004b), this document is a crucial influence in the COC research canons.

section grounds the research epistemologically. Event and gender studies frame the theoretical discussion and are further explored in the conceptual framework in chapter 3. The focus on urban development and regeneration contributes to the understanding of the field, which is further elaborated in the first chapter: *Situating the Field*.

Urban Development in Focus

Drawing upon Jones and Evans' (2008) book, *Urban Regeneration in the UK*, I summarise urban development as a process directed by strategic influences, in order to advance physical and symbolic transformations of city landscapes. The authors open the discussion with the question 'What is urban regeneration?' and explain that 'Cities are never finished [...], land uses change, plots are redeveloped, the urban area itself expands and occasionally shrinks' (Jones & Evans, 2008: 1). According to the authors, development is a continuous process of change engrained in the urban space. Beyond these common developmental processes, urban regeneration constitutes a transformative process, which is based on 'political strateg[ies] using a whole range of planning regulations and policies to encourage' developments (Jones & Evans, 2008: 4).

Since the 1980s, urban regeneration processes have been an important field of study. Scholars looking at the issue from different perspectives, including economics, geography and sociology, have engaged with the subject in order to understand the consequences for urban populations and their economic, social and cultural development (Roberts & Sykes, 2008).

In the UK, urban regeneration as a term and strategy arose in the 1980s in relationship to policy atmospheres under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. While the 1980s serve as a reference point for the contemporary understanding of urban regeneration, Jones and Evans (2008) clarify that strategically planned urban development agendas are not a new phenomenon. With reference to the 1950s and 1960s, the authors highlight previous urban development strategies addressed as reconstruction in response to the explosive growth of cities in the early twentieth century and destructions of World War II. While they argue that urban transformations are a reoccurring phenomenon, the authors' interpretations of the contemporary urban regeneration era need to be read in wider economic, governmental and environmental contexts. Therefore, in the mid-twentieth century, the continuous decline and final crash of traditional industries in the UK and other parts of Europe fostered the need to re-think cities

for a new generation. Strongly influenced by neoliberal⁹ interests, the 1980s agenda of urban regeneration became not only an economic but also a ‘moral crusade’ (Jones & Evans, 2008: 2) of the Thatcher regime. In order to compensate for the negative effects of deindustrialisation, but also with the aim to ‘attract new investments in the global economy’, urban regenerative approaches create the strategic agendas of cities and nations in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. Referencing the historical roots, but further focusing on contemporary circumstances, Matthew and O’Brien (2016) contextualise the urban regenerative agenda of the UK in its current situation. Their book *After Urban Regeneration* sets the governmental perspectives into the context of their contemporary financial realities. While built over decades, the regenerative perspectives of governmental programmes are driven into precarity in the context of the global financial crisis of 2008/09 and the resultant austerity politics. Consequently, contemporary regenerative schemes are under pressure of legitimisation. Hence, explorations of alternative ways for regeneration frame current debates and strategic developments.

Event-based, culture-led Regeneration

Culture-led regeneration can offer one of these alternative ways and is particularly relevant in the investigated strategies of urban development related to COC mega-events. Here, cultural assets and infrastructures are instrumentalised for their social and economic benefits.

Bianchini and Parkinson’s (1993) edited volume *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience* pioneered the discussion of how culture and regeneration come together as a tool for urban development. As the authors outline, the mid-twentieth century was a highly relevant period in regards to the use of culture and related policies for regenerative interests. Bianchini (1993) summarises that in the 1950s and 1960s culture was a fairly unimportant field of policy-making. The politicisation of cultural policy occurred in the 1970s and were directly linked with urban social movements such as ‘feminism, youth revolts, environmentalism, community action, gay and ethnic/

⁹ I use the term ‘neoliberalism’ in accordance with McGuigan’s (2005: 229-230) description of the ‘liberalism in political economy’. More specifically, the term addresses the ‘revival of free market economy policy and its rapid diffusion around the world with enormous social-structural and cultural consequences.’ As considered in this section but as well further outlined through the thesis, neoliberal globalisation profoundly influences and shapes the research field of urban regeneration, culture-led mega-events and the production of cultures of gender equality.

racial minority activism' (Bianchini, 1993: 9). These movements influenced not only alternative cultural scenes, but also the left-controlled local authorities in encouraging the politicisation of the policy genre of culture and arts in cities. In the 1980s and 1990s, political shifts towards neoliberal regimes introduced a new base for legitimacy in the discussion of culture as grounds for regenerative policy-making. Bianchini (1993: 13) elucidates:

The language of 'subsidy' was gradually replaced by the language of 'investment'. Community access, popular creativity and grassroots participation became less important, for example, than the role of prestigious flagship cultural projects in promoting a city's positive image, or the development of sector strategies aimed at maximising the economic potential of local cultural industries.

The shifting focus repositioned cultural policy as a strategy of image regeneration feeding into the positioning of cities in the global competition of urban spaces. Driven by a rebirth ethos, anxious display of urban sophistication and cosmopolitanism or the practice of reconciliation, culture-led regeneration strategies have defined urban agendas in the UK and Europe since the 1980s, and have attracted significant academic attention.

For example, Evans and Shaw (2006) identify three common practices how culture-led regeneration is enacted in its contemporary conceptions. The approaches include iconic building projects, cultural clusters or neighbourhoods, and the creation of cultural dynamism based on Florida's (2002, 2005) popular idea of the 'creative class'. In addition to this three-folded perspective on how culture-led regeneration is enacted, my interest centres on event-based approaches. The authors touch upon these only in the margins of their outline.

Due to the structures and practices prevalent in COC initiatives, the discussion of events and their relationship with urban regeneration becomes central. I provide an in-depth analysis of the relationship between COC mega-events and regenerative ambitions in chapter 1: *Situating the Field*. For the purpose of this introduction, I want to highlight the relevance of the event-based, regenerative agendas through Cudny's (2016) interpretation of the festivalisation trend. The author describes festivals as a 'popular element' (Cudny, 2016: 79) for aspired urban transformation. The trend represents a complex development process in which festivals influence the creation and experiences of urban spaces. Employing the popular modality, urban spaces are 'revitalised and restructured'

with further capacities to ‘perform many social and cultural functions with regard to city inhabitants and visiting tourists’ (Cudny, 2016: 79). With an interest in the cultural transformative potential, festivalisation trends frame my understanding of the processes embraced by culture-led urban mega-events such as the COC phenomenon. Accordingly, Evans (2003: 425-426) summarises how the UK and ECOC initiatives interact and employ event-based, culture-led regeneration strategies, while reflecting on the structure and execution of the festivalisation trend:

[COC mega-events have] acted as an effective ‘Trojan horse’, by which structural economic adjustment policies and funding have been diverted into arts-led regeneration [...] generally bypassing national and even city cultural and economic development policy. [...] The use of culture as a conduit for the branding of the ‘European Project’ has added fuel to culture city competition, whilst at the same time celebrating an official version of the European urban renaissance.

As a particular event-based, culture-led regeneration strategy, COC initiatives employ the festivalisation trends relevant to urban spaces and their regenerative processes.

On Festivals, Celebrations and Events

While I clarify the term ‘event’ in a later section of this introduction, I concentrate in this section on the developments of festivals, events and celebrations and their related research canons.

In the form of a procedural overview, Newbold et al. (2015) summarise the developments of the European contemporary event sector throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The scholars argue that in the 1940s and 50s, arts and culture events developed with the explicit interest expressed through the notion of arts for arts’ sake. The following two decades were marked by an orientation towards the community. Festivals became forums of political activism and symbolic resistance. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, a radical transformation can be observed as the formerly politically informed and fringe phenomenon faced commercialisation and commodification. Cudny (2016) argues that in this period, events became an economic industry.

In order to feedback to the lucrative industry sector and driven by management and tourism interests, research agendas were established in the later phases of the contemporary developments (I. Lamond & Platt, 2016). Not

bound to a particular discipline, event studies gather multiple perspectives and combine academic and practice-led insights. As a field of study rather than a disciplinary cluster, events and festival studies have also entered higher education curricula (Getz & Page, 2016).

The focus on events as a sectorial category strictly narrows the concept of events. In order to understand the subject and its research development better, I broaden my perspective and address celebrations as the central entity in the research field.

Celebrations are markers in society, which play with notions and values that societies and groups share. As ritualised acts, celebrations mark transitions, reaffirm status and belief and create moments of release (Falassi, 1987a). With such attention to the social and cultural function of celebrations, Newbold et al. (2015) summarise that historically much of the work on celebrations has been done through an anthropological understanding. Disciplines such as anthropology and sociology pioneered the research canons (Andrew & Leopold, 2013). In the edited volume *Time out of Time*, Falassi (1987b) acknowledges Goethe's descriptions of the Roman Carnival as one of the first ethnographic descriptions of a celebration. He highlights his account not only as a narrative of 'a pleasant spectacle, a joyful amusement, an aesthetic experience bringing exhilaration to the spirit' (Falassi, 1987b: 13). But he also considers Goethe's input to be an analysis of the festive as a 'mirror of culture and a metaphor of life itself' (Falassi, 1987b: 14). This focus on the interpretation of culture through the study of celebrations shapes the anthropological approach to the subject matter and provides a relevant perspective on events, festivals and celebrations beyond their economic profitability. Even though anthropological and sociological studies shape the origins of the field of events and celebrations, Frost (2015) points out that contemporary texts on event studies acknowledge the relevance of the anthropological and sociological disciplines only on the margins or in footnotes.

Opposing the overwhelming amount of operational, managerial studies of events, my research is inspired by a thematic sub-group within the mainstream canons of events studies. In 2016, a number of event studies scholars in the UK gathered for the symposium: *Making Events Critical*. The initial symposium led to the formation and discussion of scholarly connections summarised as Critical Event Studies. Critical Event Studies departs from a critique of the

commercialisation of events and related research. Lamond and Platt (2016b) point out how event studies have been reduced to practical interest in event management and tourism, while sociological and anthropological questions are marginalised in both educational and research agendas. In light of such an imbalance of attention, the authors demand a critical rethinking of their own research focus and proclaim:

Critical Event Studies takes the concept of ‘event’, within the field of events studies, to be essentially contested. It does not shy away from that contestation – nor does it see contestation as a problem to be resolved – instead it recognises this essential contestation as a creative dynamic that powers and enhances research, and understanding, placing it at the forefront of our work as academics interested in events. (Lamond & Platt, 2016: 5)

Critical Event Studies question the very essence of its own field – the event itself. Within my own research, this approach grounds my conceptual interpretation of events. As explored in further detail in the conceptual chapter (3), Finkel (2015) points out that events not only serve a function but are also social and cultural practices themselves. Thus, my focus lies on the conceptual and theoretical discussion of the phenomenon of festivals.

While my investigative focus on the production of socio-cultural values is embedded within the general trends of Critical Event scholarship, I explore the analytical approaches to gender within festival and event contexts in the following outline.

Gender-specific Attention in the Study of Events

Pielichaty (2015: 237) highlights that ‘festivals are a significant site for the investigation of gender’. *LGBT Pride* events as well as music festivals with political activist motives illustrate the powerful relationship between celebrations and politics since the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, Coyle and Platt (2015: 275) declare: ‘Using festivity to champion a particular political viewpoint or as an act of collective activism is nothing new.’

While scholars such as Pielichaty (2015) as well as Coyle and Platt (2015) showcase the relationship, Platt and Finkel (2018) clarify that the synergies between gender and event studies are only emerging. Current gender-sensitive and event-related research is mainly influenced by leisure, tourism and consumer studies (Coyle & Platt, 2015; Hahm et al., 2018; Puar, 2002). Goulding and Saren

(2009) reason the limited history through the independent developments of the two research agendas of the study subjects. Due to their simultaneously marginal positions within dominant disciplinary contexts, only recently have a growing number of studies embraced, either implicitly or explicitly, the subjects in relation to each other. While the subject matter is limited in its extent and history, related scholars continue to argue that celebrations illustrate in multiple ways imbrications with gender (Markwell & Waitt, 2013).

In this fairly recent history, I observe a heightened attention in scholarly literature towards certain types of events. These celebrations are explicitly marked by their immediately inscribed cultural interests and related target audiences. Consequently, LGBT events dominate the scholarly canons of gender and events studies. The main body of research in this area explores Pride parades and parties, but expands into general considerations of LGBT-related event infrastructures.¹⁰ Additionally, even though numerically outnumbered, feminist festivals are under observation by researchers. The *Michigan Womyn's Music Festival* has a crucial role in the debate: Size, popularity and recent controversies concerning access policies raised scholarly interest in the discussion of festivals, politics and gender.¹¹ Events without an explicit gender-sensitive or sexuality-explicit focus are underrepresented in the considerations of events as sites for the production of gender.¹²

Three analytical perspectives summarise the examined literature concerning the study of gender and events. Firstly, scholarly discussions question the ways in which events foster and create collective identities. Hahm et al. (2018) exemplify this perspective by examining events in the LGBT community and the associated social movement. The authors suggest that *LGBT Pride* events primarily function as a catalyst for processes of collective identification. Secondly, festive events are investigated as a site for the reproduction of gender stereotypes, relations and hierarchies. To this end, Pielichaty (2015: 237) recognises that leisure spaces such as festivals 'serve as sites for "gender work" where femininities and masculinities are made and reconstructed'. Therefore, the presence of gender

¹⁰ See Ammaturo (2016); Browne (2007); Hahm et al. (2018); Johnston (2007); Jones (2010); Kates (2003); Kates & Belk (2001); Kenttamaa Squires (2017); Luongo (2002); Markwell (2002); Markwell & Waitt (2009); Morris (2005); Waitt & Gorman-Murray (2008); and Waitt & Stapel (2011).

¹¹ See Browne (2009); Cvetkovich & Wahng (2001); and Eder, Staggenborg, & Sudderth (1995).

¹² See (Goulding & Saren, 2009; Johnson & Up Helly Aa For Aa, 2019).

on festive occasions becomes subject to examination. The author's observations also influence the third thematic enquiry: gender work is not only observed in its hegemonic patterns of a binary, but also in transgressive and explorative manners. The perceived opportunity for freedom and liberation is assumed with the explorative interpretations of gender categorisations and sexual orientations.¹³

Transformation, Gender and Events

Combining the discussions of urban development/ regeneration, event and gender studies, I emphasise the transformative potential that relates to each category in this correlation. In the case of urban development and regeneration, the transformative ambitions are most explicit and inherent in the above-mentioned descriptions. With the intention to transform urban spaces for a new generation, new urban imaginaries are created (Jones & Evans, 2008). In this context, events are seen as a fruitful strategy for transformative ambitions. They are conceptually and empirically characterised through a transgressive, subversive potential in relation to their conceptualisation as liminal and carnivalesque experiences, as outlined in further detail in the conceptual framework in chapter 3 (Bakhtin, 1968; V. Turner, 1974, 1982, 1989). In light of the liminal, carnivalesque features of events and their influence on urban developmental/ regenerative agendas, I argue that gender becomes a central component of the negotiation of cultural transformation. In regards to equality-themed events, negotiations, explorations and expressions of gender and gender equality are embedded in the cultural transformative atmospheres (Pielichaty, 2015; Ravenscroft & Gilchrist, 2009).

Defining Terms

Besides the epistemological embedding provided by the research framework, this introduction clarifies frequently used terms relevant in the study. In the following sections, I discuss the usage of the terms 'event', 'culture', 'gender' and 'gender equality'.

The impossible Task of defining Events

This study uses the term 'events' as a generic notion to refer to the investigated phenomenon. I regularly substitute the term for other generic terms such as 'activity', 'festival' or 'celebration'. These alterations are mainly a stylistic choice.

¹³ See Browne (2007); Jones (2010); Kates (2003); Kenttamaa Squires (2017); Morris (2005); Pielichaty (2015); Tokofsky (1999); and Ware (2001).

However, as outlined in the previous research framework and forthcoming conceptual discussion in chapter 3, the substitutional references address the anthropological roots in which the research analysis is based. The referenced notions are kept fairly broad on purpose: as the phenomenological characteristics and in particular their experiences are key to my study, a reductionist definition of the used terminology would not allow engagements with all the sensations and dynamics captured in this research.

In the context of event studies, the compositional term ‘planned events’ (Getz & Page, 2016: 4) is prominently used. Due to strong interests in managerial perspectives of events, the adjective ‘planned’ becomes relevant as studied events constitute the result of an organisational process. Beyond hegemonic interests in event management, my research is directed towards the experiences of planned events. This focus requires me to conceptualise so-called planned events through sensations of surprise and immediacy (E. Turner, 2012). In my analysis I concentrate on the moments of spontaneity and immediateness in ‘planned’ event as I focus on the experiential accounts. Therefore, I drop the attribution ‘planned’ and refer to the overarching term ‘events’ for the investigated phenomenon.

Other commonly used attributes refer to the purposes of events. Terminologies such as ‘sporting events’ (Finkel, 2015: 218) or ‘combined arts events’ (Finkel, 2009: 3) characterise events in reference to their key purpose. While I investigate events, which could be categorised as combined arts events, I find this categorisation arbitrary for the aim of this study. Rather than referring to the purpose of the investigated events, in my descriptions, I concentrate on the thematic interests of the event. Therefore, I refer to the investigated events as ‘equality-themed events’ to express the thematic dedication to gender-sensitive and equality-provoking contents.

The notion ‘mega-event’ is another relevant as well as contested term for this study and my usage of the term in reference to COC events requires clarification. Research participants have criticised my choice to refer to COC events as mega-events. Their critique grounds in the comparison of the ‘mega’ features of COC events in relation to other events such as for example the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012*. With reference to a much smaller budget, scope and reach, the attribution ‘mega’ for COC events is under continuous discussion. According to Roche’s (2017) classification of events, COC events

would be categorised as ‘hallmark’ or ‘special’ events rather than ‘mega-events’. However, my usage of the term considers the ‘mega’ feature beyond the operational consideration of scope and scale of events. Due to the attention gathered in academic, policy and practical contexts, I consider the attribution of ‘mega’ to COC events as a crucial characteristic. Rather than identifying and characterising events on the basis of their operational procedures, my focus lies on the importance of events for the locality in which they are based. As outlined in the first chapter, *Situating the Field*, Hull’s celebration of the UKCOC title needs to be seen in the city’s lack of attention in the regional and national cultural scene. Having been granted the ‘badge of authority’ (Redmond, 2009: 2) through their successful bid for the UKCOC title, the expectations and aspirations based on the celebrations are ‘mega’ for the city of Hull. Even though, Hull2017 does not represent a mega-event in regards to the operational features, I value the 365-days of the city’s celebration as a mega-event, in order to pay respect to the city’s extraordinary efforts and experiences as Hull2017.

What Culture?

The need to define the term ‘culture’ is exemplified in the description of my research project: I investigate cultures of gender equality in a culture-led mega-event, entitled City or Capital of Culture. Within this simple sentence, ‘culture’ is referenced three times, but on each occasion a different notion of ‘culture’ is addressed.

Primarily, I clarify my own interpretation of the notion of ‘culture’ in relation to the investigation of cultures of gender equality. My considerations are informed by anthropological debates. For instance, Hall’s (1997: 1) outline of culture as a conversation and a web of relationships speaks to my research interests: ‘to put it simply, culture is about shared meanings’. I assume culture is a form of collective ideology or shared conceptual map. Culture shapes social values and beliefs. The notion is a system of classifications, which members of the community are socialised in and familiar with. In respect to the socio-cultural practices of events, I use the term in an interpretation that relates culture with practices of negotiation. Hall (in Procter, 2004: 1) states that: ‘questions of culture [...] are absolutely deadly political questions’. Interpreting Hall’s conceptualisations, Procter (2004: 1) further highlights ‘that culture is not something to simply appreciate, or study; it is also a critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially

unsettled'. Particularly, in regards to the transformative potential that contextualises the production of cultures of gender equality in COC mega-events, I am continuously facing redefinitions, evaluations and negotiations of shared meanings and therefore culture.

Alongside my understanding of cultures of gender equality, the project description referred to the term 'culture' in its attributional nature. 'Cultural industries' and 'culture-led mega-events' refer to an instrumentalisation of cultural assets. So-called culture-led approaches have been addressed as a regenerative strategy in the previously presented research frame. In synthesis, the compositional usage of the term refers to an instrumentalisation of artistic and cultural productions for the purpose of its regenerative, economic or social potential (Pritchard, 2016).

Finally, the reference to 'culture' in the title of COC mega-events requires further attention. A comprehensive outline of the conceptual and practical developments of the notion 'culture' within COC mega-events requires a separate investigation and therefore only a brief summary can be provided. The contemporary usages of the term 'culture' in COC mega-events reflect a progressive definition and continuous expansion of the term. While the guidelines of the ECOC and UKCOC initiatives give little definition to the term, the practical developments of the notion in COC mega-events have moved from a narrow definition of culture as traditional artistic disciplines towards a widely encompassing notion. Several contemporary and future host cities foster an anthropological interpretation of the term. In the analytical discussion of DSS2016's negotiation of socio-cultural values in chapter 4, the notion of 'culture' features further and is addressed in more elaborate forms.

Gender and Gender Equality as a socio-cultural Values

Distancing myself from a biological interpretation of sex, I address gender as a product of socio-cultural norms. Based on socialisations, individuals enact gender identifications. Therefore, rather than 'being' of one gender, I argue that individuals and communities are 'doing' gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As a social construct, gender continuously intersects with other markers of identity. This intersectionality links the practices of gender with other categories of identification including ethnicity or class among others (Holvino, 2010). Due to the research developments and subsequent focus, my attention is particularly set

on the intersecting practices of gender and sexuality in the context of the investigated culture-led mega-events.

In the context of this research, gender socialisation should be understood in relation to political movements working towards gender equality. The previously presented interpretation of the term 'culture' also informs my understanding of the notion of gender equality for this research context. As Procter (2004) in reference to Hall (1997) describes: culture is not only a subject of study, but a site of intervention. I adopt a similar approach for my understanding of the notion of 'gender equality': gender equality is not treated as a subject area, studied and observed as a pre-defined category. On the contrary, I understand gender equality as a practice, process and negotiation defined by the investigated field.

While distancing myself from prescribed ideas of the notions of 'gender equality', I acknowledge that the subject is well-established in policy contexts of the UK and EU. In the case of the EU, Enderstein (2017: 110) synthesises:

Gender equality has been declared a fundamental European value in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, gender equality policies represent one of the most substantive domains of European Social Policy and the current EU claims to offer the 'most progressive gender regime in the world'.

In the case of the UK, the Equality Act 2010 showcases how gender equality serves as a value of national identification. Described by the European Institute for Gender Equality (n.d.) as a 'landmark piece of legislation that overrode all previous gender-equality laws for England, Scotland and Wales', the legislation includes the Public Sector Equality Duties, which secures gender mainstreaming in the UK. Due to the existence of such documents and their associated relevance for national and international practices and values, cultures of gender equality need to be read in the context of this legislation. Furthermore, even though cultures of gender equality are not explicitly inscribed into the guidelines of the ECOC and UKCOC initiatives, the socio-cultural value of gender equality influences COC mega-events due to their representative status on national and international scales. While EU and UK policy definitions serve as orientation in defining gender equality, my research engages with cultures of gender equality as a process of negotiation, production and practice as analysed in the context of the ECOC and UKCOC mega-events.

Structure of the Thesis

The following thesis is structured in seven chapters. The first two chapters discuss the field and methodology. They are contextual in nature and are followed by chapter 3 highlighting the conceptual framework. The chapters 4 to 7 encompass the analysis of the research material. While the fourth chapter refers to data collected in relation to the celebrations of DSS2016, the chapters 5, 6 and 7 refer to the case study of Hull2017.

Chapter 1, *Situating the Field*, outlines the field characteristics, on which this research is based. My research field is characterised by multiple influences including the ECOC and UKCOC initiatives, the cities of Hull and Donostia/ San Sebastián, the mega-events of Hull2017 and DSS2016, as well as the individual events under investigation within the yearlong celebrations. While the further analysis primarily concentrates on Hull2017, both field sites require appropriate introductions to their contextual conditions. I conclude the chapter in discussion of the relational approach that connects the two field sites. Rather than comparing the two mega-events, DSS2016 helps to frames approach towards and my explorations of Hull2017.

The introduction to the field is followed by a discussion of the methodology and methods applied in this study (Chapter 2). As they are highly dependent on each other, the field determines the methodological approach and selected methods. Regarding the suitability, relevance and limitation of the research practices, I outline the importance of feminist methodological principles for the ethnographic approach taken in this research. To this end, Harding's (1993) strong objectivity and practices of reflexivity concretise my feminist methodological approach. In my discussion of research methods, I separate fieldwork methods and methods used for analysis. After a brief overview of the plurality of methods applied in the context of the fieldwork and their inherent challenges, I engage in detail with the methods of participative observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. Substantial attention is paid to the collaborative practice with the so-called 'observing-participants'¹⁴. This chapter serves not only the discussion of methods, but also allows me to introduce

¹⁴ The notion 'observing-participants' is a wordplay. It refers to research participants, who contribute through their participative observations to the investigation. Further details are provided in chapter 3: *Methodology and Methods*.

the various groups of research participants. In listings, I present the political actors such as members of the executive organisations of Hull 2017 Ltd and the DSS2016 Foundation, cultural actors including artists and producers contributing to the selected activities and residents, who joined focus group interviews. Due to their in-depth involvement, the observing-participants are introduced through personalised narrative portrays.

The third chapter, entitled *Conceptualising Gender and Events*, is dedicated to the theoretical discussion and conceptually frames the further analysis. In this chapter, I outline the political potential of events in relation to the production of cultures of gender equality. These theoretical foundations combine discussions from the fields of event and gender studies. I focus on the phenomenological interpretations of events in relation to the anthropology of the festive and Critical Event Studies. On this basis, I argue for the socio-cultural significance of celebrations and the inherent process of meaning-making with particular attention to liminal and carnivalesque event experiences. In order to illustrate such conceptual considerations, I regard events in terms of the production of gender and gender equality. I address events as a crucial platform to negotiate gender identities and expressions and highlight how gender equality developed into a socio-cultural value in reference to the notions of homonormativity and homonationalism in celebratory settings. On the basis of such outline and in accordance with Browne's (2007: 63) suggestion, I argue that the study of events and their production of cultures of gender equality needs to address celebrations as 'parties with politics'.

After the contextual and conceptual discussions, I embark on the analytical journey in chapter 4: *Shifting Attention towards Cultural Ambitions*. This chapter serves as the connector between the conceptual considerations and the analytical explorations of the research interest. The exploration serves as a clarification of how COC mega-events can negotiate socio-cultural values. In reference to Immler and Sakkers' (2014: 22) observation of the '(re)programming' of COC initiatives, I argue that ambitions of current mega-events shift: heightened attention to the production of socio-cultural values is evident in multiple referenced case studies. Through the example of DSS2016, I illustrate how these ambitions are enacted and foreground the COC mega-event as a 'contested space' (O'Callaghan, 2012: 201) which invites negotiations of socio-cultural values.

Chapter 5 is the first of three analytical chapters, which explores the case study of Hull2017. The chapter, *Engaging with Equality*, explores the sub-question: *In what way are audiences engaging with the produced cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017?* With reference to the phenomenological interpretation of events, I argue that the festival experience shapes not only the individual and collective interpretations of equality but also the festival and its narrative on cultures of gender equality as a whole. Two strains of analysis are addressed in this chapter. On the one hand, I address the encounters participants have with equality and emphasise conversations and interactions as crucial forms of engaging with equality in celebratory contexts. On the other hand, I address audience dynamics in celebrations of equality. Here, experiences of togetherness and strategies of inclusion structure the analysis.

In the subsequent chapter (6), *Performing Equality*, I outline how cultures of gender equality are performed in cultural activities as part of Hull2017. With attention to the content productions fostered by the six investigated activities, I highlight differing – and at times conflicting – interpretations of equality. The analysis concludes that equality is necessarily a plural notion in the context of its production in the mega-event of Hull2017. The practices of meaning-making of events are crucial conceptual influences in this analytical discussion. Within the section, *Performers of Equality*, I question who is responsible for the production of equality but also query why performers are drawn to such responsibility. The analysis of the narrations of equality explores what and how stories of equality are being told.

The final chapter (7), *Infrastructures of Equality*, outlines in what kind of infrastructural conditions celebrations of equality are embedded and how the socio-cultural value of gender equality relates to the given infrastructures. The analysis portrays examples of infrastructural conditions that support the celebrations of equality. Additionally, the harming effects of inadequate structures needs to be examined. While infrastructures of equality are countless, I concentrate on the three dominant themes addressed as the festivalisation of equality, materialities of in/ equality, and commercialisation of equality. In the first theme, I focus on the festivalisation and highlight the prominence of events in the celebration of equality. In this analytical focus, I question how the programming emphasis of festivals and events affects the production of cultures of gender equality. Secondly, I pay attention to the material conditions that

influence the immediate experience of the celebration of equality. I focus on ticketing structures and spatial arrangements as grounds for discussion. Finally, I address the economic realities in which the mega-event of Hull2017 and the individual events embed. I discuss tendencies of the commercialisation and commodification of equality as a risk of the celebration of socio-cultural values in the context of COC mega-events. Provocatively, I ask, 'So what?' and explain that in the celebration of equality further attention needs to be paid to these infrastructural conditions to foster the production of cultures of gender equality.

Beyond the seven chapters as core discussions, I finalise my thesis in a conclusion. Alongside a summary of findings and implications, research limitations as well as recommendations for future research, I outline the research impact beyond academic dissemination and synthesise the arguments established from the previously presented analysis.

Chapter 1

Situating the Field

In this first chapter, I introduce the research fields of Hull2017 and DSS2016. Although this research focuses primarily on Hull2017, I present both field sites, in order to contextualise each site appropriately. The initiatives of ECOC and UKCOC, the cities of Hull and Donostia/ San Sebastián, the mega-events of Hull2017 and DSS2016, as well as their individual activities imbricate for the purpose of this study and constitute the field of investigation.

In the following outline, I discuss the research field through four interlinked influences. Firstly, I address the European and British COC initiatives regarding their developments and relationships. Secondly, through descriptions of the geographic, historic and demographic characteristics, I introduce the cities of Hull and Donostia/ San Sebastián. Thirdly, I outline the local interpretations of the COC title through the mega-events of Hull2017 and DSS2016. As a fourth influence, I discuss the relevance of the cultural programme and present the selection of investigated cultural activities. I conclude the chapter by discussing the relational reading, which constitutes the analytical and methodological relationship between Hull2017 and DSS2016.

European Capital and UK City of Culture

Established in 1983 and first celebrated in 1985, the ECOC programme constitutes the origin of the global COC movement. The initiative has had ripple effects as various programmes in other geographical contexts followed the model (European Commission, 2009; S. Green, 2017a). One of the latest spin-offs is the British interpretation of the UKCOC award. While the initiatives differ in administrative and geographical parameters, their relations are omnipresent. The similarities of the two initiatives in structure and intention enable a fruitful relational reading¹⁵ for the aims of this investigation.

¹⁵ Relational Reading as a methodological approach is explained in further detail in the final section of this chapter.

The purpose of the ECOC is to celebrate the richness and diversity of Europe¹⁶ and to explore common histories and shared connections. Since its inception, the ECOC intends to bring residents closer together and provides (...) opportunities for Europeans to meet and discover the great cultural diversity of our continent and take a fresh look at our common history and values, the ECOC promotes mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue among citizens and increases their sense of belonging to a community. (European Commission, 2015: 1)

The initiative is grounded in the conviction that the political and geographical space of Europe shares cultural synergies. Former Greek Minister of Culture and ECOC initiator, Melina Mercouri argued that Europe cannot be understood solely as a political and economic space. In order to legitimise relations, Europe needs to be addressed as a cultural space equally (European Commission, 2009). As Sassatelli (2002, 2008, 2009) and Lähdesmäki (2013, 2014) emphasise, the ECOC initiative as a symbol of European cultural policy contributes to the construction of the entity of Europe and its identity.

The contemporary ECOC emerged through three administrative developments¹⁷. Since 1999, the competition for the title depends on a national rota, in which each year two member-states of the European Union are designated to compete for the title. An international, independent panel is responsible for the selection of the host cities. In 2006, the European Commission introduced a monitoring process and the Melina Mercouri Prize. If the monitoring panel considers the preparations for hosting the title appropriate, the prize supports the awarded cities with 1.4 Million €. In 2014, further developments were agreed upon. From 2021 onwards, the administrative progress introduces a new rotation system, in which every three years an international competition opens for cities outside EU boundaries. Through this extension, the European Commission offers countries with an interest in joining the European Union to present themselves through the initiative.¹⁸

The UKCOC title is inspired by Liverpool's and Glasgow's widely celebrated success as ECOC in 2008 and 1990. The Department of Culture, Media

¹⁶ Referring only to EWR Countries.

¹⁷ Such administrative reconsiderations occurred in 1999, 2006 and 2014.

¹⁸ See documents outlining the policy developments: The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2006, 2014).

and Sports developed the UK-wide programme in consultation with the appropriate administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Phil Redmond, initiator and chair of the independent advisory panel for the UKCOC programme, outlines the title as an inspiration, ambition and ownership for the host city:

UKCOC is more than just a title. It is a focus, a rally cry, a call to action, an opportunity to create and innovate to build local pride, to show the world who you are and what you can do. It can inspire, instil a sense of ambition and provide the base for a real step change. And of course it is a platform for a yearlong celebration of local cultures and the great cultural diversity of the UK today. (Department for Culture Media and Sports, 2013: 3)

Redmond (2009: 2) considers the UKCOC programme to be a ‘badge of authority’, as the host city becomes the centre of attention of the national cultural scene during its tenure. Unlike the ECOC, the UKCOC is awarded every four years. Derry/ Londonderry held the first UKCOC title in 2013 and was followed by Hull in 2017. Coventry is the third city to be awarded the title, the celebrations thereof are taking place in 2021.¹⁹

Capitals/ Cities of Culture Developments and Ambitions

Throughout the past 30 years of the initiative, executive models and trends have shaped the ECOC programme. The expansion of time-scale and budgets are just two examples of executive developments (García & Cox, 2013). The most prominent development focuses on regenerative ambitions, which frame the contemporary COC mega-events.

While the first ECOC were world-famous cities and well-known for their cultural, artistic and historical importance, in 1990, Glasgow pioneered as the first city by presenting a different, and less traditional profile. Harnessing its post-industrial, declining image and successfully transforming the city’s cultural assets through the celebrations, inspired other cities to bid for, and host the title. Lille, ECOC in 2004, and Liverpool, ECOC in 2008, are more recent examples of celebrations with regenerative purposes and successes through hosting the COC mega-event. Recognising the transformative potential of the arts, culture and heritage, the cities’ profile and ambitions for hosting the title have changed.

¹⁹ UKCOC rotates in a four-year cycle.

Increasing interest in regeneration strongly influences the motivations for bidding. Consequently, COC mega-events have become synonymous with urban regeneration, as also highlighted in the introduction of this thesis (European Commission, 2010, 2015). In the case of the UKCOC, regeneration is a central driver of the initiative. With reference to Liverpool's transformative effects, the UKCOC initiative is grounded in regenerative intentions. In the *UKCOC Guidelines for Bidding Cities*, the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (2013: 3) elucidate:

The overall aim of the UK City of Culture programme is to encourage the use of culture and creativity as a catalyst for change. [...] Cities and areas that bid for the title will need to spell out [...] how they will use it in making a step change in their area and creating a lasting legacy.

While in the ECOC framework, regenerative interests developed throughout the history of the ECOCs, urban transformation is named as a central aim of the UKCOC award.

The two mega-events of Hull2017 and DSS2016 need to be read in the context of event-led regeneration and urban transformation. As previously highlighted in the introduction and further discussed in the following sections, Hull2017 is characterised by regenerative ambitions. The rhetoric of transformation determines the project of Hull2017, as economic and social regenerative potentials are foregrounded. DSS2016 also incorporates transformative visions through the celebration of the ECOC title. However, the regenerative ambitions are of a more explorative nature, as I outline in detail in the fourth chapter: *Shifting Attention towards Cultural Ambitions*. Rather than embracing the economic potential of culture-led regeneration, DSS2016 pioneers in its explorations of the socio-cultural regeneration, transforming the cultural perspectives in a post-conflict society.

Capitals/ Cities of Culture Research

Academic interest in COC initiatives and case studies have developed extensively over the past 30 years and cover a range of scholarly traditions. Rather than clustered by disciplines, the literature is thematically divided. Due to its longer history and wider significance, the ECOC initiative dominates academic agendas. I borrow from Ooi, Håkanson and Lacava (2014) to summarise the literature canons as divided into the poetics and politics of COC mega-events. While some scholars present a romantic picture of success and glory, others highlight the

struggling realities that event-led regeneration entail. Ooi et al. (2014: 420) conclude ‘a remarkable lack of consensus as to how successful past ECOC tenures were’. Therefore, attention to the plurality of perspectives is crucial in the research of COC mega-events.

While Langen and García (2009) offer an extensive literature review on research developments regarding COC mega-events, I limit my overview to insights regarding the regenerative research perspectives with explicit focus on economic, social and cultural dimensions.²⁰ This outline allows me to give a structured presentation of the multiple scholarly discussions associated with COC initiatives. In practice, the scholarly canons are continuously entangled with each other.

In relation to the above described developments of COC initiatives, studies regarding the regenerative potential of COC mega-events dominate the academic literature. As ambitions for transformation constitutes a central motivation for host cities, practice-based developments inform the academic examinations of the event framework. Bianchini, Albano and Pollo (2013: 515) reason the academic awareness of the regenerative aspirations as follows:

The increasingly fierce competition between cities to win the title (especially in large countries with many rival candidatures, as in the case of the UK for the 2008 title, of Germany for 2010, France for 2013, Spain and Poland for 2016, and Italy for 2019) is evidence of the widespread belief – among politicians, policy makers and the media – that the ECOC can successfully contribute to urban regeneration processes. It is therefore important to examine the achievements and limitations of the ECOC as a tool for urban regeneration.

Consequently, the main body of literature and scholarship is concerned with correlations between urban regeneration and the mega-event structure and process.²¹

²⁰ Due to my focus on regenerative research perspectives, I exclude the vast canons of literature addressing questions of governance and management of COC mega-events. See Cox & O’Brien (2012); Crepaz, Huber, & Scheytt (2014); Cunningham & Platt (2018); Hansen & Laursen (2015); Hudson et al. (2017); O’Brien (2011); O’Brien & Impactso8 (2010); Wahlin et al. (2016).

²¹ See Andres (2011); Balsas (2004); Bernardino, Freitas Santos, & Cadima Ribeiro (2018); Bicakci (2012); Borseková, Vaňová, & Vitálišová (2017); England’s Northwest Research Service & Impactso8 (2010); García (2004, 2005); Gunay (2010); Nobili (2005); Papanikolaou (2012); Paris & Baert (2011); Rekettye & Pozsgai (2015); Richards & Marques (2015); Richards & Wilson (2004); Shukla, Brown, & Harper (2006); Sykes (2011).

The prevalent regenerative research perspectives pay attention to economic, social and cultural dimensions of the initiative and its celebrations. Even though, the discussions imbricate and feed each other, I want to discuss these three dimensions separately, in order to provide an overview and give credit to the particular scholarly concerns. With interest in economic profitability, most scholars approach the COC mega-event as an important catalyst for urban regeneration due to the economic impact potentially achieved within the COC tenure. The economic research perspectives develop in three strains of debate and enquiry. Firstly, with their study of Salamanca as ECOC in 2002, Herrero et al. (2006) exemplify discussions of the economic dimension, as they estimate the direct and indirect benefits and expenses. Secondly, Campbell (2011) outlines important discussions regarding the profitability of cultural industries and their relevance for further investment. Critically opposed to the former considerations, a small number of academics raise a third point of debate, as they identify and criticise the commodification of arts and culture.²² Entangled but not always clearly acknowledged within such parameters, research on tourism and COC mega-events needs to be taken into consideration in relation to the economic impact of COC mega-events²³. Since the early 2000, discussions concerning the social dimension of the mega-event framework emerged. Here, cultural participation and public perceptions are core issues of enquiry. Research interests are guided by the adaptations of the ECOC guidelines, which consider community engagement as the objective of the event.²⁴ Several scholars, such as Fitzpatrick (2010) in her doctoral thesis on Liverpool ECOC 2008, address the social dimension critically, as they question how power relations affect the celebration and are constructed through the mega-event. The cultural dimension of COC mega-events is interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, research of this dimension stresses the development of cultural industries and infrastructures through the COC mega-event.²⁵ On the other hand, similarly to my own research

²² See Fitzpatrick (2010); O’Callaghan & Linehan (2007); Tucker (2008).

²³ See Åkerlund & Müller (2012); Falk & Hagsten (2017); Gehrels & Landen (2015); Hughes, Allen, & Wasik (2003); Richards & Wilson (2006).

²⁴ See Boland (2010); Boland, Mullan, & Murtagh (2018); Dragičević et al. (2015); Fitjar, Rommetvedt, & Berg (2013); Giovanangeli (2015); Hudec & Džupka (2016); Hunter-Jones & Warnaby (2009); Moolaert, Demuynck, & Nussbaumer (2004); Ploner & Jones (2019); West & Scott-Samuel (2010).

²⁵ See Bergsgard & Vassenden (2011); Campbell (2011); Cohen (2013); Griffiths (2006); Quinn (2009); Umney (2019).

interests, scholars address the cultural values inherent in the production of COC mega-events. The celebration of transnational, national and regional identities are central concerns in this research perspectives regarding COC mega-events.²⁶ I do not go into further depth on this issue in this introduction of the field sites, as I discuss this topic in detail in the fourth chapter: *Shifting Attention towards Cultural Ambitions*.

The Cities and their Culture(s)

According to the European Commission (2009: 3-4), the success of COC initiatives lies in the independence of each host city to respect their local needs:

Like a living organism, the event is forever evolving and developing. [...] Geography, history, a country's size, politics, budgets, the cultural scene, the men and women on the board of the project and those organising its artistic side, all mix up into different cocktails of distinct flavours.

No two cities are alike and therefore no two mega-events can be the same. Rather than responding to a given framework, host cities are encouraged to use the title according to the needs and requirements of the city. Due to such emphasis on independence and the particular cities' needs, introductions of the geography, demography and history of Hull and Donostia/ San Sebastián are required in order to further situate my research field.²⁷

Hull

Hull, short for Kingston upon Hull, is situated in the administrative region of Yorkshire and the Humber in the North of England at the junction of the Humber Estuary and the River Hull. The city counted 258,995 inhabitants in the national estimation of 2015 (ONS Mid Year Estimates, 2015).

Surrounded by smaller villages, which make up the East Riding of Yorkshire, the city forms the urban centre of the region. Due to the growth and merging of the city and the suburban villages, clear borders of the city often are no longer visible. As a port city, its geography is orientated along the river banks

²⁶ See Aiello & Thurlow (2010); Bianchini & Tommarchi (forthcoming); Boland, Murtagh, & Shirlow (2016); Bunnell (2008); Devlin (2016); Dragoman (2008); Immler & Sackers (2014); Ingram (2010); Iordanova-Krasteva, Wickens, & Bakir (2010); Lähdesmäki (2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014); O'Callaghan (2012); Patel (2013); Žilič-fišer & Erjavec (2017).

²⁷ As the research focuses on Hull and Hull2017, the introduction of the city is more detailed than the outline of Donostia/ San Sebastián.

and spreads into the hinterlands. The city's geography is marked by an East, West and North separation, in which East and West are separated by the River Hull and the related industrial area. The three zones of East, West and North Hull show very different socio-economic and demographic profiles. The areas are further structured into neighbourhoods, which developed historically or were explicitly constructed in different urban developmental phases (Hull City Council, n.d.). Residents' identification with neighbourhoods in the East, West or North zones is marked through associated cultural and sportive assets.²⁸

The city was first mentioned in the twelfth century and named Kingston upon Hull under King Edward I in 1299. It gained importance in trade, due to the access to the North Sea provided by the Humber Estuary. Trade connected the city with Scandinavia, the Baltic region and the Low Countries. At its heights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the whaling and fishing industries influenced Hull's urban growth. The accumulated wealth and importance of the port city was the reason for major bombing during World War II, in which 95% of the city centre was destroyed or damaged. In the 1950s and 1960s, the city recovered from the war in economic and social terms. While Hull experienced another prosperous decade in trading and fishing, the 1970s saw a collapse for the city's industry due to the decline of the European fishing industry (Hull City Council, n.d.).

Ever since, the population has dealt with the socio-economic consequences of this decline. Today, Hull is the third most deprived local authority out of the 326 local areas in England (Culture Place and Policy Institute, 2018). As a consequence of these worsening socio-economic conditions, in 2003 *The Idler Book of Crap Towns: The 50 Worst Places to Live in the UK* rated Hull the worst place to live in the UK. Such negatives statistics and descriptions mark the city's internal and external perceptions greatly.

In 2013, Hull City Council published the city's regeneration plans: *Hull City Plan*. The strategic document outlines the city's ambition to become a world-class visitor destination and a hub for renewable energy. Researchers at the University of Hull's Culture, Place and Policy Institute (CPPI) (2018) remark that

²⁸ Identifications with neighbourhoods refer to postcode districts. Therefore, in further description and presentation of residents participating in the research the postcode is used to identify their location of residence.

arts and culture lie at the heart of such regenerative perspectives and drove the bidding process for the UKCOC title. Consequently, culture-led regeneration is a central concern, not only as a short-term action but also as a long-term strategy.

The attention to cultural industries in Hull’s regenerative aspirations leads me to consider the cultural infrastructures in this introduction to the city. Due to space restrictions, my focus is fairly selective. Guided by my research interests, I have confined the discussion to venue and festival landscapes, as well as educational facilities related to arts and culture.

For this purpose, I created the following spatial outline in order to illustrate the cultural venues and their geographical spread across the city.²⁹ All venues are categorised broadly in respect to their primary function.

