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## **The Pretensions of a Mediated Culture: The Case of Herceg Novi, European Capital of Culture 2021**

**Abstract:** This article is about problematization of media image created on the eve of Herceg Novi, Montenegro's candidacy for European Capital of Culture 2021, which, in this competition was awarded to competitor city Novi Sad, Serbia, instead. The introductory portion of this article concerns the philosophers of the Frankfurt School, as well as the concept of creative industries, as well as the critical theory of society, which leads to the treatment of culture as a consumer good, and its subsequent exploitation. Via a review of media permeability and indulgence, we analyze the media situation of specific local communities, including consumers' opinion of local news portals, through the media 'shaping' of information associated with the aforementioned candidacy. The text also examines the realities and possibilities of local cultural policy and cultural workers before and during the preparation of the candidacy itself. Finally, we shall seek answers to the following questions: Who is involved in the creation of culture in local media, and what kind of culture is created in the media context?

**Keywords:** European Capital of Culture Herceg Novi; media image; candidacy; cultural policy; cultural industries

### **Introduction**

The problematization of the media picture, created ahead of the Montenegro's candidacy of Herceg Novi for European Capital of Culture 2021, is the scope of this article. Regarding the understanding of the concept of cultural industry,<sup>1</sup> what Adorno and Horkheimer wrote about, this paper analyzes the concrete situation of the candidacy, in which culture was commodified and used to make society passive towards cultural changes. Through the review of journalistic permeability and leniency, consideration is given to the reception of information by the local community regarding the intention of members of one part of the ruling political coalition, which started with the project and fully undertook it. As the center of the governance structure, the

<sup>1</sup> The concept of cultural industries was created in 1944 under the auspices of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and its most prominent representatives by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. The term was used to indicate irreconcilable contrasts between culture and the economy. In postindustrial societies, in relation to those forms that existed in the past, in the 1980s, the concept of cultural industries was accepted in a more positive sense.

local self-government association, named ‘Choice’<sup>2</sup> and itself part of the coalition alliance, could have influenced local news portals as very important sources of information, as well as means of profiling that information reaching the public. This may be the starting point for reasoning about ‘media truth,’<sup>3</sup> which was the first victim of the use of cultural opportunities for propaganda purposes.

The anachronistic representation (or concealment) of decisions and results refers directly to attempts at explicit self-regulation of cultural policy economics,<sup>4</sup> carried out during the timeframe of project preparation. As we know, the title of European Capital of Culture was awarded to Novi Sad; consequently this cultural maneuver was received negatively by local society. A paradigm of this paper is the fact that the realization and participation in the candidacy project required continuous activity in the field of culture, in accordance with the knowledge of anthropological opportunities, understanding and knowledge about the tradition of Herceg Novi, and networking of the institutional and civil sector.

### **Pretensions of mediatized culture**

As Pierre Bourdieu states in his analysis of television and the media as a whole, the key issue is the field of journalism,<sup>5</sup> which has its own legality. Bourdieu examines the relationship between individual sectors (press, radio and TV), as well as relations of dominance within each of them. The economic dependence<sup>6</sup> of TV and radio stations can affect editorial policy, but when it comes to journalism, there is nothing to change formally – a daily newspaper, a weekly, a monthly, can maintain established concepts of reporting. A newspaper can appear with different content and appearance, which consequently results in changes in the status of other papers within the same field.<sup>7</sup> Then there is a shutdown or a change in editorial policy, adaptive positioning in relation to the competition. Bourdieu’s analysis implies both the relations of employees (editors) in newspaper houses, and their relations with the media corporation heads and owners.

The citizens association “The Election”, as part of a political coalition and during its mandate initiated the project the European Capital of Culture Herceg Novi 2021 upon the decision of the Herceg Novi Assembly on May 19, 2015, when the city’s candidacy was officially announced. It will be revealed that the Assembly session approved the future concept, which was pushed by the media imperatives of speed and

<sup>2</sup> Udruženje građana Izbor, “Da se Novi razvija,” <https://www.facebook.com/izbor.info/>, acc. June 15, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Media truth’ was closely related to those [truths/values] accepted by the ruling coalition.

<sup>4</sup> Routh Towse, “Ekonomski profil sektora kulture,” in *Ekonomika kulture* (Beograd: Clio, 2012), 31–77.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Narcisovo ogledalo. Debata o televiziji i novinarstvu* (Beograd: Clio, 2000), 91–107.

<sup>6</sup> Economic dependence of public or commercial broadcasters.