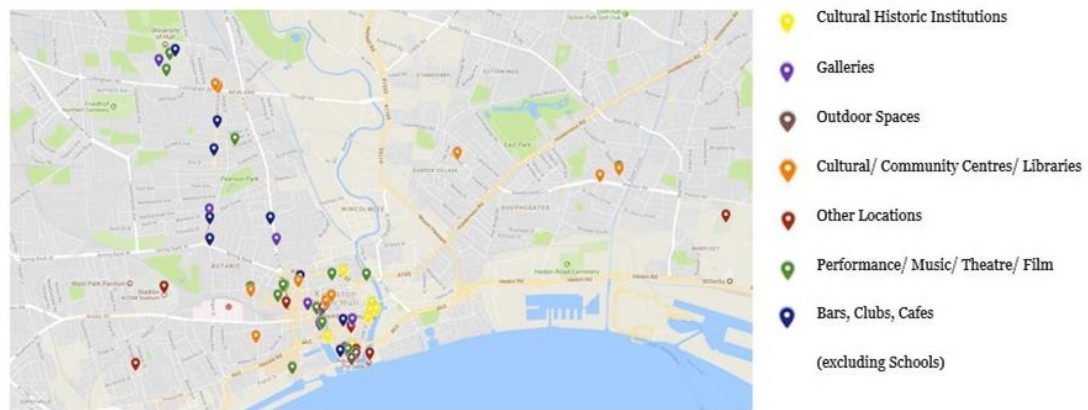


Figure 2: Cultural Infrastructure Hull (Spring 2018)

The geo-spatial analysis illustrates a concentration of arts and culture venues in the city. The majority of cultural venues and facilities are located in the city centre and the Marina district. Such concentration is based on the historic locations of iconic buildings, such as Hull Minster³⁰ or Wilberforce House.³¹ Other locations, such as Humber Street, were purposefully developed as cultural and artistic hubs as part of the City Council’s regenerative plans. Next to these

²⁹ The map was last updated on the 21.5.18. Due to continuous changes in the artistic community and consequential changes of venues, the map cannot be considered as a comprehensive repository of all venues in the city but rather an indication of the geo-spatial distribution and spread of arts and cultural venues in the city.

³⁰ Hull Minster, originally known as Holy Trinity Church, was built in the thirteenth century and declared Minster status in 2017 (Hull Minster at Trinity Square, 2019).

³¹ Wilberforce House is the birthplace of William Wilberforce, MP and campaigner for the abolition of the slave trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Situated on High Street as part of the Museum Quarter, the house hosts a museum dedicated to the life of William Wilberforce, the eighteenth-century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the campaign for abolition and issues concerning contemporary slavery (Humber Museums, 2019).

centralised locations, several venues and facilities can be found in West Hull. The university campus in the North West of the city is a crucial part of Hull's cultural infrastructure. The East and North of the City accommodate only a few exceptional places, such as the Freedom Centre, which serves as a community hub for the neighbourhood and includes the local library, performance space and café. Overall, the largest number of venues are dedicated to performing arts including dance, music, theatre and film. The fourteen venues include major establishments such as Hull New Theatre ³² and Hull Truck Theatre ³³. Additionally, smaller performing arts venues create a vibrant scene, as often these smaller venues combine their purposes between bar/ café, cultural venue and community hub. A number of art galleries are situated across the city. I was able to identify ten spaces with a primary gallery purpose. However, with the exceptions of major institutions such as the Ferens Art Gallery, these gallery spaces appear, move and disappear continuously, which signals the instability of the sector. The establishment of the contemporary art gallery Humber Street Gallery as part of Hull2017 contributes to the visual arts landscape in the city. It is worth noting that the city has nine facilities with a primary cultural-historic purpose. In relation to the city's size, the density of archives and museums is above the national average and can be seen as an indicator for the historical relevance of the city.

Next to tangible and permanent venues, festivals and events are a crucial asset in the city's cultural infrastructure. *Humber Sesh*³⁴, *Hull Street Food Night*³⁵ and *Pride in Hull*³⁶ are three of the most popular events taking place in the city centre each year. The list is spear-headed by the annual *Freedom Festival*,

³² Hull New Theatre opened in 1939 and refurbished in 2016-2017. In the latest refurbishment, the theatre enlarged the auditorium as well as backstage area in order to accommodate appropriate scenery, lightening and stage effects for leading touring theatres in the UK (Hull New Theatre and Hull City Hall, 2019).

³³ Hull Truck Theatre was formed as a theatre company in 1971 by Mike Bradwell. In its current location, the venue is dedicated to produce high quality theatre. The team is ambitious to reach diverse audiences and specialises in first time theatre adventurers (Hull Truck Theatre, 2019).

³⁴ Humber Street Sesh is an annual outdoor music festival taking place in the area of Hull's Marina. The one-day festival is visited by over 30.000 people in support of local, emerging musicians and artists (Visit Hull and East Yorkshire, 2019).

³⁵ Hull Street Food Festival was introduced in 2017. Local and regional vendors provide in the monthly festival their products for an evening out (Robinson, 2019).

³⁶ Pride in Hull is the annual *LGBT Pride* celebration. Taking place in form of a parade through the city centre and a day-long music festival, the event has been exceptionally successful since 2017 with up to 50,000 visitors annually (Pride in Hull, 2019).

which attracted 130,000 visitors in 2018 and claims to be one of the leading international arts festivals in the UK (Freedom Festival Trust, 2019). With festivals taking place mainly throughout the summer months, the urban calendar is well filled and organised according to these well-known festivals and events.

Even though it is only a secondary influence in my research field, I want to highlight the importance of arts education in Hull. Due to limitations of space, I focus only on the higher education sector. The arts courses and degrees at the University of Hull and Hull School of Arts and Design have a strong influence on the local artistic community. Both institutions have been of great importance for the city's cultural infrastructure, as many members of the local artistic community have been either educated in, affiliated with or otherwise influenced by the two institutions³⁷.

Donostia/ San Sebastián

The city is situated in the Basque Country in the North of Spain, twenty kilometres from the French border. With 186,095 inhabitants, the city is the capital of the province of Guipúzkoa (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2017). The dual title reflects the bilingualism in the region. 70% of the province's population speak Basque; however, their level of fluency and usage in daily interactions vary significantly (Departamento de Cultura, 2009: 41).

Located in the gulf of Bizkaia, the sea has a consistent presence in the geography and history of the city. The beaches of Zurriola, La Concha and Ondarreta are central points of orientation, as the city spreads along them and expands further into the hinterlands. Particularly in the twentieth century, the city and its surrounding villages have grown into an indistinguishable web of urban neighbourhoods. Similar to Hull, identification with certain neighbourhoods or former villages is prominent within the urban population.

The first inhabitants in the region are documented in the eleventh century, when a monastery was built in the current neighbourhood of Antiguu. In the twelfth century, during the kingdom of Navarre and Castile, the city gained importance as a trading port. The population moved from the original settlement in Antiguu into the shadows of the castle on Monte Orgull, which in the present-

³⁷ The relevance of the facilities of higher education need to be put into perspective of contemporary developments, as Hull School of Arts and Design faced excruciating financial cuts and restructuring at the beginning of 2018, reducing the quality standards originally offered by the institution to its students and future artists in the city and beyond (Collinson, 2018).

day forms part of the old town/ city centre. The inhabitants lived as traders and merchants, and the fishing industry increased in importance. In 1873, Donostia/ San Sebastián expanded beyond the original city walls, which were taken down for a redevelopment plan in regards to the rising tourist industry in the nineteenth century. During this period, the relevance of tourism gained importance for the city, not least because Queen Isabel II and later Queen Maria Christina chose the city as their summer residences. The nineteenth-century tourism influenced the construction of major buildings, which were supposed to serve the interests of aristocratic and upper-class tourists; these still mark the city's built environment today. In the twentieth century, Donostia/ San Sebastián was still impacted by summer tourism of the political elite, due to Franco's summer residence in the city. The influence of the civil war in the 1930s, followed by dictatorship, affected not only the lives of the inhabitants but also the society more broadly in regards to questions of the Basque identity (Artola, 2004). The late twentieth century was marked by violent conflicts between Basque separatists and the Spanish government across the region and the city. It was only in 2009 that ETA, the main actor in the violent conflict, declared the end of the violence and demanded peaceful dialogue (Aparicio, 2009). The political struggles in recent decades have negatively influenced the city's position in the tourism market. However, Donostia/ San Sebastián is again amongst the top-ranking Spanish tourist destinations, both nationally and internationally. The city's tourist profile has shifted from traditional seaside tourism towards more cultural and sportive activities (San Sebastián Turismo & Conventions Bureau, n.d.).

The long-standing influence of tourism determines the cultural infrastructure of the city. The main venues are situated in the city centre, which is expanding through improved infrastructures and transportation.

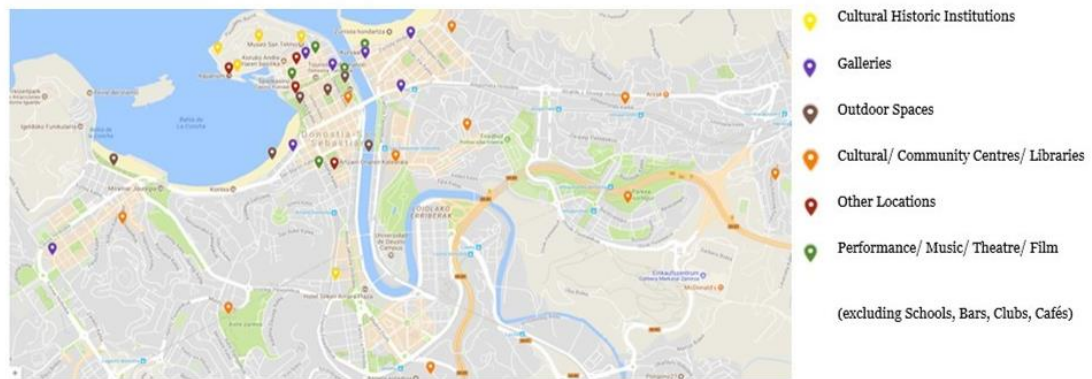


Figure 3: Cultural Infrastructure Donostia/ San Sebastián (Spring 2017)

Public libraries and cultural centres mark the cultural infrastructure in the outer neighbourhoods. These so-called *casas/ centros de la cultura* are centrally organised through the governmental culture and leisure institution Donostia Kultura, but they run individual cultural programmes to suit their own target groups. Due to its novelty, I want to highlight the International Centre for Contemporary Culture Tabakalera, which has significantly shaped the city's profile since its advent. Situated in a former tobacco factory, the centre was inaugurated in 2015 in association but not immediate relation with the ECOC celebrations.

The yearlong Celebration of Arts and Culture

As highlighted in these brief introductions, both cities have their own challenges and attributes. Industrial decline and socio-economic deprivation characterise Hull and its recent history, while Donostia/ San Sebastián looks back upon a violent past, in which identities, politics and conflicts marked the city's streets. The celebrations of the COC title respond to such local conditions as they are individually interpreted in the mega-events of Hull2017 and DSS2016. In those mega-events, the institutional framework and local particularities collapse. Therefore, the introduction of the field sites includes a presentation of the two mega-events. In the following section, I briefly sketch out the application, preparation and execution processes.

Hull2017

In November 2013, in competition against Dundee, Leicester and Swansea, Hull was announced the second UKCOC for 2017. The bid was led by Hull City Council. Proposing to present 'a city coming out of the shadows' (Hull City Council, 2013: 4) was an effective strategy to win the bid. The panel especially appreciated Hull's interest in and dedication to community engagement, the role of the private sector, and its focus on legacy. CEO of Hull 2017 Ltd and Creative Director,

Martin Green (2015: 1) summarises Hull's application: 'The bid said very proudly: Hull wants this and Hull needs this'. The submitted plans promised 1500 events, a literature programme, 15 festivals, ten artist residencies and an £11m business plan for the production of the mega-event. Additionally, the UKCOC tenure was announced as part of a twenty-year regenerative plan, as mentioned previously. The transformative, regenerative rhetoric was highly influential for Hull's application as well as the execution of the mega-event.

Four years of preparation followed the selection, in which the executive structures were established. In 2014, Hull City Council set up the independent company and charitable trust Hull 2017 Ltd for the delivery of the mega-event. Martin Green, former Head of Ceremonies at the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012*, led the company as CEO and artistic director. He and his executive team were supported by a board of trustees chaired by journalist and cultural commentator Rosie Millard. The preparations included physical changes in the public spaces, which were not immediately related to but were associated with the city's upcoming celebrations. Major renovations took place in central cultural venues such as Ferens Art Gallery and Hull New Theatre.

The aim of Hull 2017 Ltd (2015: 14) was 'to deliver 365 days of transformative culture through a range of diverse and high profiled cultural events and projects'. The cultural programme was designed to take audiences on a journey through four seasons, namely 1) *Made in Hull*, 2) *Routes and Roots*, 3) *Freedom* and 4) *Tell the World*. The titles suggested certain focus during each season but associated activities were not bound to the thematic structure. The seasonal journey can be summarised as follows:

The first season was designed to be more inwardly facing and celebratory, focusing on Hull's heritage and historic contribution to the world, whilst the last season was designed to look outwards towards a revitalised future for the city. (Culture Place and Policy Institute, 2018: 35)

The preliminary evaluation by CPPI (2018) calculated that the year included over 2800 events, cultural activities, installations and exhibitions. Next to the official programme, a separate programme developed in relation to the creative communities funding scheme. Sixty projects by local community groups were selected for financial and administrative support by Hull 2017 Ltd.

DSS2016

Donostia/ San Sebastián presented its application for the ECOC competition in 2010. At this point, the Spanish selection was the largest competition in the history of the ECOC, with 15 bidding cities³⁸. The selection panel appraised Donostia/ San Sebastián's high-quality cultural programme and stressed the importance and courage of the city to tackle local histories of violence and terrorism in their planned mega-event. In the final presentation in June 2011, the same arguments were decisive for the city's selection as ECOC for 2016 (Selection Panel, 2010, 2011).

During the application and preparation periods, the city experienced several governmental changes, which affected the delivery of the mega-event. In 2011, Odón Elorza González (PSE-EE)³⁹ lost his position as mayor of Donostia/ San Sebastián. After nearly twenty years of Elorza González's leadership, the governmental restructuring introduced Juan Karlos Izagirre (Bildu)⁴⁰ as the new mayor of the city. Only four years later, another change of mayor occurred, placing Eneko Goia Laso (EAJ-PNV) in position as the city's mayor just six months before the year of cultural celebration. Due to different agendas and interests for the city, political difficulties accompanied the preparation period. The changing governmental environment was critiqued for influencing the potential of DSS2016 (Moyano, 2014a, 2014b).

The independent foundation of DSS2016 carried the executive responsibilities for the project. Though it was independent, the foundation was supported by the city council of Donostia/ San Sebastián, the regional government of Guipúzkoa, the Basque government and the national government of Spain with specific responsibility given to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Due to political and personal differences with the ruling party in the city council, the first director, Itizar Nogeras, left the foundation after seven months in position. Pablo Berástegui picked up the mega-event's execution as general director of the foundation. After this change, Xabier Paya, Garbiñe

³⁸ The Spanish competition in 2010 was outnumbered by Italy in 2013/ 2014 with 21 applications (European Commission, 2015).

³⁹ Partido Socialista de Euskadi – Euskadiko Ezkerra.

⁴⁰ Political coalition with ideological tendencies concerning the Basque independence.

Muñoa and Enara García were employed for the positions of artistic director, economic director and director of participation and evaluation.⁴¹

DSS2016 committed the yearlong mega-event and cultural programme to the slogan: *Culture of Co-existence*. The mega-event engaged with and negotiated unity in a divided society. DSS2016 centred its vision and programme on the discussion of a common existence of different communities. While DSS2016 referred to the city's and region's violent past, the slogan and political message took a universal consideration of values such as respect, equality and tolerance (DSS2016 Foundation, 2009, 2016). While these interests of exploratory nature were outlined initially, the final programme of activities was a reproduction of hegemonic event programming. Changing executing teams as well as the practicalities of the mega-event minimised the exploratory nature of the cultural programme. I discuss the thematic focus, political developments and eventual consequences in further detail in the first analytical chapter: *Shifting Attention towards Cultural Ambitions*.

In the final programme, the theme, *Culture of Co-Existence*, was separated into three thematic clusters addressed as 'Lighthouses'. Firstly, the *Lighthouse of Voices* addressed the most traditional programming structure with classical artistic mediums represented in the programming of this theme. With particular attention to music and performing arts, the focus was on the question of hearing and understanding through other voices or forms of expression. A great focus on multilingualism and discussion of minority languages formed part of this thematic cluster. Secondly, the *Lighthouse of Peace* fostered conversations about human dignity and rights. The thematic cluster attempted to conceptualise a more respectful and fairer society. Included in this thematic cluster were activities discussing issues of conflict and peace in a local and global context. The final thematic cluster, *Lighthouse of Life*, addressed ways of living in contemporary society. With a focus on care and community, this thematic cluster addressed the relationship and web of human interactions in society. Furthermore, the programme included activities on two further levels called: *Conversations* and *Waves of People's Energy*. *Conversations* referred to a line of activities, which were not directed or related to DSS2016 but appealed to the values incorporated in the project. *Waves of People's Energy* was a line of

⁴¹ See EITB.EUS (2013); El Diario Vasco (2014); and Moyano (2014a, 2014b).

activities that functioned as a community programme, which enabled different associations in the city to fund their individual projects (DSS2016 Foundation, n.d.).

Cultural Activities

While the ECOC/ UKCOC initiatives, the host cities and their local interpretations of the mega-event constitute the field sites of this study, my interest in the production of cultures of gender equality is rooted in the programming practice of the mega-events. The programme of cultural activities is one of the most visible features of a COC. It is crucial to consider that every single activity in a COC mega-event contributes to the overarching vision and identity of the mega-event. In accordance with such claim, I further interpret the field of this investigation through individual cultural activities formulating part of the larger picture of a programme, which tangibly express the vision of the mega-event.

I selected six activities in each location for in-depth analysis. My objective was to represent the diversity of the programming practices through a sample selection. I chose activities through a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the publications of the cultural programme of Hull2017 and DSS2016. Through key words and contextual analysis, I identified cultural activities with gender-sensitive profiles in their form, content and/ or purpose. Here, terms such as 'women', 'LGBT' and 'equality' or any eventual variation of the wording guided my primary selection. Through close reading of the introductory texts as presented in the programme booklets, I identified potentially gender-sensitive and equality-provoking activities. My selections were further informed by conversations with my wider network. I fine-tuned the selection of the events in consideration of the timescale, location and artistic genre of the identified activities.⁴² In the context of Hull2017, the three events of *Women of the World* festival, *LGBT50* and *Freedom Festival* are characterised by their emphasis on issues of gender, equality and social justice. Therefore, their selection was fixed. Their timeline predetermined the choice of further events. In the context of DSS2016, the technique of close reading programme brochures was less successful, as the outlines were often too brief. Therefore, the selection was based much more on the recommendations of my network contacts. My explicit focus

⁴² A full list of equality-themed events for Hull2017 is provided on the research blog: <https://genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com/home/hull2017/>

on gender-sensitive and equality-provoking events throughout the fieldwork prohibited an exploration of events outside such defined concepts. In the plurality of events and simultaneous happenings, I struggled to engage with events outside my predefined spectrum, in order to document events not explicitly informative to the researched production of cultures of gender equality.

The following outlines schematically present the selected activities in both field sites including the event format, timeframe and location. I include the abbreviation of the event as it is used in later referencing.

Table 1: Schematic Outline of Selected Activities Hull2017

Title	Format	Dates	Location	Abbreviation
WOW Hull	Festival	10-12.3.17	Hull City Hall, various locations in the city centre	WOW
SKIN: Freud, Mueck and Tunick	Exhibition	22.4.-13.8.17	Ferens Art Gallery	SKIN
Assemble Fest	Festival	3.6.17	Various locations on Newland Avenue	AF
LGBT50	Festival/ Event Series	22.-29.7.17	Various locations in the city centre	LGBT50
Freedom Festival	Festival	1.-3.9.17	Various locations in the city centre	FF
Hull, Portrait of a City	Exhibition	13.10-31.12.17	Humber Street Gallery	HULL

Table 2: Schematic Outline of Selected Activities DSS2016

Title	Format	Dates	Location	Abbreviation
Embarcada Artivista	Forum/ Exhibition	Jan-Dec 2016	Various locations	ARTIVISTA
Entre Arenas	Intervention/ Exhibition/ Forum	Jan-Dec 2016	Various locations	ENTRE
Las Mujeres y el Mar	Exhibition	29.1-19.11.16	Untzi Museoa/ Museo Naval	MAR
Olatu Talka	Festival	20-22.5.16	Various locations	OLA
DSSirez	Workshop Series/ Festival	Aug-Nov 2016	Various locations	DSSIREZ
Feministaldia	Festival	12.-18.12.16	Tabakalera	FEM

As the two tables indicate, multi-platform festivals or associative event formats dominate the selection of cultural activities. Additionally, I investigate three exhibitions. While cultural activities in Hull2017 followed traditional event genres, the majority of events in the context of DSS2016 challenged standard interpretations of event categories and could therefore not be clustered in a singular category. The time schedules of the selected cultural activities indicate similar differences in the handling, interpretations and adaptations of the conventions of event management. Activities in Hull2017 related to a fixed

schedule of relatively short duration.⁴³ DSS2016 fostered durational projects, which took place over several months in a fairly loose time frame. The selection of locations created a major challenge. In both field sites, investigated activities tend to be multi-sited and therefore not bound to one venue. However, I was eager to include activities bound to explicit establishments, in order to explore the institutional relationships and interests.

Selection of Activities in Hull2017

In the following sections, I introduce the selected activities. In the context of Hull2017, I outline the six activities from an empirical perspective, in order to represent the immersive experiences and capture the atmospheres of the events.

WOW Hull (Festival, 10-12.3.17, Hull City Hall and Various Locations)

Walking to Queen Victoria Square, on the 10th of March 2017, fills me with excitement, curiosity and tension for the upcoming weekend. In bright red, yellow and black, the logo, *Women of the World*, screams from the entrance doors of Hull's City Hall. The colour scheme indicates the branding of the international festival framework and is countered inside the building by white, purple and green decorations referencing the suffragette movement.

While I walk through to get my free tickets and pass to the VIP lounge as a member of the Circle of Friends, the majority of the audience waits outside the doors until their entry is permitted. I follow a staff member, whose shirt states, *This is what a feminist looks like*, into the main hall ready for the grand opening.

The programme for the upcoming three days is a celebration of women and gender equality in the contemporary society of Hull. The highlight of the festival is the championing of selected women, who have influenced Hull's society and developments in the past and present. The communal feature is their gender identity. Their occupations and interests are fairly broad, including artists, activists and athletes. The presentation encompasses prominent figures including writer and philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft or pianist and composer Ethel Leginska. Furthermore, local women such as AGE UK Fundraiser – The Bee Lady – Jean Bishop, boxing world champion Barbara Buttrick or Reverend Alison White are honoured. In addition to championing these women, the challenges of gender inequalities are being stressed through different panel sessions. The festival engages audiences through a mixture of information/ knowledge sharing

⁴³ With the exception of exhibitions, which lasted several months in both cities.

and so-called fun activities to enhance experience factors. Seemingly, every panel discussion is followed by some sort of interactive, entertaining activity including hula-hoop dancing, crafts or singing workshops.

On Sunday afternoon, I leave the event with a hand-made badge, which was crafted by community members prior to and during the event and gifted to festival participants at the closing of the celebration. In the colours of red, yellow and black, my badge states the stitched words: *We can*. Empowerment and encouragement create a communal atmosphere throughout the festival weekend.

SKIN: Freud, Mueck and Tunick (Exhibition, 22.4-13.8.17, Ferens Art Gallery)

My involvement in and research for this activity starts in July 2016, when I strip naked and paint myself blue at 2am in Queen's Garden in Hull's city centre. I join in a crowd of over 3000 people in the art installation, *Sea of Hull*, by artist Spencer Tunick, commissioned by Ferens Art Gallery.

The installation involves two photo-shoots. While the first one takes place on Saturday morning in scenic locations in Hull's city centre, the next day 200 inspired and excited models are taken to a secret location across the Humber Bridge in order to pose on the water front.

The pictures of the art installation are displayed within the blockbuster exhibition *SKIN: Freud, Mueck and Tunick* at the newly renovated Ferens Art Gallery. Tunick's images are the major attraction in the exhibition. Additionally, the miraculous sculptures of Mueck's life-like representations of human bodies astonish visitors. In my numerous visits to the gallery, I experience the atmosphere of the exhibition as a show-and-tell-event. The different art works become a platform for conversations and exchange. The relatively static display is continuously interrupted and loosened up through the encounters of individuals, especially those looking at Tunick's work. I am continuously asked for feedback on my participation in the installation of *Sea of Hull* by other gallery visitors. The mass engagement project leads the discussion on flesh, human bodies and body image.

Assemble Fest (Festival, 3.6.17, Newland Avenue Various Locations)

With the intention of exploring the cultural landscape beyond city centre venues, I get ready for the theatre festival taking place up and down Newland Avenue on the first Saturday of June. The general buzz of this street is at its peak on this day. Decorations along the street indicate that something different is happening. But

since businesses run as usual on a Saturday, festival goers as well as non-goers are encouraged to meet and wander about the happenings in the street.

The festival slogan, *Performances, where you least expect them*, provokes excitement and curiosity. *Assemble Fest* commissions local theatre makers for site-specific performances of 20–30 minutes. Fetching tickets is a logistical feat, due to the variety of shows and complexity of the programme. However, once achieved, the hop-in hop-out spectacle starts. The variety of locations including retail shops, alley ways and pubs complements the variety of theatre genres including puppetry, storytelling and musical performances. The street serves as a stage. Beyond the usual infrastructure, barely any alterations are needed. Rather than changing the spaces, the festival adapts to the conditions. This site-sensitive approach appears sufficient to select this festival for investigation. However, during my participation, I am surprised by the repeating gender-sensitive themes that the performances tackle. Not explicitly intended by the festival directors, in 2017, *Assemble Fest* turns out to provide food for thought about gender stereotyping, homosexual rights and gender-specific consumption routines.

LGBT50 (Festival/ Event Series, 22-29.7.17, Various Locations in the City Centre)

Announced within the first programme, the week-long, commemorative celebration entitled *LGBT50* creates a mystery, which unfolds throughout the first six months of the year. Officially addressed as a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales, *LGBT50* is one of the flagship activities of the yearlong programme.

For the first time in my fieldwork experience, I cannot pinpoint a particular moment when my research involvement with this activity starts. Due to the relevance for my research and the durational programming structure, I join a variety of community engagement projects prior to the event. Primarily, in order to stay in the information loop but also to satisfy personal and professional curiosities; I participate in projects such as a community dance project or a community craft workshop. My personal involvement in such projects take over my own experiences of the city. In preparation for and during the event series, I appear to be moving between LGBT-themed spaces, which are created through a multiplicity of community engagement projects in various locations throughout the city. The immersive experience alters my perceptions of the city, which in my 20 months of residency, I have never experienced to be so attentive to issues of gender and sexual diversity.

The week-long celebration is inaugurated by the first ever *UK Pride Parade and Party*, which counts over 40,000 participants. The city appears to be painted in rainbow colours throughout the day. Bars, civic buildings and the festival grounds in Queen's Gardens are plastered with rainbow-coloured flags. The parade and party present as a mainstream celebration of sexual diversity without particular commemorative intention. After this unexpectedly popular start to the event series, the working days are followed by smaller, more intimate events and encounters, which critically engage with questions concerning LGBT politics and experiences. As one of the dancers in a community dance project, my attention is directed to the closing event of the commemorative week, as the central square is taken over by an outdoor tea party. In this intervention, the associated artists seek to create a nuanced debate and commemoration of LGBT history.

Freedom Festival (Festival, 1-3.9.17, Various Locations in the City Centre)

The annually reoccurring *Freedom Festival* has engrained itself in the city's schedule over the past eleven years. In a joking manner, participants point out that they organise their yearly agenda in accordance to this festival, as for them, it marks the end of summer and beginning of autumn in the city.

The street art festival brings an atmosphere into the city centre that is unique and not repeated until the following year. While the festival has various stages and organises its programme along these activity hubs, my personal orientation goes by sounds. With a multiplicity of activities scheduled throughout the three-day festival, surprises are to be expected, and I often stumble upon completely unexpected activities on the way from one planned event to the other.

The thematic roots of the event are in commemoration of Hull's famous resident William Wilberforce and his campaign for the abolition of slavery. The festival's creative team expands this commemorative purpose and addresses contemporary questions of freedom and human rights through artistic practices. After critiques in past years of turning into a popular culture event, rather than engaging with its initial claim, residents commented in 2017 that *Freedom Festival* has found its ideological roots again. In 2017, as in previous years, gender equality is not a thematic focus but is nevertheless continuously present due to the artistic interventions included within the programme. With a thematic focus on social equality and through the festival framework and size, the event qualifies for the selection for further investigation.

Hull, Portrait of a City (Exhibition, 13.10-31.12.17, Humber Street Gallery)

Curiosity about the institutional affiliations drives my selection of the exhibition: *Hull, Portrait of a City*. Humber Street Gallery, a contemporary visual arts gallery in Humber Street, is created and funded for the year of the mega-event by Hull2017 Ltd. As a new space in the city, the gallery symbolises the regenerative process in that particular street and area.

My interest is further sparked by the thematic focus that the advertisement promises. Discussions of the culture of a city mark the photographic exhibition. Two photographers responded to the commission brief through a focus on youth and food culture in Hull. Their particular, well-known aesthetics leave a signature over the prints and are presented within the exhibition through very simple forms of display. Capturing expressions as well as aspirations through their portrait photography allow critical discussions of notions such as 'Culture,' 'Portrait' and 'Hull'.

Selection of Activities in DSS2016

Since DSS2016 serves as a relational model and point of reference, the individual activities are less relevant for the further analysis. Therefore, the information is shorter and limited to a presentational modality.

Embarcada Artivista (Forum/ Exhibition, Jan-Dec 2016, Various Locations)

The project, *Embarcada Artivista*, is a process of investigation, participation and exhibition in order to engage with daily questions: the relationships between cultures, people and the general environment. The project incorporates in this exploration a strong interest in questions of gender – particularly addressing gender relations and encounters in different contexts. *Embarcada Artivista* takes as a point of departure the urgency of social, political and cultural topics. Here, art is understood as a tool for activism. Particularly through the attention to activism – a combination of art and activism - the immediacy and the political interest of the project is highlighted.

Entre Arenas (Intervention/ Exhibition/ Forum, Jan-Dec 2016, Various Locations)

The project, *Entre Arenas*, thematises, sympathises and supports the people of Western Sahara. The project intends to continue the reflections and debates on the injustice and inequality that the population suffers. The solidarity movement within the Basque Country and Spanish State is very active, as activists criticise Spain for its failure in acknowledging its responsibilities. The project, in its forms and themes, was initiated by the DSS2016 Foundation, but its production was

outsourced in order to use the knowledge of the activist community. Therefore, *Entre Arenas* was carried by the DSS2016 Foundation with a project coordinator and director from a local NGO. The activities associated with the project were inviting for reflections on global relationships, cooperation, exploitation and neo-colonialism. In particular, due to the external producer, the project strongly focused on women's roles in relation to human rights.

Las Mujeres y el Mar [Women and the Sea] (Exhibition, 29.1-19.11.19, Untzi Museoa/ Museo Naval)

The exhibition, *Las Mujeres y el Mar*, discusses the historical and contemporary relationship between women and the sea with specific focus on the Basque coast and the port city of Donostia/ San Sebastián. Located in the Maritime History Museum of the city, the exhibition explores imaginary and mythological ideas surrounding femininity and the sea as well as the working and leisure conditions of women working on and enjoying the sea side. The exhibition thematises the significance of women in maritime history and presence, which according to the curators has been down played and even ignored for long time. Therefore, the exhibition claims attention for the visibility of women in this environment. While the museum or curatorial process was not funded or supported directly in financial or administrative terms by DSS2016, the foundation included the museum and its temporal exhibition in the programme publication and, therefore, raised the profile and visibility of the exhibition and the museum.

Olatu Talka (Festival, 20-22.5.16, Various Locations)

Descriptions of *Olatu Talka* point out that it is a festival in order to create the city – a festival that searches for new forms of collaborations, new usages of public space and makes art and culture accessible to anyone. My primary interest is raised by the gender-sensitive approach towards the usage and challenge of spaces through transformation. *Olatu Talka* was initially created in 2010 in the spirit of DSS2016. After 2016, the festival continues as one of the legacy projects of the mega-event. Its administration is integrated into the department of Donostia Kultura. *Olatu Talka* is a three-day festival in the city for the city, from residents for residents with its primary interest in the active participation of residents. The programme of *Olatu Talka* is based on an open call for submissions, in which any association or collective in the city can put forward a project or contribution to the festival. In this way, the festival produces an agenda

of up to 200 activities all over the city, mainly led by amateur artists⁴⁴ (Olatu Talka, 2016a, 2016b).

DSSirez (Workshop Series/ Festival, Aug-Nov 2016, Various Locations)

The theme of sexuality is a core interest of the DSS2016 Foundation, as the team wants to encourage a perspective on the cultural relevance of sex and sexuality. After an open call for proposals and projects, the *DSSirez* project developed. Carried by several cooperating collectives, the project – also entitled erotic movement – highlights the relevance of sexuality in daily life. The project stages an intervention to challenge and overcome stereotypes as well as celebrate the diversity of sexual desire in the city. The project is mainly based on workshops with children and adults and was concluded through a final *Festival of Seduction*. The project is one of the least artistically informed projects of the overall selection, but it offers an interesting perspective through the thematic focus and practical approaches, which were guided by strong feminist commitments.

Feministaldia (Festival, 12-18.12.16, Tabakalera)

Feministaldia is entitled the festival of feminist culture and has taken place for eleven years in the city of Donostia/ San Sebastián. The initiative derives from Plazandreok, which is the women's party in the city. The festival is particularly directed towards the feminist community in the city and region. For the past five years, *Feministaldia* is financially supported by the DSS2016 Foundation, which has allowed the producers to develop the festival in size, shape and focus. The 2016 edition carries the title #plaza and addresses the occupation of space in terms of knowledge production but also physical space in the city of different marginalised identities. Extracting from my own observations, the thematic focus is not limited to such a theme but was rather a great exploration of a variety of topics that would come together regarding the general focus of *Feministaldia* as an academic conference and artistic festival with a feminist focus.

Integrated and presented as part of the yearlong cultural programme, each selected activity contributes to the vision of the investigated mega-events. The activities' gender-sensitive or equality-themed forms, content or ambitions

⁴⁴ I borrow the term 'amateur artist' from the publicity material by the organisers of *Olatutalka*. The festival employs such terminology, which shows repercussions regarding the lack of funding for artists involved in the festival.

provide fertile grounds for the study of the production of cultures of gender equality.

Reading relationally

Finalising the discussion of my research field, I outline the practice of relational reading, which captures the analytical relationship between the two field sites of Hull2017 and DSS2016. The relational reading allows me to address DSS2016 as a point of departure and source of inspiration for understanding and questioning Hull2017's approaches to the production of cultures of gender equality.

Comparative studies are highly recommended in COC research canons (García & Cox, 2013). As knowledge transfer between mega-events and host cities strongly informs this research, I take these comparative interests into consideration. However, I do not intend to compare the two mega-events of Hull2017 and DSS2016. Rather, I read them in relation to each other.

As McGuirk (2018) explains, the prominent comparative studies of COC host cities focus their investigative interests mainly on the 'urban craftsmanship' that is expressed in event-based, culture-led regeneration. However, in a context-sensitive subject such as gender equality and its socio-cultural production, a direct comparison would not do justice to the local and historical situatedness that cultures of gender equality hold in each location. As outlined in the previous sections, Hull2017 and DSS2016 are embedded in their own contexts and conditions. The celebration of the COC title is their common denominator, but the local specificities are crucial to the study of the production of cultures of gender equality. In addition to this epistemic approach, the time sensitivity of events in correlation with the time limitations of the PhD track practically prohibited a full comparison of the two research fields.

In light of such subject-specific and logistical restrictions, I foreground a relational reading, which allows attention to the individual localities and their particularities regarding the celebration of cultures of gender equality. The active engagements with the two field sites allow me to use one site as a frame of reference for the further exploration of the other. The primary study of DSS2016 informs my investigative lens in the context of Hull2017. DSS2016's progressive interests and innovative practices of cultural regeneration in the context of the city's COC project serve as an analytical prism, which shape my research perspective of the mega-event of Hull2017. Similarly to a pilot study, I construct, test and extract questions, concerns and considerations from DSS2016 and

include them as a frame for my investigation of Hull2017. Therefore, I do not attempt a comprehensive analysis of DSS2016. Rather, I use the city's celebration as a starting point for my analytical considerations on COC mega-events in generally, and my analysis of Hull2017 in particular in order to contribute to the learning and knowledge transfer between the two COC mega-events.

In the data analysis, the practice of relational reading expresses itself through an initial discussion of DSS2016's cultural approaches and potentials. DSS2016, as a precursor, serves for the in-depth questioning and exploration of Hull2017 and its cultural dimension. In the fourth chapter, *Shifting Attention of Cultural Ambitions*, I provide further reasoning for this analytical choice.

Conclusive Summary

In this first chapter, I discussed the initiatives' frameworks in connection with local particularities and argued for their further influence on the interpretations of the title and celebration of the mega-events. Moreover, I highlighted the relevance of individual activities as an influence on the conceptual vision of the celebrated mega-events. With a selection of six activities, I root the analysis into the ground of productions of cultures of gender equality. I concluded my outline with an introduction of the research practice of relational reading, in which I analyse one field site in relationship to the other. In this investigation, I use DSS2016 as a model of reference to discuss the production of cultures of gender equality in Hull2017. This relational interpretation of multiple, intersecting layers enables investigative pathways through the complexity of COC mega-events.

Chapter 2

Methodology and Methods

Following the introduction of the field sites in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the research methodology guiding the investigation. I discuss the research field and methodology in two separate chapters. However, these chapters are highly dependent on each other. Therefore, in this chapter, I aim to problematise the field conditions and argue for the suitability, relevance and limitations of the methodological choices and processes.

The methodology of the research project, *Gendering Cities of Culture*, is anchored in an ethnographic research approach, which draws upon feminist methodological principles. I primarily work with qualitative material. The fieldwork and analysis developed inductively. The field conditions and methodological challenges both allowed and required innovative approaches regarding the research methods. Therefore, while working with traditional ethnographic practices of interviewing and participative observation, I emphasised novel interpretations of the original techniques, which were informed and inspired by feminist principles of knowledge productions.

The chapter is structured in two sections. Firstly, I outline the methodology that guides my research practice. Here, I argue for the relevance of feminist approaches to knowledge production and highlight the necessity of reflexivity for this qualitative, ethnographic research. Additionally, I embed such feminist principles in the canons of event studies. Secondly, I discuss the applied methods. Due to the nature of the project, I distinguish between fieldwork and analytical methods. While I only briefly sketch the fieldwork practices with attention to the challenges and difficulties encountered during fieldwork, I treat the analytical methods in more detail. I discuss the methods of participative observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews. Additionally, I devote attention to the collaborative practice with the team of observing-participants, which I specifically developed for this research and applied in the context of Hull2017. The chapter finalises with an outline of the strategy for referencing empirical data.

Feminist Approaches as Research Methodologies

The thematic focus on the production of cultures of gender equality influences my research approach, which is framed by feminist methodological principles. This means that questions regarding the processes and power dynamics in knowledge production drive my thinking within this project.

Critically opposing positivist epistemologies and methodologies, feminist methodological concerns have been developed within the environment of post-structural and postmodern critique of science (Hekman, 2007). While acknowledging the correlations of various streams of critiques, my focus is on feminist contributions to the epistemological and methodological debate. Due to the explicit attention to gendered power structures in research contexts, I draw upon classical feminist literature by Haraway (1988), Harding (1987a, 1987b) and Mies (1983). Informed by such readings, I situate myself in the methodological debate opposing positive ideals of value-free, truth-seeking objectivity. As Hekman (2007) synthesises, a feminist methodological approach recognises the relevance in acknowledging social value, in contrast to positivist approaches. Positivist methodologies concentrate on certain voices and experiences, while others, for epistemological reasons, stay invisible. In opposition to such practices of marginalisation, feminist scholars argue for methodological principles that acknowledge social values as a driving factor in research. In reference to these methodological critiques, I distance my research practice from the belief in truth, objectivity or neutrality. Rather, I refer to the notion and concept of strong objectivity, as developed and discussed by Harding (1987a, 1987b, 1993). In light of feminist approaches to knowledge production, Harding (1987a) encourages the development of a different interpretation of objectivity. She argues that all knowledge is socially located. Consequently, there is no value-free research, as no society or scientific community is free of hierarchical structures. Therefore, Hirsh, Olson & Harding (1995: 202) suggest, '[m]aximising objectivity in social research requires not total value neutrality, but instead, a commitment by the research to certain values'.

I translate their suggestion of commitment to values into the principle of reflexivity. According to Fonow and Cook (1991, 2005) and Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007), reflexive practices are conceptualised as a holistic approach, which requires continuous mediation at all stages of the research process. Therefore, I employ reflexive methodologies through my research positionalities, processes

and politics. Firstly, I refer to a continuous consideration and awareness of individual positions and interests. I consider not only participants' active involvement but also reflect upon my own position as a person and researcher in this process. As personal situatedness marks the research involvement, I selected methods that acknowledge and value the individual as an active subject within the research process. The selection of ethnographic methods such as participative observation is driven by their high level of individual reflexivity (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2016). Furthermore, I incorporate a reflexive practice in respect to the research process, and I am attentive to power structures and inherent relationships. The chosen methods allow me to cautiously consider and observe the relationships between different research participants, the researcher and the research project. With the aim of countering and challenging hierarchies inherent in the process of knowledge production, I work in collaboration rather than mere participation. While the epistemological authority of analysis, writing and publishing depends on the researcher, I attempt to reduce hierarchies through collaborative approaches in the process of data collection. Finally, in respect to the reflexive accounts, I need to acknowledge the political interest of this research. Feminist scholars such as Haraway (1988), Harding (1987a, 1987b) and Mies (1983) highlight the continuous correlation between feminist theoretical and methodological conceptualisations. Knowledge is not produced for the pure sake of knowledge production, but rather the process is linked to political aims and aspirations of the feminist movement⁴⁵. Informed by my feminist methodological stance, I am urged to critically engage with my own political motivations. The research links to the political project of the feminist movement and stands in support of gender equality.

Methodological Enquiries in Event Studies

While feminist approaches underpin this study, I also draw on event studies for methodological orientation. Events and festivals are a highly researched field. However, the methodological approaches are fairly limited. Holloway, Brown and Shipway (2010) outline that methodological debates in event studies concentrate

⁴⁵ I understand the feminist movement to be a collection of multiple strains of thought and collectives. Rather than a singular entity, feminism(s) need to be read in plural but can be seen in combination when regarded as a socio-cultural movement. Consequently, the political aims and aspirations are multiple in relation to the plurality of feminist thoughts. In synopsis, Rich (1986) describes feminism as a call for social justice and change and highlights the struggle of political abstractions as the central goal of the feminist movement.

on quantitative rather than qualitative investigative practices. Similarly, Lamond and Platt (2016: 2) observe: ‘Present methodological discussion within event studies is often dominated by the changing demands for refinement of methods suitable for event evaluation’. In the context of COC mega-event studies, the vast majority of studies employ quantitative methods driven by evaluative purposes. In regards to the COC research canon, Bianchini et al. (2013) as well as García and Cox (2013) relate these methodological restrictions to the strong emphasis on operational analysis. The scholars argue that evaluation-based research is driven by a neoliberal economic agenda and therefore serves the interests and concerns of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Consequentially, feminist research agendas and methodologies are marginalised within event studies. However, a group of scholars affiliated with Critical Event Studies inspires and informs my methodological focus. Lamond and Platt’s (2016) publication *Critical Event Studies: Approaches to Research* highlights alternative methodologies driven by qualitative, explorative practices. According to the editors, Critical Event Studies seek to ‘radically challenge all preceding formulations of event studies and events management’ (Lamond & Platt, 2016: 3). This also includes its methodological approaches. Contributions by Dashper (2016), Finkel and Sang (2016) as well as Pavoni and Citroni (2016) discuss qualitative approaches to event research, as they highlight ethnographic, auto-ethnographic and participative practices of investigation. My feminist methodological considerations are situated within these emerging discussions of qualitative research approaches in Critical Event Studies. In consequence, with this thesis, I seek to contribute to the disciplinary developments of event studies, as I explore feminist methodological approaches in the context of festivals.

Applied Research Practices

Guided by my commitment to reflexivity, I chose a well-balanced and carefully selected mix of research techniques that support my explorations of cultures of gender equality through feminist methodologies. The complexity of the project required a differentiation between research methods: some practices were used only in fieldwork, while others inform the further analysis⁴⁶. Therefore, the following discussion departs from a general overview of all of the methods

⁴⁶ Methods employed as fieldwork techniques or practices are addressed as fieldwork methods, while methods that serve for further analysis are addressed as analytical methods.

employed in the context of this research. I highlight schematically and descriptively all methods used for the purpose of fieldwork and discuss their related challenges. In subsequent sections, I focus in more detail on the methods of participative observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, which are relevant for the further analysis. Additionally, I outline the collaborative research practice with the so-called observing-participants, which I developed explicitly for the purposes of this study.

Two objectives guide the following outline of methods. Firstly, my aim is to highlight the relevance and appropriateness of the chosen methods. While keeping the descriptions of the methods to a minimum, I concentrate on the practical implementation – including limitations and potentials – of the methods. My second objective is to introduce the research participants who shaped the project. As a feminist act of reflexivity, gratitude and respect, an appropriate representation of the research participants is provided as part of this section.⁴⁷

Fieldwork Methods

Since the fieldwork techniques influence in part the analytical methods, a presentation of the methods employed in fieldwork is necessary. These research techniques are field-specific and strictly follow the research design of the political, practical and perceptive perspectives, as outlined in the introduction. For easier comprehension, I provide the following schematic overview:

⁴⁷ Participants relating to the political and practical perspective of the research, and therefore representatives of professional capacity or positions, are introduced only generically. Residents supporting the research project as observing-participants are introduced individually with greater detail due to their personal, durational involvement in the research project.

Table 3: Schematic Outline of Fieldwork Methods Hull2017

Hull2017 (Preliminary Explorations 15.2.16–31.10.16; Fieldwork 1.1.17–31.1.18)		
Politics	Practices	Perceptions
Textual and Visual Content Analysis/ Close Reading of Bid Book and Application Videos	Mapping Strategies of potential gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities through the published programmes	Focus Groups with community and interest groups
Semi-structured interviews with members of Hull 2017 Ltd.	Mapping Locations and Venues of potential gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities through participative location tracking of the researcher (March 2017–October 2017)	Collaboration with observing-participants in selected gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities
	Semi-structured interviews with cultural actors of selected gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities Participative Observation of the research in selected gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities	Participative Observation of the researcher in selected gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities.

Table 4: Schematic Overview of Fieldwork Methods DSS2016

DSS2016 (Preliminary Explorations 1–15.3.16; Fieldwork 1.11.16–31.12.16 + 1.4.17–30.5.17)		
Politics	Practices	Perceptions
Textual and Visual Content Analysis/ Close Reading of Bid Book and Application Videos	Mapping Strategies of potential gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities through the published programmes	Participative Observation of the researcher in selected gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities.
Semi-structured Interviews with members of DSS2016 foundation as well as former team members involved with the application process	Semi-structured Interviews with cultural actors of selected gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities Participative Observation of the research in selected gender-sensitive, equality provoking activities	

As the schematic outline indicates, my engagement with Hull2017 started through a preliminary exploratory phase, which served for general orientation within the city and the preparations for the mega-event. With the opening event *Made in Hull*, the fieldwork officially started in January 2017 and lasted until January 2018. In Donostia/ San Sebastián, the fieldwork had three distinct phases with a preliminary exploration and orientation in March 2016, a primary fieldwork phase in November and December 2016 during the celebration of DSS2016 and a secondary fieldwork phase in April and May 2017, by which time the mega-event had terminated and associated infrastructures were about to close. In total, I was able to conduct 15 months of in-depth fieldwork for the purpose of this investigation.

I studied the political level in both field sites through semi-structured interviews with members of the two executive teams of Hull 2017 Ltd and DSS2016 foundation. In the case of DSS2016, I also included political actors in the application and initial preparation phases, due to their relevance for the mega-event's ideological visions. Besides interviews, I employed a textual and visual content analysis of the bid books and application videos. Through close reading of the visual and textual material, I orientated myself within the ideological and administrative structures of the mega-events.

In both sites, the practices of cultures of gender equality were investigated through semi-structured interviews with cultural actors and participative observation in selected activities. As outlined previously in the presentations of activities as part of the first chapter, *Situating the Field*, I chose cultural activities through a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the cultural programme. With attention to the content, form and structure of the activities as promoted in these publications, I created and published listings of potentially gender-sensitive, equality-provoking activities.

Focus group interviews, participative observations and the collaboration with the so-called observing-participants were employed for the investigation of the perceptive levels. The perceptions of cultures of gender equality was only investigated in the context of Hull2017. As all fieldwork methods relevant to the perceptive level are used for analytical purposes, I discuss them in more detail within the relevant section of this chapter.

Logistical and personal Challenges in Fieldwork

The complex schematic outline of fieldwork methods resonates with the multiple intersecting layers that constitute the research field, as outlined in the first chapter: *Situating the Field*. In these complex structures, a discussion of the challenges and inherent research limitations are in order. In this section, I describe briefly the logistical efforts of this research and the restrictions bound up to it. Additionally, I discuss how my personal position affected the fieldwork experience, as I explore the concepts of innocence and naivety as an asset in ethnographic research.

The nature of the field sites as well as the labour-intensive methods created logistical challenges. While research in two time-sensitive, convoluted fields was inevitably associated with logistical difficulties, the ethnographic approach and participative methods required extensive project and community management. The selected methods required continuous involvement in and dedication to the developments of the field. In consideration of the political and practical research perspectives, high levels of networking were demanded, in order to become familiar with the artistic community and the teams executing the mega-events in both cities. Additionally, the collaboration with the team of observing-participants needed continuous contact, in order to engage participants in the events. Owing to this high management demand, the research was based on a fairly static planning strategy. As visits to activities often needed to be planned and booked several weeks or even months in advance, spontaneity was sacrificed in order to manage and structure the research project well. An immediate result of this research challenge was that the final selection of investigated activities in Hull2017 only included highly promoted events. Smaller activities with less promotional capacities but potentially relevant gender-sensitive content, form or structure could not be matched with the planning process of the research project.

Furthermore, my personal and professional positionality created advantages as well as disadvantages for the research practice. Prior to the research, I was not familiar with either of the cities or with the mega-events of Hull2017 or DSS2016. Therefore, I approached both field sites through a fairly uninformed perspective. While such an approach could be positively described as being unbiased, the lack of prior knowledge required intense preparations for the actual fieldwork. However, my unfamiliarity constituted an important advantage in my ethnographic explorations as I was allowed to ask questions, which participants often acknowledged as being unusual. The confrontation with

unfamiliar questions and research interests was further enhanced through my appearance as a young, female foreigner. My language abilities as a non-native speaker of Spanish and English marked me as foreign to the geographical and cultural customs. While it is difficult to generalise, I continuously used this supposed deficiency as an entitlement to ask questions in potentially odd ways. The label or attribution 'foreign' granted me explicit explanations of social, cultural and political contexts, as participants assumed a lack of local knowledge. My age and gender appearance further influenced the research practices. Reflecting on my fieldwork experiences, I agree with Errant (2004), who points out that assumed innocence is a strong asset for anthropological research involvement with one's own field. While I played with assumed naivety as an advantage in fieldwork settings, the majority of researched individuals and communities granted me acceptance, support and appreciation on the basis of shared sexual identifications, gender experiences and/ or political views.

Methods relevant for further Analysis

Within the multiplicity of fieldwork techniques, I focus on the methods of participative observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and the collaborative practice with observing-participants for further analysis. In the following sections, I provide an outline of each of the four methods and introduce the associated actors.

In preparation for the later employed analytical approach on practices rather than stakeholders of gender equality, the three-layered research design collapses in this presentation of analytical methods. Hence, I focus on the individual methods rather than the clusters of politics, practices and perceptions of cultures of gender equality. The methods correlate as follows to the designed perspectives: semi-structured interviews were used in the investigation of the political and practical considerations with political and cultural actors. Participative observation influenced the research concerning practices and perceptions of gender equality. The perceptive perspective was investigated through focus group interviews and the collaborative practice with observing-participants.

In the following discussion, due to the in-depth involvement of the participants and the richness of the collected data, the collaboration with observing-participants receives greater attention than the other methods. Additionally, in the later analysis, the team of observing-participants has a large

prominence. Due to their continuous involvement, material contributed by the observing-participants outweighs the data shared by other research participants.

Participative Observation

The following discussion of participative observation portrays on the one hand, my own engagement with cultural activities. On the other hand, in reference to the method's conceptual considerations, the outline also contributes to the development and practice of collaboration with a team of observing-participants.

Buch and Staller (2007) summarise the method of participative observation as an active engagement of a researcher in the routines of a field. The participative observer documents the details of social interaction and pays attention to the behaviours and enactments of the different actors within a field. The method allows great flexibility and adaptation of the researcher. As I engaged in a plurality of settings including art installations, exhibitions, performances, talks, workshops, music events etc, fast adaptation to the circumstances was a crucial asset for the experiential explorations of the selected activities.

Through fieldnotes and social artefacts, I documented occasions of participatory observation. These thick descriptions present the experiences in the field in a vivid and detailed manner. As Buch and Staller (2007) suggest, I made fieldnotes through a two-part procedure. The moments of participation were noted as jottings, which served as tools for remembering. During or immediately after participation, jottings were organised as fieldnotes. My writing of fieldnotes mainly followed a chronological order of an activity. Therefore, the fieldnotes usually read as a descriptive story, providing details of my own experience, with specific attention to the research interest. Observations were further documented through a continuous collection of social artefacts. They supported and visualised the fieldnotes, and were often used as jottings. These artefacts are items that are encountered in the field in the moment of participation/ observation. Throughout the past 15 months of fieldwork, I collected 93 fieldnotes, which vary in length and reference. Additionally, the collection of social artefacts includes 175 objects. The materiality of this collection is dominated by printed materials such as programme schedules or leaflets. Furthermore, I collected video/ audio-recordings as well as physical artefacts. The high number of fieldnotes represents the considerable number of events visited. Due to the fieldwork method of mapping gender-sensitive and equality-provoking activities, I attempted to get an appropriate overview of all events of this category. However, for analytical

purposes, I reduced this vast number of activities to six events in each field site representing approximately 60 fieldnote-files.

Semi-structured Interviews

For interviews, I used a semi-structured format with focus on open-ended questions. My emphasis laid on the quality of dialogue. With open-ended questions, I intended to collect narratives rather than factual statements.

I interpret interviews as an instrumentalisation of a conversation for the purpose of data collection, as argued by Oakley (1981). The scholar considers the research interview to be a pseudo-conversation. The interview situation includes clarity and guidance through questioning and systematised listening for the purpose of the research method. At the same time, the pseudo-conversation requires empathy, active listening and interest, which responds to the conversational aspect. This interview technique allows a high level of flexibility, as interviews can be adjusted to the unique situations of each conversation. As Hesse-Biber (2013) specifies, semi-structured interviews allow to ask questions, which respond directly to the research interest, while simultaneously allowing certain levels of control over the conversation without interrupting the fluidity of the dialogue.

Methodologically, the interviews with political or cultural actors did not differentiate from each other. However, in practical terms, the interview schedules adapted to the individual circumstances and categorical considerations⁴⁸. With political actors, interview questions concentrated on the general structures and developments of the mega-event and often referred to explicit events in order to exemplify explanations and arguments. Meanwhile, conversations with cultural actors centred on affiliated events and their practical implications. From such focus, interviews expanded in regards to the general structures of the mega-event, cultural sector and the city's development.

Political and cultural Actors

Merged with the methodological discussion, in this section, I offer an introduction of the political and cultural actors. Prior to this introduction, I need to declare that a strict differentiation between political and cultural actors is not always possible. Many political actors carry responsibilities of cultural production. At the same time, many cultural actors are influential in the management levels

⁴⁸ Samples of interview schedules are included in the appendix.

of their affiliated event or companies. The categorisation is based on their primary responsibilities. In the following outline, I, firstly, discuss the relevance of political and cultural actors, the selection process and related ethics. Secondly, I present the research participants.

Through interviews, I made the professional and personal experiences, positions and opinions of these key professionals in political and cultural positions accessible (Devault & Gross, 2007). I am aware that political and cultural actors speak from positions, in which personal and professional interests merge. On the one hand, they represent the mega-event or a specific activity. On the other hand, interviewees often express an immediate personal interest in their contribution to the cultural programme of Hull2017 or DSS2016.⁴⁹ While their contributions are essential, professional restrictions limit the potential of the method. On several occasions, potential interview participants were unable to participate in the research due to the company's internal strata or non-disclosure policies.

Political actors are in a key professional role and can be clustered as decision-makers in relation to the ideological content of Hull2017 and DSS2016. In both cities, I selected political actors in respect to their different positions within the executive bodies of the mega-event. While in Hull2017 all political actors were members of the executive team, in the context of DSS2016, I also included members from the bid team, who were no longer involved in the delivery of the mega-event. Next to availability, the plurality of positions in the hierarchical structures of the executive bodies influenced my selection. Therefore, I included members of different teams such as production, management and the board.

I use cultural actors as a generic reference. The category includes individuals and collectives, who are involved in, contribute to, or are responsible for the delivery of a cultural activity. Cultural actors are in the positions of producers and directors, as well as artists. They have explicit responsibility for the content, structure and visions of individual activities. Similar to political actors, their personal and professional visions impact the gender-sensitive practices. However, much more than the political actors, cultural actors engage with the activities on a hands-on basis. Their influence stretches from the initial

⁴⁹ Such claims are further explored in the analytical chapter: *Performing Equality*.

intentions to the production process and is often far more critical and operational than the political actors' considerations of the ideological and managerial structures. The range of cultural actors is based on the selection of cultural activities, as previously introduced in the chapter: *Situating the Field*. In Hull2017, each activity is represented through at least two cultural actor related to artistic content or production process. The exhibition *SKIN: Freud, Mueck and Tunick* is an exception, as only one interview with a member of the production team could be undertaken. In the context of DSS2016, I interviewed only one cultural actor for each activity. In all cases, the interviewed cultural actors were in a directing role including curator, director, project coordinator or lead producer.

In the majority of interviews, I got to know the political and cultural actors personally through my involvement with the activities and wider artistic community in the cities. In order to request interviews, I contacted potential participants formally, either through email or social media⁵⁰. In several cases, emails were not answered, so I relied on face-to-face encounters to express my invitation for the research participation. All interview participants received a written summary of the research in the form of an information sheet prior to the interview. This written document includes my contact details and links to further information concerning the project⁵¹. Moreover, I explained the interview purpose to each participant and highlighted their right to anonymity and withdrawal verbally prior to the interview. Informed consent was stated orally through recordings at the beginning of the interviews.

In the course of 15 months of fieldwork, I conducted over 90 interviews. A total of 32 interviews were selected and transcribed for further analysis.⁵² I work with seven semi-structured interviews with members of Hull 2017 Ltd and DSS2016 foundation. Additionally, I include 19 interviews with cultural actors in the context of Hull2017 and six cultural actors from DSS2016. In the following list, I outline each interview participant by highlighting their role and affiliated event. The list is structured primarily by location and secondly by categorisation

⁵⁰ A sample email for political and cultural actors is included in the appendix.

⁵¹ The information sheet for political and cultural actors is included in the appendix.

⁵² As the selection of activities was confirmed only in the second half of the fieldwork process, several interviews, especially with cultural actors, have been excluded due to the changing criteria of the final selection as outlined in the first chapter: *Situating the Field*.

as either political or cultural actor. The order is alphabetical according to participants pseudonyms. In the case of political actors, the affiliated event is substituted with their relationship with the executive bodies of Hull 2017 Ltd or DSS2016 Foundation. The professional roles are fairly arbitrary. In order to enhance levels of anonymity, descriptions are reduced to the three generic categories of production, management and artist. While this listing does not provide the depth of such categories, I explore the relevance and qualities of the professional roles in further detail in the analytical chapters.

Table 5: List of Political Actors Hull2017

Pseudonym	Professional Role	Affiliated Event/ Institution
Coby	Production	HULL2017
James	Management	HULL2017
Sabrina	Management	HULL2017

Table 6: List of Cultural Actors Hull2017

Pseudonym	Professional Role	Affiliated Event/ Institution
Abbie ⁵³	Production	WOW
	Production	AF
Alice	Artist	AF
Arthur	Artist	WOW
Bahar	Artist	WOW
Claudia	Artist/ Production	WOW
Erin	Production	HULL
Eva	Production	FF
Harry	Artist	AF
Henry	Production	LGBT50
Hugo	Artist	HULL
Jess	Artist	LGBT50
Laura	Artist/ Production	FF
Lily	Production	FF
Max	Artist/ Production	LGBT50
Mia	Production	SKIN
Oliver	Artist	AF
Thomas	Artist	LGBT50
Tim	Artist	FF

Table 7: List of Political Actors DSS2016

Pseudonym	Professional Role	Affiliated Event/ Institution
Ane	Production/ Management	DSS2016
Kepa	Production	DSS2016
Kosmo	Production	DSS2016
Koldo	Production	DSS2016

⁵³ Abbie was interviewed twice as she produced *Women of the World* Festival as well as *Assemble Fest*.

Table 8: List of Cultural Actors DSS2016

Pseudonym	Professional Role	Affiliated Event/ Institution
Abarne	Production	MAR
Collective ⁵⁴	Production	FEM
Deina	Production	DSSIREZ
Errita	Production	ENTRE
Etor	Production	OLA
Pello	Production	ARTIVISTA

Focus Group Interviews

As I do not investigate the perceptive dimension of cultures of gender equality in the context of DSS2016, the method of focus group interviews only applies to the context of Hull2017.

Hesse-Biber (2013) discusses focus group interviews as an option within the techniques of in-depth interviewing. She argues that the method aims to capture lived experiences from a subjective perspective. The unique potential of focus group interviews is the interaction of multiple respondents. Leavy (2007: 176) describes the situation of a focus group interview as a ‘happening’, which ‘is a conversation that, while prearranged and “focused” by the researcher, remains a dynamic narrative process’. In order to embrace such a dynamic happening, I included a craft as part of the focus group interview. On the one hand, my intention was to create an atmosphere of unstructured conversations following a structured discussion. On the other hand, I wanted to pick up on the creative, artistic atmosphere that surrounded my research project, process and setting. As part of the focus group interviews, I invited participants to craft their own snow globes in order to commemorate their personal memories of the past year. The symbol of the Do-it-yourself snow globe valued the individual memories and experiences in material form. Furthermore, the end product could be used to shake up one’s own memory whenever needed, as I explained to the focus group participants.

From November 2017 to January 2018, I held four focus group interviews with a total of 18 participants. The first focus group encounter took place as the final meeting with the observing-participants in November 2017. Additionally, I worked with three community groups with particular interest in arts, culture and/ or gender. I selected these community groups in respect to their location of

⁵⁴ In the case of *Feministaldia*, I was able to interview three members of the production/ management team and therefore will address them as a collective rather than individually.

assembly in the city. Hence, I included one group in West Hull, one in the City Centre and one in East Hull. The participants were associated with a professional women's network, a local craft group and an activists' collective⁵⁵. In the cases of the professional women's network and the local craft group, I had a person of contact, who formed part of the group. These gatekeepers were former research participants, who enacted roles of political and cultural actors in the context of the research. Upon my request, they helped me to get in touch and arrange the meetings with the groups. The focus group interview with the activists' collective developed through my personal attendance of some meetings prior to the fieldwork. Throughout my fieldwork, I was regularly in touch with members of the collective and followed their interventions. Invitations for the focus group interview was sent out through the official mailing list, but the encounter was arranged as an informal meeting of the collective.

The following list outlines all participants in the different focus groups and gives details of their age group, gender identification, location of residence as well as their personal affiliations with Hull2017⁵⁶. In order to guarantee anonymity, contributions from focus group participants are not linked to an individual pseudonym. Rather, in discussion of their contributions, I address all individuals as focus group participants. All participants were briefed about the purposes of the research prior to the conversation verbally as well as in writing through an information sheet⁵⁷. Consent was given in writing through a form⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ The collective congregated explicitly in relation to the mega-event of Hull2017 and intervened in Hull2017 programmes on a regular basis. In addition to critiquing the notion of culture promoted and presented in Hull2017, members of the activist group strongly questioned the mega-event's funding structures.

⁵⁶ This information was collected through demographic survey, which participants were asked to fill in prior to their participation. While age groups, location of residence and affiliations with Hull2017 were predetermined through check boxes, gender identification was left to be determined by the participant without pre-established categories.

⁵⁷ See Appendix.

⁵⁸ See Appendix

Table 9: List of Focus Group Participants

Participant (by Number)	Focus Group	Age Group	Gender Identification	Location of Residence (by Postcode)	Affiliation with Hull2017 ⁵⁹
1	Observing-Participant	25-34	Female	HU3	Active Participant
2	Observing-Participant	75>	Female	HU5	Active participant, Distant Observer
3	Observing-Participant	35-44	male	HU17	Cultural Actor, Hull2017 Volunteer, Active Participant
4	Observing-Participant	25-34	Female	HU2	Active Participant, Distant Observer
5	Observing-Participant	35-44	on a sliding scale/ transwoman	HU3	Cultural Actor, Active Participant
6	Activist Collective	25-34	male	HU3	Cultural Actor, Active Participant
7	Activist Collective	25-34	Female	HU5	Passive Bystander
8	Activist Collective	25-34	male	HU3	Active Citizen
9	Activist Collective	25-34	Male Heterosexual	HU3	Cultural Actor
10	Activist Collective ⁶⁰	x	x	X	x
11	Women's Business Network	65-74	Female	HU17	Volunteer in other Institution, Active Participant
12	Women's Business Network	65-74	Female	HU6	Cultural Actor, Hull2017 Volunteer, Active Participant, Passive Bystander
13	Local Craft Group	75>	Female	HU8	Volunteer in other Institution, Active Participant, Passive Bystander
14	Local Craft Group	65-74	Female	HU8	Volunteer in other Institution, Passive Bystander
15	Local Craft Group	65-74	Female	HU9	Volunteer in other Institution, Passive Bystander
16	Local Craft Group	55-64	Female/ Lady	HU4	Volunteer in other Institution, Active Participant
17	Local Craft Group	45-54	Lady	HU8	x ⁶¹
18	Local Craft Group	45-54	Female Lady	HU8	Hull2017 Volunteer

⁵⁹ Provided list of affiliations with Hull2017 included the following categories: Cultural Actor, Hull2017 Volunteer, Volunteer in other Institution, Active Participant, Passive Bystander, Distant Observer. Focus Groups participants had option of multiple choice and terms of categories were left to their own interpretations. In one situation, a participant chose to create his own category of affiliation with Hull2017.

⁶⁰ Participant preferred not to provide information.

⁶¹ Participant preferred not to provide information.

The data contributed by focus group participants is used similarly to the reflections of observing-participants, as they represent residents of Hull and contribute to the perceptive layer of analysis. However, due to the depth of the work with observing-participants, focus group participants are less represented as direct voices throughout the analytical chapters. Their contributions support rather than frame the analysis, as their perceptive accounts are less explicitly related to the individual activities under investigation, but rather state general considerations of Hull2017 and its developments. This analytical underrepresentation of focus group participants is a crucial limitation of the method and is mainly bound to the logistical challenges within their arrangements. The labour intensity of the collaboration with observing-participants, as outlined in the section below, postponed the establishment of focus group interviews towards the end of 2017 and my analytical process. Consequently, interview schedules were influenced by the preliminary analysis of other data sets.⁶² The questions referred strongly to pre-established themes and did not incorporate the same inductive flexibility as other interview schedules.

Observing through Participants

For the purpose of this investigation, I developed a collaborative work relationship with a team of up to nine residents of Hull and surrounding villages. In synthesis, I invited the so-called observing-participants to visit, explore and observe selected cultural activities. The residents documented their participation in events and other activities through fieldnotes, audio-visual material and social artefacts. After their event observations, I met up with each participant individually for a follow-up conversation in order to discuss the experience and record their reflections. With this collaboration, I seek to understand the audience' perceptions of the event. The observing-participants benefited through free tickets to activities, which I arranged and funded through the GRACE Project.

The name observing-participants is a deliberate word play in reference to the method of participative observation. I trained the research participants in observation techniques. Therefore, rather than mere research participants, they were observing-participants. As I outline later in the section, the attribution of 'observing' rather than 'research' further highlights their active involvement and crucial contributions to the research process and analysis.

⁶² Workshop outline for focus group interviews is provided in the appendix.

The development of the collaborative practice derives from my interest in methodological explorations of qualitative techniques in researching audience experiences. Cultural, artistic and creative activities are based on the lived experience of their audience, as further discussed in the chapter: *Conceptualising Gender and Events*. My exploration of perceptions of cultures of gender equality are driven by audiences' experiences and reflections. I attempt to document these experiences in their most immediate state. During my preparations, I explored different documentation strategies of such experiential settings. I envisioned and developed this collaborative practice with the aim of extending the experiential insight through first-hand accounts and perceptions of the activities in question.

The method is based on an experimental, participative approach to qualitative, ethnographic research in event settings. In this collaboration, I merged the ethnographic technique of participative observation with Hesse-Biber's (2013) feminist application of in-depth interviewing, as outlined in the previous section. I used a common interview schedule⁶³ for all follow-up conversations, but adjusted questions and themes for each activity and participant individually. The questions were left fairly broad, addressing the expectations prior to the event, the atmosphere experienced during the event as well as the contents presented as part of the event. The final point of discussion of each interview questioned the potential contribution of the selected activity to cultures of gender equality in reference to the observing-participants' personal experiences, interests and visions.

The initial team was recruited from September 2016 until February 2017 and trained in the methods, purposes and interests of the research project through a workshop prior to the first observation in March 2017. Throughout the year, the team members were free to decide whether or not to join an observation opportunity. Due to shifts in numbers during the summer period, I enlarged the team in August 2017, in order to be able to draw upon a pool of active observing-participants at all times.

The recruitment of the nine residents based on purposive sampling. Age, gender identification and residential location guided me in the invitations for participation, as I aimed to represent the greatest possible variety in respect to

⁶³ See Appendix.

these categories of selection. The recruitment was further influenced by the participants' certain interest in the city's developments. However, no knowledge or previous experience was expected for participation. The participants' involvement and knowledge varied extensively: some participants are passionate about theatre, dance or local history, while others merely have a general interest in Hull2017 or the city's wider developments.

The following table outlines the team members in alphabetical order in reference of their pseudonym. The list includes an overview of the observing-participants' age, gender identification and location of residence according to postcodes. For the purpose of orientation, I also indicate which activity each observing-participants visited for research purposes. Due to different moments of recruitment, specialised interests or life circumstances, some participants visited, explored and observed activities more frequently than others. However, in the final analysis, all observations and reflections are considered equally. In total, I collected 33 interviews with the observing-participants concerning their explorations of the six selected cultural activities in Hull2017.

Table 10: Listing of Observing-Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Location of Residence	Affiliated Events
Alex	18–24	Male	HU3	SKIN LGBT50
Anna	25–34	Female	HU2	HULL SKIN AF LGBT50 FF HULL
Daniel	25–34	Male	HU2	WOW SKIN AF LGBT50 FF HULL
Emma	25–34	Female	HU10	WOW
John	35–44	Male	HU17	HULL
Mathilda	25–34	Female	HU11	SKIN AF LGBT50 HULL
Rachel	45–54	Female	HU8	WOW HULL
Rosa	65–74	Female	HU5	WOW SKIN AF LGBT50 FF
Sophia	35–44	Trans-Female	HU3	WOW SKIN AF LGBT50 FF HULL

The relevance and strength of this research collaboration lies in the active involvement of residents in the research process. The observing-participants are not only participating in the investigation, but actively contribute to the data collection. Through personal exploration, participatory observation and the further sharing of experiences in follow-up conversations, they shape the preliminary stages of the analytical process. With regards to the previously outlined feminist methodological principles, this involvement of the participants intrinsically challenges the authority and hierarchies of the researcher and the researched in the process of knowledge production (Grabher, 2018).

The personal development that participants expressed in our final meetings summarises a crucial aspect of success of this research collaboration. Several observing-participants appreciated the participation as a form of motivation to engage with Hull2017 activities. The facilitation and organisation of tickets and events schedules reduced barriers for engagement. Through several collective visits to activities, new friendships and bonds were created. Additionally, the follow-up conversations required critical reflections about their experiences. Several observing-participants commented that such reflective practices sparked a learning process regarding issues surrounding gender and sexuality, which affected participants' personal and professional lives. While I did not anticipate such transformations in the original development of the research collaboration, the learning experiences create an enormous potential for the investigation as the research participation affected individuals' lives. Several of these experiences are described in the later analytical chapters.

While the collected material is original, unique and insightful, I have to acknowledge the limitations of the research collaboration. Firstly, the participative method is labour-intensive and relies on the voluntary capacities of participants. In the planning of the collaboration, I underestimated the organisational process. As highlighted previously regarding the logistical challenges, the project and community management is an essential component regarding this collaborative process. The commitment and interests of the observing-participants simplified the organisational efforts. With the exception of free tickets, the participants had no monetary gain; they invested their time, energy and attention voluntarily into the research and its outcomes. This first acknowledgement of difficulty leads to the second limitation, as the collaborative practice lacked flexibility and spontaneity due to the labour-intensity of the

organisational processes. Due to the busy event schedule and limited availability of participants, I had to prepare and plan observation opportunities months in advance. Therefore, observations were prearranged and very much scheduled according to specific festival days and locations. Nevertheless, the valuable insights and observations provided by participants compensate for the restrictions in terms of flexibility. The third limitation relates to the difficulty of recruitment. While I was attentive to the diversities in the team, recruitment could be fine-tuned. Further diversity in regards to location of residence and an additional consideration of educational backgrounds would be beneficial for future adaptations of the collaborative practice.

Observing-Participants

Due to the relevance and exceptional involvement of the observing-participants in this collaborative process, I introduce each participant in the form of a narrative profile. For the analysis, all names and personal details have been anonymised. The listing follows an alphabetical order. The length of the individual descriptions is not related to the value of their contribution.

Alex

Alex (late 20s, male, HU3) is a community activist and politically active resident, involved with several activist groups in the city, region and country. During his university degree, he theoretically engaged with issues concerning human rights and gender equality. His devotion to activism is partially informed by such academic interest. Alex is very critical of the relevance of the UKCOC mega-event, as he is concerned about the notion of culture that Hull2017 promotes. He actively vocalises his concern about funding structures and commodification/instrumentalisation of culture in the mega-event. His critical reflections and active countering of certain developments are key contributions to the perceptive considerations of gender equality.

Anna

Anna (early 30s, female, HU2) moved to Hull in 2016. She is working in the global trade industries but engages personally and intensely with art, culture and activism through her participation in different artist and activist communities in Hull. Anna repeatedly expressed her interest in gender issues and searched for conversations with me and other participants beyond the focus of the research in order to understand her personal experiences of gender. Anna expressed great motivation for participation in the research project, due to the collective

experience and reflection of artistic and cultural productions in order to engage more intrinsically with critical questions and political considerations that art can provoke.

Daniel

Daniel (mid 30s, male, HU3) engages professionally with the music industry and education. In 2016, he moved to Hull due to his professional development. As a fairly new resident in Hull, he appreciates and explores the city in the context of Hull2017. Due to his professional capacities, he describes his relationship to arts and culture, particularly the performing arts, as a form of intellectual and professional training, which he regularly practices and enjoys. He demonstrated a great interest in a variety of cultural and artistic genres but clearly links his interest to his professional engagements with music.

Emma

Emma (early 30s, female, HU10) engaged with questions of gender equality on an academic level due to her university degree. Such knowledge influences her personal and professional life; however, she is not explicitly involved with feminist or queer activism and scholarship anymore. Therefore, she experiences the observations of gender-sensitive activities as a reminder to return to this cause and sees great inspiration through the experience of participation in the research project. She grew up in a neighbouring village of Hull and lived for several years outside the city as well as in the area of HU5. Furthermore, her perspectives about the city have been shaped by her academic study and professional capacities in the care industries. She is interested in Hull's developments but not devoted to arts and culture in an explicit sense. Therefore, her research participation is motivated by an interest in gender equality and the refreshment of her personal devotion to the movement.

John

John (late 30s, male, HU17) joined the team of observing-participants in the summer of 2017. As a volunteer of Hull2017, he has experienced and dedicated a lot of time and effort to the cultural developments in the city. His motivation to 'not miss out' (John, OP, FG)⁶⁴ is his drive to challenge himself continuously through his voluntary involvement with the mega-event. He recently moved with

⁶⁴ The referencing strategy for interview material is outlined in the next section entitled 'Analytical and Referencing Strategies'.

his family to a neighbouring village in the East Riding and works in IT support for a large company in Hull. While not experiencing fulfilment through his professional capacities, John experienced his volunteer commitment to Hull2017 as life-changing. The volunteer opportunity serves as an outlet to leave his comfort zone and explore new sides of himself. John is particularly inspired and excited about the community dance and performance projects and has joined several such opportunities throughout the year. His personal experiences and developments alongside the city's developments contribute a highly significant perspective to the research project.

Mathilda

Mathilda (late 20s, female, HU3) is a new resident in the postcode area of HU3 and only recently moved from East to West Hull. Growing up and living in East Hull until the beginning of 2017, she describes the motif of such relocation in relation to her interest to be closer to cultural venues and offers in the city. Her core motivation for participation in the research was to 'get her ass kicked' (Mathilda, OP, FG) to see, engage in and experience the happenings in 2017 in the city. Referring to herself as lazy, her behaviour counters such self-reference with an outspoken passion and pleasure for theatre and festivals. She continuously highlights her joy in seeing people coming together for the purpose of celebrations, and her lively, open character allows her to engage with and enjoy such festive atmospheres to the fullest.

Rachel

Rachel's (mid 40s, female, HU9) motivation to join the research is her intention to 'mingle' and 'get out of the house' and her own comfort zone (Rachel, OP, WOW). As mother and wife, she is dedicated to the care for her family and household. Furthermore, she is passionate about the local history of Hull and is able to tell special stories about the city and its people. Rachel is very aware of the demographic and geographic separations of Hull and concerned about how the East and West of the city are divided as the boundaries are hardly ever crossed. She fears that such separation might also affect the cultural developments of the city throughout 2017. Due to such concern, she engaged with Hull2017 primarily as a volunteer. Her ability for critical reflection and expression without mincing matters are a unique feature of Rachel and shape her personality and strength.

Rosa

Rosa (mid 70s, female, HU5) is an activist volunteering for a local human rights organisation. In our first conversation, she pointed out that justice is a very important word and concept to her, which on a personal as well as professional level, she campaigns for. While growing-up in one of the former British Colonies, she came to Hull in the 1960s and has not only observed but lived the recent history and developments of the city, region and nation ever since. After retiring from her teaching position in a local school, she dedicated her time to further investigating historical developments, uncovering the stories of human rights activists in and from the city. Her knowledge about social justice champions such as William Wilberforce or Mary Murdock turns every conversation into an exciting and engaging history lesson, which not only considers the local developments but also embeds such considerations in a wider discussion of global relationships and struggles for social justice and human rights.

Sophia

Sophia (mid 40s, female, HU3) is a word warrior and critical resident of Hull. Her work as a writer is driven by her support for the underdogs of culture – artists and practitioners, who are not entitled to glossy, glamorous marketing campaigns but build the essence of the city's cultural scene. As a resident, she loves this city, which she calls her home and observes its developments consciously. For her, streets are not just names, but her own living memories. Sophia can tell stories about every street corner and alley way. While being well-known and appreciated in the city for her work and expressive character, Sophia simultaneously knows the city in its other facet, as she has struggled for acceptance and survival in her daily life. Identifying as a member of the LGBT community, the cultural transformation of the city is a personal interest for her.

Analytical and referencing Strategy

For the analysis of the data, I employ the method of qualitative content analysis. I use the strategy according to Mayring's (1991) techniques of coding and categorisation. However, other than in Mayring's (1991) demonstrations, my data analysis is based on a semi-inductive approach. As outlined in the introduction, three main codes of engagement, performance and infrastructures of equality are pre-scripted. While such clusters are already set, the strategy of qualitative content analysis allows me to further generate codes and categories within as well as beyond the framework fairly loosely.

In accordance with the analytical strategy, I developed a referencing system for the presentation of the later analysis. As the analytical chapters show, it is important to highlight the individual positions of research participants. The suggested referencing system facilitates the orientation between the multiplicity of voices influencing the analysis. In the text, I primarily refer to participants through their pseudonym and reintroduce their status in the research context as well as their role and affiliated event descriptively. Furthermore, I refer to participants' positions in brackets through the following referencing strategy including the pseudonym, status in the context of this research, professional role and affiliated event. The following table exemplifies the strategy and illustrates how to read the references to interview material:

Table 11: Referencing Strategy for Interview Material

Pseudonym	Status in research context	Professional Role ⁶⁵	Affiliated Event
Political Actors			
James	Political Actor (PA)	Management	HULL2017
Cultural Actors			
Thomas	Cultural Actor (CA)	Artist	LGBT50
Focus Group Participants			
Participant	Focus Group (FG)	X	X ⁶⁶
Observing-Participants			
Anna	Observing-Participant (OP)	X	SKIN

Conclusive Summary

In this second chapter, I highlighted the methodological strategies and influences applied within the context of the research project: *Gendering Cities of Culture*. The aim of this chapter was to introduce the research practices employed in this study.

On the basis of the previous introduction to the research field, I addressed the methodological principles which frame the processes and perspectives of this investigation. Following feminist theory and methodology, I am committed to Harding's (1987a, 1987b, 1993) concept of strong objectivity, which grounds on reflexive practices rather than value-free, truth-seeking objectivity.

⁶⁵ In the case of focus group participants and observing-participants, the category 'professional role' is not applicable.

⁶⁶ In the case of focus group participants, the category 'affiliated event' is not applicable.

In the second part of this chapter, I outlined how selected methods apply to the methodological principles. I differentiated between the research techniques related to fieldwork and methods used for further analysis. I argued for such separation due to the strong need for orientation in the highly complex field of the mega-events. As a consequence, my explanations of fieldwork methods were kept to a minimum with the main attention given to the challenges in the specific research context. Discussing the methods used for further analysis, I sketched out the ethnographic techniques of participative observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews in relation to their conceptual and methodological relevance. I related these outlines to the actors who are involved in, but also perform these methods. Furthermore, I focused on the collaboration with observing-participants and their individual introductions. Developed explicitly for the purpose of the research, I argued that the collaborative method conceptualised supporting residents not only as participants in the study but also as contributors to the data collection and therefore later analysis.

While this chapter aims to introduce the methodologies and methods of the research, I argued throughout for a mutual consideration of the methodological and practical choices in relation to the field conditions and research developments. This argument primarily developed from the methodological decision to adapt a feminist approach to the study. The thematic focus of the investigation as well as insights gained from Critical Event Studies informed my choices. On the basis of this methodological principles, appropriate methods, practices and techniques were developed and employed to navigate the rather complex and multi-sited field of COC research.

Chapter 3

Conceptualising Gender and Events

This chapter is dedicated to the key concepts that frame my subsequent analysis. I draw on event and gender studies in order to build a comprehensive conceptual framework. In the following outline, I consider the political relevance of celebrations with attention to events' transformative potential and their relationship to the production of cultures of gender equality.

My conceptualisation of events and gender is driven by a phenomenological interpretation, which centres on the socio-cultural practice and experience of the two interlinked entities under investigation. On the one hand, the socio-cultural significance of events shapes my reading of celebrations and their potential for gender equality. On the other hand, the liminal experiences and carnivalesque expressions of festivals inform the further interpretations of gender in events. In combination, the transformative potential of celebrations becomes prevalent, as the gendered dimensions of festivals unfold through the political potential and the transgressive atmospheres of celebrations.

The chapter is structured in two sections. Firstly, I examine the conceptualisation of events with particular reference to the Anthropology of the Festive and Critical Event Studies. In line with Benedict (1983), Falassi (1987a) and Finkel (2015), I consider the relevance of events through their socio-cultural significance and argue that celebrations have the potential to produce meaning. I outline this meaning-making practice in consideration of the celebrations of gender equality. With reference to Duggan's (2002, 2003) notion of homonormativity and Puar's (2002, 2013a, 2013b) concept of homonationalism, I explore events as a platform for the negotiation of gender equality. Secondly, I highlight the transgressive potential of events envisioned through the experiences of celebrations. Here, I draw upon Victor Turner's⁶⁷ (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) term of liminality and Bakhtin's (1968) discussion of the carnivalesque in order to understand in what way event experiences frame

⁶⁷ As I refer to Edith and Victor Turner, I add their first name in order to clearly identify the authors. References indicate the scholars through the attribution of the initials of E. and V. in addition to the surname of Turner.

celebrations and their atmosphere. In order to exemplify my argument, I regard the event experiences through a gendered reading and foreground lived, political and imaginary dimensions of gender in the celebratory context.

Celebrating Equality

In an exploration of the socio-cultural significance of celebrations, I ground my understanding of how gender equality is negotiated as a socio-cultural value in events. Firstly, I engage with a conceptualisation of events, festivals and celebrations through an anthropological lens and discuss their relevance for society. Secondly, I engage with the entanglements between gender equality and events through a focus on homonormative and homonationalist influences. Based on this outline, I argue for an understanding of celebrations as ‘parties with politics’ (Browne 2007: 63).

Socio-cultural Significance of Events

Celebrations hold the potential to engage, distort and express the zeitgeist of the location in which they are situated. Falassi (1987a: 3) elucidates that ‘the primary and most general function of the festival is to renounce and then to announce culture’. Hereby, the author captures events’ practice of meaning-making, which entails the socio-cultural significance of celebrations. Following Falassi’s (1987a) observation, Finkel (2015) points out that events do not take place in a vacuum. The scholars argue that celebrations are embedded in and expressive of their contemporary situatedness. In his analysis of the nineteenth-century World Fairs as mega-events of their time, Benedict (1983: 2) illustrates this interpretation, as he notes:

The fairs were not only selling goods, they were selling ideas: ideas about the relations between nations, the spread of education, the advancement of science, the form of cities, the nature of domestic life, the place of art in society. They were presenting an ordered world. Many of these ideas could be seen in concrete (or at least plaster) forms at the expositions.

The reference to the ‘selling of ideas’ exemplifies the conceptual understanding of celebrations and their socio-cultural significance. Events reproduce a monitored and often artificial reality, which allows a close reading of desired local

and temporal particularities, as several scholars outline⁶⁸. Based on this interpretation, I understand events as techniques for the promotion of political ideologies, communal values, cultural assets and social dynamics that become meaningful through the concentrated spatiality and temporality of celebrations. Concluding from this discussion on the potential and significance of celebrations, I argue that events construct meaning in the context of the transformative environment as they renounce and announce shared values. Falassi (1987a: 2) summarises:

Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognises as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what the festival celebrates.

Therefore, I argue events are highly political, value-laden practices in intensified cultural and social circumstances.

Gender, Equality and Events

The socio-cultural significance of celebrations becomes tangible in the consideration of the productions of cultures of gender equality in event settings. In references to the *Eurovision Song Contest*⁶⁹ and the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012*, Baker (2015, 2017) and Hubbard and Wilkinson (2015) exemplify the entanglements and allow me to argue for homonormative and homonationalist tendencies in the meaning-making processes of these events. In her observations on the *Eurovision Song Contest* in the 1990s and 2000s, Baker (2017) captures the gender political highlights of the event throughout its history. The first openly gay and trans performers in 1997 and 1998, the premier same-sex kiss by the Russian duo taTu in 2003 and the victory of the drag performer Conchita Wurst in 2014 are just a few examples of the explicit enactment of gender and sexual politics in the competition. The author argues that the *Eurovision Song Contest's* political developments of the 1990s and 2000s

⁶⁸ See Bartie (2013); Black (2007); Brewster, Connell, & Page (2009); Byrne (1987); Cohen (1980); Cohen (1998); Costa (2002); Gorokhov (2015); Leong (2001); McCartney & Osti (2007); and Quinn (2003).

⁶⁹ The *Eurovision Song Contest* is a music competition, in which designated representatives of countries compete against each other. The event's focus lies on its international television broadcast.

matches several national and European discourses on the institutionalisation of gender equality. Baker (2017: 101-102) summarises that ‘Eurovision [...] entered a context where certain state governments and European institutions were constructing LGBT equality as a matter of European identity and national pride’. This relationship leads Baker (2017: 112) to claim that the popular culture event can be addressed in relation to the construction of a European cultural citizenship⁷⁰. Hubbard and Wilkinson (2015) adopt a similar perspective when discussing representations of gender at the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012*. The authors focus less on the performance of gender and sexuality but foreground in their study the influences of gender and sexuality in relation to processes of place-making through tourism and city marketing. They argue that the city’s international reputation as ‘gay friendly’ was crucially used in the marketing of the mega-event. According to the authors, the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012* linked values of gender and sexual equality with the national re/presentation and channelled the information through event-led visibility. The *Eurovision Song Contest* and the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012*, both mega-events in their own rights, are based on different event frameworks than the studied COC mega-events. While certain features – including competition frameworks, histories, lengths and sizes – do not match the contexts of the researched mega-events, their gender-political debates and their event-based contextualisation relate to my research interests. In the studies by Baker (2015, 2017) and Hubbard and Wilkinson (2015), the focus lies on the claims of gender equality as socio-cultural values, which strongly influence the celebratory atmospheres. Furthermore, related to these claims for equality, the celebration of the socio-cultural value is grounded in territorial identifications with specific reference to national and international aspirations for gender equality. Therefore, the analysed events become producers of the negotiations of cultures of gender equality in accordance to the regional, national and transnational agendas.

⁷⁰ Baker (2017: 112) points out that the relationship between Eurovision and the construction of the European cultural citizenship ‘cannot be termed [...] unproblematically’. The author highlights: ‘Viewing it as a source of European cultural citizenship requires acknowledging the inequalities of access to citizenship in Europe, both in terms of political, social and economic participation and nationality-based stratification of residency rights’ (Baker, 2017: 112).

The incorporation of gender equality in the moral concept of national and transnational political agendas is discussed in Puar's (2013a, 2013b) terms as a process and product of homonationalism. The concept relies on Duggan's (2002) notion of homonormativity, which expresses mechanisms of normalisations of communities formerly marked as sexual others through adaptations to models and patterns of heterosexual order. When such normalisation processes are affecting national and transnational discourses, homonormativity becomes instrumentalised for territorial claims. Carniel (2015: 146) summarises: 'The concept [of homonationalism] denotes how acceptance or tolerance of previously marginalised sexualities has become a criterion for legitimating national sovereignty in both domestic and global discourses'. In both concepts, sexual – and in further consideration gendered – and territorial structures collapse.

As highlighted in the introduction of the field in chapter 1, COC mega-events are essential parts of processes and strategies of local, regional, national and transnational identity building. Therefore, similarly to Baker (2015, 2017) as well as Hubbard and Wilkinson (2015), I argue that the investigated COC mega-events influence the signification of cultures of gender equality for the hosting city, celebrating region, designated nation and overarching trans/ national organisation. Consequently, I regard COC mega-events in relation to homonormative and homonationalist strategies, which mainstream gender equality as a moral concept through the instructed celebration of urban culture.

Within my own analysis, three selected activities in Hull2017 correlate with my conceptual considerations. The *UK Pride Parade and Party* as part of the *LGBT50* celebrations, the *Women of the World* festival, and *Freedom Festival* present tendencies of homonormative, homonationalist valorisations of gender equality. Firstly, *UK Pride Parade and Party* constitute the most obvious example of homonationalist practices and processes. The struggle for LGBT rights becomes a national moral concept as the organisational spectrum indicates. Secondly, I consider *Women of the World* festival as a homonormative event. In broad terms, as the festival is directed towards the celebrations of gender equality, similar tendencies of national normalisation of values of gender equality can be observed. Thirdly, *Freedom Festival* can be studied in relation to normalisation and nationalisation of socio-cultural values. The festival does not immediately associate with claims of gender equality and might therefore not be addressed in terms of homonationalism. However, I argue that similar political mechanisms

are in place in this case study, as the commemorative festivity pairs the fight for social justice and equality with the celebration of the city and region.

Engaging with gender equality as a socio-cultural value requires and allows me to outline the significance of celebrations more widely. The event is a political product of its local, temporal situation, embedded in the wider space-time continuum, while creating a space-time of its own. Regional, national and transnational political agendas merge, and are reproduced in event settings. The production of cultures of gender equality in COC mega-events gives me grounds to exemplify such correlations.