<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu has defined the field as a network or configuration of objective relations between positions. The most important feature of the field is dynamism.

sensationalism, without any delay or dialogue. Society, and not just a scientific community – in this case a group of this project's leaders – had to know about the complexity of the project's content of cultural possibilities, as well as its plans in the 'bid book' of proposals for possible subsidization, that would be presented to the European Commission. Functionalism<sup>8</sup> focuses on the development and survival of the community, in contrast to the needs of an individual who is perceived in relation to a system of which it is an integral part. As such, it functions as a system and works the way the system requires. Functionalist perspective sees the media as an important factor in social life and in solving social problems, and for this purpose includes a large influx of targeted information. It means that this way of thinking views the media as consumer goods regulated by the laws of market supply and demand. Contrary to functionalism, the critical theory of society emphasizes man, his dignity and freedom, in contrast to the sociological system manipulated by personality. As Divna Vuksanovic writes in her book *Filozofija medija: ontologija, estetika, kritika* [*Media Philosophy: ontology, aesthetics, criticism*], media phenomena should not be read and identified as one of the phenomena of virtual reality, which operates through multiple media culture filters. It is precisely the opposite, which is a problematic examination of the entire territory of media activity, which will enable the foundation of a philosophy of the media that recognizes world of inverted reality as a cause for conceptual work, critical thinking and responsible social action.<sup>9</sup> Information is a prerequisite for achieving power, and the media are crucial in power relations at the local and global levels. Today, experts are trying to find out whether the media really directly affects consumers on the basis of their subcutaneous effect, or they simply represent a window into the world, a communication channel between viewers and some objective reality around them.<sup>10</sup> Giorgia Aiello in her co-authorial text "Symbolic Capitals: Visual Discourse and Intercultural Exchange in the European Capital of Culture Scheme]" wrote of the political, economic and cultural impact of the European Capital of Culture project on the local community, obtaining the outline of the European identity of the city, studying the promotional texts 30 out of 43 participants, in the period from 2005 to 2011. It becomes clear here that the common intention of these cities was to use the intercultural potentials of visual discourse, which in the initial name of Frenemies<sup>11</sup> could be manifested, but only formally, in this particular case.<sup>12</sup> Ron Griffiths, analyzes in his study: "City/culture discourses: Evidence from the competition to select the European

<sup>8</sup> Mišel Lalman, "Funkcionalizam Talkota Parsonsa," in *Istorija socioloških ideja, tom 2* (Beograd: Zavod za udženike i nastavna sredstva, 2004), 81–113.

<sup>9</sup> Divna Vuksanović, *Filozofija: ontologija, estetika, kritika* (Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2008), 9–55.

<sup>10</sup> Divna Vuksanović, "Mediji i obrazovanje za život s njima i u njima," in *Knjiga za medije. Mediji za knjigu* (Beograd: Clio, 2008), 13–22.

<sup>11</sup> The 'Frenemies' program was supposed to deal with the reconciliation of formerly conflicting sides in the Yugoslav conflict, connections with geographically close towns, participants in the Yugoslav conflict (for example with Dubrovnik) had to be established.

<sup>12</sup> Giorgia Aiello and Crispin Thurlow, "Symbolic Capitals: Visual Discourse and Intercultural Exchange in the European Capital of Culture Scheme," *Language and Intercultural Communication* 6, 2 (2010): 148–62.

capital of culture 2008”, how the selection process between three cities of the United Kingdom (Liverpool, Cardiff, Bristol) brought new reasoning about what culture can change in the city agenda.<sup>13</sup> Such a study was absent in the concept of Herceg Novi, which in part became clear later, when the European Commission made a detailed report on it.<sup>14</sup>

The truth can be constructed and formatted by the clips of an event, which, like the Italian philosopher Dario Fo, told in his comedy *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, when talking about constructing media truths, can be a good parallel with the essence and purpose, respectively with the topic this work. Fo dealt with mechanisms of manipulation: legal, state, the relativization of the notion of truth, and mechanisms of spinning stories that then form the opinion of citizens. Writing a media image, formatting the text to say everything without knowing much or even creating a completely opposed situation from one that is merely realistic, is a journalistic intention.<sup>15</sup>

Bourdieu explains that the very field of journalism is increasingly under the influence of a dominant commercial logic, which is a threat to the independence of various fields of cultural production. This type of manipulation takes place through the mediation of cultural creators located between the field of journalism and separate specific fields (areas in which they are educated). This kind of intellectual journalist produces two types of effects: introducing new forms of cultural production, consistent with their education, in accordance with their professional calling, but also by imposing their critical judgment, principles of evaluation originated from initial education in relation to the profession they’re engaged in.