Parties with Politics

In my phenomenological reading of events, I depart from the assumption that events not only serve a purpose of pleasure or commerce. Conceptually framing the relationship between gender, equality and events enabled me to understand the socio-cultural significance of celebrations. To take this conceptual point further, I argue that politics are ultimately engrained in the party. A growing number of activists and scholars tend to reduce the political influence of contemporary event industries to their commercialisation, institutionalisation and normalisation of their political contents.⁷¹ For example, studying *LGBT Pride* events, Taylor (2014: 33) summarises the debate through the following provocation: ‘The question [...] is whether pride has been reduced to festivalised spectacles of Otherness in the marketing of cities and commodities. Or is it still able to maintain its potential for political and sexual agitation?’ Informed by this critical questioning of the political potential of events, my conceptual approach requires a nuanced understanding of celebrations. While celebratory events are mainly associated with factors of entertainment and consumerism, the reduction of events to a mere party would not do justice to their socio-cultural significance, as argued previously in reference to examples such as the *Eurovision Song Contest* and the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012*. As Carniel (2015: 136) points out regarding the *Eurovision Song Contest*, ‘[i]t is widely acknowledged that, despite the glittery, wind-machined appearance, the Eurovision Song Contest is a highly political event’, and I argue that even in

⁷¹ The movement associates with the notion of ‘Gay Shame’ or ‘Pink Washing’ with strong activist networks in San Francisco, Brooklyn as well as London. See Bernstein Sycamore (2004); Halperin & Traub (2009); and Love (2007).

compromises political negotiations are taking place. I relate to Waterman's (in Jones, 2010: 276) statement that '[f]estivals are critical in creating, maintaining, transforming and transmitting culture'. The challenge lies in the reading of festive events beyond a binary interpretation between party and politics. In a similar vein, Kates (2003: 6) suggests that boundaries need to be blurred because the 'commercial, artistic and political arenas' overlap, interchange and mingle into a network, which cannot distinguish between party or politics. Rather, I consider festive events as 'parties with politics', according to Browne's (2007: 63) suggestion. Kates (2003: 8) elucidates:

In this way, meanings of the festival evolve over time, sometimes politically charged and rebellious, sometimes commercialised and 'corporate' but usually existing in a dialectic tension, reflecting the morass of social conditions and political agendas in which the festival itself is embedded.

The consideration of parties with politics grants space in order to acknowledge the evolution of festive events, their inherent contradictions and necessary compromises. The political as well as the profane receive appropriate attention, in order to balance the different stimuli in the festive occasions.

Experiencing Events

Based on a phenomenological understanding of events and gender and informed by my ethnographic approach to this research, the socio-cultural significance of events and their production of cultures of gender equality requires consideration through experiential levels of celebrations. According to Getz and Page (2016), an event is an immediate, experience-based condition. The scholars argue that the event's space-time is constructed by experiences of audiences, performers, producers and other supporters. These experiences occur spontaneously in the moment of their happening, which gives celebrations their inherent provocative, transformative potential.

Conceptualising festival experiences, I draw upon the concepts of liminality and carnivalesque. Liminality emerged as a key concept in Victor Turner's (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) study of rituals in the 1960s. Through a lens of literary studies, Bakhtin's (1968) notion of the carnivalesque refers to Rabelais and his depictions of the medieval carnival. The literary analytical concept can be associated with the anthropological notion of liminality and influences my interpretations of events for this research.

Characterising liminal and carnivalesque Festival Experiences

The most prominent characteristic of liminal and carnivalesque event experiences relates to the temporality of celebrations. Both concepts depart from the understanding of event experiences as a 'time out of time', as expressed by Falassi (1987b: 1). Celebrations occur in exceptional circumstances, which are marked as distinct from the daily routines and time schedules. They are framed by an introduction and conclusion, which allows for a set timing out of the ordinary. Bakhtin (1968: 6) describes such time out of time effect as follows: '[Medieval carnivals] built a second world and a second life of officialdom, a world which [...] [the community] lived during a given time of the year'. Victor Turner (1987a: 76) expands on the temporal characteristic further and refers to a space-time continuum of the festive experience:

Truly [the festival] is the denizen of a place that is no place, and a time that is no time, even where that place is a city's main plaza and that time can be found on an ecclesiastical calendar. For the squares, avenues and streets of the city become, in [the festive occasion], the reverse of their daily selves.

The temporal characterisation of events shapes the liminal, carnivalesque experiences that celebrations enable.

Furthermore, but intrinsic to the temporal dimension of event experiences, liminality and carnivalesque are described as sensations of norms out of the norm. The second intrinsic feature of the liminal, carnivalesque event experiences is the subversion of existent normative structures. In both theoretical conceptualisations by Victor Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) and Bakhtin (1968), transgressions of norms form a key subject of their study. Transgressive behaviour could be described as simply as Victor Turner (1974: 60) states: '[...] in liminality people "play" with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them'. Edith Turner (2012: 34) exemplifies such subversions in carnival further: 'People wear extravagantly beautiful costumes, masks, and cosmetics, overdoing the symbols that demonstrate joy. They overextend themselves, often literally in gross overeating and excessive drinking'. Consumption and the demonstration of emotions are crucial elements within the behavioural studies of liminal momentums. Bakhtin's (1968) analysis focuses particularly on humoristic, comical and entertaining expressions. As already addressed by Edith Turner (2012) in the above referenced citation, behavioural

changes often correlate with symbolic manifestations. Costumes, masks and cosmetics serve as expressions of participation in liminal and carnivalesque occasions. Furthermore, decorations and alterations of festive spaces add to the time out of time feature. In various situations, behavioural and symbolic adaptations might overlap as discussed in the example of practices of cross dressing during events such as the *German Carnival* (Tokofsky, 1999), *Mardi Gras* (Kates, 2003; Kates & Belk, 2001) or specific festivities of subcultures (Goulding & Saren, 2009). Within the scholarly literature, the preparations, practices and presentations of such transformed behavioural and symbolic codes are discussed as visible expressions of the discontinuity and transgression of everyday and normative life.

The temporal, spatial and transgressive features characterise the liminal and carnivalesque event experiences. The sensation of time out of time, place out of place and norms out of the norm capture the exceptional event experiences, which due to their subversive and transgressive nature hold crucial potential for negotiations of cultures of gender equality.

Potential of Transgressions

In the liminal, carnivalesque momentum, the social structures, norms and relationships are discontinued. According to Turner (1974) and Bakhtin (1968), social boundaries are negotiated. Bakhtin (1968: 7) captures such momentums as follows:

While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants.

Eventual rights and obligations are suspended. Boundaries are redefined. Psychological and sociological constructs are overridden. Often the social order appears to be turned upside down. With Bakhtin's (1968) observations enters my curiosity for the political potential of the transgressive practices in liminal and carnivalesque momentums.

Can such destructive moments be considered to be creative, transformative ones? Not confined by the hegemonic boundaries and with the possibility to re-define its own parameters, society is set up for a challenge, accompanied by the continuous humoristic joy, which Bakhtin (1968) describes.

Various scholars refer to the liminal, carnivalesque potential due to its energy created by subversions of normative structures. Abrahams (1987: 178) synthesises the debate, as he describes the festival and its transgressive, transformative potential in the following terms:

Festivals manufacture their own energies by upsetting things, creating a disturbance 'for the fun of it'. [...] Festivals work (at least in their inception) by apparently tearing the fabric to pieces, by displaying it upside-down, inside-out, wearing it as motley rags and tatters.

In this moment and experience of supposed disruption and destruction, power dynamics are re-evaluated. Here, Bakhtin (1968: 9) envisions a 'utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance' and situates transformative potential in the liminal, carnivalesque event experiences. On a conceptual level, liminal experiences invite transformations. Victor Turner (1974: 61) elucidates:

When implicit rules begin to appear, which limit the possible combination of factors to certain conventional patterns, designs, or figurations, then, I think, we are seeing the intrusion of normative social structure into what is potentially and in principle a free and experimental region of culture, a region where not only new elements but also new combinatory rules may be introduced.

While liminality or carnivalesque are temporally limited concepts and subversive atmospheres pass, Victor Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) argues for the necessity and essence of such breaking points in strictly structured and stratified societies. He even goes as far as to proclaim that society's desires and imaginations become visible within the liminal, carnivalesque expressions of festive encounters. The celebratory experience allows for imaginations of alternative models of living. Furthermore, according to Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989), the liminal, carnivalesque sensation also leaves its traces within the normative conditions of society. Festivals might be a momentum of liminal anti-structure, and might only appear as memories of subversion, but in small drops they are feeding back into society and the socio-political structures. Subversion of the norm in events supplies societies with goals, aspirations and structural models otherwise not imaginable, capturing the transformative ambitions that celebrations entail. Through its transition and marginality, the liminal, carnivalesque experience can challenge the boundaries, allow

explorations and continue experimentations free from traditional social constraints.

Studying Gender through Events

Translating the formerly outlined arguments to my research interests, I consider that events create a platform with a potential to question, challenge and negotiate gender expressions, relations and norms. Kates (2003) and Browne (2007) illustrate such considerations in their investigations of gender and sexuality in LGBT events. In his analysis of the *Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras* in Sydney, Kates (2003) argues that the subversive potential of the liminal and carnivalesque characteristics of events allows for – or even invites – re-negotiation of conventional meanings of genders and sexualities. Browne (2007) further elaborates on these debates, as she suggests that genders and sexualities are (de)constructed through the conditions that the festive event creates. In her analysis of *LGBT Pride* events in Dublin and Brighton, she strengthens the argument by pointing out that the festive mood invites for critical questioning of gendered and sexualised codes of these structures. Drawing on the scholars' considerations, I explore the potentials for negotiations, struggles and disruptions in relation to the gendered lives, politics and imaginaries as celebrated in the festive occasions.

I acknowledge Markwell and Waitt's (2009) considerations that gender might just be one of the aspects that constitute the festive experience. Various 'axes of identity, such as class, gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality' (Markwell & Waitt, 2009: 147) become present, interact and interfere throughout celebrations. These multiple influences declare the complexity of the analysis of event experiences, while also showing the richness of social and cultural influences of the experiential setting.

Celebrating lived Experiences of Gender

The potential of events is immediate, visible and comprehensive through the lived experiences of gender. As celebrations invoke cultural meaning, personal perceptions and experiences of the self and the celebratory community are shaped. Markwell and Waitt (2013) point out that in the analysis of festive events, the celebratory community and its individuals may not be considered as static entities. In my specific focus on gender, identities cannot be considered pre-set. Rather, festive events need to be addressed as a space-time, in which participants relate to and explore their identities in unique ways due to the liminal,

carnavalesque momentum. This argument resonates with Kates' (2003) observation of *LGBT Pride* festivals. He emphasised the relevance of events in order to constitute gendered or sexualised meanings on a personal basis, as each individual creates – abstract or literal – relationships with the celebratory community. Eder, Staggenborg and Sudderth (1995) focus on women participating in the *Michigan Womyn's Music Festival* in their study of the effects on women's lives. The authors outline that the festival's participants experience a feeling of freedom. Many attendees described their participation as an escape from the conventions of mainstream culture. According to the participating women in Eder et al.'s (1995) study, the personal and communal experiences of the festival created an environment envisioned as a feminist utopia of emancipation and liberation. The scholars acknowledged the experiences of a four-day camp-site festival as an encounter of renewal. The influence affects not only the present lived experience but leaves traces in the further trajectories of the participants. In these descriptions of celebrations and discussions of their lived experience, the notion of empowerment is a crucial reference. Hereby, empowerment is understood as a personal as well as political struggle and aspiration for autonomy and self-determination by people and communities characterised by gender and sexuality but as well other categories of identification (Rowland-Serdar & Schwartz-Shea, 1991).

Celebrating gendered Politics

Next to the effects on individual lives, political enactments and negotiations are crucial to the gendered reading of events. My considerations stem from the political immediacy of certain events. *LGBT Pride* celebrations are the most explicit and widely discussed examples of such historically rooted, political events. Originally enacted as political rallies and/ or marches, Pride events are a direct response to the celebration and defence of the rights of sexual minorities and marginalised gendered identities. Their historical roots give great stimulus to the discussion of gender and sexual politics within events.

Beyond political origins, Markwell and Waitt (2013) call attention to the political potential of events through their contextual study. Their argument is based on the investigation of the first *World Pride* in Rome in 2000. The global celebration of LGBT rights and identities coincided with the *Great Jubilee festivities* of the Catholic Church. The correlation of the particular events and their inherent values created a highly charged political atmosphere. While the

events themselves were not explicitly politically orientated, the contextual circumstances of the event created a political agenda. Therefore, the scholars proclaim that their analysis of *World Pride* is not only an analysis of a celebratory space-time but simultaneously an examination of an encounter of charged contexts.

In both cases, the historical and contextual politics are enacted in an event characterised by the claiming of public space. Here, visibility is key. In respect to *LGBT Pride* events, Browne (2007: 66) discusses such temporal visibility as a 'presence of sexual otherness in otherwise heterosexualized urbanities'. Ammataro (2016) supports Browne's (2007) argument, as he announces that the temporal subversion of space through sexual otherness constitutes an opportunity for cultural creation. The politics of visibility signals immediate, explicit political demands and affiliations in the form of festive events. Therefore, claims of visibility are not only coincidental. Rather, they are ground-breaking for the analysis of the political potential of events.

Celebrating the Imaginary

Linking personal experiences with the political potential of events, my gendered reading of events further involves an exploration of the imaginary. I consider events not only effective in relation to personal and political realms, but they serve as creative mediums to imagine realities beyond the normative boundaries. I have outlined this argument already in discussion of the liminal and carnivalesque opportunity of transgression. However, I want to discuss the effects further in relation to the gendered reading of events. Jones (2010) and Hahm et al. (2018) inform my considerations. Drawing upon Jones' (2010) auto-ethnographic study and queer reading of the *Wild Ginger Witch Camp* illustrates the imaginary potential of events: with attention to witchcraft and wicca culture enacted in the camp, she argues that the event is a materialisation of the imaginary shared by celebratory communities. While the camp publicly manifests individual accounts and creates an identity of the celebratory community, the materialisation creates a space-time, in which boundaries of the imaginary might be enlarged, re-configured and adjusted. Though only temporary, the gathering creates an alternative space-time to the status-quo, informing the imaginary of witchcraft and wicca culture. Alongside processes of materialisation as constructions of imaginaries, Hahm et al. (2018) address the collective action and its mechanisms of awareness raising as a potential exploration of imaginaries

seen in celebrations. In their study of LGBT events, the authors argue that within events, the participants' individual consciousness heightens due to the exposure to, exploration of and engagement with the wider community. The individual awareness therefore is relational to a collective perspective through the moment of celebratory actions. According to Hahm et al.'s (2018) call for heightened awareness, events hold a great creative power for collective and individual imaginations. Jones' (2010) and Hahm et al.'s (2018) case studies highlight the potential for the imaginary in celebrations. Relating to wicca and LGBT communities, processes of collective sharing, materialisation and awareness raising inform events' imaginary perspectives.

Restrictions of Subversions

While the events in relation to their liminal, carnivalesque experiences are celebrated – maybe even worshipped – for their subversive energies, discussions of the conceptual and practical restrictions ground the hype. In the light of the contemporary situation of the festival industry and the increasing normalisation of social values within it, events need to be critically reviewed in regards to their liminal, carnivalesque and subversive potential. I want to highlight the issue in order to raise awareness for its analytical application, but not to scrutinise the conceptual potential that frames my analysis of events, festivals and celebrations. Due to the limited space and focus of this thesis, I am going to focus on two critiques regarding the conceptual interpretations of socio-culturally significant, transformative event experiences. Lamond and Moss's (forthcoming) publication, *Liminality and Critical Event Studies: Borders, Boundaries and Contestation*, provides an extensive review of the restrictions of liminality and states an important reference in relation to a critical understanding of events and their study.

Firstly, events and their experiences need to be read in the context of their institutional and commercial framework. As addressed in discussion of the socio-cultural significance of events, celebrations are expressions of the zeitgeist, in which they are embedded. Newbold et al. (2015) introduce such a consideration in their review of the development of the European festival industries in the second half of the twentieth century. As outlined in detail in the introduction, the scholars consider a festivalisation movement throughout the observed time period. The contemporary scene is highly professionalised, as festivals institutionalised in the 1990s and early 2000s. This leads to a shift in the event

ethos driven by political motivations to an interest in profitability. According to Newbold et al (2015), current developments of the festival industries are driven by strong commercial tendencies. On the one hand, these changes in the sector are informed by neoliberal influences. On the other hand, the commercialisation of festivals and the development of a profitable branch of industry depends on the funding structures in the current climate of austerity in the UK and Europe. Consequently, commercial sponsorship has become an attractive financial scheme for the contemporary event industries. In regards to the increasing numbers of private sponsors in contrast to public funders, I need to be aware of the effects on the socio-cultural significance of events and their transformative potential. In the later presented analysis of the data, research participants extensively discuss the tendencies of the commercialisation of events. While the conceptual and analytical discussions require me to acknowledge commercial influences in event-settings, I do not want to fall into exclusive and essentialised considerations of such commercialisations. I agree with Pielichaty (2015): where there is commercial input, there is also societal and political subversion and transgression. Therefore, for the further analysis, I focus on the commercial element as a form of control but simultaneously also explore expressions of resistance. In such tension, the analysis of socio-cultural significance of events and its transformative potential continues to provide a valid perspective of analysis.

The second critique to the socio-culturally significant, transformative event experience questions the disciplining mechanisms of events in opposition to the rhetoric of subversion and transgression. I draw upon Aching (2010), Pielichaty (2015), and Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2009) for the following formulation of the restrictions. Pielichaty (2015: 239) summarises the critique as a juxtaposition of 'the festival between celebratory chaos and a social vehicle employed to maintain order and discipline'. The three scholars point out that subversion always goes hand in hand with disciplining practices. Aching (2010) and Pielichaty (2015) approach the critique with focus on the temporality of the liminal, carnivalesque experiences and their transgressive potential. Aching (2010) observes that conceptualisations of the liminal, carnivalesque time out of time relies on a strict binary between the normal or ordinary and the abnormal or subversive. Pielichaty (2015: 239) synthesises the risk of such dualistic interpretation: 'providing individuals with liminal space to momentarily lose

themselves and behave in a care-free manner promotes the ethos of chaos as limited, constrained and restrictive'. These observations are also acknowledged by Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2009), as they study the festive community in the context of temporally limited, eventually subversive event experiences. While Victor Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) argues that the sustainability of the creative atmosphere drops back into society through the imagination of societal desires, Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2009) question whom the liminal, carnivalesque momentum serves. They argue that alternated, subverted structures, norms and conventions are explored with the knowledge and security of returning to routine again. In a dualistic interpretation of the time out of time model of festive events and their experiences, the celebratory community is conceptualised as a homogenous mass celebrating its transgressive liberty. However, Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2009) problematise this assumption by suggesting that the momentary liberty might only be a liminal, carnivalesque experience to hegemonic communities of society. Identities for whom daily survival is the subversion of normative structures might be left out. In agreement with Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2009), I speculate on how transformative aspirations might affect celebrating women, non-binary individuals or homosexual identities. Their challenging of the norm is a daily struggle of subversion, which in a celebratory context is disciplined to an extraordinary experience. Even though, the imagination of alternative models of living are explicitly relevant for these marginalised individuals and communities, vulnerable identities are further scrutinised as their daily transgressions are accepted and promoted by hegemonic structures only in restricted, controlled occasions of celebrations.

Conclusive Summary

This theoretical framework merged influences from the fields of event and gender studies. In the light of my analytical enquiry into the production of cultures of gender equality in COC mega-events, my conceptualisation of events depends on their interpretation as a festive phenomenon in reference to the fields of Anthropology of the Festive and Critical Event Studies. Here, celebrations are characterised by two features, which I address as the socio-cultural significance of celebrations and the relevance of event experiences.

I firstly drew upon the anthropological interpretations of the festive phenomenon based on its societal functions. I outlined that events are a practice

of meaning-making and the constructed meaning is ultimately what the festival celebrates. As Falassi (1987a: 3) describes, festivals 'renounce and announce culture'. I argue that events are social and cultural practices, in which values, ideologies and cultures are negotiated.

Secondly, in reference to the concepts of liminality and carnivalesque, I illustrated how the socio-cultural significance is related to the sensations of events. As a time out of time in a place out of place, event experiences inherit transgressive powers as the celebration enables sensations of norms out of the norm. Victor Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) argues that these liminal momentums are expressions of societal desires, imaginations and visions. While restrictions through commercialisation, institutionalisation and affiliated controlling mechanisms need to be taken into consideration, these conceptual characteristics of events frame the foundations of my investigation. With focus on the experiences of celebrations, COC mega-events such as Hull2017 and DSS2016 continuously provide me with grounds to explore the festive phenomena.

These anthropological interpretations of events create the foundations for my gendered reading of the festive settings. Imbricating canons of event studies with debates in gender studies, I explored how experiences of gender and values of gender equality are enacted within festivals and events. I argued that festivals and their transgressive potential are vital conditions for the exploration of gender codes, norms and relationships. While I acknowledged the restrictions of such subversive explorations, I turned towards the negotiations and productions of gender equality as a political agenda in and through events. In reference to Kates' (2003: 8) description of the 'dialectic tension', I proclaim that events are networks influenced by entertainment as well as politics. Therefore, I suggest an understanding of festivals as 'parties with politics' (Browne, 2007: 63). Through their practice of meaning-making based on liminal, carnivalesque event experiences, events are reproducing and producing socio-cultural values of gender equality. In reference to events such as the *Eurovision Song Contest* or the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012*, I discuss the territorial notions of celebrations of political ideals. In the consideration of these case studies, Falassi's (1987a: 2) previously referenced statement is reaffirmed: 'Festival[s] are closely related to a series of overt values that the community

recognises as essential to its ideology and worldview [...] which is ultimately what the festival celebrates’.

In the further analysis, I illustrate how gender expressions and experiences as well as politics of gender equality entangle in event settings of COC mega-events. With particular attention to the territorially defined agendas of regional, national and international scale, I explore empirically how Hull2017 and DSS2016 produce cultures of gender equality through their programming of cultural activities.

Shifting Attention towards cultural Ambitions

After the discussions of the field conditions, research methodology and conceptual framework, I now embark on the empirical journey. In the following chapters, the overarching research interest concerning COC mega-events' potential to foster socio-cultural values guides my analysis.

In this first of four analytical chapters, I link the contextual and conceptual debates with the main body of analysis. Prior to the analytical explorations of the potential ways of producing cultures of gender equality in Hull2017, I need to clarify how socio-cultural values are negotiated within COC mega-events. Therefore, in the following chapter, I depart from scholarly observations of the '(re)programming' (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 22) of ambitions in the COC initiatives and mega-events. I argue that contemporary COC mega-events reconsider the potential of their tenure to challenge, negotiate and produce socio-cultural values, as I understand COC projects as 'contested spaces' (O'Callaghan, 2012: 201). Through my empirical material, I illustrate how DSS2016 enacts these ambitions. On the basis of scholarly observations and my analysis of DSS2016's '(re)programmed' (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 23) ambitions, I am able to shift the attention towards an in-depth study of how COC mega-events negotiate cultures of gender equality in the case study of Hull2017.

On the one hand, I outline the cultural dimension and its changing importance in COC initiatives. On the other hand, my empirical explorations of DSS2016 illustrate how these transforming priorities allow me to investigate the production of cultures of gender equality in Hull2017. Consequently, the chapter's structure follows this dual purpose. Firstly, I clarify the developments of the cultural dimension of COC mega-events. Secondly, I engage with the empirical material collected during the fieldwork in Donostia/ San Sebastián. I discuss DSS2016's position and practices through the processual perspectives of the project and its programming. In the final section, I link – rather than conclude – the presented analytical and contextual discussion to the upcoming analysis of Hull2017 in reference to O'Callaghan's (2012: 201) suggestion to understand COC mega-events as 'contested spaces'.

Culture in a Capital/ Cities of Culture

As highlighted in the first chapter, *Situating the Field*, the ECOC initiative set out as a cultural project with interest in raising awareness of the commonalities and diversities in Europe. However, many scholars argue that the initiative progressed to become a place-making tool fostering urban regeneration. Immler and Sakkers (2014: 4) synthesise the debate as follows:

Although the original idea of this cultural programme was to stimulate European awareness in order to support political unification, the title of European Capital of Culture has been used in recent years not so much to communicate Europe than to position a certain city as a cultural capital, to promote its international image and to solve local problems.

Similarly, Quinn (2009: 249) claims that ‘the ECOC has lost sight of its original cultural aims and is being increasingly used to further city-branding, image creation and tourism revenue generation agendas’. This potential of the COC mega-event is noteworthy. However, Immler and Sakkers (2014) outline that rather than being a marketing tool, the purpose of the COC mega-events was and still is to promote values shared by the transnational, national, regional and local communities.

Therefore, Quinn’s (2009: 250) provocative question ‘[W]hat are the cultural outcomes of the ECOC?’, receives increasing responses in contemporary editions of the COC celebrations and the related scholarly literature. Immler and Sakkers (2014) observe growing practical and academic attention to the cultural dimension of the initiatives. The scholars argue for a ‘slight shift’ in COC mega-events ‘from a competition-based marketing of local identity towards a more universal value discourse’ (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 23). The scholars call this transformation a process of ‘re-programming’, in which COC initiatives are slowly transforming as mega-events. Interestingly, the cultural dimension appears to gain prominence in contemporary event agendas.

Lähdesmäki (2013) and Boland et al. (2016) contribute exemplary insights into this shifting attention. Similarly to the previously outlined Critical Event Studies, but with explicit attention to COC mega-events, Lähdesmäki (2013) queries the ideological, political and cultural considerations that underpin and drive the mega-events. With reference to ECOC’s such as Pécs2010, Tallinn2011 or Turku2011, the researcher studies the negotiations of national and European

Identities in the context of COC mega-events. With focus on the notion of cultural diversity in these ECOs, Lähdesmäki (2011: 32) argues that negotiations of the socio-cultural values is essentially political as ‘the rhetoric used in discussing culture and identities in the [ECOC] program, is in itself profoundly ideological’. Another example of shifting research interests in regards to COC mega-events constitutes Boland et al.’s (2016) exploration of the curing effects of culture in the case study of Derry/ Londonderry’s celebrations of the UKCOC title in 2013. In this context, the researchers observe that peace processes and a ‘culture for the cure’ approach frame the processes of the mega-event. Boland et al. (2016: 6) elucidate: ‘During the 70s–80s–90s cultural antagonisms were the cause of the conflict, whereas in 2013 cultural expression was perceived as curative. [...] Given this, [Derry/ Londonderry] represents an important case to critically examine culture as a [...] peace resource’. The scholars highlight the relevance of the mega-event for its curing potential in consideration of its negotiation of culture through artistic mediation. Lähdesmäki’s (2013) and Boland et al.’s (2016) case studies are examples for a revitalising trend for the origins of the COC mega-events. While city branding and image campaigns accompanied COC host cities’ agendas over the past decades, Immler and Sakkers (2014: 23) observe a move back to the ‘original cultural aims’ (Quinn, 2009: 249) of the COC initiatives – as ambitions and aspirations are ‘(re)programmed’ (Immler and Sakkers, 2014: 23) and attentions shift towards cultural transformation.

DSS2016 – Between drizzling Rain and utopian Horizons

Inspired by the readings of COC mega-events of Boland et al. (2016), Immler and Sakkers (2014) and Lähdesmäki (2013), I turn to the case study of DSS2016 in exploration of the positioning and processing of socio-cultural values in the mega-event. Below, I argue that DSS2016 introduces an innovative approach and contribution to the ‘(re)programming’ (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 22) of the COC mega-event in regards to the cultural and social potential of the yearlong celebration.

As mentioned in the first chapter, *Situating the Field*, the project’s courage and innovation has been acknowledged both by the selection panel at the bidding stage and highlighted at the point of evaluation by panel member and keynote speaker Steve Green (2017). Immler and Sakkers (2014: 17) recognise DSS2016’s emphasis on socio-cultural values and summarise the project as follows:

[Donostia/] San Sebastián in Spain [...] focuses explicitly on human rights, dedicating its 2016 programme to ‘Culture of Coexistence’ and to ‘Overcome Violence’: ‘Unfortunately, today the violence ... of ETA ... casts a shadow over ... many people in our country. That’s why [Donostia/] San Sebastián has been fighting these barbarian acts for years, promoting a culture of peace and education of values.’ (DSS2016EU, 2010: 91-93) It uses the Basque Country’s own history of violence as its starting point, representing human rights as a universal quality standard, discussing them with reference to local issues on local podiums but disseminating this discussion Europe-wide through the facilities of international city networks.

The essence of the project is the re-configuration of the socio-cultural values shared in the city. The DSS2016 Foundation (2010: 91, 93) outlines their mission as follows:

To promote new social codes for reconciliation, understood as civic harmony and coexistence between opposites, who contribute to the progress and development of human rights in Europe and all over the world ... to make the city [of Donostia/ San Sebastián] an international benchmark in the culture of human rights.

DSS2016 seeks to reformulate how people in an urban society can share their environment. Embedded within the peace and reconciliation process of the city and region, the curing effects of culture are embraced by the project of DSS2016. While the armed conflict in the region is of immediate urgency, the project consciously expands beyond the local peace negotiations through their slogan: *Culture of Co-existence*. The exploration of co-existence is treated first and foremost as a negotiation of human rights, which centres on the exploration of cultures of (gender) equality.

Positions and Practices of DSS2016

In summary, the slogan, *Cultures of Co-existence*, invites for explorations of the socio-cultural values shared by the urban and regional society scarred by violent conflict. In her explanations of the position of DSS2016, Kepa (PA, Production, DSS2016), a member of the executive team of the Foundation, addresses the socio-cultural transformative ambition as the positionality of the project:

I think it all has to do with. [Pause] It is all like a utopia. [Pause] [...] I define it as utopia. [...] It is a Latin American author, who has this great

phrase, who says more or less that if the utopia is there, you have to make a step into that direction, but every step that you take, the utopia is one step further away. So, what is the utopia for? Well actually, it makes you walk. So, step by step what we attempt in 2016 is to change a bit the vision of people and that they walk towards a society, which is freer, more respectful, more coherent – a lot of things. [...] So, this is about changing the vision, changing the way we walk.⁷²

With the walking metaphor and the vision towards the ever-changing utopian horizons, Kepa (PA, Production, DSS2016) describes the position of DSS2016 through an urgency of movement towards aspired transformation. While she is very clear that transformation cannot be achieved or completed, the act of moving, engaging and embracing these processes becomes essential in the project of DSS2016.

In agreement with Kepa's (PA, Production, DSS2016) explanations, Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016), another member of the executive team, elaborates further on the processual visions and conceptual positionality that DSS2016 embraces. She refers to drizzling rain as DSS2016's interventionist modality. Contrary to other COC host cities' strategies, Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) clarifies that DSS2016 never intended to execute the title in the form of a mega-event. While some culture-led mega-events engulf the urban space like a thunderstorm, DSS2016 aims to nurture the city through a breeze of consistent rain drops. Rather than a highly visible and eventually even destructive downpour, Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) summarizes DSS2016's approach to the transformative aspirations in the form of continuous and smooth interventions.

Addressing the positionality of DSS2016 in a procedural form, Kepa's (PA, Production, DSS2016) description of moving towards utopian horizons and Ane's (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) metaphor of the drizzling rain invite further exploration of DSS2016's practices. Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) encourages me to consider DSS2016 less as a coherent entity, but as an umbrella. Rather than a solid unit, Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) considers the project of DSS2016 to be a facilitator of conversations. The usage of the term 'culture' exemplifies this facilitating role. Ane (PA, Production/

⁷² Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

Management, DSS2016) elucidates that DSS2016 understands culture as a comprehensive notion and practice. Not bound to artistic disciplines of performing or visual arts, DSS2016 embraces an anthropological interpretation. ‘Forms of living, customs, orientations, processes and convictions and behaviour’⁷³ (Ane, PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) frame the conceptualisation of culture in the project. Kepa (PA, Production, DSS2016) explains:

DSS2016 does not intend to just use [...] the [traditional] term of culture, but rather wants to re-enforce a culture, which is way more extensive, much more diverse, and much richer. It is not only the artistic disciplines but as well all these elements [mentioned above] and therefore the continuous question is how do you make people conscious that we are all part of many things and that this is what makes us culturally so rich. I don’t know if I am simplifying [it] too much but [this is what culture means in the project of DSS2016].⁷⁴

While other COCs enlarge their perspectives of what culture is by including sports, gastronomy and other facets into the catalogue of activities,⁷⁵ DSS2016 addresses culture as the lived experiences that communities share. Ane’s (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) attention to the ‘customs, orientations and processes’ next to Kepa’s (PA, Production, DSS2016) question of ‘How do you make people conscious that we are all part of many things?’ illustrate aspects of the innovative practice of the COC mega-event.

Related to the conceptualisation of culture, the practices of DSS2016 are further expressed in the employment of artistic disciplines within the programming practice. Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) explains:

The artistic disciplines in the end are instruments, which help us to understand that there are different ways to express yourself, different voices, different forms of communication. And it is not all words. [...] In this sense, they are an instrument, through which we can get to a

⁷³ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

⁷⁴ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

⁷⁵ Examples include Aarhus2017 (Degn et al., 2018), Liverpool2008 (Connolly, 2013; Griffiths, 2006), Lille2004 (Paris & Baert, 2011; Sacco & Tavano Blessi, 2007).

collective understanding. No? [...] In the end they are instruments in order to work some questions.⁷⁶

Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) exemplifies the practice of artistic instruments through the project, *Sin Adios* [Without Goodbye], in which artists engaged with twelve families, who were victims in the violent conflict in the region. With focus on the family's loss of a relative, the artists developed a framework to explore and create memories through artistic mediums. The artistic intervention did not aim to visualise the victim. Rather, artists opened the dialogue concerning the co-existence required in this context. Ane (PA, Production/ Management, DSS2016) synthesises the intentions and the artistic practices, as she explains:

[The project, *Sin Adios*,] is not about guilt [or] responsibilities [...]. It is about remembering the person, who was a victim in the context of the conflict [...]. It is about remembering that this person had a life. They were people with values and faith. It is about recovering these memories and also a way to transcend and advance the co-existence in this country. The artistic part hereby is really important. It is a matter of reconstructing the roof and reconstructing the pain of many people, which is really important and it is using the artistic disciplines in order to do this work [...]. In this project it shows well how we are using the concept of art and what the artistic expression can do.⁷⁷

Sin Adios illustrates the relevance and potential of the arts and artists as mediators of memory and facilitators of co-existence. The artists explore realities that hardly find expressions otherwise. In DSS2016, the arts serve as a new language, which provides opportunities of expression. Kosmo (PA, Production, DSS2016), a member of the executive team of the DSS2016 Foundation, summarises: 'When creators/ artists enter in the process of reconciliation, they are creating new languages, they are creating new iconographies, new references and new focuses.'⁷⁸

With such complex interpretations of what culture means and how artistic mediums are used in the context of the DSS2016 project, the practices need to be

⁷⁶ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

⁷⁷ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

⁷⁸ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

understood as a process of negotiation. The presentation of a cultural programme is the result of a process of exchange and relations rather than a traditional practice of programming. Bringing together the notion of culture, arts and co-existence, the production of cultures of gender equality in the context of DSS2016 result from negotiations in order to move towards utopian horizons while a rain of ideas, exchanges and new imaginations drizzles on the urban landscape.

Challenges in DSS2016's Conceptions

While the innovative approach of DSS2016's position and practices regarding the exploration of co-existence are celebrated, contradictions within the process and planning of the mega-event cannot be ignored. In the developments of COC mega-events, political and practical tensions have been observed by multiple scholars (Devlin, 2016; Doak, 2014). O'Callaghan (2012: 201) summarises the debate: 'While many [COC] claim to encourage debate, the politics of the event stops them from truly engaging in real creative dialogue'. In the context of DSS2016, all participants acknowledge that the party-political changes, conflicting interests and the overall expectations associated with a mega-event hindered, harmed and even disabled the political vision that the project embraced. On the basis of their experiences, research participants identified barriers and difficulties, which prevented the project of DSS2016 from exploring its full potential. As a member of the executive organisation, Kepa (PA, Production, DSS2016) addresses the consistent tension of objectives and perspectives as follows: 'There are so many lines that you have to take into consideration in your work, so many layers. It is super complicated as you are facing constant contradictions and a lot of suffering'.⁷⁹

Kepa (PA, Production, DSS2016) and other research participants share the opinion that the contradictory nature of the project and its consequential suffering result from the inadequate structures within which it is placed. Next to changes in the leadership of the city, Koldo (PA, Production, DSS2016), a member of the original bid team, questions if the project of DSS2016 was ever able to fit into the mega-event framework that COC initiatives request. With reference to computer operating systems, Koldo (PA, Production, DSS2016) explains the restrictions and contradictions that DSS2016 faced: Like an open-source software, DSS2016 had been given the permission or even liberty to work within a set of

⁷⁹ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

operating systems. The project was placed in the frameworks of the ECOG initiative, national politics as well as urban changes and therefore bound to specific expectations around the project. Even though, DSS2016 might have been a visionary project, it still had to fit into pre-established conditions. For Koldo (PA, Production, DSS2016), the success of the application was not necessarily the ideal outcome for the project. Funding and attention due to the prestige of the title meant that pre-established structures and expectations needed to be faced and negotiated. In the light of these overwhelming pressures, Kepa (PA, Production, DSS2016) summarises the rising pragmatism that overarched the project of DSS2016 in simple words, as she exclaims: ‘The monster is very big; therefore, in order to confront the monster, you will choose certain ways’.⁸⁰

Similar to research participants’ experiences, O’Callaghan (2012) observes the difficulty of COG mega-events in the multiple and contradictory objectives that the framework entails. In reference to his observations, Žilič-Fišer and Erjavec (2017: 583) summarise that between economic, social and cultural objectives, ‘ECOG programmes have to promise more than they can realistically deliver, [therefore] tensions arise’. In light of the observed and widely discussed contradictory nature of the production of cultures of gender equality in COG mega-events, O’Callaghan (2012: 201) concludes that ‘the aim [of COG mega-events] should not be to answer [the] questions [of socio-cultural values] but to use the contested space [of the mega-event] to stimulate dialogue through creative responses’.

Outlook: Analytical Attention in Hull2017

In this first analytical chapter, I considered the development of the cultural dimension and the influences in COG initiatives. I argued that there has been a growing interest in the production of socio-cultural values by contemporary COG host cities. In order to illustrate these progressions of the initiatives, I used DSS2016 as an example, which is celebrated for its extraordinary positions and practices in the negotiation of *Culture of Co-existence*. I engaged with the project in exploration of its processes and inherent contradictions in order to understand the city’s celebration as a ‘contested space’ (O’Callaghan, 2012: 201) for the negotiations of socio-cultural values.

⁸⁰ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

The conceptual and analytical discussions in this chapter elaborated on the overarching research interest concerning the potential of COC mega-events and their negotiation of socio-cultural values. In response to this general interest, O'Callaghan's (2012) statement becomes crucial in my further analysis of Hull2017: while attention to the cultural dimension of COC mega-events is shared by practitioners and academics, the COC mega-event's role in the production of socio-cultural values is the platform's capacity to negotiate. As a practice rather than a product, socio-cultural values are engrained in the process of celebrations of COC mega-events. With a conceptual outline and analytical exploration of such capacities, I, henceforth, focus on the ways socio-cultural values are negotiated as I regard the production of cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017. The developments of the cultural dimension, raising interests in socio-cultural values as well as the position, practices and contradictions expressed in the context of DSS2016 inform my further analytical lens. In the practice of relational reading, DSS2016 draws analytical lines onto the map of explorations in Hull2017. Questions that arise in DSS2016 translate into the other context, in order to recreate a potential answer to the production of cultures of gender equality in the context of COC mega-events.

While I regarded the process of DSS2016 only briefly through the positions, practices and contradictions of the project's interest in *Culture of Co-existence*, I follow a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration in the context of Hull2017. Through the chapters, *Engaging with Equality*, *Performing Equality* and *Infrastructures of Equality*, I explore how cultures of gender equality in Hull2017 are negotiated in the 'contested space' (O'Callaghan, 2012: 201) of a COC mega-event.

Chapter 5

Engaging with Equality

In chapter 4, I highlighted the shifting ambitions of COC mega-events. Following the conceptual and analytical explorations of the potential of COC mega-events with regards to the project of DSS2016, the subsequent chapters provide an analysis of Hull2017 in respect to the ways in which cultures of gender equality are produced in the programming of ‘365 days of transformative culture’ (Hull 2017 Ltd, 2015: 14). Driven by O’Callaghan’s (2012: 201) observation of COC mega-events as ‘contested spaces’ for the negotiation of socio-cultural values, I further explore the collected material along the triangulation of the audience engagement, content production and infrastructural conditions in the mega-event of Hull2017.

The first of these Hull2017-centred analytical chapters, *Engaging with Equality*, concentrates on how audiences participate in equality-themed events and how their engagements relate to the negotiation of the socio-cultural value of gender equality in Hull2017. The empirical analysis strongly depends on the phenomenological interpretation of celebrations, as outlined in the third chapter: *Conceptualising Gender and Events*. I explicitly draw on the theoretical discussions concerning the festival experiences. Through Victor Turner’s (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) notion of liminality and Bakhtin’s (1968) conception of the carnivalesque, I characterise event experiences as a time out of time in a place out of place with the potential to create norms out of the norm. In respect to their transgressive potential, I suggest that the event experiences allow a re-evaluation of the status quo. Hence, the transgressive potential invites explorations of alternative forms of living in society, celebrating a set of communal values. On the basis of such conceptual potential of event experiences, I empirically consider audiences as substantial contributors to the production of cultures of gender equality. The analysis shows that audience engagements not only shape the individual and collective experiences, but the festival and its narratives as a whole.

Two imbricated discussions structure the following chapter. The first analytical perspective is entitled: *Encounters with Equality*. Here, I question in

what way community members engage with thematic issues presented in events. The empirical material highlights conversations and interactions as two prominent modalities of encounters and outline in what way event-based encounters affect the personal and collective understandings of equality. The second analytical discussion addresses the dynamics of engagements with equality. Informed by the concept of *communitas*, the sensations of togetherness and strategies of inclusion frame the analysis. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the transformative potential that event-based engagements might hold and highlight participants suggestion to ‘continue the conversation’ (Alex, OP, HULL).

Encounters with Equality

Cultural actor Abbie (CA, Production, AF) and observing-participant Rosa (OP, LGBT50) introduce the vague notion of encounters and encourage further analysis of their relevance to the production of cultures of gender equality. Abbie (CA, Production, AF), a member of the production team for *Assemble Fest*, highlights the multiple forms of encounters that her event enables:

The beautiful thing is everybody – everybody – gets a different kind of engagement with the festival: from the very, very low level of seeing a unicyclist going up the street, while you are getting your shopping or whether you decide to get a day ticket and see all six [performances]. It is up for people to make those choices and to invest in whatever way we do.

Similar to Abbie’s (CA, Production, AF) recognition of the multiple forms of encounters, observing-participant Rosa (OP, LGBT50) inspires my thinking about audiences and their encounters with equality, as she states:

I mean, I think a lot of people [...] who turned up for anything will have taken some little thing. You can’t help if there are things going on around you to pick up some pieces. But you have to go to the more targeted smaller events. There are in the street things of course, but you have to go to the smaller targeted events to really engage in a more significant way.

As Rosa (OP, LGBT50) explains, encounters simply happen by ‘people turning up and taking something with them’ – even if it is just ‘some little things’. I agree with the research participants remarks that any form of participation creates an encounter. Independently of whether participation takes place in continuous,

immersive volunteering or through distant observations of a spectacle, any engagement is an encounter with the potential to provoke reactions. On this basis, I take the notion of encounters further and consider even intentional disengagement as a form of encounter. As suggested by Matarasso (2019), turning away from or leaving the festival sites still creates encounters, as reactions are generated.

The empirical attention to encounters with equality is embedded in the previous conceptual outline regarding the lived experiences of gender through events. In chapter 3, *Conceptualising Gender and Events*, I referred to a study by Markwell and Waitt (2013) who describe an event's space-time as a formative moment, in which identities are (de)constructed. In their studies of the *LGBT Pride* events in Dublin and Brighton, the *Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras* event in Sydney or the *Michigan Womyn's Music Festival*, Browne (2007), Kates (2003), and Eder et al. (1995) illustrate the transgressive influences of the event experiences on the personal and community levels. As identities are not pre-set, celebrations of equality have formative influences on the individual as well as the collective.

In my further analysis of the empirical material, and guided by my research participants, I discuss conversations and interactions as two interrelated modalities of encounters with equality. With such focus, I outline how personal and communal perceptions of cultures of gender equality are inspired through conversations and interactions in the celebrations of equality.

Conversations

I borrow the notion of 'conversation' from Abbie (CA, Production, WOW), a member of the production team of the *Women of the World* festival. On multiple occasions, she states: 'I mean [...] [the festival] is about starting the conversation' (Abbie, CA, Production, WOW). With the ambitions to create individual and collective encounters, she emphasises that the festival environment allows people to gather. The celebration creates a platform, in which members of the audience can meet and enter into debate. For her, the *Women of the World* festival enables a space to speak about equality in a celebratory setting. Attentive to such conversing modalities, I trace personal as well as collective encounters in the celebrations of equality.

The first conversational level engages the self with itself. While not immediately thought of as a conversation, observing-participants experienced

equality-themed celebrations often as an encounter with themselves. Observing-participant Anna (OP, FF) illustrates this conversational level in the following statement, as she reflects upon her experiences of *Freedom Festival*:

On a very basic level, it made me realise [...] how big [a] hunger I have for just [...] seeing something. It moves something in my head and just opens some new ways of thinking and some new reflections and stuff and it is just making me realise that I don't have it that often here in Hull.

The festival experience allows Anna (OP, FF) to engage, question and query her own beliefs, thoughts and perspectives. I count multiple references of residents who gather inspirations, affirmations and discoveries through their participation in the selected activities. Emma's (OP, WOW) inspiration to 'want to change jobs' or Rachel's (OP, WOW) affirmation to be 'ok to have lumps and bumps' are just two examples from the *Women of the World Festival*, which demonstrate the ways in which equality-themed events encourage personal reflections. The investigated equality-themed events create dialogical encounters with oneself, which allows people to question and re-think their personal positionalities and relations to cultures of gender equality.

Moreover, I address conversation in its dialogical modality, as I regard the collective, communal levels of encounters with equality. Next to Anna's (OP, FF) previously mentioned encounter with herself, she describes engagements with the wider community on the basis of equality-themed events. During *LGBT50*, Anna (OP, LGBT50) shares multiple conversational opportunities, as she explains:

It is just [...] really mind blowing [...]. This LGBT week made me enter a lot of conversations. People in Hull started to talk more about this stuff and made me realise how surprised I am about a lot of their [positive and progressive] attitudes.

Similarly to Anna (OP, LGBT50), observing-participant Sophia (OP, WOW) experiences and appreciates the conversational opportunities created within the celebrations of equality. She takes her observations of conversations a step further and relates the conversational potential to the needs of the urban society. From her point of view, conversations are a way to construct and maintain networks contributing to cultures of gender equality. In respect to the *Women of the World Festival*, Sophia (OP, WOW) elucidates:

Women came together at that event and will then potentially socialise more with each other, realise that there are issues that they are all interested in and carry on their own sort of conversations about [...] those issues. [...] It might mean that the women in the city will shout a bit more; having had this platform once, they will say ‘right, we can have this platform again’, and they will shout a bit more to have that.

While Anna (OP, LGBT50) talks about one-on-one encounters in conversations, Sophia (OP, WOW) addresses the conversation as an encounter with a wider collective. Both accounts immediately reflect Abbie’s (CA, Production, WOW) previously stated ambition to create conversations in and through the festival. As a consequence, the celebration appears to offer space and time to encounter oneself as well as the further community within the context of cultures of gender equality.

Interactions

Beyond the conversational opportunities, I regard more subtle gestures and actions as encounters with equality. For analytical purposes, I synthesise these through the generic term ‘interactions’, but their characteristics are ambiguous. My focus lays on applause and cheering as a crucial interactive modality in festival settings. Scholarly debates and popular media engage with the history, cultural differences and rhythmic physics of applause. The anthropological significance is described as a sign of approval, gratitude and support (Berlins, 2007; Kluge, 2011; Mann et al., 2013; Voicescu, 2012). Without going into further depth concerning the academic conceptualisations of applause, I am attentive to the expressive nature of this interaction.

In much more abstract ways than conversations, applause and cheering highlight the personal and collective formative process that equality-themed events enable. In her first observation opportunity, observing-participant Sophia (OP, WOW) pays attention to the act of clapping during the opening ceremony of the *Women of the World* Festival. Sophia (OP, WOW) notes: ‘Every applause moment was for a woman. That is great’. Her observations relate to the presentation of the so-called *Hull Trailblazers*: women of Hull, which the festival committee championed for their influence in campaigning for social justice and equality in the city. Sophia (OP, WOW) acknowledges that the recognition of these trailblazers by the festival committee was an important act of equality in itself. However, in an interactive way, the audience’s applause served as a form of

further approval, acknowledgement and support to the selection and celebration of these women and their work. This symbolic encounter becomes even more explicit as Sophia (OP, WOW) sarcastically remarks: ‘It was interesting to see, which women got the most applause and which ones didn’t’. Expanding on discussion of applause as an encounter with equality, observing-participant Mathilda (OP, LGBT50) shares her experiences of encountering cheering crowds during her participation in the *UK Pride Parade*. Next to Sophia’s (OP, WOW) understanding of applause as an act of recognition through audience members, Mathilda (OP, LGBT50) observes the sensations of cheering from the recipient’s perspective:

As we were walking through the city centre, just seeing the amount of people stood on the roads that was a bit heart-warming. [...] The amount of people, it was quite heart-warming. [...] Just to see so many people coming out on that day, just to cheer everybody on.

Mathilda (OP, LGBT50) expresses emotional reactions regarding the interaction between the crowd and the parading community. I interpret her use of the term ‘heart-warming’ in two ways. On the one hand, as I outline in detail in the following sections, Mathilda (OP, AF/ LGBT50) is highly appreciative of the coming-together of the community in general. On the other hand, I understand her expression of a ‘heart-warming’ sensation as a reflection upon her own identification and acceptance as a member of the LGBT community: the crowd’s cheering is an expression of approval, acknowledgement and appreciation of her identity. Less explicit than in the case of conversations, the personal and collective formation of an understanding of equality becomes apparent in this encounter with equality. On the one hand, applause and cheering is a collective act of appreciation through a group of people in this context defined as an audience. On the other hand, the reception of applause and cheering portrays a formative experience, as illustrated in Mathilda’s (OP, LGBT50) expression of the ‘heart-warming’ sensation. Sophia (OP, WOW) and Mathilda (OP, LGBT50) address the interaction of applause and cheering as a crucial contribution to the celebrated values. The sound of clapping hands and cheering crowds provides an opportunity for the individual and the collective to encounter cultures of gender equality and significantly shape the celebration of equality.

Dynamics of Equality

From the analytical focus on encounters with equality through conversations and interactions, my attention shifts to a connected consideration of audience dynamics. In my analysis, I interrogated the collected material in order to understand strategies, practices and processes of engagement in equality-themed events. One key concept stands out from research participants' descriptions: equality-themed events embrace a coming-together of the community. Reported as a sensation of togetherness by residents and discussed as a strategy of inclusion by cultural and political actors, this engagement dynamic characterises the event experiences and the celebration of equality.

The following discussion evolves in a three-folded structure. After a conceptual consideration of the notion of *communitas* through Victor Turner (1989) and Edith Turner (2012), I focus on the experience of togetherness and later address the strategy of inclusion. Empirical accounts affirm the observed strategies. However, restrictions are inherent in the conceptual as well as empirical discussions.

Coming-Together: Effects of Liminality

Empirical narratives concerning a communal sensation in equality-themed events resonate with Victor Turner's (1989) conceptualisations of *communitas*. As a consequence of the liminal experiences, Victor Turner observes a collective sense of *communitas*. While he initially developed the concept, Edith Turner's (2008, 2012) further discussions are more fruitful for my study of festival contexts. She describes the sensation of *communitas* as '(...) a group's pleasure in sharing common experiences with one's fellow' (E. Turner, 2012: 5). Influenced by liminal sensations, *communitas* creates a 'magical' (E. Turner, 2012: 5) and unique atmosphere of a festive context as individuals meet as a collective of the celebratory community. Edith Turner (2012: 5) writes: '[The collective experience] comes unexpectedly, like the wind, and it warms people toward their fellow human beings. It arises when people let go into negative capability, which itself is a condition of creativity, a readiness without preconceived ideas'. Negotiating the community, Edith Turner (2012: 2) argues that in the pleasurable moment of the common experience, identities do not merge, they exist alongside each other, as 'each and every person are alive to the fullest'. In other words, *communitas* is characterised by loose ends. The oneness respects the individuality but creates collectivity and communality through the shared experience.

Sensations of Togetherness

While I address the value of togetherness in the sixth chapter, *Performing Equality*, this section focuses on the sensation of togetherness as an audience dynamic influencing engagements with equality.

The concept of *communitas* finds repercussions on empirical grounds, as residents in this study acknowledge, value and even emphasise magical sensations of togetherness as a substantial dynamic moving the festive community. I could list a large number of statements from various residents sharing experiences of associated to the conceptualisation of *communitas*. However, to achieve analytical depth, I focus on observing-participant Mathilda's (OP, AF/ LGBT50) depictions of the sensation. Her statements stand out as she shows particular awareness of and fascination for the collective experience. In her observations of *Assemble Fest*, Mathilda (OP, AF) summarises the relevance of togetherness as an event sensation:

[The Festivals] brought people out of their houses and away from the smartphone [...] to actually come and see what people can do first hand and I think that was bringing people together. All of these City of Culture things [are] doing that. Just to see the streets full of people – young, old, whatever – just seeing everybody out on mass was magical. I like it a lot.

Her particular attention to the collective sensation crystallises in an activity as part of *Assemble Fest*. The musical walk-about, *The Chase*, connected members of the festival community by inviting them to parade along with musicians and performers. This performance served Mathilda (OP, AF) as a metaphor for her experience of the festival and celebrations within Hull2017 in general, as she explains:

The community added on bit by bit so it was kind of an accumulative feeling. Everybody was just coming together in this mass that was stopping the traffic with help from that zebra crossing the road. It is like, I liked it a lot. I really enjoyed it. I don't know, I don't know what word I am looking for. [Long Pause] It made me feel good.

The musical performance, which brings people together so even the traffic has to stop, serves as a strong observation and illustrates metaphorically the dynamics of togetherness, which Mathilda (OP, AF) enjoys. In consideration of the sensation of community, Mathilda (OP, LGBT50) refers to her experiences of the

LGBT50 celebrations and particularly the *UK Pride Parade and Party*. She does so with an undertone of annoyance, as she felt she was repeating the same observations in regards to various festivals and celebrations. Mathilda (OP, *LGBT50*) explains:

I think I said it a million and one times: it is everybody coming together. [...] This is a weird thing about the [celebratory] community. So, it is a community bringing everybody together, celebrating their individualness, their individual identities, their individual preferences or whatever. So, it is a bit of a weird one, it is unity but at the same time diversity.

Everybody joining in unity with an attention to each other's particularities is an essential element for Mathilda's (OP, *LGBT50*) experiential take on coming together in an LGBT celebration. Similarly to Edith Turner's (2012) outline of the concept of *communitas*, the unified mass has its peculiarities, individualities and uniqueness within. The collective and communal are a strongly knit sensation but simultaneously open for personal expressions and impressions. Employing even similar words as Edith Turner (2012), Mathilda (OP, AF/ *LGBT50*) observes *communitas* as a sensation of togetherness in the unique, magical atmosphere of equality-themed events.

Echo-Chambers

The idealised sensations of togetherness are being disturbed by the reflections of other residents. Rather than appreciating the sensation of togetherness, residents observe so-called 'echo-chambers' (Daniel, OP, *WOW*) as a reoccurring audience dynamic. In his observation of the *Women of the World* festival, observing-participant Daniel (OP, *WOW*) notes:

Well, now I am thinking out loud, but I think it is like reinforcing an idea, which we all agree upon already. [...] Yes, an echo-chamber [...]. Because we are already agreeing in the entrance. We don't need [the cultural actors] to tell us about [gender equality]. Therefore, I am telling you it is like we see a club where we are all already part of.⁸¹

As a result, equality-themed events are observed to speak only to the accomplices. In the context of the *Women of the World* festival, Daniel (OP, *WOW*) experienced the audience as a 'club, in which we all agree'. In order to illustrate

⁸¹ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

the metaphor of the echo-chamber and club of accomplices, Daniel (OP, WOW) further refers to a performance and its usage of humour in the *Women of the World* Festival. While the punchline is narrated, laughter is returned from the audience. In this moment, Daniel (OP, WOW) considers that the narrative and response work like an echo. Dependent on the particular audience members and their expectations, reactions are already pre-written. Therefore, according to Daniel (OP, WOW/ AF), in an echo-chamber the audiences are ‘accomplice[s] of the narrative’ (Daniel, OP, AF).

In response to this effect of echo-chambers, Abbie (CA, Production, WOW), a member of the production team for *Women of the World* festival, argues that one of the difficulties of equality-themed events is the assumed target audiences that engage with celebrations of equality. She explains:

You know, the issue, I think, we always had creating a festival called Women of the World was that ‘women’. It looked like we were just focusing on women. Even when we tried to combat that, we [...] met up with so much resistance, because it is ‘women’. So, it is just for women like ‘Oh, it is not for me, it is for women’. I remember inviting my dad to a think-in and [he was like,] ‘it was just for you, women’, and I was like, ‘No, that is not the point’. But [...] it is still that issue.
(Abbie, CA, Production, WOW)

Abbie’s (CA, Production, WOW) explanation is crucial, in order to understand the associated expectations, which are attached to the production of cultures of gender equality. The notions of women and LGBT construct a symbolic barrier regarding thematic accessibility. Even though this was resisted and worked against by political and cultural actors, there tends to be an invisible boundary created by the assumptions and interpretations of the thematic focus on equality.

While I recognise the critiques and risks of echo-chambers, I need to also highlight their beneficial implications regarding professional and personal developments. Alice (CA, Artist, AF), a member of a local feminist theatre company, explains that the company’s thematic focus on gender equality is a niche within the theatre sector in the city and region. This niche creates a ‘marketing question’, as their thematic focus generates a community of ‘followers’, who ‘enjoy seeing that part of work’ (Alice, CA, Artist, AF). The dynamics of an echo-chamber is profitable to their work, as the company can count on more or less stable audience numbers. Next to Alice’s (CA, Artist, AF) professional

considerations, observing-participant Sophia (OP, WOW) highlights positive contributions of echo-chambers for her personal experience of equality-themed events. Referring to the *Women of the World* festival, Sophia (OP, WOW) considers her particular seating position between groups of men during the opening ceremony. Being surrounded by men, Sophia (OP, WOW) explains that she was alienated from her expected club of female accomplices. She remarks that the encounters with like-minded people – particularly women – over topics of gender equality was an important motivation for her festival attendance.

While equality-driven echo-chambers can be critiqued for their exclusionary tendencies, the audience dynamics contributes to a sensation of collective encounters with equality. As Daniel (OP, AF) acknowledges: ‘It is this club of friends, this echo-chamber; but still, there is always things to discover or remember or refresh’. Therefore, the effects of echo-chambers in response to the sensation of togetherness need to be relativised.

Strategies of Inclusion

In relation to the sensation of togetherness, political and cultural actors outline their strategies of inclusion. Similarly to Finkel, Sharp and Sweeney’s (2018: 2) observations, ‘inclusion is a ubiquitous term’ in this research. Thinking carefully about the use of terminology, the strategies of inclusion addressed by research participants refer to the notion of inclusion as a way for ‘people to participate in society as it is constructed’ (Finkel et al., 2018: 2). Described as a coming-together of the community, interpretations of inclusive strategies are addressed in this section.

The theatre festival *Assemble Fest* serves as an important example for highlighting this strategic perspective. The event explicitly outlines an interest in promoting inclusion in the performing arts. The festival’s slogan declares, ‘Theatre where you least expect it’ (Assemble Fest, 2017), and takes over⁸² the residential neighbourhood of Newland Avenue. Abbie (CA, Production, AF), a member of the production team for *Assemble Fest*, explains her motivations, strategies and practices of inclusion as follows:

[I kept] thinking about what are the barriers that people experience going to theatre and I think Assemble Fest has been very much about

⁸² While I use the phrase ‘take over’, Abbie (CA, Production, AF) opposes this term. The festival team aims to work with the streets, its shops and neighbours, rather than taking over.

not only supporting artists, but breaking down those barriers and that is part of the way we are doing it on a high street. So, it is literally on people's door steps. We do it in businesses, where people would usually go but also where they wouldn't go. So, there is a beautiful kind of thing in encouraging people to try out and see amazing spaces that they don't go into. [We are] trying to create this live experience and that live thing of going into a space and seeing it and hoping people go back.

Abbie (CA, Production, AF) further states that accessibility frames the interest of inclusion for the festival. The overall mega-event employs similar approaches, as James (PA, Management, HULL2017), a senior manager of Hull 2017 Ltd, explains:

I think the bigg[est] drivers were the inclusion driver. [...] We wanted to make sure that the programme worked right across the city both by doing and producing work within communities and within geographies. But also, if we were doing work in the city centre by hopefully insuring that it was open and accessible that whoever wanted to come to it. So, possibly the answer [to the question of the values of Hull2017] is that our focus was a demographic and geographic approach [to inclusion].

On the micro scale of a one-day festival as well as on the macro structure of the mega-event, inclusion serves as a crucial interest, in order to support the audiences and encourage their engagements. Inclusive strategies in the context of *Assemble Fest* and the project of Hull2017 foster accessibility for potential audiences. Through reduced barriers and increased accessibility, audience members' curiosity is piqued, which potentially leads to the engagement of new audiences.

Limitations to Inclusion

In discussion of inclusion, research participants draw my focus to the limitations of the strategies and the related implementations. The critique is overall driven by a concern for whom or what inclusion applies. Observing-participant Anna's (OP, FG) experiences and reflections guide me in the formulations of the limitations of inclusion in Hull2017. While sharing multiple inclusive, diverse and welcoming experiences, she encountered strategies of exclusion in relation to her activism against financial partnerships of Hull 2017 Ltd. Throughout 2017, a

small group of residents mobilised against the sponsorship of Hull2017 by the oil company British Petroleum (BP). Docking onto a national campaign, the activist group raised critiques concerning the company's art-washing of their brand from environmental and human rights violations. The Hull-based activist group continuously intervened in a yearlong lecture series, explicitly sponsored by BP. The activists' provocations took the form of asking a question in the Q&A after each lecture. Anna's (OP, FG) experience of intervening critically questions the reach of inclusion. In a focus group interview, Anna (OP, FG) explains:

It's not part of the actual [...] events that we have been to for the research, but I have been [...] to these conversation[s] at the University and I asked a question concerning the BP sponsorship, which the people on the stage didn't like. [...] So, they didn't reply to it. [...] So, yes, I wasn't welcomed with the question. [I asked about] if the city of culture thing being sponsored by BP in the context of Hull being in danger by being flooded as an effect of global warming. [...] They didn't want to answer the question and actually this moment made me feel like ok that it is not including all aspects of me and of people around me. So, [it seems that] if we have any sort of critique we are just being silenced.

In the statement, Anna (OP, FG) down-plays the organisers' and audiences' reactions. In an informal conversation, she explains to me that organisers demanded the microphone from her while she was still speaking, in order to physically stop the intervention. Additionally, attending several lectures myself, I experienced the audience reactions and noted they became harsher each time the question was asked – moaning, booing as well as yelling have been recorded. Anna (OP, FG) reflects on these physical and symbolic barriers as practices of exclusion. In regards to the analysis of inclusion as an audience dynamic, I agree with her personal conclusion that certain critiques and critics 'are just being silenced' (Anna, OP, FG).

Engagements of transformative Potential?

In respect to encounters with and dynamics of equality-themed events, research participant's reflections show how cultures of gender equality are explored through the celebratory setting. Underlying the engagements with equality, the collected narratives address the transformative potential of event experiences. While personal and communal transformations are frequently reported, research

participants continuously debate the depth of event-based potential for transformation. In the citation introducing this section, which I reproduce here, observing-participant Rosa (OP, LGBT50) points towards the varied intensities of encounters with celebrations of equality. She elucidates:

You can't help if there are things going on around you to pick up some pieces. But you have to go to the more targeted smaller events. There are in the street things of course but you have to go to the smaller targeted events to really engage in a more significant way. (Rosa, OP, LGBT50)

Her judgement questions the potential for engagements with equality in relation to aspired personal and cultural transformation.

Reviewing the empirical material, I observe a stark contrast between cultural actors' intentions and residents' perceptions of the transformative potential of celebrations and audience engagements. The desire, aspiration and necessity for transformation is omnipresent in the contrasting considerations of cultural actors and residents. Artists and producers identify transformative encounters as a key interest and motivation of their work. For example, Abbie (CA, Production, WOW), a member of the production team of the *Women of the World* festival, declares: 'What I wanted to do particularly with [this] festival was to offer an opportunity for everybody. [The festival serves] as a way [for] people to engage with the ideas, the debates, some of the issues that are out there'. While the desire for engagements with gender equality is acknowledged by residents, they critically question the efficiency of these intended encounters in order to create change. In their critique, the notion of 'change' correlates with a demand for effectiveness. Alex (OP, LGBT50) synthesises:

I think like in that sense [engagements with equality through celebrations] is not effective. I don't see it as an effective form of social change but like that is my damning critique of the whole thing. [...] It didn't change.

Alex's (OP, LGBT50) doubt reaffirms in observing-participant Daniel's (OP, FF) remark concerning the idiosyncrasies upon which the festivalisation of equality build:

Nowadays, protesting is no longer standing in the front line. Nowadays, protesting is dancing in the city like in the pride like in gay pride. Nowadays, it turns out that protesting for the rights of homosexuals or

whoever means you participate in a stupid concert, in a park with a beer.⁸³

Alex's (OP, LGBT50) and Daniel's (OP, FF) observations empirically illustrate my previously conceptual discussions of the restrictions of subversive, transformative event experiences. While, cultural actors share their commitment to transformation in the form of event-based encounters with cultures of gender equality, observing-participants criticise the assumption of societal change. Beyond sharing his observations, Alex (OP, HULL) raises suggestions and particularly pays attention to the temporal restrictions and the need for continuity:

I feel like again and again: [...] where is the space for continued conversation? [...] [I] just feel like we haven't succeeded over the whole year in fostering [...] critical conversations. I don't feel that we have succeeded even beginning to get some conversation[s] off the ground. This isn't creating genuine conversations. [...] Especially in terms of [...] an increasingly divided society, where these kind of conversations [...] need to happen. These spaces are not creating space that these different people with these radically different world views and context can begin to explore whether [they] might have some common ground or where they might like start to come together and have some great conversation. I don't think it is doing that at all.

While acknowledging that encounters with equality do occur within festival spaces, Alex (OP, HULL) points out that the continuation of encounters is essential to the transformative potential of these engagements.

Conclusive Summary

In this chapter, *Engaging with Equality*, I focused on the audiences of equality-themed events and studied their engagements with the production of cultures of gender equality in celebratory settings. In response to the question, *In what way are audiences engaging with produced cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017?*, I highlighted the relevance of audiences and their engagements as crucial contributors to the production of cultures of gender equality and argued that they shape celebrations and their narrative as a whole. Attentive to the encounters and dynamics of equality in the studied festivals, I conceptually

⁸³ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

embedded the analysis in a phenomenological reading of event experiences with focus on the liminal, carnivalesque sensations of festivals.

Firstly, I addressed conversations and interactions as exemplary modalities of encountering equality in celebrations. In accordance with Matarasso (2019), I understand every form of engagement as an encounter with equality in the studied events. As conversations and interactions were addressed by the majority of research participants, I based my further examinations on these modalities of engagement. I grounded my analysis on Markwell and Waitt's (2013) suggestion that events need to be studied as formative moments for individuals and collectives. For instance, due to her experience of *Freedom Festival* as well as her multiple conversations with others about issues of LGBT equality and rights inspired by the *LGBT50* celebrations, Anna's (OP, FF/ LGBT50) affirmations of her beliefs and interest show how the conversational modality impacts personal and collective perceptions of equality. Additionally, I was able to portray similar processes through the interaction of applause. Less tangible than conversations, Sophia (OP, WOW) and Mathilda (OP, LGBT50) showed the ways in which the act of cheering can become an interaction with equality stimulating the personal and collective experiences. With a firm understanding that any encounter is an engagement, my analysis highlights the personal and collective influence that encounters with equality have as they form and inform perceptions of the produced cultures of gender equality.

Secondly, I examined the dynamics of audiences in equality-themed events. Drawing on my data, sensations of togetherness and correlated strategies of inclusion seem to dominate audience dynamics. The experiential and strategic coming-together of communities reflects the consequential effects of liminality, which Victor Turner (1989) describes as *communitas*. Edith Turner (2012) expands on this concept, arguing that liminal experiences in celebrations affect and form a celebratory community. *Communitas* is characterised by a strong collective sense, while respecting and affirming the individuality of each participant. Representing the views shared by many research participants, Mathilda (OP, AF/ LGBT50) demonstrated a strong understanding of and appreciation for the sensation of togetherness, as she shares in her depictions of the event experiences, using terms such as 'magical' and 'unique' which is in line with Edith Turner's (2012: 5) description. Alongside the observing-participants' empirical accounts, political and cultural actors addressed the coming-together

of the community as a strategic approach addressed as inclusion. Referring to Abbie (CA, Production, AF) and James (PA, Management, HULL2017), I captured how inclusion as a strategy frames a one-day festival as well as the yearlong mega-event. Beyond the affirmative observations of the sensation of togetherness and strategy of inclusion, I addressed the limitations of the coming-together as echo-chambers and showed that exclusion contradicted the experiential and strategic approaches of inclusion. Daniel (OP, WOW) suggested that audiences often appear to be accomplices to the narrative presented in the equality-themed celebrations. Therefore, the audiences in equality-themed events become a 'club of the already converted' (Daniel, OP, WOW), which creates an echo-chamber of equality narratives. While I addressed the inherent risks and limitations related to these dynamics, I also highlighted the advantages of these echo-chambers for professional development and personal sensations of belonging. Furthermore, observing-participant Anna's (OP, FG) experience of exclusion exemplifies how fragile the strategic approaches to inclusion can be. Resulting from her observations, I argue that inclusion is a highly monitored and selective strategy and practice, which influences the perception of audience members and related dynamics considerably.

The analysis of audience engagements addresses the transformative potential captured on a conceptual level through the transgressive event experiences. While aspirations for transformation define the experiential atmosphere of equality-themed events, research participants urge me to debate their potential for change. Due to different forms of engagements and shifting emphasis, Rosa (OP, LGBT50), Alex (OP, HULL) and Daniel (OP, WOW) question the transformative power of audience engagements in celebrations of equality. Intensity and sustainability grounded the judgements on the suitability of celebrations of equality. I finalised the discussion through Alex's (OP, HULL) demand for the continuation of conversations, interactions and encounters. He pointed out that the productions of cultures of gender equality require consistent engagement in order to build on the established potential of the mega-event of Hull2017.

Chapter 6

Performing Equality

According to the triangulation of analytical perspectives, I move from a focus on audiences and their engagements to the performative level of produced contents. In this chapter, I investigate how cultures of gender equality are performed with respect to the contents presented in the six selected activities forming part of Hull2017. The study of performances of equality reveals differing, diverging and even conflicting interpretations of equality. Therefore, in this chapter, I argue for a necessarily plural interpretation of the fragile notion of cultures of gender equality in Hull2017.

The notion of ‘performance’ or ‘performer’ of equality is used as a generic term. Rather than a reference to a specific art genre, the notions serve as descriptors of all artistic practices and practitioners considered in the cultural programme of activities. For the purpose of an inclusive analysis, I address actors, moderators, painters and curators as performers. Exhibitions, festivals, or concerts are performances. The notion of ‘performance’/ ‘performer’ serves as the most encompassing term in the complex arena of festival industries.

The chapter reflects strongly on the socio-cultural significance of celebrations as outlined in the conceptual framework through the work of Benedict (1983), Falassi (1987a) and Finkel et al. (2013). The socio-cultural practice of meaning-making becomes obvious in this discussion of the performers and performances of equality. In Chapter 3, I cited Benedict’s (1983: 2) study of World Fairs, in which he explains: ‘The fairs were not only selling goods, they were selling ideas. [...] Many of these ideas could be seen in concrete (or at least plaster) forms at the expositions’. In further illustrations, I highlighted different events, festivals and celebrations as case studies in which meaning-making becomes prevalent. In the context of the *Eurovision Song Contest*, Baker (2017) explores the happenings on stage as an analytical anchor for her outline of the significance of the gender and sexual politics of the event. When it comes to LGBT performers and performances, the scholar argues that the event’s developments correspond to the general European discourse of gender equality and therefore informs European identity. In a similar vein, Hubbard and Wilkinson (2015) argue for a portrayal of gender equality as a national value in the context of the

London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012. Focusing on processes of place-making in the context of city marketing, the researchers outline how the progressive reputation of London and the UK in terms of LGBT rights was heavily utilised in the marketing of the event and urban tourism. Conceptualised as homonormative and homonationalist trends, the case studies enable me to understand the socio-cultural significance and the processes of meaning-making in celebrations. Ideas and values are celebrated in the context of festivals. Therefore, the study of performers and performances allows valuable insights into the production of cultures of gender equality.

This chapter follows two analytical lines in discussing the performers and narrations of equality. In the first section, *Performers of Equality*, I argue that the performers themselves become representatives of equality and therefore, carry responsibility for producing cultures of gender equality. In the section, *Narrations of Equality*, I address the stories and strategies of equality as they unfold in the investigated celebrations as part of Hull2017.

Performers of Equality

In the conceptualisations of festivals and events in chapter 3, I did not pay great attention to the performers of events. However, the discussion of performers, their roles and responsibilities become essential in my empirical study of equality-themed events in Hull2017, as the individual and their performance imbricate. When questioned about the performance of equality in selected events, performers are a crucial point of reference for political and cultural actors as well as residents. The attention to performers is grounded in the assumption that these individuals are representatives for the celebrated values. This assumption is voiced by observing-participant Sophia (OP, SKIN) who illustrates the dependencies between performers and performances of equality in her reflections on the exhibition *SKIN: Freud, Mueck and Tunick* at Ferens Art Gallery. The exhibition addresses the subject of nudity in the fine arts largely through the work of Ron Mueck, Lucien Freud and Spencer Tunick. Artworks from the permanent collection of the gallery further add to the exhibited theme. During her visit, Sophia (OP, SKIN) notices a gender imbalance regarding the artists represented at the exhibition. With the exception of Francesca Woodman, all displaying artists are male. Sophia (OP, SKIN) reflects upon this lack of gender diversity and its effects, as follows:

Ok, so, in terms of the artists' work on show, it is not very equal. [The exhibition] is about the body and how we see ourselves. But it is only from the male artist's point of view - almost exclusively.

Sophia's (OP, SKIN) attention to the gender imbalance and the consequential exclusively male point of view concerning the theme of the show highlights the relevance of the situatedness of performers. Synthesising the views of the majority of residents contributing to this research, Sophia (OP, SKIN) suggests that the performers' situatedness stands in direct correlation with the produced content. Therefore, the performers become representatives of the presented performance and celebrated value of equality. They carry responsibility for the production of cultures of gender equality. Drawing on my empirical data, I dedicate the following section to the performers as crucial producers of socio-cultural values in the context of Hull2017. In doing so, I outline how performers represent and are responsible for the production of cultures of gender equality.

Representatives of Equality

Research participants highlight three strategies of representation that performers in equality-themed events inherit. Firstly, diversity is acknowledged as a representational strategy. Secondly, I explore the influence of what some observing-participants referred to as 'tick box exercises' (e.g. Sophia, OP, WOW), which suggest that attempts to represent diversity might turn into mere tokenism. Thirdly, I address the relevance of the highly appreciated 'one of us' (Rachel, OP, WOW) approach as a representational strategy, which is based on the relationship between the performer, the performance and the audience in respect to their experiences and identities.

Diversity on Display

The strategy of diversity in events is based on a categorical interpretation of identities. Among others, gender, race, sexual orientation as well as age are key components in the representative spectrum, which is presented through a range of performers. This representational strategy is summarised by observing-participants Daniel (OP, WOW) and Sophia (OP, LGBT50). In his observation of the *Women of the World* festival, Daniel (OP, WOW) acknowledges: 'Just the simple fact that there are women [performing] [...] that is a statement. That is a declaration of principles'. He understands the prominence of female performers to support the event's vision and socio-cultural significance. The 'declaration of principles' (Daniel, OP, WOW) is also noticed by other observing-participants in

relation to different events. In the context of *LGBT50*, Sophia (OP, LGBT50) participates in a community writing project and observes a similar representative strategy. She explains: ‘They wanted a mix of voices. They wanted people from all different sectors of the LGBT+ community. It was about [...] [giving] them a voice in a form [of this writing workshop]’ (Sophia, OP, LGBT50).

Next to observations of diverse representations by residents, the strategy also creates a key point of discussion for political and cultural actors. When questioned about the production of cultures of gender equality, James (PA, Management, HULL2017), a senior manager of Hull 2017 Ltd, and Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50), a member of an artists’ collective involved with the production of *LGBT50*, agree on the relevance of diversity as a representational strategy in their curatorial approach. James (PA, Management, HULL2017) elucidates:

I think [diverse representational strategies] start in making sure that you have a balanced team. Because if you are going to believe in the curatorial act [of diversity] [...] then you have to have a team that reflects that. So, you know, we have a balanced team of people, so, therefore, different points of view would come in. People would point out that it was all getting a bit male and pale over there. I think it is a structural point from the beginning. [...] Unless you have a team that reflects the world you live in, you are not going to produce a programme that reflects the world you live in. So, you have to be very, very careful when you are hiring and creating a team that you have those differences in it. Well, it is like you never finish that.

In this narrative, James (PA, Management, HULL2017) acknowledges the curatorial necessity for diversity and argues that a diverse team of performers strategically contributes to the aspired cultures of gender equality. Extending James’ (PA, Management, HULL2017) argument, I turn to Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50). He is acutely aware of his own and his organisation’s practices and outlines the relevance of diversity for the company’s ethos and vision. Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) shares James’ (PA, Management, HULL2017) consideration that the team’s profile relates to the curatorial capacities for diversity. While James (PA, Management, HULL2017) briefly acknowledges that ‘you never finish’, Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50)

emphasises the continuous efforts to challenge diversity as a representational spectrum. He explains:

We struggle. We struggle not to be male dominated. I think, even though we are a queer company, we are gay men. We are gay and we are queer. But we are still men and will still have that background. I am still a man, I still have all that kind of privilege or upbringing. [...] It is a big [issue] and I do think it is slightly unresolved – even in a queer company. (Henry, CA, Production, LGBT50)

The two narratives outlined above consider and foreground diversity as a representational strategy crucial to curatorial, managerial and political work within Hull2017. However, while James (PA, Management, HULL2017) assumes a potential achievement of diverse representation, Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) acknowledges the difficulties and challenges on the basis of his company's experiences.

Diversity as a representative strategy catches the attention of residents and is easily identified. As a 'declaration of principles' (Daniel, OP, WOW) or a form 'to give voice' (Sophia, OP, LGBT50), cultural and political actors employ diversity as a strategy in their curatorial process and practice. With the awareness that it is a challenge to achieve a diverse representative spectrum, the two cited actors communicate awareness for the relevance and necessity of diversity.

Equality as a Tick Box Exercise

While diversity becomes a focus and factor in the discussion of the performance of equality, residents perceive tendencies towards tokenistic approaches in the investigated equality-themed events. On the one hand, 'ticking boxes' (Sophia, OP, WOW) refers to a representational strategy for performers of equality. On the other hand, as I will address at a later point in this chapter, the approach also relates to content and programming practices that determine which topics, themes and issues are addressed.

With the term 'tick box exercise', Sophia (OP, WOW) captures her observation of unreflective strategies that seek to achieve diverse representations. According to her, strategies of diversity imply a level of reflexivity relevant to the production of cultures of gender equality. The attention to representing marginal identities works as a tool for diversity mainstreaming, however, in several events, Sophia (OP, WOW) observes that sincere diversity strategies turned into 'tick box exercises'. In her observations of the *Women of the World* festival, Sophia (OP,

WOW) highlights: ‘They had some classical standards: [...] I felt that there was like token black woman, the sexy PR friendly classical violin girls, and that sort of nod to Bollywood. It was conceived as ticking boxes’. She claims that strategies and tools of diverse representation become a mere calculation of visible or expressed identity categories with the expectation that equality is therefore represented.

While observed and often judged by residents, cultural actors’ understandings of tokenism are particularly insightful. Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50), a member of an artists’ collective involved in the production of *LGBT50*, verbalises the tensions underlying the discussion. Highlighting the need to showcase different voices, he expresses a reflexivity and awareness of diversity in his own event productions. He explains: ‘I mean the event itself will be driven and led by a queer female lesbian voice. So, she is at the front of the thing. She is the leader of the event’ (Henry, CA, Production, LGBT50). He shows great awareness of the relevance of diversity in his attention to the role of the female lesbian performer. However, simultaneously, Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) acknowledges that some practices of diversity lead towards a tactic of politicking and are vulnerable to tokenism. In order to distinguish between the diversity strategies and tick box exercises, Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) raises the crucial question:

Who is it for, when you are putting a drag on stage or a band or a fat bloke in a bath or a drag queen on a revolt or two guys doing dancing or a female drag queen or [...] a black queer activist talking about what it is like to grow up black and gay and masculine?

Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) suggest to question ‘Who is it for?’ as a guide for curatorial and representational practices in order to manoeuvre between the contrasting strategies of diversity and tokenism.

‘One of us’ Approach

Alongside observations of representational strategies of diversity and tokenism, residents strongly support performers who represent ‘one of us’ (Rachel, OP, WOW). Extracted from Rachel’s (OP, WOW) reflections of the *Women of the World* festival, the ‘one of us’ approach is a fruitful strategy that performers utilise to represent cultures of gender equality in Hull2017. The strategy refers to the geographic origin or social class of the performer, but could be expanded to various other categories of identification such as gender, sexual identity, ethnicity

among others. Contrary to the strategies of representational diversity, identity markers are not the main attention. Rather, as Rachel (OP, WOW) suggests, the identification of the audience with the performer characterises the ‘one of us’ approach. After her participation at the *Women of the World* festival, observing-participant Rachel (OP, WOW) expresses her joy at having the opportunity to meet Karen Briggs, who is a celebrated world Judo champion and was born in the east of Hull. Rachel (OP, WOW) explains the significance of Karen Briggs as a representative of equality as follows: ‘I knew that [Karen] was a Judo champion, but it was really interesting, because she was what I consider working class, like people I know. [...] Karen’s story from being working class to being a champion: that was good’. Her encounter with Karen Briggs illustrates Rachel’s (OP, WOW) appreciation for performers, who are from her community and to whom she can relate.

Observing-participant Rosa (OP, WOW) introduces a similar interest or even demand for nuanced selections of performers as representatives of equality. While acknowledging the presence of Hull-based performers in the *Women of the World* festival, Rosa (OP, WOW) highlights the ‘one of us’ effect:

I think the festival was to show that [the performers] were ordinary women. They were not born with any particular advantages, but yet throughout their lives they looked for ways to express what kind of talents they had and eventually became successful. It was a good idea.

Rosa (OP, WOW) refers to the representative potential of ‘ordinary women’, relating to what Rachel (OP, WOW) addressed as the performer being ‘one of us’ in suggestion and appreciation of the representative strategy for performers of equality.

Responsibility for Equality

The second analytical perspective on the performers’ contribution to the production of cultures of gender equality focuses on the responsibility of performers. Reflecting upon the line-up for the *UK Pride* concert, observing-participant Daniel (OP, LGBT50) triggers my analytical interest:

Why are those artists there? Because they are gay? Is it because they are kind of like a flagship music for gay people? [...] Maybe some were

gay, maybe some wrote one song that says: 'I will survive'. [...] It makes you wonder: Why are they there?⁸⁴

Daniel (OP, LGBT50) addresses performers as reference points for the production of cultures of gender equality. Similarly to his account, many observing-participants identify performers as crucial and responsible actors in the meaning-making process of equality-themed events.

While Daniel (OP, LGBT50) does not seek an answer to his query, his provocative question 'Why are they there?' encourages me to understand performers' motivations and negotiation for this responsibility for equality.

Personal, political and professional Motivations

I trace performers' motivations based on their personal, political and professional relationships with cultures of gender equality. Abbie (CA, Production, WOW), a member of the production team for the *Women of the World* festival, frames the following analysis: She introduces the relationship between her personal convictions and political responsibilities in her reflections about her professional engagement with the *Women of the World* festival. Abbie (CA, Production, WOW) explains:

It is an interesting one for me because there were times particularly with this festival where I think there was an expectation that you have to be a feminist to engage with those issues or create those platforms.

[...]

When I took on the job I was a little bit anxious slash hesitant, because I don't feel like I am a feminist.

[...]

We had various conversations about introduction statements and they should be more political and I am not that person. So, it was quite good to go: No, actually that is ok. It is ok, you know, being the programmer for the WOW festival without being an ardent feminist. Though, I am sure that there are some ardent feminist[s], who probably come after me.

In this statement, Abbie (CA, Production, WOW) shares her concerns about programming an equality-themed event with me, as her personal convictions somewhat contradict political aspirations. In the first analytical encounter with

⁸⁴ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

this statement, I caught myself formulating a judgement about the lack of feminist interest and the implications for the programming of the event. However, after further analytical reflections, my attention shifts, as I become aware of the dependencies of the personal, political and professional in regards to the performers responsibility for equality.

Inspired by Abbie's (CA, Production, WOW) honest reflections, I trace similar relationships in the analysis of performers' motivations for their engagements with cultures of gender equality. The interplay between the personal, political and professional becomes most explicit in conversations with performers associated with the *LGBT50* celebrations. Dominated by white, gay, male performers, my question concerning the source and inspiration for their dedication to struggles for gender and sexual equality was promptly met with the declaration: 'I am a gay man' (Thomas, CA, Artist, *LGBT50*). On multiple occasions, I requested further reflections upon the relationship between the identification as a gay man and the professional commitment to issues of gender equality. Several performers clarify their understanding of this identity marker and outline how professional engagement and political awareness are written into their personal biographies. Jess (CA, Artist, *LGBT50*), lead artist for a community craft project in association with *LGBT50*, explains:

Gay politics is [...] something that attracts me deeply and defines who I am. This is a struggle that I still have in my life and I guess [my artistic practice and work] is a way of still working through with those politics. I still have problems with my parents and I am 60 and my dad is 91. My mom is 85 and they have known that I am gay for many years and they struggle.

In this statement, he considers his duty for equality to be a duty of care towards himself. He reports of political struggles, which are engrained in his personal biography and therefore shape his perception and identity. Jess (CA, Artist, *LGBT50*) introduces the relevance of artistic practices as a professional encounter with personal and political realities. Thomas (CA, Artist, *LGBT50*), lead artist in a community dance project affiliated with *LGBT50*, similarly narrates a biographical relationship with struggles for equality. He explicitly relates the personal experiences of sexual discrimination with his creative work, as he explains:

I am a gay man. I am an openly gay man and I don't mind giving myself that label. But I grew up very much in a very narrow-minded small village in Yorkshire, where being gay wasn't an option and it was a miners' village. It was dominated by white straight men with very traditional values and as a young gay artist, I wouldn't say it was hard, but there was definitely an oppression there. So, [...] I think by the time I got to my late teenage years, when I discovered my creativity, I used that as a tool to express my sexuality. (Thomas, CA, Artist, LGBT50)

Both reflections refer to biographical experiences as a source for the professional dedication to the production of cultures of gender equality. Many performers highlight that their artistic practice is a form of enacting such responsibilities, in order to work through personal issues as well as societal discrimination caused by gender and sexual oppression. Throughout all interviews with cultural actors, a pattern reoccurs, which associates the motivations for the performers' responsibility for equality with personal trajectories, political visions and further influences on professional involvement.

Negotiating Responsibilities

Beyond the personal, political and professional imbrications constituting the motivations for performers' involvement with cultures of gender equality, Daniel's (OP, LGBT50) provocation 'Why are they there?' also challenges the ways in which performers perceive and negotiate their responsibility for equality. Cultural actors describe their responsibility as a 'duty of care' (Max, CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) as well as a practice of 'social engineering' (Henry, CA, Production, LGBT50). In our conversation, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50), a member of a charity involved in the production of the *LGBT50* celebration, introduces his dedication as an act of care. Reflecting back onto the audiences and their experiences of equality-themed events, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) clarifies the relevance of his work for the LGBT community and its members:

I think [...] the entertainment is engaging and valuable and so important for life because when you are there and you are having a good time, it frees your mind up and I think that is the power of pride. It does allow you to kind of think about things that perhaps are going on.

With awareness of the roots of the event, the LGBT community and the linked struggle, Max negotiates his responsibilities as a form of care work. He carries such duty for equality with pride and caution, as he understands its value and fragility. Expanding on Max's (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) conceptualisation of the responsibility for equality, Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50), a member of an artists' collective involved with the production of *LGBT50*, addresses the work as a responsibility for and liberty to envision and shape equality. He points out that the responsibility for equality is given through the work with queer, equality-themed subjects and genres. Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) elucidates:

It is our job to associate and engineer [...] a cultural product [of equality]. Yes, we are in the business of creating cultural products. We are making stuff up and [...] it is our responsibility from our heart as well we want to socially engineer a better society.

Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) calls himself a social engineer, whose product is equality. This dedication entails responsibility, as the vision carries a duty for the equal and just society he aspires to create. As an act of care from the perspective of creating a better society, events and performers' responsibilities reproduce an understanding of the political and imaginary potential of celebrations, which I previously outlined in chapter 3: *Conceptualising Gender and Events*. Referring to Ammaturo (2016), the duty of care and practice of social engineering are creating a construct of equality on the basis of the temporal, subversive event atmosphere. The responsibility for equality states an ambition to be negotiated as political atmospheres are debated and imaginaries envisioned.

Shared Responsibilities

Alongside Max's (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) and Henry's (CA, Production, LGBT50) negotiations of responsibilities, Bahar (CA, Artist, WOW) introduces the crucial argument that the responsibility for equality is shared. She points out that political actors and structural layers influence and essentially determine the performer's capacities in the production for cultures of gender equality. Commissioned as lead artist in a community craft project, Bahar (CA, Artist, WOW) contributes to the *Women of the World* festival. She expresses gratitude for the opportunity to support the event's aspirations for equality. Nevertheless, Bahar (CA, Artist, WOW) is critical of the political agendas of equality-themed events and explains:

It is all about the people who do the commissioning of the work. Is [the production of cultures of gender equality] really their agenda? [...] It is all about what is the real agenda of the person commissioning the work.

In previous collaborations, she encountered herself in contexts where the political struggle of equality was commodified. Therefore, while aware of her responsibility as an artist, she calls for more attention to the awareness of political actors in their function as decision-makers. According to Bahar (CA, Artist, WOW), the production of cultures of gender equality relies on the performers and their performance. However, these responsibilities are shared. The greater political context and its consequent structures influence the performers' capacities.

I take Bahar's (CA, Artist, WOW) observations as an invitation to address the political agenda with decision-makers. In discussion with James (PA, Management, HULL2017), a senior manager of Hull 2017 Ltd, the duty, dedication and even obligation to equality takes shape:

[Working towards equality] is just something that you do, you know. And I feel very strongly, you need to gather a group of people, who would find it very odd to do anything else (laughing). It is a bit like the diversity argument, you know. You create work that reflects the world you live in and everybody lives in the world that I live in and we live in. So why would you possibly not create a programme that did that. You become mindful of it as you go forward.

Here, James (PA, Management, HULL2017) conceptualises his interest and devotion to the production of cultures of gender equality. While I discuss the consequential practical implications in the section concerning 'Strategies of Narration', I appreciate his reflections and awareness of the duty of care, which Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) initially described.

Narrations of Equality

At this point, my analysis moves away from the performers to the narrations of equality in Hull2017. Independently, if it is addressed as 'quality' (Mia, CA, Production, SKIN), 'value' (Abbie, CA, Production, AF) or 'message' (Harry, CA, Artist, AF), performers express an interest in the communicational potential that the artistic expression enables. Similarly to Benedict's (1983: 2) notion of 'selling of ideas', I investigate the potential of the narration that frames and defines what cultures of gender equality mean in the context of the investigated celebrations.

While I encounter performances that do not explicitly engage with a practice of narration, the majority of the investigated events share a strong interest in storytelling. The narration of values sets a core interest for performers' artistic engagement with equality. Thomas (CA, Artist, LGBT50), lead artist of a community dance project affiliated with the *LGBT50* celebrations, illustrates the relevance of artistic practice as a form of communication in the following manner:

I see my art is a way of communication. Like a writer or an author would communicate what they are doing through words, I try to communicate it through theatre and movement. Whenever I create a piece of work, I try to rely on a subject matter to be educational, so you teach somebody something on some sort of level. I am not a choreographer that just works without structure or pure movement. I am not interested in that. I think movement can be a strong tool to portray [...] messages and ideas and ideologies and I think that is where the politics is. [...] Doing a movement is political, is saying something. So, I use my art as a tool to speak, to say, to communicate.

In his choreographic practice, Thomas (CA, Artist, LGBT50) declares movement as a form of expression and uses such communication to engage in conversations about equality. His artistic practice serves as a medium to channel his voice and message.