As Lev Manovich explains in the book *New Media Language*, once texts coded human knowledge and memory, they educated, inspired, persuaded, and seduced readers to accept new ideas, new interpretations of the world and new ideologies. The printed word was related to the art of rhetoric. A new rhetoric of hypermedia might have less hyperlinks that distract the reader from the argument, but the existence of a hyperlink actually indicates a decline in the meaning of rhetoric. These connections take readers from one text to another today without any special order.<sup>16</sup> Reading requires active involvement and concentration. Writers, journalists and editors, according to their requirements, will structure the text, and readers can react in the way they want. They can read documents in parts at different times, skip ahead in order to see what will happen next or first read the end – that is, only those parts that match their interests.<sup>17</sup> This fact is especially important when we see more and more smartphones in the hands of those who pass their time by reading titles and flying over the

<sup>13</sup> Ron Griffiths, “City/culture discourses: Evidence from the competition to select the European capital of culture 2008,” *European Planning Studies* 14, 4 (2006): 415–30.

<sup>14</sup> Milena Aprčević, “Why did Herceg Novi not become the European Capital of Culture?” *Antena M*, <http://www.antenam.net/index.php/drustvo/item/30780-zasto-herceg-novi-nije-postao-evropska-prijestonica-kulture>, ac. June 15. 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Refers to the journalist in the play of Dario Fo, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*.

<sup>16</sup> Lev Manovich, *Jezik novih medija* (Beograd: Clío, 2015), 116–21.

<sup>17</sup> Roger Fidler, *Mediamorphosis* (Belgrade: Clío, 2004), 74–76.

screen through information. A reaction in the form of comment on the text on site is also permitted, which allows it to be discussed. This kind of communication can be seen on social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), which implies contrasted opinions, which are exchanged, confirmed. The freedom of expression of the individual should be guaranteed and allow virtual participation in everyday issues. The subjective reactions of the participants last until the next text where they again intersect their opinion.

### **Chronology of preparation: the media picture**

Herceg Novi's candidacy for the European Capital of Culture 2021<sup>18</sup> was delivered in Brussels on October 23, 2015. It was then indicated that this was also a practical step towards bringing Montenegro closer to the European Union. The theme and concept of the future program were called Herceg Novi 2021 Frenemies/Peace of Art. Practically, it's about two words, friends and enemies, a term *that reflects our past and present*, as it was written on the official website of the European Capital of Culture, Herceg Novi 2021, which was recently shut down.

Regarding the application, it is thought that the first application book contained approximately 80 pages answering questions by the European Commission, which were arbitrated by the jury from the texts without an oral defense. What most troubled Assembly members in municipality of Herceg Novi was the budget, how much and who would initially provide funding, and especially how it would be spent. As explained at the pre-conference, initially it was about 275,000 Euros, of which a third was already spent by October 8, 2015 – the day the session was held. Most of the money was to be spent on paying a professional team<sup>19</sup> working on preparation and realization, but money was also intended for travel, meetings, print, promo materials and applications.

If Herceg Novi was awarded the title, there would consequently be a period of construction during which the projects planned by the application, both cultural and infrastructural, would be realized. According to the model, budget for these five years

<sup>18</sup> The European Capital of Culture has been held since 1985, when it was also established on the proposal of the then-Greek Minister of Culture Melina Merkuri and her French counterpart, Jacques Lange. To this date, a total of 52 cities in Europe have carried this title.

<sup>19</sup> The expert team consisted of: Project Director Aleksandar Peković (Serbia), an expert in the field of cultural policy; Communication Director Marko Maršičević (Serbia), Darko Brlek (Slovenia); President of the European Festival Association and Director of the Ljubljana Festival), Cultural Heritage Expert Marko Mateuci (Italy); and Creative Director Nadežda Milenković (Belgrade), author of some of the region's most famous advertising campaigns. The team also included Art Director Slavisa Savić (Belgrade) graphic designer with many years of international experience, and designer Aleksandar Spasojević (Belgrade). Advisers for the application preparation team are international experts who have so far participated in five winning European Capitals of Culture: Nil Piterson, from England, and Hans Dieter Schmitt and Nadia Grizo, from Germany. During 2016, the development of projects included in the application were envisaged, and at the same time the city hosted delegations from various cities, associations and networks in order to gain important partners for organizing actions from all areas. For this phase, the projected budget was 275,000 euros.

would amount to 15 million Euros out of which, about a third came from the city and state budgets. The rest was provided by the private sector and European Union funds – which would be available to Montenegro as an EU member state (but which it has not yet become).