The investigated events embrace plural and complex approaches to the theme of equality. Consequently, I do not claim to provide a comprehensive analysis of all potential stories and strategies. Rather, I refer to a selection of the most prominent stories and strategies of equality. Firstly, I generically address what stories of equality are addressed within the investigated equality-themed events. Secondly, I consider how strategies of narrations are employed. The two perspectives need to be read in relationship to each other, but for analytical purposes are presented separately.

Stories of Equality

The investigated events tell multiple stories of equality. For clarity, I simplify this plurality to three storylines, which dominate the investigated equality-themed activities in Hull2017. I initiate the discussion with a focus on the representation of marginalised voices. Later, I introduce the notion of awareness as a story of equality. I finish by considering equality as an act of empowerment.

Telling the Untold

The visibility of ‘minorities’ (Coby, CA, Production, HULL2017) is a crucial storyline of equality. In the previous section, I considered representational strategies concerning the performers of equality. In the analysis of visibility as a storyline of equality, representation continues to be a dominant theme. In the conceptual framework in chapter 3, I referred to Browne (2007: 66) in regards to the discussion of visibility in *LGBT Pride* events. She addresses *LGBT pride* celebrations as a ‘temporal presence of sexual otherness in otherwise heterosexualised urbanities’. This conceptual point finds repercussions in Coby’s (PA, Production, HULL2017) experiences. As a member of the production team for *LGBT50*, he elucidates:

For me personally, the way I apply some of those values [of equality to the event] is through the idea of minorities. I hate using that term. But in a sense, [I refer with this term to] people, who feel isolated in the normativised conversations that cities have about themselves: what it is to be Hullisian? Or what it is to be the other? Good or bad? [The event seeks for those] minorities [to] feel that they have an ownership and citizenship in their city and they have an ownership and a right in the public. They have a right to express themselves freely in that space. (Coby, PA, Production, HULL2017)

Coby (PA, Production, HULL2017) explicitly relates to the representation of LGBT communities in the city and associates their visibility with the story of equality in his event. Similar interpretations also frame the representation of women in society: the presence of otherness affects not only the ‘heterosexualised urbanities’, as addressed by Browne (2007: 66); male dominated spaces are similarly negotiated in the investigated events. Observing-participant Daniel (OP, WOW) discusses the visibility of women as a central storyline of equality in the *Women of the World* festival:

As a general line of the festival, it appears to me that the presence of the women in the world was the core guidance. It was all a theme, no? And it was interesting to see how this was interpreted in a variety of ways.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Statement translated by Author from Spanish.

The celebration and recognition of women serves as a storyline for the festival. Conceptually as well as empirically, the visibility of minorities dominates the narratives celebrated in equality-themed events. Even though some residents questioned whether minorities' visibility is key to the production of equality, their representation continues to be a highly demanded factor in the performance of equality.

Awareness towards Equality

A further story of equality embraces the notion of awareness. Conceptually connected to the storyline of visibility, but discussed separately due to its presence in the empirical material, I frame equality-themed events in light of awareness-raising campaigns. The awareness for equality struggles is particularly present in the context of the commemorative event of *LGBT50*. As a member of a charity involved in the production of *LGBT50*, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*) explains:

I think [*LGBT50*] is about sadness and celebration. I think, it is about remembering what has gone on and what has to go on in the future. I think for many in 1967 it wasn't just that: right, we are alright now. 27 of July 1967⁸⁶ did not mean from that point on everything was fine. But, actually, it was the beginning of a change, an opportunity and empowerment for communities and individuals to get together.

Here, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*) frames the intention of the event, and consequently the story of equality, in relation to raising awareness. He argues that knowing about the past and present struggles of equality is important in understanding current situations. Jess (CA, Artist, *LGBT50*), who is the lead artist of a community craft project related to *LGBT50*, expands this storyline further, as he reflects on the purpose of his artistic practice:

It is telling stories; making those stories apparent; making people aware of them and [...] showing what has happened to make people understand that this is part of you, part of your history and it is still going on and it is really, it is really: how lucky people are now really.

⁸⁶ On the 27th of July 1967, the UK Parliament agreed on the Sexual Offences Act 1967, which decriminalised same-sex intercourse between two male adults in private spaces (Hull 2017 Ltd, 2017).

As *LGBT50* heavily focuses on community involvement in preparation for and during the event series, the celebration explicitly looks into awareness raising as a storytelling strategy. On the one hand, as Jess (CA, Artist, *LGBT50*) describes, the project intended to make apparent and share the knowledge about stories of equality. On the other hand, in his final sentence, he highlights the importance of this awareness in order to locate current situations within their contemporary and historical contexts.

Stories of Empowerment

Markwell and Waitt's (2009) conceptual understanding of the event as a formative experience affects not only the event experience itself but also the storytelling taking place in equality-themed events. As a final storyline, empowerment is crucial throughout major equality-themed events including the *Women of the World* festival, *LGBT50* celebration and *Freedom Festival*. Sophia's (OP, *LGBT50*) experiences of a community dance project related to *LGBT50* crystallise how stories of empowerment are written. For her, the participation was guided by the expression of 'showing no fear' (Sophia, OP, *LGBT50*). The phrase derives from a spoken word piece related to the dance performance and summarises her personal interpretation of the project as well as the general commemorative celebration. Sophia (OP, *LGBT50*) explains:

We are here, we are queer, and we are showing no fear. That message ran through the whole of the performance and the whole of the project. Showing no fear in terms of being visible, in terms of being out in the public. Showing no fear working with people from all different sides of the community. Showing no fear with something very big [...]. Showing no fear in committing. Showing no fear in committing parts of yourself to something emotionally. It was all about getting rid of fear, I think.

Sophia (OP, *LGBT50*) elucidates that her experiences of 'getting rid of fear' set the core story of the project. 'Showing no fear' (Sophia, OP, *LGBT50*) becomes an emblem of the empowerment discourse, which I continuously encounter in the research field. Next to Sophia (OP, *LGBT50*), observing-participant Mathilda (OP, *LGBT50*) reflects upon empowerment as a story of equality in regards to her participation in the *UK Pride Parade*. She states:

I am, who I am. [...] I lost track of how many times we sang that song during the weekend [...]. So, [it was saying] take me as I am or don't take me at all. I think the self-acceptance and [...] individuality is the

theme, I think: [...] I am born this way. These are reasonably cheesy songs or like pride songs. [...] I don't know if they have deep meanings – but they all have a same overarching theme don't they: this is 'who I am, I am not going to change, because you might want me to or because you feel more comfortable about it and, yeah, let's just get on with our life really.' That is the theme! That is the theme of these events, I always thought. (Mathilda, OP, LGBT50)

While referring to 'cheesy' song lyrics, Mathilda (OP, LGBT50) pinpoints an essential story of equality: the celebration of equality empowers individuals and communities to be who they seek to be. Song lyrics, such as *I am who I am* and *Born this Way*, frame the central themes, values and messages experienced by research participants.

Strategies of Narrations

In the previous section, I emphasised what stories of equality are told in the investigated events in Hull2017. Further, I explore how these stories are narrated. As outlined in the methodology chapter, the selection of events includes a multiplicity of formats such as festivals, exhibitions and performances. The settings and contexts of the particular events guide the narrative strategies. However, I encounter two general tactics of narrations common to all investigated events. In the first narrative strategy, I address entertainment as an approach to the celebration of equality. Secondly, I consider the narrative strategy of comfort. Thirdly, and in reaction to the previous tactics, I introduce alternative strategies of narrations, which foreground a critical reading of cultures of gender equality.

Entertaining Cultures of Gender Equality

Events, and festivals in particular, carry an expectation of entertainment. As previously discussed in relation to the conceptualisation of liminal, carnivalesque event experiences, key words such as 'festival,' 'fest' or 'party,' are anticipated or even demanded to be fun. As a temporal and spatial suspension of the normative structures, entertaining experiences are inscribed in the celebratory contexts (E. Turner, 2012). Therefore, entertainment is established as the first narrative strategy. Observing-participant Rosa (OP, WOW) explains:

When people see the word festival, they expect to be entertained as well as informed – with the emphasis on the entertainment. In other words: a celebration, not a conference. Not that conferences are not

celebrations. They are, you know! (Laughing) But they are more serious. They are like more serious celebrations.

Entertaining tactics of narrations are embedded in the structure of an event. In the programming process for the *Women of the World* festival, the relationship between the narrative strategy of entertainment and the event's structure becomes apparent. As a member of the production team, Abbie (CA, Production, WOW) synthesises the structural relevance of fun:

[Women of the World festival] is very much an art form festival, so it is about different ways of exploring these issues of equality without being a conference – without it being too intellectual.

[...]

[The programming] is literally kind of going: why aren't there more darts clothes for women? So, we had a darts pop up moment. How do we engage with trail blazers? They are coming in cartoons.

[...]

We flipped [around]: from a panel discussion to hula-hooping or singing demonstration or a dance demonstration or a Bollywood demonstration. So that there were ways of getting people to realise that city hall isn't just a sit on your bum and listen kind of [space].

Abbie (CA, Production, WOW) introduces how entertainment has been considered in the festival's production of cultures of gender equality. The provision for fun elements appears to be central to events – independently whether equality-themed or not.

Additionally, entertainment formulates a narrative strategy for the performances. Oliver (CA, Artist, AF), director of a local theatre company, addresses their interest and usage of entertainment, as follows:

I think [...] a lot of people make theatre to make a point a lot of the time, which is great and that is what theatre should do. But I think our starting point is that we want to entertain people. Then, through that you can start and feed in little bits of what you are trying to say. Because at the end of the day, if you don't entertain people, people are not going to listen. [...] It is about stories, it is about drama, it is about creating attention, and all of these things. We like to make people laugh, because we like to laugh. So, we would like to make the stuff that we would like to laugh at.

The theatre director implies that entertainment is a tool for seeking attention and communicating their stories. This highlights the relevance of entertainment not only on a structural level in the programming of events, but also as a narrative strategy for the artistic practice of performers in their performance of equality.

Comforting Cultures of Gender Equality

The second narrative strategy interacts with entertainment. However, due to its different conceptual influences and empirical perceptions, I consider the strategy of 'comfort' (Anna, OP, LGBT50) on its own. On multiple occasions, residents observed a sensation of being made comfortable in the celebration of equality. The strategy of comfort seems to contradict the previously provided conceptual discussion of event experiences, since the liminal, carnivalesque momentum appears to have a disruptive rather than a comforting effect. However, drawing on my critique of the transgressive potential of liminality and the carnivalesque, the narrative strategies of comfort respond to the function of controlled chaos as addressed by Pielichaty (2015).

For this analytical perspective, I am guided by observing-participant Anna's (OP, LGBT50) reflections about the *LGBT50* celebrations, as she expresses how easy, simple and comfortable the commemorative celebrations felt to her. Anna (OP, LGBT50) explains:

It is quite appealing and like quite easy, you know, being packed in colourful rainbow packages and just being sold to everybody around and people easily refer to it, easily find themselves in that. So, yeah, like spreading some kind of tolerance behaviours and also this consciousness of the whole history of it and knowledge about it.

Anna's (OP, LGBT50) observations of comfort are expressed in the package of knowledges and behaviours concerning the LGBT communities and histories. Observing-participant Daniel (OP, FF) expands on the comforting sensation, as he highlights simplicity as a key characteristic in the narration of equality. Talking about the community dance project *Rush* as part of *Freedom Festival*, Daniel (OP, FF) reflects: 'It is very easy to do a show with, I don't know, 200,000 Pounds and all the people in Hull say: together, we can'. The dance performance tackles contemporary and historical issues of protests and riots in the UK. With such attention to struggles of inequalities, Daniel (OP, FF) is rather disturbed by the comforting effects that he experiences as an audience member. He considers this tactic to be difficult and even risky due to their false interpretation of the

inequalities represented. Further, he argues that the simplification and even beautification of struggles of equality seem to be prevalent, to the effect that viewers are more comfortable in their consumption of the narrative.

Political and cultural actors provide little reflection upon the narrative strategy of comfort. Part of the production team of *Women of the World* festival, Abbie (CA, Production, WOW) contributes one of the only statements in this respect. She outlines:

I mean one of the things that turns me off about the issues [concerning equality] is, when I meet people who are overly political about that. Because I cannot identify with that. I admire the passion, but it is not in my language and I think, if we want to really make change, then it has to be really accessible to everybody. So, it is about how we find different ways of talking about it, so it is accessible.

Abbie's (CA, Production, WOW) reading of the narrative strategy of comfort encountered a strong opposition from residents. As the two quotations imply, observing-participants are very vocal and critical of the narrative strategies of comfort. Concluding the section with the following statement, Anna (OP, LGBT50) synthesises the critique:

City of culture until now, they are making you quite comfortable, rather than uncomfortable. It would be nice to make you uncomfortable. [This is] what art can be about. Not just making you feel like: 'Oh, you are so great. You are just so tolerant. You are just [...] great. [...] Lets just make a mental jerk-off all together [about] how great we are'. But I think [maybe it is necessary too] sometimes to think that we are shit in some stuff. Maybe we have a long way still to go and just to be critical, be a little bit sad about stuff. [Maybe sometimes] try to be moved to some different attitude, rather than just this glad, comfortable self-indulgence.

The empirical statements respond to my conceptual critique of the liminal, carnivalesque potential of subversion as a controlled momentum of chaos. In accordance with Aching (2010), Pielichaty (2015) and Ravenscraft and Gilchrist (2009), I question who the 'liminal space to momentarily lose themselves and behave in a care-free manner' serves (Pielichaty, 2015: 239). The alternated, subverted structures, norms and conventions are explored with the knowledge and security of returning to routine again. Therefore, Anna's (OP, LGBT50)

observations and critique of comforting effects feed into the limitations of subversive potentials. I argue that the strategy of comfort primarily serves the hegemonic communities of society. Comforting strategies are employed as tools in the productions of cultures of gender equality. However, similarly to my conceptual discussion of the limitations, the effects of comforting strategies for non-hegemonic collectives including women, non-binary people or homosexual individuals needs further considerations. Living and experiencing discomfort due to continuous marginalisation and othering, the momentums and strategies of comfort are granted by the hegemonic structures only in restricted, controlled occasions of celebrations.

Alternative narrative Tactics

Following the analysis and critique of the entertaining and comforting strategies, I gather alternative tools and tactics of narrations. These alternatives are less cohesive than the previously addressed strategies. However, they give insight into particular practices introduced by cultural actors. The approaches are project-specific and, therefore, need to be read in their own context.

Firstly, I refer to Arthur (CA, Artist, WOW), who points out that he does not want ‘to be preachy’. As director of a local theatre company, he outlines his narrative strategy as follows:

You cannot lecture people. You cannot and mustn’t lecture people.

[...]

[The intervention] must not be preachy. Let people make the jumps themselves. Because when people make the jumps themselves, it is far more powerful. I think that is the power of [art]. There is theatre and artistic practices that has this potential. (Arthur, CA, Artist, WOW).

Arthur (CA, Artist, WOW) does not speak of a particularly novel approach to the conceptualisation of art. His opinion resonates with a variety of other cultural actors’ interpretation of their work (Abbie, CA, Production, WOW; Harry, CA, Production, AF; Max, CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50; Oliver, CA, Production, AF). Summaries as ‘Show, don’t tell’ is the underlying slogan to this conceptualisation of an alternative narrative strategy. While discussed in conceptual terms, my request for explicit examples of this tactic have not yet found adequate responses.

Secondly, I turn to Thomas (CA, Artist, LGBT50) and his reflections on processes as a narrative strategy. As the lead artist of a community dance project

affiliated with the *LGBT50* celebrations, he expresses his narrative strategy in an analogy to baking:

If you were trying to make a cake, if you have a cake in your mind and you just see your end product, which is a beautiful iced cake and it looks gorgeous and there is colours and everything and a lot of detail and it looks beautiful. If you have that in mind, [...] you [must not] forget to make the fucking cake. It needs icing and sugar and flour and it all needs weighing out and you actually have to mix it together and you have [to have] the right consistency and you have to make sure the oven is the right temperature. The cake! You got to bake it! That is your process. (Thomas, CA, Artist, LGBT50)

The cake analogy refers to the process as a narrative strategy. Rather than seeking a story of equality in the 'end product', Thomas (CA, Artist, LGBT50) considers the story of equality to unfold in the process. The process becomes the strategy. His processual interpretations are highly appreciated by residents, who have participated in his work or seen the final presentation of the dance project (Sophia, OP, LGBT50; Mathilda, OP, LGBT50).

Finally, I end this section with a narrative strategy which seeks to establish personal relationships. Cultural actors continuously discuss with me their personal motivations and interests, which they express in their work. As an artist exhibiting her work in the exhibition, *The Female Gaze*, as part of the *Women of the World* festival, Claudia (CA, Artist/ Production, WOW) outlines her narrative aspirations:

I hope almost within my work it is a place for people to reflect about themselves. I hope people look at it and they find things about their own lives in it that they can kind of use it as a way to contemplate on things that they are interested in the issues they encounter. I don't know if that makes any sense.

Claudia's (CA, Artist/ Production, WOW) narrative strategy is rather hidden but captures the crucial relationship between the artwork, the artist and the viewer, which responds back to the 'one of us' representational approach previously addressed in this chapter.

Conclusive Summary

The chapter, *Performing Equality*, centred on the artistic content presented in the 365 days of what was aspired to be transformative culture in Hull in 2017. The

analysis is strongly guided by the conceptual discussion of the socio-cultural significance of celebrations and processes of meaning-making (Benedict, 1983; Falassi, 1987a; Finkel, 2015). With reference to the gendered studies of events such as the *Eurovision Song Contest* (Baker, 2017) or the *London Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012* (Hubbard & Wilkinson, 2015), the potential for celebrations to produce meaning concerning cultures of gender equality becomes apparent. Inspired by such a conceptual outline, I interrogated the collected material in respect to the performance of gender equality and identified the analytical importance of the performers and narratives that the cultural programme of Hull2017 provides.

Firstly, I explored the performers of equality as representative and responsible for the production of cultures of gender equality. In the majority of conversations about cultures of gender equality in Hull2017, performers were the first point of reference in order to discuss, estimate and judge the negotiation processes. Therefore, I outline them as representatives of equality in the context of equality-themed events and the celebrations of Hull2017. Supported by the voices of observing-participants, I was able to identify three strategies of representation: diversity approaches are based on the identification and representation of different identities which are put on display. This representational strategy is a reflective process, but it runs the risk of turning into a 'tick box exercise', as Sophia (OP, WOW) describes. Similar to other participants, she suggests that in various cases an unreflective approach to diversity takes place and therefore the different identity categories are ticked for representation purposes rather than engrained in the curatorial practice. Another approach is summarised through Rachel's (OP, WOW) description of Karen Briggs as 'one of us'. Rachel (OP, WOW) highlighted that certain performers allow her to relate, as she identifies with their class background. This approach was particularly appreciated in the context of Hull by the majority of observing-participants. Beyond representational strategies, Daniel (OP, LGBT50) provokes my further discussion of the performers in regards to their responsibility for equality, as he asks: 'Why are those artists there?'. In an imbrication of the personal, political and professional approach to equality, I addressed the motivations of performers of equality. Additionally, I discussed ways that the responsibility is conceptualised and negotiated by performers. As an act of care and a practice of social engineering, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) and Henry (CA,

Production, LGBT50) outlined their understanding of the obligation towards cultures of gender equality. This section ended with a discussion about shared responsibilities. Bahar (CA, Artist, WOW) highlighted the relevance of the agendas of political actors and addressed the structural levels as simultaneously fundamental influences in the process.

Furthermore, I focused on the narrations of equality as a further contributor to the performance of equality-themed events. I addressed what and how stories of equality are told in the context of the investigated celebrations. With reference to conceptualisations of visibility and formative influences of events, I outlined three storylines that stand out and shape the narratives of equality as presented in Hull2017. The representation of marginalised voices and awareness of their struggles are two core themes, which incorporate a strong ambition to make otherness visible in hegemonic urbanities, as Ammaturo (2016) and Browne (2007) address. Furthermore, the story of empowerment refers to Markwell and Waitt's (2013) consideration of the formative process that events enable. While this aspect of the celebrations of equality in Hull2017 has been addressed in the fifth chapter, *Engaging with Equality*, I reconsidered its importance in relation to the storytelling that the investigated events embraced. I closed the chapter in regards to the strategies that emphasise the narration of equality and highlighted the relevance of entertaining and comforting strategies for the celebration of equality. With reference to liminal, carnivalesque event experiences and their conceptual critique, I considered the entertaining strategy as an intrinsic feature of events, festivals and celebrations. As suggested by residents and cultural actors, the festival atmosphere demands a component of fun and entertainment due to its time out of time, place out of place and norm out of the norm features, as previously described in relation to the conceptualisations in chapter 3. Comfort as a narrative strategy received rather critical reflections from observing-participants, who regard it as a simplification of the highly nuanced discourses of cultures of gender equality. In relation to the formerly presented critique of the transgressive potential of liminal, carnivalesque event experience in chapter 3, I argued that the comforting strategy exemplifies the controlled environments of events, festivals and celebrations. Even though it can be thought of as being subversive in association with liminality and the carnivalesque, the comforting strategies illustrate how the supposed chaos is controlled. I further provided alternative tactics and tools of narration, which

nuanced the liminal, carnivalesque atmosphere of entertainment and its comforting, controlled counterparts.

This discussion of the performance and performers of equality highlights potential ways in which cultures of gender equality are produced in Hull2017 and emphasises the multiple influences in set production. Rather than speaking of a singular story embraced by Hull2017, my attention and interest were directed to the multiple stories of equality. Differing, diverging and contradicting interpretations of equality and its celebrations become prevalent. The analysis synthesises that cultures of gender equality need to be considered as a reflective practice and shared responsibility in order to embrace the plurality of meanings produced in the context of the investigated equality-themed events. The chapter outlines that the production of cultures of gender equality is not a solid entity, rather the opposite: fragility of the notion and its practices characterises how gender equality is being performed in the context of the mega-event of Hull2017.

Infrastructures of Equality

In this final chapter, I shift my analytical focus from audience engagement and content production to the infrastructures of equality. In my conceptual discussions of events and their gendered dimensions, I have thus far paid little attention to the infrastructural conditions of events, festivals and celebrations; however, they emerged as key components in my empirical exploration of cultures of gender equality within Hull2017. Guided by a phenomenological understanding, my investigation focuses on the socio-cultural significance of celebrations and the liminal, carnivalesque characteristics of event experiences. I address infrastructural influences only as a restriction of the anthropological examination of events and their transformative potential. Previously, I referred to Newbold et al.'s (2015) genealogical portrayal of the contemporary festival industries and Pielichaty's (2015) call for resistance, in order to incorporate infrastructural perspectives within my understanding of celebrations. Within the anthropological studies of celebrations and the canon of Critical Event Studies, discussions of the impact of infrastructures on celebrations are limited. Even though the infrastructural conditions of event industries ground the anthropological, critical examinations of celebrations, they are predominantly discussed from a mainstream event management perspective and lack a phenomenological consideration. With awareness of these discrepancies in scholarly attention, the subsequent analysis relates event infrastructures with my anthropological understanding of the socio-cultural significance and the processes of meaning-making in events: I ask in what way infrastructures influence and condition the celebration of cultures of gender equality. My argument outlines that beyond audiences engagements and produced content, infrastructures of celebrations are crucial in the investigation of the production of cultures of gender equality.

Due to the lack of conceptual discussions of infrastructural conditioning of celebrations from anthropological and Critical Event Studies perspectives, the further analysis is mainly guided by empirical material. Observing-participant Alex (OP, FG) inspires my focus. In the focus group interview of observing-participants, Alex (OP, FG) summarises his experiences of the yearlong

celebration of Hull2017 in acknowledgement of the transformative potential for people's lives as they engaged with and performed cultures of gender equality. However, he also considers the 'deeper structural levels' (Alex, OP, FG) and questions their effects for the transformative cultures of gender equality. Alex (OP, FG) explains:

Maybe these equality things are going on. [Maybe] people's lives are getting transformed and that is amazing. But on a deeper structural level, I don't think it's facilitating and moving towards equality or it doesn't feel like it to me. It is like another year of distraction away from [what actually needs to be changed in order to achieve equality].

On the basis of this statement, Alex (OP, FG) urges me to explore the structural levels and their contributions to the production of cultures of gender equality. In accordance with his observations, I refer to infrastructure as an all-encompassing notion in reference to the material and contextual conditions of event productions.

In the following outline, I concentrate on three prominent infrastructural issues. Firstly, I engage with the event-based structure of Hull2017 and consider how the programming emphasis of festivals and events affects the celebrations of equality. Secondly, I discuss the materialities of in/ equality with a particular emphasis on expenses and spatial arrangements, and I seek to understand how this infrastructural condition contributes to the negotiation of equality. With the third focus on event economics, I end the chapter: as celebrations are not merely established out of 'fresh air and [...] good will' (Max, CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50), I discuss tendencies of the commercialisation and commodification of equality and highlight the risks of such infrastructural influences for the production of cultures of gender equality.

Festivalisation of Equality

In initiating the conversation about infrastructures and their influences on celebrations, my primary focus lies on the event-based production of cultures of gender equality. Here, I question how production of cultures of gender equality is affected by the festivalisation trend that the mega-event of Hull2017 embraces. Addressing the programming strategy of event-based celebrations, this analysis explores the ways in which the structure affects the celebration of equality by highlighting the dynamic, normalising, as well as isolating effects of festivals for the production of cultures of gender equality.

In the introduction of this thesis, I used the notion of festivalisation to describe the growing trend and effect of the development of the contemporary European event industries in the late twentieth century. Cudny (2016) summarises that the prominence of festivals serves transformative purposes in urban spaces which provokes cities to be framed by a festivalisation trend. On the one hand, the concept of festivalisation influences my understanding of my research field regarding COC mega-events and their regenerative potential for cities. On the other hand, the concept of festivalisation also informs my analytical perspectives, as I observe a festivalisation of equality in the programming of Hull2017. Focusing on ambitions of cultural transformations, I observe a prominence of events, festivals and celebrations dedicated to the celebration of socio-cultural values of gender equality. The trend has been acknowledged by multiple residents when reflecting on the overall programming practices of Hull2017. Vocalising the observations of several observing-participants, Sophia (OP, WOW) describes: '[Women of the World] stands out from the rest of the programme. The same way, [...] LGBT50 will'. Anna (OP, LGBT50) highlights: '[I think] it is not a coincidence that there is a women festival, some kind of LGBT festival and there was a refugee event [...]' The presence of equality-themed events and the deliberate support of the production of cultures of gender equality is not a coincidence or accident of the programming team. Rather, residents' observations find repercussions with James' (PA, Management, HULL2017) vision for the yearlong programming of the mega-event of Hull2017. As a senior manager of Hull 2017 Ltd, he explains the programming strategy and its festivalisation of equality as follows:

We did look, we did look at it constantly to make sure that [...] we were engaging everybody. And yes, then, you know, there is always an occasion and a celebration to zoom in on particular identities. So, that is why we said: yes, we would do Women of the World. We can and we did LGBT50. [...] We staged a collection of events that everybody found connection with and more importantly nobody felt excluded from.

The presence of equality-themed events is not only an observation of the trained observing-participants on a quest to support the research, as an interviewed artist (Hugo, CA, Artist, HULL) suggests. Rather, the festivalisation of equality is pivotal to the programming strategy of the mega-event.

In discussions of these trends, residents and cultural actors highlight three effects of the event-based structure for the production of cultures of gender equality. Firstly, the event dynamics are highlighted as an essential influence for the negotiation of plural notions of equality. Secondly, through the celebrations of equality, residents observe a process of normalisation of equality discourses, as celebrations enable a public visibility of the socio-cultural value. The third effect formulates as a critique, as the temporal limitations of the event-based structure seems to isolate the discourse and restrict the sustainable developments of cultural transformations.

Eventful Equality Dynamics

The relevance of event-based structures for the production of cultures of gender equality becomes apparent in the energetic understanding of events, festivals and celebrations. Similar to the conceptual understanding of the liminal, carnivalesque experience in chapter 3 and the empirical outlines of such sensations in chapter 5, cultural actors address the dynamic characteristics of festivals as an important structural influence for the production of cultures of gender equality. Coby (PA, Production, HULL2017), a producer of *LGBT50* for Hull 2017 Ltd, synthesises:

The value of the energy of the festival is that you have multiple events. So, when people want to collaborate things together, they can. But not to the exclusion of other events. I think festivals are useful in that way of providing small or large events over a period of time. They offer individual voices an opportunity to express themselves either collectively or individually.

[...]

A festival is particularly useful because it is a diverse programme so you are giving independent stages to different voices as well as collective moments of a variety of voices to congregate.

Simultaneous events allow for multiple voices to express their perspectives and embrace the previously discussed plurality of performances of equality. Therefore, event-based structures facilitate the production of cultures of gender equality, as a plurality of interpretations can be represented in a festival context.

Normalisation of Equality

The relevance of visibility has been addressed already in relation to the representational strategies in chapter 6, *Performing Equality*. Visibility is also a

crucial effect in the festivalisation of equality. In relation to the *LGBT50* celebrations, observing-participant Anna (OP, LGBT50) points out the relevance of the festival framework as a way to make equality struggles visible: ‘Once again, probably like other events, we already commented, LGBT50 had for me a little bit of this bring-stuff-to-masses element. Just like trying to slide it in some simple and right accessible way’. Anna (OP, LGBT50) introduces the festival infrastructure in its consequential effect as a way to expose a large celebratory community to equality discourses. Therefore, she foregrounds that the reach and consequential spread of the socio-cultural values of equality are fostered by the festival framework.

This infrastructural effect of the festivalisation becomes particularly relevant in regards to sensitive issues included in the context of an event. Considering the panel on domestic violence in the *Women of the World* festival, observing-participant Sophia (OP, WOW) outlines the strength of the festival framework through its accessibility of the topic:

Was it necessary to have [the panel about domestic abuse] there [in the festival]? It seemed fairly well attended. I think it was a good opportunity. It didn’t have to be there, but, because it was under the WOW umbrella, they had probably more chance of people attending. If it had been sort of an event, a standalone event, then I don’t think it would have been as well attended and [it would not have gotten] the same audience.

[...]

There is also that issue to have it in the context of the larger festival, as you are not necessarily going to a domestic abuse meeting. You are going to a festival that happened to be a domestic abuse thing. So, you are not labelling yourself as a victim of domestic abuse. So, there is that. There is a kind of creating a space that it is ok to talk about it because it is within this wider context of a festival about women.

As Sophia (OP, WOW) suggests, the festival environment allows conversations to take place in a different context. Therefore, the festivalisation of equality creates an opportunity to discuss sensitive topics, political issues and raise awareness of the struggle towards equality.

Consequent to such visibility and accessibility of themes related to the struggle for gender equality, I defend a normalisation of equality discourses

through festivalisation trends. Through continuous efforts to celebrate socio-cultural values, cultures of gender equality become legitimised and normalised both in the context of Hull2017, and also beyond this particular framework. With a focus on *LGBT Pride* celebrations, observing-participant Alex (OP, LGBT50) outlines the festivalisation of equality and the related legitimacy of the discourse as follows:

I do think there is this strange thing as well that actually pride is almost one of these things now, which has like (pause) I can't think of the word (pause) It almost has like a level of legitimacy in the public. Sort of a conception on a level of like moral legitimacy. [...] [Pride] has gotten this level of authority that is almost like if you critique [its politics in regards to its militarism and consumerism], it is almost like you are homophobic.

Alex (OP, LGBT50) points out that the event and celebrated values inherit their own legitimacy. Connected to the concepts of homonormativity and homonationalism, the equality-themed celebrations are affected by contradicting moralities. On the one hand, this legitimacy contributes to the production of cultures of gender equality, as normalisation processes are in place. On the other hand, the legitimacy of such celebrations constructs a hegemonic discourse, which upon reference to its morality cannot be questioned. As the event and celebrated value of gender/ sexual equality engrains further into national agendas, the risk of the commodification of the celebrated cultures of gender equality increases, as outlined in the last section of this chapter.

Isolating Equality

As previously addressed in the conceptual discussion in the third chapter, festival experiences and their liminal, carnivalesque moments are temporally limited (V. Turner, 1969, 1974, 1982, 1987b, 1987a, 1989). The mega-event of Hull2017 and its programming of activities relies on an event-based schedule. Therefore, liminal momentums and the temporal characteristics are intrinsic to the celebration of equality. However, in regards to the festivalisation of equality, the temporal restrictions are a source for critique and concern as the limitation of the infrastructures of equality become apparent. While the festival atmosphere is generally appreciated, residents question what kind of cultures of gender equality the festivalisation of equality creates if the celebration of the socio-cultural value

is limited to pre-defined moments. With attention to the *LGBT50* celebrations, observing-participant John (OP, FG) summarises the concerns:

They did this week [of *LGBT50*] where they did focus on [gender and sexual equality] and then the rest of the year, it has just been business as normal. It happened as discussed: [the event] comes; [its content] only matters during the week. [...] I did think about this for the rest of the year: for example, during the concert 'I Feel Love' on the night, you know, they kept saying: 'Oh ladies, gentlemen and those not on the gender binary'. It is the only time, I heard that in the entire year, you know they never said it in any other event. They always say: Ladies and gentlemen'. They don't say the rest of it.

John's (OP, FG) observation and associated reflection highlights the infrastructural conditioning that festivalisation of equality is subject to. The sporadic nature of celebrations of equality is perceived as a limitation to the celebration of equality. As John (OP, FG) describes, during a designated time period, struggles for gender equality are highlighted. However, further long-term references are missing.

The temporal features and lack of continuations in the celebration of equality also receives critique from cultural actors. They share John's (OP, FG) previously stated concerns and agree to the difficulty of continuation. In the context of LGBT awareness, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*), who is a member of a charity involved in the production of *LGBT50*, does not only share these concerns but also expresses his frustration. His emotional reactions come from the lack of cross-overs and collaborations between different festivals, their infrastructures and contents. He explains:

I get very frustrated with other events in the city like Freedom [Festival] for example. It frustrates me [how they address the notion of freedom]. Freedom is so much more than just race. It is the freedom to be yourself in all different formats and freedom is – yes – LGBT+. The pride movement is one element specifically to do with sexual orientation and gender identity but I think that we need to get loud and get supportive with other events and there needs to be more cross-over with stuff throughout [the event schedule]. (Max, CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*)

While a continuation of the celebrations of equality is aspired and assumed, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) experiences frustrations about the isolation of the particular celebrations. Even though events relate to one another in content and in their political aspirations, cross-over between major equality-themed festivals in the city do not take place.

According to John's (OP, FG) and Max's (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) experiences, the festivalisation of equality implies a lack a continuation. The limited time periods of festival frameworks isolate the celebrations and their contents to particular moments.

Materialities of In/ Equality

The following section moves from the rather abstract, intangible considerations of festivalisation trends and their structural effects on the production of cultures of gender equality, to more tangible, concrete infrastructures generically addressed as materialities. With the term 'materialities', I summarise various observations and reflections of infrastructural conditions that research participants associate with the production of cultures of gender equality in celebrations. The material nature of events and their demands are being continuously discussed by residents. For example, food and beverages provided in event spaces as well as security fences and bus routes are some of the issues discussed as material conditions determining event experiences and the related meaning-making processes of celebrations. Due to repeating reflections by the majority of research participants, my analysis centres on ticketing structures and spatial arrangements as crucial examples for the material negotiation of cultures of gender equality. Firstly, I discuss ticketing strategies and their implications for the celebration. Secondly, I examine the negotiations of spaces. On the basis of the empirical material, I address the relevance of these material conditions and their potential to negotiate cultures of gender equality in Hull2017.

Ticketing Equality

My empirical research shows that general availability of tickets and related expenses are central concerns for residents. Already in their first observation opportunity during the *Women of the World* festival, various observing-participants discussed the ticketing structures and their potentially negative effects. The referenced festival was priced at ten pounds per day. Additionally, the opening and closing event was ticketed and required extra payment. While in other parts of the UK this price might appear as a bargain for a day ticket, for

Hull's cultural offer, a ten-pound ticket could be considered to a mid-range ticket price. Due to structural effects, debates on ticketing strategies encompass strong emotions in the narratives of residents. Observing-participant Rachel's (OP, WOW) reaction summarises the general attitude of observing-participants, as she states: 'I was pretty angry [and thought I had to] explode at some time, because people like me [...] can't spend or don't have the spare cash to spend 10 or 15 pounds to go to [the Women of the World Festival]'. While Rachel (OP, WOW) considers herself to be 'quite well off', she is aware and considerate of members of her community, who are struggling with high levels of deprivation. Rachel's (OP, WOW) explosive anger is an expression of the perceived injustice that the pricing structure of an equality-themed event provoke. Observing-participant Sophia (OP, WOW) experienced the ticketing structures similarly to Rachel (OP, WOW) and comments on the perceived disturbance:

[The ticketing structure is] compartmentalising different areas of society [...] in a whole range of ways. [...] Not having disposable income to be able to get [a ticket] straight away [means] [the tickets] only go to people [who] have disposable income. [Additionally, the tickets] only go to the people, who can sit on technology. So, people, who can sit for two hours to get a ticket for a thing, who have access to technology during working hours, when the tickets go live. This ensures that the shows will only get a certain sector of society. They don't get a fair representation of everybody in the city. The system makes sure that happens, which is very sad, because it means that City of Culture is only for one group of people. And this feeds into the kind of feeling that a lot of people have: that it is not for them; that it is only for a particular community or a particular sector of the community.

For Sophia (OP, WOW) and Rachel (OP, WOW), the prices for tickets are a source of frustration and anger, as material conditions limit participation for residents with lower levels of income and less flexibility in their expenses.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Similar to comments about restrictions of ticketing and booking logistics, the selection and accessibility of venues are consistently in discussion. For example, in the focus group interview in East Hull, participants highlight that 'everything is happening in the city centre' and therefore 'everybody has to go to the city centre' (Participant 15, FG). Additional expenses for transportation are a crucial barrier and feed into the previous discussion of ticket expenses and logistical challenges associated with event attendance.

Similarly to ticket expenses, booking procedures feed into the experience of the material conditions of equality-themed festivals. Major difficulties in the initial large-scale, free but ticketed events led to uncertainties and insecurities in the handling of the newly installed, city-wide booking system. While the problems were fixed, the preliminary experiences of a failed ticketing system framed the booking experience throughout the entire year as the participants of a focus group confirm (Participant 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, FG). Therefore, the logic of booking procedures caused further barriers to participation. Observing-participant Anna (OP, AF) expands on the discussion by reflecting on the booking process of *Assemble Fest*. She explains that she would be definitely interested in attending the event, ‘but [...] would not get tickets, if it wasn’t for [the research participation], because [she] would wake up too late’ (Anna, OP, AF). At first, Anna (OP, AF) jokes about ‘waking up too late’ for tickets, however, she further clarifies:

The way the tickets were working and the way you had to really be a very prepared and organised person to just be part of this festival – this is like a very northern European concept: everything is accessible, if you are smart enough to look at that before; book something in advance; prepare yourself; prepare an agenda. Considering that many people aren’t very smart and bright and quick and research, they would see nothing. This was the part I didn’t like, because it is kind of against this value or the spirit that they wanted to bring.

As Anna (OP, AF) illustrates, booking procedures and ticket arrangements create a barrier of access and, therefore, are perceived as a material condition of inequality.

Rachel’s (OP, WOW), Sophia’s (OP, WOW) and Anna’s (OP, AF) reflections portray that ticket prices and logistical difficulties feed into systems of exclusion and even discrimination. The material condition and its perceived effects are even more drastic in the context of celebrations of equality. As Anna (OP, AF) points out, the mechanisms seem to contradict the ethos of the investigated equality-themed events.

Several cultural and political actors participating in the research agree with the observations by residents and challenge traditional booking and ticketing strategies through alternative procedures. The usage of outdoor spaces (Henry, CA, Production, LGBT50), ticketed but free events (Rachel, OP, WOW),

pay-as-you-wish events (Participant 11, FG) as well as open-access rehearsals (Participant 12, FG) are just a few techniques addressed by cultural actors and observed by residents.

Spaces of Equality

My further analysis draws upon the spatial conceptions of events. In the third chapter, *Conceptualising Gender and Events*, I outlined that the festive experience is bound to a liminal time as well as space. Liminal experiences are not only conceptualised as time out of time but also as a place out of place (Falassi, 1987b; V. Turner, 1987a). Therefore, my analytical focus shifts from perceptions of ticketing strategies as a material form of producing in/ equality to spatial arrangements. Debates on the usage of different venues are followed by discussions of spatial facilitations of equality within venues.

Several cultural actors explain their deliberate decisions in selecting specific locations for the celebrations of equality. While the existence of appropriate infrastructures and their management states a crucial influence on the choice of location, the re-claiming of spaces – particularly civic buildings and plazas – is highly debated in relation to the intentional production of cultures of gender equality through celebrations. Abbie (CA, Production, WOW), a member of the production team for the *Women of the World* festival, outlines:

I think it is kind of really important in terms of [Hull] 2017 [Ltd] that they looked at, I suppose, not only arts and culture but also those kind of bigger political questions about our society and giving those platforms. So, doing [the Women of the World festival] in City Hall and some of the other venues was [...] very important so we used this City Hall to explore these issues.

In the case of *LGBT50*, the relevance of claiming spaces and visibility of the celebrated value is further highlighted. Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50), a member of an artists' collective involved with the production of *LGBT50*, explains:

We decided not to be hidden away behind some buildings [...]. We wanted to be where the shoppers could see us, so they would get involved with us. We don't want an exclusive gay party [...] in a ghetto away from the ordinary people. We want to do it alongside the ordinary people [...] in the middle of a working-class town like Hull in the streets. [...] I believe in not being separate; being in a gay club. Separated away. I think that is boring.

In the *Women of the World* festival, Abbie (CA, Production, WOW) explicitly claims civic buildings, including Hull City Hall and Ferens Art Gallery, for the celebration of equality. In the context of *LGBT50*, Henry (CA, Production, LGBT50) speaks of the deliberate usage of outdoor spaces in the city centre, such as Queen Victoria Square and Queen's Garden, in order to visualise the equality claim inherent in the event. Guided by the visibility of the produced cultures of gender equality, both cultural actors are aware of the relevance of space. Previously acknowledged in chapter 6, regarding the *Narrations of Equality*, visibility declares an important practice for the celebration of equality. Ammaturo's (2016) and Browne's (2007) conceptual discussions of claiming hegemonic spaces for gendered and sexual otherness is therefore not only enacted in discursive, but also in material forms through the request for spatial visibility and distribution. The claiming of spaces, and the consequential visibility that such spaces enable, is a crucial contribution to the production of cultures of gender equality for equality-themed events in Hull2017.

The discussion of the materialities of in/ equality leads to a more refined conception of space as a facilitator of an event's production of cultures of gender equality. I draw upon supportive and conflicting spatial arrangements to discuss the relevance of facilities in festival spaces as a factor in the negotiation of equality.

Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50), a member of a charity involved in the organisation of *LGBT50*, enlightens my understanding of festive spaces and facilities as he outlines the spatial concept of the *UK Pride Party* in Queen's Garden. He elucidates:

We have those open spaces where people can sit down on the grass with the comfort of their family and they are encouraged to explore the space. [...] There is an area where you can get a drink. There is an area where you eat, or you can talk to people. There is even an area where you can have an HIV test. There is an area of art works. There is a band stand. I think the way that this space is set up is kind of perfect for [the UK] Pride [event] because there is [space for everything]. (Max, CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50)

Awareness of the audience's needs is crucial to the spatial concept of the particular event. This perspective is further informed by the commitment to equality. The provision of changing and toilet facilities illustrates how much the spatial arrangement takes the celebrated values of the event into consideration.

Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) outlines the importance and alternative strategies for toilet facilities that the event follows:

Having access to [...] gender neutral facilities, where you don't have to choose, you don't have to feel awkward that I am going into the ladies or the gents, but actually I am just going into the toilet, because I am just a person who has to pee, [is so important for the event]. [Another thing is that] we have got a very strong Trans community in Hull, so we provide changing facilities.

Toilet facilities and general arrangements indicate how the celebratory community, the celebrated content and the infrastructures of celebrations work and fit together.

Contrary to Max's (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) equality-informed spatial concept, the provision of a VIP space at the *Women of the World* festival illustrates conflicting spatial arrangements. I turn to my own observations of the festival in order to illustrate the dispute. As I supported the WOW Circle of Friends, I received a free ticket to the opening ceremony of the festival. On the evening of the opening, while around 30-40 people waited already on the main plaza in front of the City Hall, I walked into the main foyer to pick up my tickets and was asked by a volunteer to follow her. Without having received any information about special treatment, I was taken to a back room behind the main stage, where I encountered many WOW Circle of Friends members, festival performers and the team of Hull 2017 Ltd enjoying a free buffet of canapés and wine. In a short speech, Rosie Millard⁸⁸ greeted the invited guests to the festival's opening ceremony and expressed her gratitude on behalf of the team of Hull 2017 Ltd. Observing-participant Sophia (OP, WOW), who was with me at the time, reflected upon the arrangement:

Glamour, Glamour, Glamour. All of the sort of knows and faces in the city were there [in this VIP space], you know, all of the best people were there. They had that VIP lounge, didn't they? For all the special people, the business leaders and the special people in the city, people, who sort of exist in the top layer of the pile and not the regular folk, who had to wait outside.

⁸⁸ Chair of the Board of Hull 2017 Ltd and WOW Circle of Friends member.

I understand that this special treatment and the spatial segregation in the form of a VIP lounge derives from a grateful intention, as a member of the production team explained to me (Abbie, CA, Production, WOW). However, the spatial arrangement and its mechanism of gratitude contrasts with the equality-promoting ethos of the festival. The separation of certain individuals from others as well as the special treatment of particular guests disturbed the celebration of equality that was just about to take place.

While Max's (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) conception of space facilitates the event's production of cultures of gender equality, I argue that the spatial arrangement of a VIP space in the context of the *Women of the World* festival restricted and even harmed the supposedly celebrated value of gender equality.

Capitalising upon Equality

As the final analytical theme concerning the infrastructures of equality, I turn to economic infrastructures of celebrations of equality in Hull2017. In chapter 3, *Conceptualising Gender and Events*, I addressed commercial tendencies as a restriction for events' socio-cultural significance. Following such conceptual discussions, my analysis illustrates that equality-themed events do not escape capitalist logics as processes of commercialisation and commodification shape the investigated celebrations. However, in accordance with Pielichaty (2015), I do not intend to scrutinise the celebration of equality in their exposure to commercial and commodified pressures. Rather, I direct my attention to the resistances and subversions of neoliberal forces in order to observe how cultures of gender equality are negotiated within, and alongside, infrastructures of economic inequalities.

In order to understand the economic context of the production of cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017, the motivations of Hull's UKCOC project needs to be understood. As highlighted in the introduction and chapter 1, *Situating the Field*, economic regenerative agendas drive COC initiatives in general and Hull2017 in particular. As Hull 2017 Ltd's (2015) *Strategic Business Plan* outlines, economic regeneration is one of the central objectives for Hull's application and execution of the UKCOC celebration. The preliminary evaluation report highlights the economic objectives of the mega-event through outcomes such as:

Value of tourism on track to contribute at least £300m to the economy;

[...]

Nearly 800 jobs created in the visitor industry and the cultural sector since 2013;

[...]

Over half of businesses surveyed felt that Hull2017 had contributed to increased turnover. (Culture Place and Policy Institute, 2018: 131)

While aspirations for equality are communicated in the programming strategy as highlighted by James (PA, Management, HULL2017) in the previous section, *Festivalisation of Equality*, the investigated celebration of equality embeds within the economic regenerative interests, which guide the mega-event of Hull2017. Rather than excluding the celebration of equality from such economic regenerative contexts, research participants suspect immediate relationships between the regenerative motives and the celebration of cultures of gender equality. Observing-participant Anna (OP, LGBT50) summarises:

We are talking about a big event [when talking about Hull2017] involving a lot of money and looking forward to get more tourists and investments. [This system is] very much established in a capitalist logic. [It seems the celebrations are] not just about building values. This is not the biggest purpose.

According to Anna (OP, LGBT50), the celebration of equality in the context of Hull2017 is bound to the economic regenerative strategies of the mega-event. She suggests that in the context of such interdependencies, the infrastructures serve the capitalist logic of profitability, rather than foster the celebrated values for a production of cultures of gender equality. Observing-participant Alex (OP, SKIN) expands upon Anna's (OP, LGBT50) reflections as he states:

My feeling about the whole [celebration of equality] is still like: [Pause] the conversation is like a capitalist production within that whole vomit inducing system. It is just business as usual. I don't think it is part of a conversation of trying to really undercut the roots of white supremacist imperialist capitalist heteropatriarchy. I feel it is the opposite.

For Alex (OP, LGBT50), the productions of cultures of gender equality cannot be considered outside the context of their infrastructures of existence. As he points out, rather than undercutting, challenging or questioning capitalist structures, the equality-themed activities in the context of Hull2017 support these systems

even further. Therefore, Alex (OP, LGBT50) suggests this contradiction risks equality becoming a commodity within the capitalist framework.

Commodifying Equality

Anna's (OP, LGBT50) and Alex's (OP, SKIN) attention to the risk of commodification due to the capitalist logic of economic regenerative objectives of mega-events becomes concrete in the challenges that the investigated equality-themed events face. Commercial interests affect not only equality-themed events but the arts and cultural sector in general. In the context of ongoing austerity politics and associated cuts in public funding in the UK, arts, culture and events seek new sources of income and forms of financial sponsorships. In this context, the financial involvement of the private sector is continuously growing and consequently leading to a privatisation and related commercialisation of arts, culture and events, as Bianchini et al. (2013) suggest. These dynamics of commodification become a crucial point of discussion in the *UK Pride Parade and Party* and other events associated with the *LGBT50* celebrations. Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50), a member of a charity involved with the production of *LGBT50*, acknowledges the tension between political interests and infrastructural conditioning of the *UK Pride Parade and Party* celebrations:

I think we have got to watch out for Pride becoming commercial. That is what bigger prides [use,] in order to balance [their efforts]. [Hull's LGBT Pride event] is a free event but it has to be paid for. These [events] do not happen out of fresh air and just good will.

Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) calls for awareness concerning the commercial tendencies that the equality-themed event faces, while he acknowledges the tension, summarised in his sarcastic comment: 'These things do not happen out of fresh air and just good will'.

Consequent to the awareness and sensed tensions, residents are attentive to the commodification of equality. In this respect, the presence of commercial companies throughout the *UK Pride Parade and Party* was a crucial observation. Observing-participant Rosa (OP, LGBT50) highlights: 'I was surprised actually by the number of organisations not directly connected with the gay movement'. While in initial observations residents acknowledge the existence of particular organisations in the parade, in further reflections, commentaries expand into a discussion of the relationship between the value of equality and the parading for-

profit companies, brands or institutions. Observing-participant Sophia (OP, LGBT50) explains with a nuance of annoyance:

The organisations, they just marched along. It is very strange. I don't understand why they were there. They were there with their T-shirts on and whatever. The T-shirt was saying where they have come from or what their organisation was. [...] The people who were there advertising a car hire place – what was that about?

Sophia's (OP, LGBT50) rhetorical question summarises the critique and concern, which residents shared with me. Questioning companies' motivations for support, residents suggest a conflict of interests and commodifying trends frame the celebration of equality.

Motivations and Interests of Support

Sophia's (OP, LGBT50) expression 'What was that about?' calls into question the motivations of the particular organisations. Offering a possible response to this question, Rosa (OP, LGBT50) suggests multiple reasons why companies wish to collaborate in the context of a *UK Pride Parade and Party*. In respect to a financial institution, she speculates:

Barclays Bank had a big [banner]. [...] It was rather heartening to see that various organisations were making known that they were supporting gay communities. Although, for some of these organisations like Barclays Bank, it is all a front, you know. They give a nudge to support but behind the scene that they are still [not supportive]. It is questionable whether the support is there. But, nevertheless, people can then turn around and accuse them of hypocrisy. So, there was a feeling of broad support for the communities and gay rights and gay communities. (Rosa, OP, LGBT50)

Rosa (OP, LGBT50) addresses various relational layers, which potentially influence the organisations' interests and motivations in presenting their name, logo and staff in the context of an equality-themed event. While appreciating the support by, and collaboration with, commercial partners, she critically questions the motivations of companies to join such causes. In an informal conversation after one of our interviews, Sophia (OP, infCon⁸⁹) synthesises the concern: 'You don't know if they are there to support the struggle for equality, or if they want

⁸⁹ Informal Conversation

those struggling for equality to support them'. Sophia's (OP, infCon⁹⁰) suggestion is in line with Max's (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) experience of producing *UK Pride Parade and Party*. His narration focuses less on private companies, but refers to political parties and their motivations for support. In his reflections, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) addresses the relevance of and appreciation for their political supporters. The work of his charity is dependent on the governmental politics and the parties' support. However, he simultaneously calls attention to the fact that parties' interests in participation might not necessarily be driven by the cause, but rather, serve as a tool to attract another segment of potential voters. Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) illustrates his argument by sharing his encounter with the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)⁹¹ and outlines:

We did have applications for the parade from UKIP. We had an email from the UKIP organisation and we – our chair – went back to them on behalf of the board [and asked]: 'Can we have a copy of your manifesto? Can you explain to us what your policies are with regards to supporting and helping the LGBT+ community?' Nothing came back [Pause].

In confrontation with UKIP, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) suggests a conflict of interests. His statement implies a doubt concerning the motivations for participation of the particular political party. Beyond this example, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) generally remarks that Pride events tend to be co-opted for organisations' interests. In line with Sophia's (OP, infCon⁹²) question, he suggests that rather than supporting the struggle for equality, the company's, party's or institution's presence supports the organisation's image and future profitability. Therefore, equality is used as a value which can be co-opted, commodified and commercialised for the profit of the supporters.

So What? Opportunities in light of commercial Tendencies

The conflicting interest, budgetary realities and the commercial tendencies that equality-themed events face requires me to ask: So what? Are equality-themed events doomed to become a mere commodity in a capitalist logic? Are the

⁹⁰ Informal Conversation

⁹¹ The UK Independence Party (UKIP) is a right-wing, populist party campaigning for the separation of the UK from the EU (UK Independence Party, 2019).

⁹² Informal Conversation

struggles of the margins an infrastructure to be co-opted for corporate benefits? While the equality-themed events are facing infrastructures of inequalities particularly in respect to the commodification of the celebrated socio-cultural value, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) suggests that the managerial decisions shape the politics of the event. The previously mentioned encounter with UKIP is one example to illustrate the responsibilities and negotiations that infrastructures of equality require. Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50) provides the essential answers to countering the risk of inappropriate infrastructures for the celebration of equality, as he considers:

I think that it would be rather naive to think that Pride wasn't political, because it always has been. It is just that perhaps the political aspects of it are less obvious than they were. So, pride is a protest. Going to pride is a parade and a celebration.

In accordance with Max (CA, Artist/ Production, LGBT50), I argue that there is a significant relationship between identity politics fostered in the event and the systematic, structural contexts and conditions of the event.

In this chapter and particularly in regards to this section, *Capitalising on Equality*, the relationship between the party and its politics becomes clear. As addressed in the conceptual framework in chapter 3, Browne's (2007) suggestion to understand the party with its politics crystallises the infrastructural and particularly capitalist realities in which equality-themed celebrations are embedded. Responding to the question, *So What?*, the mega-event of Hull2017 and the individual equality-themed events need encouragement to embrace their dual positionality. Negotiating the party and its politics on an infrastructural level is key to the production of cultures of gender equality.

Conclusive Summary

In this final analytical chapter, I explored the relationship between infrastructural conditions of Hull2017, the investigated events and the celebrated content of equality. With attention to the festivalisation of equality, the materialities of in/ equalities and the commercial tensions of celebrations, I argued that infrastructural conditions are fundamental to the production of cultures of gender equality. The conditions of celebrations create a spectrum in which the aspirations for equality can be supported but equally harmed. With limited attention to the infrastructures of celebrations in phenomenological interpretations of events and their socio-cultural significance and experiences, I

outlined ways in which the meaning-making processes and considered production of cultures of gender equality is affected by infrastructural conditions and contexts. Focussing on three dominant points of discussion, I concretised what kind of elements the far-encompassing term infrastructures might address. The analysis highlighted key aspects, rather than being comprehensive in the study of all infrastructural conditions.

Firstly, I engaged with the fairly abstract infrastructural condition addressed as the festivalisation of equality. By highlighting the prominence of equality-themed events in the programming schedule of Hull2017, I explored festivals as a framework for the celebration of equality through three effects addressed as the event dynamics, processes of normalisation of equality and the tendency to isolate the discourse in temporally limited celebrations. Outlined in regards to the conceptual considerations of liminal and carnivalesque event experiences, the dynamics of celebrations were highlighted as an important influence on the event-based production of cultures of gender equality. As addressed in chapter 6, *Performing Equality*, the event character of multiple happenings, simultaneous engagements and the plurality of presented voices correlates with a wide conception of cultures of gender equality embraced by Hull2017. Furthermore, I consider that festivalisation of equality tends to normalise discourses and practices of equality. Read in a context of equality mainstreaming, Alex (OP, LGBT50) experienced the celebration of gender equality in a context of its own legitimacy. The section ended with a discussion of the limitations of such infrastructural conditions. The main critique addressed the temporality of equality-themed festivals. Explorations and negotiations of cultures of gender equality tend to take place in a set time period. Due to the lack of cross-overs, practices fostering equality become isolated and marked as the disruptive, abnormal periods encapsulated in a particular time and space granted to the cultures of gender equality.

Secondly, I addressed the material conditions of celebrations through ticketing systems and booking procedures. Observing-participants Rachel (OP, WOW) and Sophia (OP, WOW) shared their emotional reflections on potential inequalities that ticket prices and procedures provoke. With attention to the booking logistics, observing-participant Anna (OP, AF) synthesised the effects that this material condition has on the production of cultures of gender equality as she explains: 'It is kind of against these values or the spirit that they wanted to

bring'. Furthermore, I expanded the analysis of materialities of in/ equality in consideration of space. On the one hand, I addressed the usage of different venues and locations for the celebration of equality. I referred to cultural actors and their arguments for visibility through the claiming of spaces. On the other hand, I interrogated spatial arrangements of festival environments. I outlined examples of supportive as well as contradicting spatial arrangements in equality-themed festivals in reference to gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities in the celebration of *LGBT50* as well as the instalment of a VIP space in the *Women of the World* festival. The analysis of materialities of in/ equality highlights the relevance of the conditions and their influence on the production of cultures of gender equality in the celebrations of Hull2017.

Thirdly, I focused on the economic realities of the celebrations of equality. This theme dominated the majority of research conversations. As 'festivals do not happen out of fresh air and just good will' (Max, CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*), I discussed tendencies towards the commercialisation and commodification of equality-themed events. The commercialisation was observed particularly in the context of the *UK Pride Parade and Party*, as companies and organisations not explicitly associated with the LGBT movement joined the parade. Observing-participants Rosa (OP, *LGBT50*) and Sophia (OP, *LGBT50*) raised valid questions concerning the motivations for such participation, which is summarised in Sophia's (OP, *LGBT50*) question: 'What was that all about?'. In reference to an encounter with the political party UKIP and their interest in joining the parade, Max (CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*) pointed out that the commodification of equality was expressed as conflicts of interest. Rather than supporting the cause of equality, equality becomes a commodity, which serves to benefit commercial and political interests.

This chapter and its analytical focus were inspired by observing-participant Alex (OP, HULL), who acknowledges the relevance of engaging in and performing equality but questions the structural adaptations that the celebration of equality need. In the final section, I asked *So what?* and referred to Max (CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*), a member of a charity involved in the production of *LGBT50*, who is attentive to the shifting political nature of the celebrations of equality that are essential and responsive to Alex's (OP, HULL) stated concern. Max (CA, Artist/ Production, *LGBT50*) states: 'It is just that perhaps the political aspects of it are less obvious than they were'. However, when considered in light

of the festivalisation, materialities and commercialisation of equality, the relevance of the infrastructural perspective in order to constitute a 'party with politics' (Browne, 2007: 63) becomes clear.

Conclusion

City/ Capital of Culture Mega-Events and their Potential for Gender Equality

In this thesis, I set out to understand the potential of COC mega-events for the production of cultures of gender equality. With attention to Hull2017's '365 days of transformative culture' (Hull 2017 Ltd, 2015: 14), I investigated how audiences, performances and infrastructures produce cultures of gender equality. Situated within the transformative atmosphere of event-based, culture-led regeneration, Hull2017 allowed me an insightful interrogation of the ways in which cultures of gender equality are produced in the context of the celebratory settings of a COC mega-event.

The investigation concludes that COC mega-events have a socio-cultural significance as they can act as tools for meaning-making. Their transformative capacities lie in the liminal, carnivalesque event experience, as they re-evaluate power structures through the invitation for transgressions of normative structures. Examining audience engagements, content productions and infrastructural conditions in Hull2017, I argued that COC mega-events need to be understood as 'contested spaces' (O'Callaghan 2012: 201). With attention to the crucial contribution of audiences in the meaning-making process, I outlined that, on a personal as well as collective level, COC mega-events foster encounters with cultures of gender equality. The sensation of togetherness and strategies of inclusion are crucial dynamics in these encounters. Furthermore, on the level of content productions, cultures of gender equality were presented through a plurality of interpretations. The analysis showed differing, diverging and even contradicting understandings of equality. Rather than a singular message, the celebration of arts, culture and heritage in Hull2017 enabled many meanings of gender equality to co-exist. Finally, the analysis considered infrastructural conditions in the relationship with the meaning-making processes of COC mega-events. While the relevance of the festivalisation of equality was highlighted, the empirical data addresses the risk of inadequate infrastructures for the celebration of equality. With emphasis on the materiality of event experiences and commodification of socio-cultural values, a critical examination of the limitations

of festive infrastructures was presented. In summary, I highlighted how COC events become ‘contested spaces’ (O’Callaghan, 2012: 201) for the negotiations of socio-cultural values. Consequently, these spaces can have transformative capacities for producing cultures of gender equality.

A key strength of this thesis lies in its thematic attention to and methodological explorations of COC mega-events. My interest in cultural transformation, the relevance of socio-cultural values and the production of cultures of gender equality in celebratory settings conceptually and empirically link perspectives of urban development/ regeneration, event and gender studies. In the context of COC mega-events and affiliated research canons, this combination is marginalised due to the predominant interest in socio-economic regenerative potentials. Hence, my perspective suggests innovative explorations of COC initiatives, with the aim to expand awareness of the capacities of the associated mega-events. The relational and qualitative methodological approach I use in this project responds to my novel research interests. Considering García and Cox’s (2013) recommendations, I study Hull2017 through an investigative lens framed by my explorations of DSS2016. This relational reading fosters learning and knowledge exchange between COC host cities. Furthermore, informed by ethnographic research practices, my qualitative research approach responds to García and Cox’s (2013) observations of the dominance of quantitative studies in COC research and incorporates their call for methodological diversity in the field.

This concluding chapter proceeds to summarise and synthesise the arguments developed in the previous contextual, conceptual and analytical chapters. Firstly, I recapitulate the contextual and conceptual discussions. Secondly, I summarise the findings as outlined in the analysis. Thirdly, on the basis of such synthesis, I review the implications of the analysis in relation to the primary query and subsequent questions that determine this research. Furthermore, I highlight the limitations of the investigation, which inform my recommendations for future research. I end with a discussion of the impact of the research project *Gendering Cities of Culture*, as I outline the non-academic dissemination in the final section.

Contextualising and Conceptualising Cultures of Gender Equality in Mega-Events

As highlighted in the introduction, the message, *Change is Happening*, characterises my research field. In chapter 2, *Situating the Field*, I outlined how the ECOC and the UKCOC initiatives, the mega-events of Hull2017 and DSS2016, as well as the selected equality-themed activities created an important site and dynamic setting for the production of cultures of gender equality. Set in the transformative atmosphere of strategic urban development and regeneration, the field of study is characterised by a complex web of interlinking influences, to which I responded with a methodological approach underpinned and driven by qualitative, feminist and ethnographic principles. The explorative, collaborative practices with observing-participants complemented the more usual interview and observation methods. I incorporated perspectives from political and cultural actors as well as residents in the investigation of the production of cultures of gender equality in COC mega-events.

Moreover, I translated the contextual conditions of the field and corresponding methodology into the conceptual framework. As outlined in chapter 3, *Conceptualising Gender and Events*, I draw upon the scholarly canons of both Event and Gender Studies. My interpretations are grounded in the anthropological understanding of the festive phenomenon, which is foregrounded by the emerging sub-field of Critical Event Studies. I highlighted events as processes of meaning-making, as addressed by Finkel (2015) in discussion of events as socio-cultural practices. The potential of the production of meaning through celebratory contexts is fostered through the experiential environment in which events are embedded. I draw here upon Victor Turner's (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) and Bakhtin's (1968) notions of liminality and carnivalesque, as an entrance point to understand the sensational, empirical realities of events and their meaning-making process. Characterised as a time out of time in place out of place with a sensation of norms out of the norm, I argued that celebrations have transgressive and transformative capacities, as they re-evaluate power structures through the subversion of the status-quo. These event-based dynamics were significant in my gendered reading of events. I outlined the relationship between events and gender through case studies, including *LGBT Pride* events, the *Eurovision Song Contest* and the *Michigan Womyn Music Festival*. These examples highlight festivals and their experiences as crucial

platforms for the negotiation and construction of gender identities. Beyond the experiential relevance of events for gender expressions and identifications, I regarded the process of meaning-making with attention to gender equality as a socio-cultural value in celebrations. In reference to homonational and homonormative tendencies of LGBT-related events, I discussed how festivals reproduce regional, national and transnational political agendas in respect to struggles for gender and sexual equality. On this basis, I argue for the political potential of events, festivals and celebrations. I do not emphasise binary interpretations of party or politics. Rather, as explained by Browne (2007: 63), I focus on how events constitute ‘parties with politics’.

Analysing Parties and their Politics

The analysis of DSS2016 as a case study in this research served to link the previous contextual/ conceptual discussions with the subsequent analysis related to Hull2017. Illustrated through the project of DSS2016, I highlighted the changing ambitions of host cities in celebrating the COC award. Calling it a process of ‘(re)programming’, Immler and Sakkers (2014: 22) suggest that cultural transformative objectives are trending in contemporary and future COC mega-events. From their perspective, host cities’ attention shift from economic and social regenerative ambitions towards ideological and political aims – or seek a combination of the various dimensions. Linking into such trending shifts of attention, my research interest in the productive potential of COC mega-events finds resonance with the analysis of the positions, practices and contradictions of DSS2016. With intentions for and perspectives on cultural transformation through the COC mega-event, the multiplicity of objectives contradict the values committed to in undertaking the event. Synthesised in O’Callaghan’s (2012: 201) suggestion, I argue COC mega-events’ aim cannot be to ‘answer the question [of socio-cultural value production]’, but rather the ‘contested space’ of the mega-event can be used ‘to stimulate dialogue through creative responses’. The analysis of DSS2016’s cultural transformative perspectives and negotiations of socio-cultural values sets the parameters for the investigation of the production of cultures of gender equality in Hull2017.

Emphasising COC mega-events as ‘contested spaces’ (O’Callaghan, 2012: 201) for negotiations, the analysis of Hull2017 responded to three sub-questions concerning how audiences engage, performances present and infrastructures condition the production of cultures of gender equality. Guided by the chapter

structure and the related sub-questions, I explored how cultures of gender equality are produced through the programme of activities in the COC mega-event of Hull2017.

In chapter 5, *Engaging with Equality*, I addressed how audiences are engaging with the produced cultures of gender equality in Hull2017. As I highlighted the experiential environment in the conceptual framework, my analysis foregrounded audiences as a crucial factor in the production of cultures of gender equality through their experiences of events, festivals and celebrations. In accordance with Markwell and Waitt (2013), I explored engagements with equality-themed events as formative processes for the audience members. Rather than assuming identities as pre-set, I observed how individuals and collectives were formed and informed by their engagements with equality. Focusing on encounters and dynamics of audiences in equality-themed events, I highlighted the potential of audience engagement and its contribution to the negotiations of the socio-cultural value of gender equality. In further detail, I addressed encounters with equality through the modality of conversations and cheering. The narratives of observing-participants speak strongly of affirmative, supportive and inspiring experiences when engaging with equality-themed events. Furthermore, I addressed the dynamics of equality-themed events, which are highlighted through sensations of togetherness and strategies of inclusion. As one of many examples, Mathilda (OP, AF/ LGBT50) pointed out her experiences and joys of coming together as a community and described it as a 'magical' sensation, employing similar terms as Edith Turner (2012) in her conceptual discussion of *communitas*. Responding to these sensations of communities coming-together, the strategies of inclusion were highly regarded by political and cultural actors. The positive experiences of togetherness and inclusion were challenged by inherent limitations. On the one hand, echo-chambers were observed as a side effect of the sensations of togetherness. On the other hand, the experience of exclusion was reported by Anna (OP, FG) in her activism against the financial relationships between Hull 2017 Ltd and BP. With attention to the encounters and dynamics of audiences and their engagements with equality, the analysis shows that individuals and collectives contribute significantly to the production of cultures of gender equality and are simultaneously informed and formed by the celebration of equality in the context of Hull2017. While acknowledging that these engagements, encounters and dynamics of equality exist, research participants

questioned their effectiveness and called for the need to ‘continue the conversation’ (Alex, OP, HULL).

The examination of how cultures of gender equality are performed through the programmed activities of Hull2017 was the subject in chapter 6: *Performing Equality*. Drawing on the analyses of Benedict (1983), Falassi (1987a) and Finkel (2015), the chapter focused on the potential for events to create meaning. While Benedict (1983) is attentive to the selling of ideas, Falassi (1987a) regards the renouncing and announcing of culture and Finkel (2015) investigates the social and cultural practices of events; nevertheless, all three authors agree upon the socio-cultural significance of celebrations, festivals and events as expressed through their performers and performances. Therefore, in the subsequent analytical chapter, I highlighted how cultures of gender equality were presented. Performers of equality play a critical role as they are seen as representatives for the celebrated values. Evidence provided by research participants suggested an immediate dependency between the performer and the content of the performance. They referred to the situatedness of the performer in direct correlation to the produced content. Three strategies of representation, namely *Diversity on Display*, *Tick Box Exercises* and the *One of Us* approach, were identified by research participants. Furthermore, I discussed the responsibility that performers carry in the performance of equality. The question, ‘Why are they there?’ (Daniel, OP, LGBT50), prompted me to ask how responsibilities are negotiated by the performers of equality. While personal biographies, feeling a duty of care and the creation of a cultural product of equality were mentioned, it is important to consider that the responsibility for promoting, perpetuating or inculcating cultures of gender equality is not only dependent on the cultural actors but is a shared role. Political and structural levels influence the capacities and responsibilities of cultural actors. Alongside the performers of equality, I paid attention to a range of narratives from various actors and audiences and questioned how the stories of equality unfold. Considering what stories are told, I highlighted visibility, awareness and empowerment as key story lines. When addressing how stories are told, research participants summarised entertainment and comfort as two narrative strategies, which dominate the celebration of equality. Additionally, research participants suggested alternative narrative strategies: anti-preaching, processual and personal storytelling approaches were named. Therefore, cultures of gender equality need to be understood in their

plurality as differing, diverging and contradictory understandings of equality are enacted in the context of Hull2017.

In the final analytical chapter (7), *Infrastructures of Equality*, my attention moved to the infrastructural conditions, which enable or hinder the celebrations of equality. This investigation of the infrastructures of equality finds limited theoretical grounding in the anthropological conceptualisation of the festive phenomenon. However, I based the relevance of this question in the empirical material collected in the context of my fieldwork. Observing-participant Alex (OP, FG) summarised the need to tackle this perspective. He understood audience engagements and content productions as essential contributions to equality, but felt that considerations of infrastructural conditions were disregarded, even though they are substantial contributors to continuous, structural inequalities. While these infrastructural conditions require further in-depth research, I focused on three aspects of the debate, which are reoccurring in the analysis of the empirical material. Firstly, I addressed the structural emphasis in the programming on festivalising equality. Referring to trends of continuous growth in the festival and event industries, research participants suggest that cultures of gender equality appear to be affected by an increasing number of festivals dedicated to issues of equality. While the accessibility and normalisation of cultures of gender equality were addressed as positive influences of these festivalised structures, the limitations in temporality and consequential isolation of the theme were major concerns for research participants. My second analytical focus related to the materialities of in/ equality with particular attention to expenses for and spatial arrangements of events. These material conditions were discussed as systems and structures that work as mechanisms of inclusion, but simultaneously might act in exclusionary ways. Particularly, ticketing systems were addressed as highly exclusive structures, which often contradicted the values, such as inclusion and accessibility, celebrated in equality-themed events. In terms of the use of spaces, similar discussions were held. However, spatial practices were much more nuanced, as the relevance of space for inclusion or exclusion was well considered by political and cultural actors. Thirdly, economic realities provoked discussions of the infrastructural conditioning of equality-themed events. Here I argued that the investigated (mega-) events do not escape the neoliberal capitalist logic. In consequence, cultures of gender equality risk becoming commercialised and

commodified. Even within Hull2017, a project designed as a catalyst for urban regeneration, the appropriation and celebration of cultures of gender equality for the sake of a mega-event needs to be brought into question. On various occasions, research participants highlighted forms of resistance against commercialising and commodifying tendencies. As a result, I asked, *So What?*, and pointed out, in accordance with my initial conceptual point, that the party cannot be thought of without the politics. While audience engagements and content productions are fairly well advanced in their practice and research, further attention to the infrastructures of equality are needed in order to not fall into a commodified, commercialised trap, in which equality is not the essence of the transformative ambitions, but merely a tool for urban regenerative agendas.

Research Implications

Driven by an investigative interest in the potential of COC mega-events to produce socio-cultural values, I outlined shifting aims and objectives of COC mega-events through the example of DSS2016. The general interest and related research question, *How are cultures of gender equality produced through the programme of the COC mega-event of Hull2017?*, require a nuanced interpretation of the potential of COC mega-events. In discussion of DSS2016's positions, practices and contradictions, I concluded that rather than being a solution to the production of socio-cultural values and cultures of gender equality, COC mega-events need to be understood as 'contested spaces' (O'Callaghan, 2012: 201), which enables negotiations, articulations and explorations of socio-cultural values. In the context of Hull2017, I outlined these negotiations of the mega-event through audience engagements, content productions and infrastructural conditions in relation to the production of cultures of gender equality.

In my analysis, I responded to the first sub-question, *In what ways are audiences engaging with produced cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017?*, by highlighting the importance of audience members in the process of cultural production of gender equality. Analytically, I outlined how audiences engage with equality in celebrations, but simultaneously, requested further sustainability in the continuation of the conversation. The heightened attention created by events provides fruitful and insightful encounters and dynamics, but it requires attention beyond the boundaries of the activity, festival or mega-event.

As cultures of gender equality are performed in event settings, the plurality of the notion becomes apparent. Hence, the question, *In what ways are cultures*

of gender equality performed through the programmed activities of Hull2017?, finds multiple responses as the essence of the performance – the interpretation of equality – is continuously contested. Rather than unifying the perspectives, an increasing attention to the plurality of notions of equality needs to be foregrounded to use the ‘contested space’ (O’Callaghan, 2012: 201) of COC mega-events as sites of negotiation, as a means to encourage multiple conversations and perspectives on equalities rather than as a forum for a centralisation of meanings.

Finally, in response to the question, *What kind of infrastructural arrangements accommodate the production of cultures of gender equality in the context of Hull2017?*, I highlighted the relevance of these influences, as they can support, but also harm the ‘contested space’ (O’Callaghan, 2012: 201) of gender equality. Inappropriate infrastructures, such as the previously discussed ticket prices and spatial segregations, make the negotiations of socio-cultural values immediately apparent. Therefore, equality-themed events should aim to provide an infrastructural frame which is coherent with the content productions and audience engagements with a focus on inclusion and accessibility.

In conclusion, this research project outlines the potential of COC initiatives, beyond their economic and social regenerative ambitions, as sites for cultural transformation and ways through which we can engage with producing and reproducing cultures of gender equality. COC mega-events need to be understood as a process of meaning-making with awareness of the relevance of the liminal, carnivalesque experiences, in order to embrace the party and its politics.

Research Limitations and Directions for future Research

In the first and second chapters, *Situating the Field* and *Methodology and Methods*, I addressed limiting factors regarding the field conditions and outlined their consequential effects for the research process. This outline restates some of the issues and constructs recommendations for future research in this respect.

The time sensitivity of COC mega-events and the consequential limitations are a main concern that needs to be taken into consideration for any future research. Because I was only able to focus on the events as they were happening, during the year of Hull’s tenure as UKCOC, I was unable to incorporate a more longitudinal perspective into my analysis of the potential of these mega events as vehicles for producing cultures of gender equality. This research focuses primarily on the outcomes of the 365 days of celebrations in a relational

perspective between Hull2017 and DSS2016. Only to a very limited extent, can I estimate longer term impacts and lasting legacies. The time-sensitivity and its relationship with research has been noted as a general issue within the canons of COC research (García & Cox, 2013). On the one hand, researchers, funders and policy-makers are most attentive to the year of celebration itself, and therefore longitudinal studies are lacking appropriate attention and, in consequence, funding. On the other hand, the research process for this study in the form of a three- to four-year PhD track prohibited a further extension of the insights over a longer period of time. While I am convinced that the ethnographic study of COCs' transformative potential requires an immersion in the exhilarating moment of the city's celebration, I recommend a consideration of future developments within the two field sites under investigation. Thus, a key direction for future research is a longitudinal study of culturally transformative events, which particularly foreground gender equality as a value to be celebrated, beyond the year of the COC event, for example in the city of Hull post-2017.

Another limitation and area for future research has been addressed already in the seventh chapter: *Infrastructures of Equality*. This chapter is limited to central themes drawn from the empirical material and lacks conceptual grounding, as anthropological conceptualisations of the festive phenomenon have not thus far paid detailed attention to these infrastructural conditions of celebrations. In this thesis, I have foregrounded that a feminist, anthropological analysis of the festive infrastructures is important, in order to understand how cultures of gender equality are being produced in COC mega-events. In a further step, it would be relevant to consider how the infrastructures of COC mega-events invite, allow and enable adaptations in order to accommodate the productions of socio-cultural values and particularly cultures of gender equality. With the policy changes of the ECOC in 1999 and the introduction of the selection criteria of the *European Dimension and Cities and Citizens*, a first step into the '(re)programming' (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 22) of the COC initiatives has been already completed. However, in order to also follow the trend on an infrastructural basis, further in-depth analysis of the COC policy implications for the production of cultures of gender equality need to be addressed.

Research Impact

In closing this thesis, I provide an overview of the research impact of this study. The main body of impact was made possible through the demands and

opportunities provided by the GRACE Project and through its generous funding and required deliverables for the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Horizon 2020 programme. Furthermore, my affiliation with the CPPI and the COC postgraduate reading group at the University of Hull directly and indirectly influenced the impact that this investigation could achieve.

The first level of notable impact is the event series, *The Conversation Continues*, which took place from January 2018 to January 2019. Extending the emphasis on public engagement as required by the GRACE Project, the event series served as an artistic translation of the research interests and took place in the form of three interventions. Not only the title but the intention underlying the event series is informed by the analytical attention to the time-sensitivity of event-based, cultural transformation. In chapter 5, *Engaging with Equality*, Alex (OP, HULL) questioned the effectiveness of equality-themed events due to their time limitations. His request to 'continue the conversation' (Alex, OP, HULL) found immediate repercussions in the establishment of this public engagement programme. In collaboration with three Hull-based artists, namely Lou Hazelwood, Tamar Draper and Andrew Quinn, creative interventions invited members of Hull's community to engage with questions drawn from the collected research material. The artistic genres of dance, performance and film served as deliberate channels for continuing the conversation. Included in the appendix, the final report of the event series provides further information and a detailed evaluation of its impact.

Secondly, as another deliverable for the GRACE Project, I produced a policy briefing that summarises my research results. Transferring the knowledge accumulated in this analysis into three policy recommendations, the brief highlights how COC mega-events could strengthen the potential of the initiative to further negotiate and produce socio-cultural values. This policy briefing is directed at future cities bidding for and hosting COC mega-events but also incorporates recommendations concerning the adaptations of the policy guidelines of the ECOC and UKCOC initiatives. The brief is included in the appendix.

Thirdly, as a co-founder and member of the COC postgraduate reading group at University of Hull, I was able to join the newly formed City of Culture Research Network funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The network aims to connect researchers and postgraduate students in the UK as well

as Galway (Ireland) and Aarhus (Denmark), who address COC mega-events or affiliated initiatives in their academic studies. With the aim to strengthen the translations of research into policy, the network works closely in partnership with major funders and policy-makers in the UK enabling to exchange between different stakeholders and ongoing research about the COC phenomenon.

Fourthly, but rather as an indirect influence, I was a co-author of the evaluation of Hull2017 entitled: *Cultural Transformations: Impacts of the Hull UK City of Culture 2017*. In February 2019, I joined the CPPI as a research assistant in order to contribute to the evaluation of Hull2017. Throughout March until August 2019, my focus lied on the society and wellbeing impact chapter as well as on an extensive literature review covering all impact areas and contextualising Hull's evaluation results in comparison to similar cities hosting COC events. Beyond my immediate input regarding the evaluation report, I have been given the opportunity to coordinate the dissemination of the evaluation report in form of a conference entitled, *Cultural Transformations – What's Next?*, which took place from the 19-20 November 2019 and shared issues and challenges for future COCs on the basis of Hull's celebration of the UKCOC title.

To return to my thesis and summarise this conclusion, I want to highlight the central point of learning that this investigation entails: I initiated this thesis with reference to the announcement by Wykeland: *Change is happening*. Throughout this investigation, I have shown that change is capturing the city of Hull and its developments through the mega-event of Hull2017. Beyond socio-economic regenerative ambitions, my analysis centred on a broader understanding of transformation as I tackle the cultural dimension of COC mega-events and its influence on cultures of gender equality. Chenine Bhatena, CEO and artistic Director of Coventry City of Culture Trust, addresses the relevance and essence of this characteristic of the COC initiatives in Hull's evaluation conference in November 2019 and explains:

[The UKCOC] is a political programme – let's not pretend. This is a political programme. This is about social change and cities. This is about growth and community. This is about identity. This is about inclusion. This is about equity. [...] This is [...] about people and places. (Bhatena, 2019)

Her call to create 'movements; not moments' in the next UKCOC host city supports the interest and argument of this thesis: cultural transformations take place in the 'contested space' (O'Callaghan, 2012: 201) of COC mega-events and need to be further fostered through audiences, performances and infrastructures contributing to the cultural programme of the '365 days of transformative culture' (Hull 2017 Ltd, 2015: 14).

Conclusiones

Los Mega Eventos de las Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura y su Potencial para producir la Igualdad de Género

En esta tesis, he analizado cómo los mega eventos de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* consiguen producir culturas de la igualdad de género. En lo relativo a la celebración de los ‘365 días de cultura transformadora⁹³’ (Hull 2017 Ltd, 2015: 14) en Hull2017, he estudiado cómo el público, las actuaciones y la infraestructura contribuyen a producir culturas de igualdad de género. Debido a su atmósfera transformadora y de regeneración urbana, Hull2017 me ha permitido examinar cómo la celebración del mega evento denominado *Ciudad/ Capital de la Cultura* logra producir culturas de igualdad de género.

La investigación concluye que las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* se consideran una potente herramienta en el proceso de crear significados socioculturales. Su capacidad transformadora depende de las experiencias vividas en las actividades llevadas a cabo. En relación con la liminalidad y lo carnavalesco, las experiencias vividas en las celebraciones permiten reevaluar las estructuras hegemónicas, porque invitan a transgredir las normas. Tras estudiar el público, las actuaciones y las infraestructuras del mega evento de Hull2017, he argumentado que las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* deben entenderse como espacios de contestación. El análisis indica que los mega eventos se ven influenciados por el público, tanto a nivel personal como colectivo, ya que promueven encuentros capaces de construir otros significados sociales en relación con la temática tratada. La experiencia colectiva y las estrategias inclusivas son dinámicas importantes que forman parte de este encuentro. Además, en relación con la producción del contenido, el estudio muestra que las culturas de igualdad de género y su producción en el contexto de los mega eventos requieren una interpretación plural. La celebración de la igualdad no produce una narrativa única. Más bien, el mega evento de Hull2017 permite una perspectiva transversal en la que coexisten múltiples interpretaciones de la igualdad de

⁹³ Las traducciones de las citas y términos en inglés que aparecen en estas conclusiones son mías.

género. Finalmente, he considerado las condiciones infraestructurales y su influencia en las celebraciones de la igualdad. Por un lado, he señalado la tendencia hacia la festivalización de la igualdad y su importancia a la hora de dar visibilidad a los derechos humanos. Por otro lado, los/ las participantes de esta investigación me han mostrado cómo una infraestructura inadecuada puede constituir un riesgo para los valores celebrados en dichos festivales. Mi enfoque está centrado en la materialidad de las experiencias de las actividades culturales y la mercantilización de los valores socio-culturales. A continuación, señalaré los límites de las infraestructuras de las celebraciones en relación con estos dos asuntos. Es decir, explicaré cómo las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* son espacios de contestación, porque invitan a la negociación de los valores socio-culturales. Los datos recogidos muestran que estos espacios tienen una capacidad transformadora para producir culturas de igualdad de género.

El valor fundamental de esta tesis reside en el marco teórico y la implementación de la metodología de la investigación. Mi interés en la transformación cultural, la negociación de los valores socio-culturales y la producción de las culturas de igualdad de género, en el contexto de las celebraciones, permite relacionar las perspectivas de desarrollo y regeneración urbana con los estudios de género y los eventos a nivel conceptual y empírico. La bibliografía existente sobre las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* se centra en estudios evaluativos y obvia una perspectiva transversal para estudiar las transformaciones culturales. Por este motivo, esta investigación propone un nuevo enfoque sobre las iniciativas de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura*, con el objetivo de mostrar el potencial de los mega eventos y los desarrollos urbanísticos asumidos. Dentro de esta perspectiva innovadora, adopto una metodología relacional y cualitativa. Siguiendo las recomendaciones de García y Cox (2013), que proponen un aumento en el intercambio de conocimiento entre las *Ciudades* y las *Capitales de la Cultura*, he analizado los casos de estudio – Hull2017 y DSS2016 – de manera comparada. Además, mi metodología cualitativa y etnográfica sirve como respuesta a otra observación hecha por García y Cox (2013): en las investigaciones sobre los mega eventos predominan los estudios cuantitativos. Esta circunstancia me ha inclinado a incorporar su propuesta en aras de conseguir una mayor diversidad metodológica en los estudios de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura*.

En estas conclusiones, recapitulo y sintetizo los argumentos desarrollados en los capítulos contextuales, conceptuales y analíticos. Primero, me centro en el debate contextual y conceptual. En segundo lugar, resumo las conclusiones previamente presentadas en relación con el análisis de los datos recopilados. En tercer lugar, en referencia al análisis de los argumentos, reviso las implicaciones del estudio en relación con las preguntas de la investigación. Asimismo, subrayo las limitaciones de esta, que me sirven para sugerir estudios posteriores. Finalmente, concluyo la tesis con la presentación del impacto no académico del proyecto: *Gendering Cities of Culture*.

Contextualización y Conceptualización de la Igualdad de Género en Eventos

Como mencionaba en la introducción, el mensaje *El cambio está ocurriendo* define el campo de investigación de mi tesis. En el segundo capítulo, *Situating the Field*, he explicado cómo las iniciativas de *Capital Europea de la Cultura* y *UK City of Culture*, los mega eventos de Hull2017 y DSS2016 y las actividades seleccionadas crean un campo dinámico para la producción de culturas de igualdad de género. En un contexto transformador y de regeneración urbana estratégica, mi campo de estudio se caracteriza por una compleja red de influencias interrelacionadas. En respuesta a esta complejidad, he empleado una metodología que está respaldada por principios cualitativos, feministas y etnográficos. La práctica exploradora y colaborativa de observación participativa complementa los métodos tradicionales de entrevistas y observaciones. En este estudio, incorporo las perspectivas de agentes políticos y culturales, así como de ciudadanas y ciudadanos.

Además, traslado las características condiciones del campo y la metodología relacionada a la conceptualización de la investigación. Como explico en el tercer capítulo, *Conceptualising Gender and Events*, me baso en los estudios de género y de los eventos. Mis interpretaciones están fundadas en el entendimiento antropológico del fenómeno festivo. Subrayo que los eventos funcionan como herramienta en el proceso de crear significado y argumento, con referencia a Finkel (2015), que los eventos son prácticas socio-culturales. La capacidad de producir significado en el contexto de las celebraciones está influida por la atmósfera experiencial de los eventos. Victor Turner (1969, 1974, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) y Bakhtin (1968), con sus conceptos de liminalidad y lo carnavalesco, me sirven como puntos de partida para entender las realidades

experienciales de los mega eventos y su proceso de crear significados socio-culturales. Entendido como un tiempo fuera del tiempo, un sitio fuera de lugar y con el potencial de crear normas fuera de la norma, argumento que las celebraciones tienen capacidades transgresoras y transformativas. La experiencia liminal y carnavalesca permite reformular las estructuras de poder por la subversión de las normas hegemónicas.

Estas dinámicas son centrales en mi lectura del género en los eventos. Explico la relación entre los eventos y el género mediante casos de estudio, incluyendo los ejemplos de *LGBT Pride*, *Eurovision Song Contest* y el *Michigan Womyn Music Festival*. Estos casos ponen de manifiesto que los festivales y sus experiencias sirven como plataformas importantes para la negociación y la construcción de identidades de género. Asimismo, evalúo el proceso de creación de significado en relación con la igualdad de género como valor socio-cultural en las celebraciones. En relación con las tendencias homonacionales y homonormativas de eventos LGBT, analizo cómo los festivales producen agendas políticas locales, regionales, nacionales y transnacionales relacionadas con la lucha por la igualdad de género y de las sexualidades. A partir de esta observación, reclamo el potencial político de eventos, festivales y celebraciones. Demuestro que no se puede establecer una interpretación binaria entre las fiestas y las agendas políticas. Como explica Browne (2007: 63), entiendo los eventos como ‘fiestas con agendas políticas’.

Análisis de las Fiestas y sus Políticas

El análisis de DSS2016 me sirve como enlace entre los debates contextuales/ conceptuales y el análisis empírico de Hull2017. Respecto al proyecto de DSS2016, he puesto de manifiesto cómo cambian las aspiraciones de las ciudades cuando reciben el título de *Ciudad/ Capital de la Cultura*. Definiéndolo como un proceso de ‘(re)programación’, Immler and Sakkers (2014: 22) sugieren que los objetivos transformadores culturales están de moda en las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* contemporáneas y futuras. La bibliografía especializada propone que las ciudades anfitrionas están cambiando sus aspiraciones. Inicialmente, una aspiración transformadora se enfocaba hacia el desarrollo económico y/o social. Sin embargo, actualmente los objetivos se orientan más hacia una transformación ideológica y política o buscan combinaciones de múltiples dimensiones. Respecto a este cambio de atención, mi interés por el potencial productivo de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* está relacionado con el análisis de las posiciones,

prácticas y contradicciones de DSS2016. La multiplicidad de objetivos parece contradictoria con los valores comprometidos por el evento. O'Callaghan (2012: 201) sugiere que la designación como *Ciudad/ Capital de la Cultura* no puede aspirar a 'encontrar las respuestas [de la producción de valores socio-culturales]', sino más bien, se puede utilizar 'el espacio de contestación' de los mega eventos 'para estimular el diálogo en busca de respuestas creativa'. El análisis de las perspectivas transformadoras culturales y las negociaciones de los valores socio-culturales de DSS2016 definen los parámetros para la investigación de la producción de las culturas de igualdad de género en Hull2017.

Centrándome en las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* como espacio de contestación y de negociación de los valores socio-culturales, el análisis de Hull2017 responde a tres preguntas. Siguiendo la estructura de los capítulos, explico a continuación cómo el programa de actividades del mega evento de Hull2017 ha producido culturas de igualdad de género.

En el capítulo 5, *Engaging with Equality*, abordo cómo el público participa en las culturas de igualdad de género producidas por Hull2017. Como indico en el marco teórico, mi análisis destaca que el público es un factor importante en la producción de las culturas de igualdad de género por sus vivencias en los eventos, los festivales y las celebraciones. Siguiendo a Markwell and Waitt (2013), exploro las participaciones en los eventos seleccionados como procesos formativos para los espectadores y las espectadoras. En lugar de asumir identidades predeterminadas, observo cómo personas individuales y colectivos se forman e informan mediante sus participaciones en la celebración de la igualdad. Centrándome en los encuentros y las dinámicas del público, tomo nota del potencial que tiene la participación activa en las negociaciones de valores socio-culturales como la igualdad de género. Argumento que los encuentros con la igualdad de género tienen lugar mediante las modalidades de las conversaciones y el aplauso. El relato de las personas observadoras-participantes incide continuamente en la existencia de experiencias afirmativas e inspiradas por la participación en eventos de igualdad. Además, las dinámicas del público se caracterizan por la sensación de compañerismo y las estrategias de inclusión. Mathilda (OP, AF/ LGBT50) proporciona un ejemplo potente, al compartir sus experiencias y alegrías de cuando se reunía con la comunidad en las celebraciones. Describe la sensación como mágica, empleando palabras similares a las utilizadas por Edith Turner (2012) en su teorización del fenómeno de las *communitas*. En

respuesta a la sensación de reunir a la comunidad, los agentes políticos y culturales, subrayan la relevancia de las estrategias de inclusión. Los y las residentes que participan en la investigación cuestionan los límites inherentes a las experiencias positivas de compañerismo e inclusión. Por un lado, Daniel (OP, WOW) reclama las cámaras de eco como efecto secundario del sentimiento de compañerismo. Por otro lado, Anna (OP, FG) denuncia sus experiencias exclusivas en su activismo contra las relaciones financieras entre Hull 2017 Ltd y BP. En lo relativo a los encuentros y a las dinámicas del público y sus participaciones sobre el tema de la igualdad, el análisis muestra que personas individuales y colectivos contribuyen a la producción de culturas de igualdad de género y están simultáneamente formadas e informadas por las celebraciones de género en el contexto de Hull2017. Aunque las personas participantes en la investigación reconocen la relevancia de la participación como un factor importante en la producción de igualdad, siguen cuestionando la efectividad de estas participaciones y reclaman la necesidad de ‘continuar la conversación’ (Alex, OP, HULL).

El sexto capítulo, *Performing Equality*, analiza cómo la exploración de las culturas de igualdad de género se está llevando a cabo a partir de las actividades programadas para Hull2017. Refiriéndome al análisis de Benedict (1983), Falassi (1987a) y Finkel (2015), este capítulo se centra en el potencial que tienen los eventos para crear significados socio-culturales. Los tres autores están en acuerdo en que las celebraciones, los festivales y los eventos tienen un significado socio-cultural. En consecuencia, el análisis siguiente explora cómo se representaron las culturas de igualdad de género. Por un lado, me concentro en los agentes de igualdad que tienen un papel fundamental como representantes de los valores celebrados. Los/ las participantes de la investigación sugieren una dependencia directa entre el agente y el contenido de la actuación. Se identifican aquí tres estrategias de representación, mencionadas por los/ las participantes: ‘*La exhibición de la diversidad*’, ‘*Ejercicios de marcar casillas*’ y ‘*Unx de nosotrxs*’. Además, describen la responsabilidad de los agentes de igualdad y debaten cómo manejan esta responsabilidad. La pregunta ‘¿Por qué están allí?’ (Daniel, OP, LGBT50) me lleva a cuestionar cómo se negocian las responsabilidades asumidas. Cuando los agentes aluden a cuestiones relacionadas con sus vidas personales, explican que lo hacen por un sentido de compromiso o que su motivación nace al querer crear un producto cultural de igualdad. Es importante tener en cuenta que

la responsabilidad de promover, perpetuar e inculcar las culturas de igualdad de género no depende solamente de los agentes culturales; se trata de una responsabilidad compartida por varias personas interesadas. Las políticas y estructuras influyen en las capacidades y responsabilidades de los agentes culturales. Por otro lado, dirijo mi atención a las narraciones construidas y cuestiono cómo se desarrollan las historias de igualdad. Subrayo la visibilidad, la sensibilización y el empoderamiento como líneas narrativas principales y abordo cómo se cuentan las narrativas de igualdad. Los/ las participantes de la investigación identifican diversión y confort como dos estrategias narrativas que dominan la celebración de la igualdad en Hull2017. Varias personas participantes en la investigación sugieren estrategias narrativas alternativas, tales como aproximaciones procesuales y personales. Por este motivo, las culturas de la igualdad de género requieren un entendimiento plural, como queda demostrado en que Hull2017 genere interpretaciones de igualdad diferentes, divergentes y contradictorias.

En el último capítulo analítico (7), *Infrastructures of Equality*, mi atención se concentra en las condiciones infraestructurales, que permiten o impiden la celebración de la igualdad. En la conceptualización antropológica del fenómeno festivo, las infraestructuras de los festivales están poco teorizadas. Sin embargo, los datos empíricos señalan la relevancia de este asunto. Una de las personas que actuaron de observador/a-participante, Alex (OP, FB), remarca la necesidad de adoptar esta perspectiva. Aunque entiende tanto la participación del público como la producción del contenido como contribuciones esenciales para la celebración de la igualdad de género, considera que las condiciones infraestructurales se tienen poco en cuenta. A raíz de su propuesta, me centro en tres aspectos del debate que se repetían en el análisis de los datos empíricos. Primero, el análisis apunta el interés por festivalizar la igualdad. Con referencia al desarrollo continuo del sector industrial de festivales y eventos, las personas participantes en la investigación surgieron que las culturas de la igualdad de género parecen afectadas por el aumento de festivales dedicados al tema de la igualdad. Mientras que la accesibilidad y la normalización de las culturas de igualdad de género se mencionan como influencias positivas de estas estructuras festivalizadas, los/ las participantes en la investigación se preocupaban por el límite temporal y el consecuente aislamiento de la igualdad. El segundo aspecto analítico se refiere a la materialidad de las des/igualdades, con atención

particular al coste de los eventos y su distribución espacial. Estas condiciones materiales se estudian como sistema o estructura que tiene una función de inclusión, pero pueden actuar también de maneras exclusivas. Particularmente, las personas participantes en la investigación denuncian los sistemas de *ticketing* como estructuras altamente exclusivas. En varias ocasiones, estos sistemas contradicen los valores promovidos por el evento. En relación con el uso de espacios, los debates siguen una línea de argumentación similar. Sin embargo, las prácticas espaciales están mucho más matizadas, porque la relevancia del espacio y sus efectos inclusivos y/ o exclusivos están bien considerados por los agentes políticos y culturales. En tercer lugar, el análisis se enfoca hacia las realidades económicas. En este contexto, argumento que los (mega) eventos investigados no escapan a la lógica capitalista neoliberal. En consecuencia, las culturas de la igualdad de género están en riesgo de comercialización y mercantilización. En Hull2017, un proyecto de aspiraciones regenerativas, examino si las celebraciones de las culturas de igualdad de género constituyen en realidad una apropiación para cumplir con las aspiraciones del mega evento. En varios momentos, las personas participantes en la investigación destacan formas de resistencia contra las tendencias de comercialización y mercantilización de la igualdad celebrada. En consecuencia, me pregunto, ¿entonces qué?, y apunto, en relación con mi punto conceptual inicial, que no se puede pensar la fiesta sin su agenda política. Mientras la participación del público y la producción están bastante avanzados en sus prácticas e investigaciones, las infraestructuras de igualdad requieren más atención para que no se caiga en la trampa de la mercantilización, donde la igualdad no es la esencia de las aspiraciones transformadoras, sino más bien una herramienta para la agenda regenerativa del entorno urbano.

Implicaciones investigadoras

A raíz de mi interés investigador por el potencial de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* para producir valores socio-culturales, explico el cambio que se ha producido en las aspiraciones de los mega eventos que he tratado. Este interés general se relaciona con la pregunta de investigación: *¿Cómo produce culturas de igualdad de género el programa del mega evento Hull2017?* Esta pregunta debe interpretarse con matices, si se quiere entender el potencial de las iniciativas de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura*. Del debate sobre las posiciones, prácticas y contradicciones del proyecto DSS2016, concluyo que el mega evento

no sirve como una solución para la producción de valores socio-culturales o de culturas de igualdad de género. Más bien, las iniciativas de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* crean espacios de contestación que facilitan negociaciones, articulaciones y exploraciones de estos valores socio-culturales. En el contexto de Hull2017, explico estos procesos de negociación en los espacios de contestación mediante la participación del público, las producciones del contenido y las condiciones infraestructurales.

En mi análisis, respondo a la primera subpregunta: *¿Cómo participa el público en las culturas de la igualdad de género producida en el contexto de Hull2017?* Subrayo la importancia del público en el proceso de producción cultural de la igualdad de género y analizo cómo este participa en el tema de la igualdad en las celebraciones. Asimismo, me centro en la demanda del público de que continúen las conversaciones iniciadas para crear culturas de igualdad sostenibles. La creciente atención motivada por los eventos facilita dinámicas y encuentros fructíferos y reflexivos, pero exige que esta atención trascienda los límites de la actividad, el festival o el mega evento.

La segunda pregunta, *¿De qué manera se ejecutan las culturas de igualdad de género en las actividades programadas en Hull2017?*, tiene múltiples respuestas: la esencia de la performance – la interpretación de la igualdad – es cuestionada continuamente. En lugar de unificar las perspectivas o centralizar el significado, el espacio de contestación del mega evento se presenta como sitio de negociación. Sirve para fomentar múltiples conversaciones y perspectivas sobre el significado de las igualdades.

Finalmente, en respuesta a la tercera pregunta, *¿Qué infraestructuras acogen la producción de las culturas de igualdad de género en el contexto de Hull2017?*, destaco la relevancia central de las infraestructuras. Estas pueden apoyar, pero igualmente dañar, el espacio de contestación de las celebraciones de la igualdad. Estructuras inadecuadas, como los precios de entradas o la segregación espacial, obstaculizan las negociaciones de los valores socio-culturales. Por eso, los eventos que tematizan la igualdad de género deberían ofrecer un contexto infraestructural que fuera coherente con los contenidos y los/las participantes.

En conclusión, este proyecto de investigación ha explorado el potencial de las iniciativas de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* más allá de sus ambiciones regenerativas en el ámbito económico y social. Ha identificado los

mega eventos de la *Ciudad/ Capital de la Cultura* como sitios para la transformación cultural, que ofrecen oportunidades para producir culturas de igualdad de género. Las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* deben entenderse como procesos para crear significados sociales, siendo conscientes de la relevancia que tienen las experiencias liminales y carnales para acoger la celebración y su agenda política.

Límites y Líneas de Investigaciones futuras

En el primer y segundo capítulo, *Situating the Field y Methodology and Methods*, he apuntado ya algunas limitaciones de esta investigación en relación con las condiciones del campo y los efectos derivados del proceso investigador. Esta sección reitera algunos de estos asuntos y aporta recomendaciones para investigaciones futuras.

El tiempo de los mega eventos y sus limitaciones derivadas son una preocupación central y deben ser considerados en cualquier estudio de este ámbito. Debido a que mi enfoque sobre los eventos de Hull como *UK City of Culture* tuvo lugar durante el año de su celebración, en el que las actividades estaban en ejecución, no fue posible incorporar una perspectiva longitudinal al análisis. Así pues, esta investigación se concentra fundamentalmente en los resultados de la celebración de los 365 días de actividades. En cambio, a modo de estimación, puedo sugerir algunos impactos y legados de media o larga estancia que se han generado. Múltiples académicos/as consideran la temporalidad como la dificultad central en las agendas investigadoras que estudian los mega eventos (García & Cox, 2013). Por un lado, investigadores/as, financiadores/as y agentes políticos concentran su interés en el año de la celebración en sí mismo. En consecuencia, no se presta suficiente atención – ni financiación – a los estudios longitudinales. Por otro lado, debe advertirse que el período de investigación para este estudio depende del marco doctoral permitido de tres a cuatro años de duración. Este esquema temporal no permite una extensión del análisis. Estoy convencida de que un estudio etnográfico de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* requiere una inmersión en los momentos estimulante de las celebraciones. Aún así, recomiendo que se considere el desarrollo de los dos casos de Hull y Donostia/ San Sebastián. Una dirección esencial que sugiero para investigaciones futuras es la perspectiva longitudinal de las transformaciones culturales y las celebraciones de la igualdad de género, más allá del año del mega evento en sí mismo.

Otra limitación y área a desarrollar en estudios futuros ya ha sido mencionada en el séptimo capítulo: *Infrastructures of Equality*. Este capítulo se limita a los temas centrales que surgieron desde el material empírico, pero se basa en un marco teórico reducido. En esta tesis, he argumentado que un análisis cualitativo, feminista y antropológico de las infraestructuras es importante para entender cómo las culturas de la igualdad de género están producidas por los mega eventos. Sugiero una consideración de cómo las infraestructuras de los mega eventos analizados invitan, permiten y facilitan una adaptación para acomodar la producción de valores socio-culturales y particularmente las culturas de la igualdad de género. Con los cambios de las normas de la iniciativa *Capital Europa de la Cultura* en 1999 y la introducción de los criterios de selección de la *European Dimension* y *Cities and Citizens*, se había dado el primer paso para la '(re)programación' (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 22) de la iniciativa. Sin embargo, para seguir y apoyar las tendencias descritas a nivel infraestructural, se necesita un análisis de las normas y sus implicaciones para entender en detalle cómo las iniciativas pueden facilitar la producción de las culturas de igualdad de género.

Impacto de la Investigación

Para terminar esta tesis, ofrezco un resumen del impacto de este estudio. Gran parte del impacto ha sido posible gracias a las exigencias y las oportunidades proporcionadas por el proyecto GRACE y su generosa financiación mediante el programa Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie de la Comisión Europea. Además, mi vinculación con el CPPI y con el grupo de lectura doctoral de Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura en la Universidad de Hull ha influido directa e indirectamente en el impacto que este estudio ha podido lograr.

El primer asunto de impacto notable es la serie de eventos, *The Conversation Continues*, que llevé a cabo desde enero de 2018 a enero de 2019. Superando las expectativas de participación pública por el proyecto de GRACE, la serie de eventos servía como translación artística de la investigación en forma de tres intervenciones. No solamente el título, sino también la intención de los eventos estaba influida por el análisis. En el quinto capítulo, *Engaging with Equality*, Alex (OP, HULL) cuestionaba la efectividad de los eventos para producir valores socio-culturales y criticaba la sostenibilidad de los eventos, que se veía limitada por el tiempo. Pedía 'continuar la conversación' (Alex, OP, HULL). Su demanda tuvo repercusiones inmediatas y se incorporó a este programa de

participación pública. Asimismo, colaboré con tres artistas de Hull: Lou Hazelwood, Tamar Draper and Andrew Quinn. En tres intervenciones creativas, invitamos a miembros de la comunidad urbana a participar y debatir cuestiones que surgieron a partir del material recopilado por la investigación. La danza, la performance y el cortometraje sirvieron como medio para continuar la comunicación. El informe de evaluación de la serie de eventos está incluido en el apéndice y ofrece información detallada y fotografías de las diferentes intervenciones.

En segundo lugar, para cumplir las exigencias del proyecto de GRACE, he producido un informe que resume los resultados de este estudio. Trasladé el conocimiento adquirido en este análisis a cuatro recomendaciones políticas. El informe subraya cómo los mega eventos pueden fortalecer el potencial de las iniciativas para negociar y producir valores socio-culturales. Este informe está dirigido a ciudades que puedan considerar aplicarlo en el futuro, pero también incorpora recomendaciones relacionadas con las directrices de las iniciativas *Capital Europea de la Cultura* y *UK City of Culture*. El informe está incluido en el apéndice.

En tercer lugar, como cofundadora y miembro del grupo de lectura doctoral de Ciudades/ Capitaes de la Cultura en la Universidad de Hull, en 2019 fui invitada a participar en el primer encuentro del *Cities of Culture Research Network* financiado por el Arts and Humanities Research Council. La red tiene como objetivo conectar investigadores/as y estudiantes de postgrado del Reino Unido, Galway (Irlanda) y Aarhus (Dinamarca) que investiguen mega eventos similares al de *Ciudad/ Capital de la Cultura*. Con el objetivo de fortalecer la transferencia de la investigación a las políticas, la red trabaja en asociación con entidades financiadoras y agentes políticos del Reino Unido para facilitar el intercambio entre las diferentes personas interesadas.

En cuarto lugar, en febrero de 2019 empecé a trabajar para el CPPI como asistente de investigación. Con este empleo, he contribuido a la evaluación oficial de Hull2017. La publicación derivada de esta experiencia se denomina *Cultural Transformations: Impacts of the Hull UK City of Culture 2017*. Me centré en el análisis del impacto relacionado con el tema de la sociedad y el bienestar. Además, hice una búsqueda bibliográfica extensa para contextualizar la evaluación de Hull2017 con la de otras *Ciudades/ Capitaes de la Cultura*. El instituto me brindó la oportunidad de coordinar la diseminación de la evaluación mediante el

congreso: *Cultural Transformations – What’s Next?*. Este congreso tuvo lugar del 19 al 21 de noviembre de 2019 y buscaba reflexionar sobre los temas y los retos de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* futuras, haciendo referencia a la celebración de Hull y su título *UK City of Culture*.

Volviendo a mi tesis y para cerrar estas conclusiones, quiero subrayar el aspecto central del aprendizaje que me ha proporcionado este estudio: tal como iniciaba la tesis, con la referencia al anuncio de Wykeland, *El cambio está ocurriendo*. Durante la investigación, he mostrado las transformaciones que caracterizan a Hull y sus implementaciones del mega evento Hull2017. Más allá de las aspiraciones y los objetivos regeneradores socio-económicos, mi análisis ofrece una interpretación amplia de la transformación generada. Así, me centro en la dimensión cultural de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* y su influencia en las culturas de igualdad de género. La directora artística del Coventry City of Culture Trust, Chenine Bhathena, abordaba la relevancia de esta característica en las iniciativas de las *Ciudades/ Capitales de la Cultura* en sus reflexiones durante el congreso de evaluación de Hull en noviembre 2019, donde explicaba:

[El *UK City of Culture*] es un programa político – no podemos aparentar que no lo es. Es un programa político. Trata del cambio social y de las ciudades. Trata de crecimiento y comunidad. Trata de identidades. Trata de inclusión. Trata de equidad. [...] Trata de [...] gente y lugares. (Bhathena, 2019)

De acuerdo con Bhathena, esta tesis demuestra que las transformaciones culturales tienen lugar en los espacios de contestación de los mega eventos del esquema *Ciudad/ Capital de la Cultura*.

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Appendix

Processes of Contact

Information Sheet political and cultural Actors

Gendering Cities of Culture.

Culture-led mega-events and their potential for gender equality.

This research project addresses mega-events such as European Capital of Culture and UK City of Culture. In specific, I investigate the field sites of Donostia/ San Sebastián, Spain, as European Capital of Culture in 2016 and Hull, United Kingdom, as UK City of Culture in 2017.

These mega-events are discussed as catalysts for change for the awarded cities, as they are often transforming the city's landscape – not only its physical appearance but also the city's image and perceptions. Through art, culture and heritage, transformation is aspired. In this context, I investigate the potential for gender equality. I analyse the politics, practices and experiences of gender equality in the context of these culture-led urban mega-events.

2017 is going to be a special year for Hull and it might be a catalyst for change. Professionals involved with the City of Culture are the source of this transformation.

Therefore, I would appreciate your views, perspectives and opinions about the city's transformation and potential for gender equality in my research.

Participants have to be aged 18 year or over. Participants of any gender, social or cultural background are welcomed. The participation in this research project is on voluntary basis. All contributions will be anonymized. The research is conducted through the University of Hull and forms part of the GRACE project (Gender Equality and Cultures of Equality in Europe). Funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie framework, the project questions the productions, transformations and performances of cultures of gender equality in Europe.



Barbara Grabher

b.grabher@hull.ac.uk

0044 7561 151 988

Research Assistant
School of Education and Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts, Culture and Education



GenderCitiesCulture

genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com

www.graceproject.eu

Gendering Cities of Culture.

¿Qué Potencial tienen mega Eventos por la Igualdad de Género?

Este proyecto de investigación analiza la Capital Europea de la Cultura y UK City of Culture. Estos son considerados como mega eventos que incluyen celebraciones culturales y artísticas durante todo un año. Mis áreas de investigación son Donostia/ San Sebastián, España, sede de la Capital Europea de la Cultura en 2016, y Hull, Reino Unido, que será la capital cultural británica - UK City of Culture - en 2017.

Para muchas ciudades estos eventos son catalizadores para la transformación. Esto incluye no solamente cambios físicos en el paisaje urbano, sino también reformas en las percepciones de las personas sobre las ciudades. En este contexto de procesos de cambio generados por la cultura y el arte, el proyecto se enfoca en la igualdad de género.

2016 es un año especial para Donostia/ San Sebastián por ser la Capital Europea de la Cultura ya que esto podría facilitar una proceso transformador en la ciudad. En este marco, las y los profesionales relacionados con los mega eventos tienen un papel relevante porque forman la base de estos desarrollos urbanos. Por esto, el proyecto de investigación busca incluir sus perspectivas y opiniones sobre el potencial de la capital de la cultura para la igualdad de género.

Las/ Los participantes deben tener por lo menos 18 años de edad. Participantes de cualquier género, contexto social o cultural son bienvenidas/os. La participación es voluntaria y todas las contribuciones permanecerán en el anonimato. La investigación está a cargo de Barbara Grabher, adscrita a la Universidad de Hull, Reino Unido. El proyecto de investigación forma parte del proyecto GRACE (Gender Equality and Cultures of Equality in Europe), que analiza las producciones, transformaciones y performatividades de la igualdad de género en Europa; este es financiado por la Comisión Europea dentro de las acciones 'Marie Skłodowska-Curie' del Programa Horizon 2020.



Barbara Grabher

b.grabher@hull.ac.uk

0034 695 97 78 79

Research Assistant
School of Education and Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts, Culture and Education



GenderCitiesCulture

genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com

www.graceproject.eu

Information Sheet Focus Groups Participants

GENDERING CITIES OF CULTURE

Invitation: Group Discussion/ Collective Reflection

Between spectacular shows and critical discussions - What have you learned in 2017?

2017 is coming to end and with it, a yearlong programme of cultural activities, events and festivals for the city of Hull. We have seen massive, spectacular shows, but also experienced some intimate, critical provocations. Big scale festivals and small encounters wrote the story of this intervention. The year of arts and culture started conversations, created discussions and potentially triggered curiosities.

I would like to invite you for a group discussion, in order to reflect collectively on questions such as:

'What is my take on Hull2017?'

'In what way do the cultural events resonate with my life?'

'What did I learn in 2017?'

Your thoughts, ideas and opinions contribute to the research project 'Gendering Cities of Culture' conducted at the University of Hull. **Through this investigation, I question what kind of conversations, discussions and experiences Hull2017 provoke.**

What happens in a group discussion?

- Citizens of Hull and surrounding villages are invited to express their reflections and memories of 2017.
- As researcher, I facilitate the encounter between the six to eight participants involving discussions as well as crafts.
- Locations are flexible – group discussions can take place anywhere; however, a quiet space is necessary in order to create a welcoming, comfortable atmosphere for the conversations.
- You might be an active participant, online follower or distant spectator of the happenings in 2017 – every experience is relevant and welcomed in this discussion.
- An encounter usually takes 90 minutes and is audio recorded for research purposes.

Curious?

For further questions or to join a group discussion, please contact me via email (b.grabher@hull.ac.uk) or via phone (00447561151988).

If you are part of a community organization, neighbourhood association or social club, I would be happy to meet you for a collective reflection in your own community.

Participants have to be aged 18 year or over. Participants of any gender, age, social or cultural background are welcomed. The participation in this research project is on voluntary basis. All contributions will be anonymized. The research is conducted through the University of Hull, forms part of the GRACE project, which is funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie framework.

Barbara Grabher
b.grabher@hull.ac.uk, 0044 7561 151988
www.genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com

Information Sheet Observing-Participants

GENDERING CITIES OF CULTURE

Invitation: Observing Participants

Excited about the Hull in 2017, but critical about some of the developments?
Interested in the programmed activities in the different seasons, but wondering what it is all about?
Enthusiastic about all of the new experiences coming up this year, but want to discuss and share your thoughts and opinions about them?

My research project 'Gendering Cities of Culture' gives you an opportunity to explore the UK City of Culture happening in Hull in 2017 through critical eyes. Your opinions and thoughts can contribute to a major research project conducted by the University of Hull. 'Gendering Cities of Culture' questions what contents are produced through the different activities happening in 2017 in Hull. Experiences of gender, race and/or class define our day to day life in many ways and I need your help to questions how these daily experiences of our identities are addressed in the activities that are part of Hull's year as UK City of Culture.

In order to explore these issues, I need your support. I am looking for a team of people from Hull, who will take part in my project as 'Observing Participants'.

'Observing Participant' - What does this mean?

As an 'Observing Participant', you have the chance to participate in selected events for free (tickets are arranged and paid for the project). Participation would involve 'observing', which means checking out what is going on, what the event is all about. It would be great if you could take some notes, maybe pictures, pick up flyers and other types of information – all the while keeping in mind the question: How does this event relate back to my daily experiences of my gender, my race or other aspects of my identity? After the event, we meet up to chat about what you found out: What puzzled you? What did you like or dislike? What was new to you? What did you learn? What was missing?

My goal is to expand the experience of an event beyond my own horizon. I want to include your perspective and experiences in my investigation. Four pairs of eyes and ears always observe more than one!

Interested? Check out the upcoming dates:

FIRST GET-TOGETHER OF ALL 'OBSERVING PARTICIPANTS'

Saturday, 25th February 2017
(10.00-12.00)
University of Hull

- Meet the team of Observing Participants
- 'Gendering Cities of Culture' – What it is all about?
- A paper, a pen and my thoughts: What is participant observation? (Workshop)

FIRST VISIT OF AN EVENT

Friday, 10th March 2017 until
Sunday, 12th March 2017
Hull City Hall
(Observing Participants can choose to visit the event for a few hours, a day or all the three days)

WOW – Women of the World Festival Hull: WOW is a festival of talks, debates, music, film, comedy and activism that celebrates women and girls and takes a frank look at what stops them from achieving their potential. Based on the premise that an equal world is a better world for all of us, WOW is a celebration not only of women and girls but of equality in all its forms.

Further dates will be announced and discussed at the first meeting.

Participants have to be aged 18 year or over. Participants of any gender, social or cultural background are welcomed. The participation in this research project is on voluntary basis. All contributions will be anonymized. The research is conducted through the University of Hull, funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie framework and forms part of the GRACE project.

Barbara Grabher

b.grabher@hull.ac.uk, 0044 7561 151988
www.genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com

Sample Email of first Contact political and cultural Actors

Subject: Gendering Cities of Culture: Interview Request

Dear [First Name, Second Name],

For my research project 'Gendering Cities of Culture', I would kindly like to ask you for an interview regarding your involvement as executive producers in Hull2017.

I am a research assistant and PhD student at the University of Hull investigating the production of gender equality through Hull2017 through its programming of cultural activities. I would like to collect perspectives and vision regarding the political motivations, decisions and visions concerning gender equal practices. In this respect, I would like to ask you for an interview regarding to your position and perspectives on the issue.

The research *Gendering Cities of Culture* forms part of GRACE Project, funded by the European Commission through the Horizon 2020 Framework and conducted in the University of Hull. I focus in my research on mega-events in the *City/ Capital of Culture* framework and their cultural dimension. In particular, I work on the case studies of Hull2017 and Donostia/ San Sebastián as *European Capital of Culture* 2016. My analytical interests address the production of cultures of gender equality with particular focus on the programming of cultural activities. I approach this analysis through the perspectives of the gender equal politics, practices and perceptions. Your perspectives, visions and intentions would be an excellent contribution to the overall research and I would like to kindly ask you for an interview in this respect.

I am working with an anthropological interview method. The method allows me to create a conversation rather than practice a traditional journalistic interview. The conversation usually lasts over 45-60 mins and is audio-recorded for research purposes.

I would be delighted if you would be interested in supporting my research project. I understand you have an extremely busy schedule and I am happy to flexibly adapt to your agenda.

Kind regards,

Barbara Grabher

Interview Procedures

Informed Consent (Sample Form)



Gender and Cultures of Equality



Consent Form

Title of the Project: Gendering Cities of Culture: Culture-led Mega-Events and the Potential for Gender Equality.

Name of the Researcher: Barbara Grabher

Research Interest:

This research project addresses 'mega-events' such as European Capital of Culture (ECOC) and UK City of Culture (UKCOC). In specific, the researcher investigate the field sites of Donostia/ San Sebastián (Spain) as ECOC in 2016 and Hull (England) as UK City of Culture in 2017. These 'mega-events' are discussed as catalysts for change for the awarded cities, as they are often transforming the city's landscape – not only its physical appearance but also the city's image and perceptions.

Through art, culture and heritage, transformation is aspired. In this context, the investigation questions the potential for gender equality. On the political, cultural and social levels, the project analyses the politics, practices and experiences of gender equality in the context of these culture-led urban mega-events.

With signing this consent form, I, _____, agree to participate in this study to be undertaken by Barbara Grabher. Furthermore, as research participant, I declare that

1. My participation in this research project is voluntary.
2. If I consider information to be sensitive I may decline to share it, or withdraw consent after having shared. That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.
3. I am aged 18 years or older.
4. I understand that all personal information in relation to my participation is anonymized through the substitution of my name through a pseudonym. Any other personal details will be changed in the interest of anonymization. Any information that I provide will not be made public in any form that could reveal my identity to an outside party
5. I understand that my participation will be documented in forms of field notes, audio-recording, visual recording, or other forms of recordings.
6. I understand that the researcher and affiliated institution has full responsibility for the safe storage of the documentation of my participation.
7. The data collected and the analysed results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals I understand that the provided information and my contribution to this project is not going be given to third parties.

I agree to take part in this research project. With my signature, I declare that I have understood the research purposes and proceedings.

Signature Research Participant

Interview Schedule political Actor (Sample)

Introduction

- Personal introduction?
- What is your position/ responsibility in [Name of the Company]? Which projects/ activities were you particularly involved in?
- What were your primary motivations/ interest for your involvement with [Name of the Company]?
- How do you personally relate to the struggles/ movements towards gender/ social equality?

Hull2017

- What is Hull2017?
- What intention/ vision/ inspiration lays the basis for the project?
- In what way does the original bid relate to the final mega-event that we see in 2017?
- From your point of view: What are the core responsibilities/ potentials/ possibilities of a mega-event like UK City of Culture/ in Hull/ in 2017?
- In relation to the discussion of the potential social, economic, regenerative benefits of a mega-event, where does the cultural dimension come into play? What is the relevance of the cultural dimension?

Gender Perspective:

- In what way does Hull2017 discuss/ produce/ question social/ cultural values in its programming?
- What are the core values of the project? What values does the festival want to represent? What values did the project want to communicate?
- In what way is a mega-event a suitable/ appropriate medium for the discussion/ production/ questioning of social/ cultural values?
- In what way is the project/ mega-event political or has political intentions/ interests? (In what way can the project/ mega-event be political?)
- Gender-sensitive activities throughout the entire year, with two core festivals regarding gender and sexual equality:
- In what way is gender perspectives reflected in the programme throughout the year?

- What is the relevance of gender/ social equality in the organisational process of the mega-event?
- In what way did gender/ sexual orientation/ equality as a theme or as a practice guide you in the process of programming activities?

Resonance/ Legacy

- In what way does/ can the mega-event Hull2017 contribute to gender/ sexual equality?
- What do you take out of it? What did you learn? How does the experience of Hull2017 influence your future?

Interview Schedule cultural Actor (Sample)

Personal Introduction

- Personal introduction?
- What is your position/ responsibility in [Name of the Event]? Which projects/ activities were you particularly involved in?
- How do you relate personally to the struggles/ movements towards gender/ sexual equality?

Organisational processes

- What is [Name of the Event]?
- What is the relationship between [Name of the Event] and Hull2017?
- What is your position/ responsibility for the production [Name of the Event]?
- In what way did gender/ sexual orientation/ equality as a theme guide the organisational practice?

Values/ Narratives/ Politics:

- What intention/ vision/ inspiration laid the basis for the event?
- What are the core values of the project? What does the project want to express? What values did the project want to communicate?
- In what way is the project political or has political intentions/ interests?
- In what way does the festival promote equality?
- What relevance does such a project have for Hull, for Hull2017, for society?

Programming Values/ Narratives and Politics

- What was vision/ perspective/ intentions in the programming [Name of the Event]?
- In what way programming guided by the theme of gender/ sexual orientation/ equality?
- In what way are the selected formats of the different projects suitable for the discussion of such political intentions/ interests?
- What aesthetics does your event support? In what way is such aesthetic suitable to stress the political intentions/ interests of the project?

Resonance/ Legacy

- In what way does a project such as [Name of the Event] contribute to gender/ sexual equality?
- What do you take out of it? What did you learn? How does the experience of [Name of the Event] in 2017 influence your future?

Interview/ Workshop Schedule Focus Groups (Sample)

Time/ Topic	Description
Welcome (5min)	<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research project ‘Gendering Cities of Culture’• What is a Group Discussion/ Collective Reflection?• Informed Consent and Demographic Form
Getting to know the group (15min)	<p>Word Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We all live in Hull; We all have made experiences in Hull – we know the city through our eyes; We are all experts of this city → I am interested in the citizens perspective onto Hull2017, their perceptions of the developments and particularly interested in the experiences made within the different cultural activities.• We are Hull is the slogan in Made in Hull – What are our perspectives on Hull?• Names? When I think of Hull2017, I think off? <p>Experience Mapping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mapping the city from our personal vision Where do I live? → Which places do I consider home in Hull? (Blue) Where do I spend most of my time when I am not home? (Red) Which is my favourite place in the city? (Yellow) Which places do I not know at all? (Brown) Three Dots: Where do you associate the Hull2017 and its events to take place? (Purple) Where has the best UK City of Culture event taken place? Which one was it? (Purple)
Vote and Discussion (30mins)	<p>Yes and No Votes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collection of statements throughout the year – from our interviews, announcements in different events, and Hull2017 publications (including Facebook, twitter etc.).• Reading out the statements• immediate response to these statements → green card expresses agreement, red states disagreement with the statements• After a primary vote, we will discuss your answers and consideration in more detail.• Do you agree or disagree with these statements? I feel that Hull2017 created welcoming spaces where I could be myself and feel included.

Hull2017 challenged in my ideas of social inequality.
I feel that Hull2017 raised my awareness about gender equality
Hull is a more equal place due to Hull2017.
Hull2017 enabled me to make a unique memory this year.

Craft (30min)

Preserving Memories

- Final statement: What is this memory?
- How would this memory look like in a snow globe?
How would 2017 look like in a snow globe?
- Explanation of the metaphor of a snow globe
 - The snow globe is a typical souvenir
 - Represent iconic buildings, important people or another special symbol
 - Representation placed in a glittery, artificial world created underneath glass.
 - Your opportunity to conserve your memory of 2017 in such way.
 - Whenever necessary you can shake it up again.
 - Next 15 minutes in order to construct in 3D a representation of this memory
 - Then 10 minutes to finalize the snow globe with the appropriate glitter and jar.
 - I am helping out with the final touch (if we don't finish in the 20 mins we can put the project aside and work on it at the end of the workshop)

Check-out (10min)

One Year in One Minute

- each person gets one minute to share anything that they feel is necessary to consider to their experience of Hull2017.

Interview Schedule Observing-Participant (Sample)

- Personal Introduction

Overall Experience of the event

- What were the expectations before joining the [Name of the Event]?
- What is the [Name of the Event] about?
- In what way does the festival/ theme relate to your personal interests?

Experiences on the sights

- Which activities did you visit during the week?
- What was your overall experience of the different activities and the week in general?
- What was the general atmosphere that you experienced in the event? In what way was that visible/ feelable?

Narrative/ Story

- Which activities in the programme did you participate?
- Which activities did you miss/ would have wished to attend?
- What was particularly exciting/ interesting/ new?
- What was not talked about? What did you miss from the programme? What would you change?
- What was the core value that the festival wanted to communicate/ What was the core value that you experienced from the festival?
- What kind of message did you receive from overall festival or the different performances?
- In what way was gender discussed throughout in the festival/ the individual activities?
- What kind of story of gender did the festival provoke?
- In what way was assumptions concerning gender challenged in the exhibition?

Resonance/ Legacy

- What can such a celebration contribute in the discussion of gender/ social equality?
- What impact did the [Name of the Event] have on you? What did you learn?

Research Impact

Evaluation Report: The Conversation Continues

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES
Event Series

MOVING MOMENTS
Community Dance Project
14.-18. March 2018

(MEDIA)TED
Performative Reading
13. June 2018

Can we imagine a culture of gender equality? In what way can creative and artistic practice help us in this visionary thinking?

Three interventions invite citizens, artists and academics to reflect, explore and envision cultures of gender equality through different creative mediums.

MORE CULTURES OF EQUALITY
Open Space Forum
21. September 2018

genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com
f The Conversation Continues
t @catalyst_gender
e b.grabher@hull.ac.uk
FURTHER INFORMATION

UNIVERSITY OF HULL
Grace
EUROPEAN UNION

Summary

- 3 Interventions
- 4 Artistic Collaborations
- 8 volunteers
- 10 Venues
- 134 participants
- 107 online followers

Introduction

The event series, *The Conversation Continues*, served as a creative translation of the research project: *Gendering Cities of Culture*. Concluding from the investigation, a three-day festival, temporary exhibitions or a yearlong mega-event potentially intervene in or contribute to communal values through the initiation of conversations. However, fostering, producing and embracing a cultures of gender equality requires a continuation of these conversations. The event series, *The Conversation Continues*, picked up on these observations and created spaces for further discussion, critical reflection and creative expression about cultures of gender equality. Throughout the year, three interventions invited citizens, artists and academics to explore cultures of gender equality through different creative mediums including as dance, film and performance.



- 2 artists collaborations;
- 18 community dancers;
- 1 volunteer

The first intervention, *Moving Moments*, of the event series, *The Conversation Continues*, took place from the 14th until the 18th of March 2018. The community dance project, *Moving Moments*, invited residents of Hull to reflect and express their experiences of Hull's celebrations of the title *UK City of Culture* in 2017 through movement and dance.

The community dance project recruited residents through an open call for participation from the 15th of February until the 9th of March 2018. Within the recruitment period, 25 residents registered for participation with a final participation of 18 residents.

In two rehearsals under guidance of Hull-based dance artist Tamar Draper, residents explored different movements. In group exercises, participants proposed different movements which might represent, associate or relate to their experiences within Hull's celebrations in 2017. The experience of abstracting from one's own experience into a dance movement was described by participants as challenging but unique, as it allowed a rethinking of memories. With a final selection of four movements the choreography was further explored and perfected during the second rehearsal. Furthermore, the participants prepared different formations and positions for the two upcoming performance days.





Over the course of Saturday, 17th of March 2018, and Sunday, 18th of March 2018, performances took place in five central locations in Hull. Locations included Queen Victoria Square, Trinity Square, Scale Lane Staith, Stage@thedock and Minerva Pier. Audio-visual artist Andrew Quinn documented the performances through film for the further process of creating a filmic translation of the research project: *Gendering Cities of Culture*. The documentation was furthermore supported by Joe Bateman through photography.



See following link for full work:

<https://genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com/the-conversation-continues/moving-forward/>



- artist collaboration;
- 5 volunteers;
- 70+ participants in video;
- 15 audience members
- support of new studio space in Hull.

In the project, Lou Hazelwood and Barbara Grabher artistically expanded and engaged with the academic interests of research project: *Gendering Cities of Culture*. Through a multimedia approach of utilising film, light and scripted reading performances, Hazelwood and Grabher introduced processes of mediating, contrasting and recycling to the experiential exploration of the production of cultures of gender equality through Hull2017.



The video installation collapses visual and sonic impulses – creating, playing and reimagining processes of reflections. Reflections are understood in physical senses through the coloured shading of facial features. Furthermore, the reflective practices are expressed through the recycling, reading, performing of posts released by Hull2017 social media channels. In combination, the installation invites for reflections about the production of cultures of gender equality and how such equality might be drawn upon ourselves.

The development of this video installation took three stages. Firstly, Hazelwood and Grabher collected facial portraits underneath the ever-changing blue and pink light. For this purpose, over 70 people participated in the filming process, which lasted over four evenings in January 2019. Participants were recruited through an open call through social media channels. Additionally, by-passers were asked to join into the art work spontaneously. The second stage took place on the 13th of June 2018 in form of a performative reading involving six readers. Due to the facilities at the newly established Photomoments Studio and the support of owner Jerome Whittingham, the reading was live recorded with an audience of 15 visitors. In a final step, the video installation was published and hosted online on the research blog genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com. Visitors are asked to leave comments to foster further conversation online as well as offline.



See following link for full work:

<https://genderingcitiesofculture.wordpress.com/mediated/>

Selected Comments

Portrait project with a difference – enjoyed taking part. Perhaps this is the truest reflection of how people experienced 2017: a torrent of information that to an outsider appears as nonsense but to us who were there and experienced the spectacle it resonates with potency, power dynamics and poignancy.

MichelleDee

This video is so beautiful and so perfectly encapsulates Barbara's commitment to her fieldwork experience. Giving voice to her research partners, Barbara is really turning ethnography upside down, letting the field become the real protagonist of her work. So beautifully done!!! And the video has an Easter egg: Barbara herself among her research partners, perfectly blending among them!!!

TommyTrillo

I liked the way in which you put together all the faces and coloured them with different lights. I find this experimental effect enjoyable as enjoyable is the visual confusion that comes with them. on the other hand, I found the sovrapposition of so many voices slightly discomfoting but probably that was part of the desired effect to convey the messiness of the real (i.e. in your case flow of information, people, commercials etc etc).

SaVerderi



- 25 participants
- 2 volunteers



On the 21st of September, the final intervention, *MORE – Cultures of Equality*, of the series, *The Conversation Continues*, took place. Humber Street Gallery offered their space for this event, which embraced conversation as an artistic practice. Departing from Stuart Halls considerations of culture as a net of relationships, this final intervention approached cultures of gender equality with the aim of creating relationships through conversations. In the midst of exhibition, *The Lumen Prize: Measures of Life*, 25 participants joined the exploration of the question: How can we build more Cultures of Equality in Hull?



The conversation was set out as an Open Space Forum. This conversation method is driven by the participants' interests and passions. While the event was themed by the central question, the agenda was created by the attendees throughout the event. Throughout the evening, participants called for sessions on questions such as the following example:

How do we measure Equality?

What is a community and should we avoid this term?

How do we expose the majority traditional culture with more of minority culture?

Through multiple parallel sessions, the complex topic of cultures of gender equality was broken down into smaller, personal encounters and brain storms. The event was supported by volunteers Laura Shand and Sandie Mills as well as documented photographically by Joe Bateman.

Policy Briefing

Gendering Cities of Culture: Fostering the gendered Dimensions of City/ Capital of Culture Mega-events.

Executive Summary

Capital/ City of Culture (COC) initiatives are a crucial influence in the contemporary European arts and cultural scene. The establishment of the *European Capital/City of Culture* (ECOC) title in 1985 inaugurated a new conceptualisation of the relationship between cities, their cultural assets and events. With over 31 spin-off initiatives including the *UK City of Culture* (UKCOC), the framework carries enormous potential for the newly imagined relations between the mentioned entities (Green, 2017). The festivalisation trend carries opportunities as well as challenges for the celebration of socio-cultural values that the initiatives encourages (Cudny, 2016: 2; Newbold et al., 2015: 2). In more recent COC editions, a '(re)programming' (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 22) of the initiatives can be observed. Continuously driven by economic regenerative objectives, explorations and aspirations for cultural transformations are shaping the COC agendas. This brief draws from recent research to present recommendations to strengthen contemporary trends and its subsequent production of cultures of gender equality as crucial aspect in the '(re)programming' (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 22) developments.

Background

The ECOC award inaugurated in 1985 with Athens as first city to 'celebrate the richness and diversity of Europe' (European Commission, 2015: 1). As one of the most popular cultural initiatives of the European Commission, the successful framework receives great attention and works as a prestigious title for the host cities. Glasgow 1990, Lille 2004 and Liverpool 2008 are often cited ECOCs, which shaped the trajectory of the initiative and established models for other cities (García & Cox, 2013). Consequently, the British ECOCs serve as the foundation, upon which the UKCOC initiative builds. Economic regeneration served as key objective of the application and execution of the mega-event (Department for Culture, Media and Sports, 2013; Redmond, 2009). In more recent editions of the ECOC and UKCOC mega-events, the former focus on economic regeneration shifts towards socio-cultural transformation, as the case studies of Derry/

Londonderry 2013 and Donostia/ San Sebastián 2016 show (Boland, Murtagh, & Shirlow, 2016; Immler & Sakkers, 2014). Informed by such trends, the research project, *Gendering Cities of Culture*, explores qualitative the case study of *Hull UK City of Culture 2017*, in what way socio-cultural values are being integrated and celebrated in the yearlong mega-event. The analytical focus lies on the production of cultures of gender equality as a central feature of the programmes in the respective cities.

The research outlines that socio-cultural values and particularly cultures of gender equality are produced through audience engagements, performed content as well as infrastructural conditions of events and festivals. While aware of their limitations, COC mega-events carry an important potential for the production of socio-cultural values and particularly cultures of gender equality.

Recommendations

In order to explore and strengthen the potential of COC mega-events for socio-cultural transformation further, the following recommendations are drawn from the research project: *Gendering Cities of Culture*.

1. Adaptation of selection criteria for COC applicant cities, in order to encourage interrogations of socio-cultural values as central concern of COC mega-events. While the introduction of the selection criteria, *European Dimension* and *City and Citizens*, in the policy amendments of 1999 strengthened the attention on socio-cultural dynamics, further guidance in the interpretations of such criteria would enable bidding cities to engage with socio-cultural values as part of their curatorial and strategic process.
2. Re-definition of evaluation frameworks of COC mega-events, in order to direct attention to the medium- and long-term transformations. In contemporary evaluation formats, only minor attention is given to the mega-events potential for the production of socio-cultural values. As evaluative attention lies particularly on short- and eventual medium-term impacts, long-termed influences such as socio-cultural transformations are evaluated and further researched only to a limited extend. Adjustments in the evaluation processes and requirements would allow to adapt and

encourage long-term research into the influential production of socio-cultural values in the context of COC mega-events.

3. Encouragement for exploration and innovation of host cities with the aim to look beyond traditional mega-event framework and event structures; granting space and attention to the negotiation of socio-cultural values. With a '(re)programming' (Immler & Sakkers, 2014: 22) of COC mega-events towards socio-cultural transformation, the 365 days of culture and its event-based structure of a traditional mega-event require new programme models. As highlighted in the second recommendation, medium- and long-term developments need to be further foregrounded and therefore, the framework of a mega-event needs to be reconsidered and restructured, in order to suit the aims and objective related to exploration of socio-cultural values.
4. Mediate and mentor national, regional and local policy-makers in the shifting priorities of COC mega-events. Bidding cities need encouragement to understand artistic and cultural production for their inherent artistic value and influence in society. While many bid cities rely in their applications and executions on arts and culture as an instrument for economic regeneration, funding bodies need to give guidance, mediation and mentorship to understand the intrinsic value of arts and culture beyond the mere economic value.

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