During the election time, reading the related newspaper articles, one could not understand what exactly was being done and what the application actually meant for the city. However, debates on the Facebook page of the Group of Satisfied Citizens of Herceg Novi<sup>20</sup> related to this topic were intensive, despite the fact that little was precisely known about it. The content of the application was the last thing that interested Herceg Novi's political opposition, which would analyze the large sums invested by the community on many issues at regular or extraordinary assemblies; when it was necessary to debate and vote, the opposition left and gave up the decision. During the two-year term of office, one of the coalition members,<sup>21</sup> came to the realization of culture as the last hope to obtain funds for an empty, deficient municipal cashbox.

The project's second phase was the correction of the book delivered in the first phase submitted in the first phase.<sup>22</sup> Then followed the defense of the book, visits by members of the jury, the organization of the European Women's Forum, with the visit from Doris Pack, as well as other women business, economic and political leaders, all of whom would be received by Natasa Acimovic, Herceg Novi's first female mayor, who was appointed by the elected coalition. Unknown to the wider expert public, her appointment to the mayor's office was not legally grounded, as claimed by a fraction of this coalition, which was confirmed twice in the court.<sup>23</sup> Herceg Novi would move to the competition's second phase, correct and refine the application, and welcome visits from the government and president of Montenegro, which signaled both public recognition and state support for the project. National branding, plus projects from the bid book, the adoption of the Culture Development Strategy or Program seemed more explicit in the statement of Nemanja Milenkovic, president of the Novi Sad Organizing Committee of 2021. However, during that time everything was under a veil of secrecy: and citizens of Herceg Novi had not learned about the existence of the project's bid book. The Municipal Assembly received visits from different regional governments in support of the candidacy, which the media extensively reported as the visits of great importance. There was still a bit of time left before the oral candidacy in Brussels, but it is now important to respect one small history of the development of events: On September 2, 2016 the Municipal Assembly decided on adoption of

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<sup>20</sup> Users of Facebook platforms discussing specific local topics within the same group.

<sup>21</sup> Of the two political parties that jointly run municipal leadership during the four-year term.

<sup>22</sup> This is the second phase, correction and clarification from the first book. In the first book we have three project lines, and within them specific projects: how can they be implemented, how it involves the public, the private sector, the NGO sector, citizens, whether it proves that the EPC is a strategic project, does the project have no ECOC, how the city imagines itself, where it should be in the next five years, etc.

<sup>23</sup> "Upravni sud presudio: Nataša Aćimović je nelegalna predsjednica Opštine Herceg Novi," Radio Jadran, <https://radiojadran.com/upravni-sud-presudio-natasa-acimovic-je-nelegalna-predsjednica-opstine-herceg-novi/>, acc. January 13, 2017.



guidelines for the Strategy for the Development of Culture Program for the period 2017–22 and conclusions on the participation of assembly in the mentioned project. Adoption of the guidelines<sup>24</sup> is a necessary component of the application for the project European Capital of Culture 2021, then the Cultural Development Program is being implemented, a legal obligation; However Herceg Novi did not adopt it as a program act.<sup>25</sup>

On September 2016, Herceg Novi delivered its candidacy to the European Commission in Brussels, whereby once again we learned about the national significance of this project, for which a large team from Herceg Novi and elsewhere in Montenegro, in cooperation with international experts, worked for nearly two years.

Dissatisfied with the treatment of the civil sector by local institutions, NGOs organized a round table to address the behavior towards local associations as the initiators of numerous cultural events in the past decade. Subsidies approved by the local government, Municipal Assembly and Tourist Organization of Herceg Novi in competitions for the NGO sector, were not assigned. Precisely, no allocation happened for years 2015 and 2016 in the prescribed deadlines. Since there are regulations that regulate the deadline for submitting project forms to public tenders – and because it is impossible to apply after one month from the beginning of the competition – regulations should be established for determining the structure of the decision committee that analyzes the project proposals, and also the valid period of the decision-making. The round table was an attempt of rebellion, but without questioning the status of the NGO sector within the European Capital of Culture project.

On October 11, a big finale was coming. Herceg Novi's delegation traveled to Brussels, where on October 13 would be held the oral presentation of the second book of the Herceg Novi 2021 project, before the members of the European Commission jury. Support from the region's cultural elite would come, would fill the columns of local media, first of all the two most important portals of Radio Jadran and Radio Herceg Novi, followed by regional online news sites.

Finally on October 13 2016, the title of the prestigious candidate was announced. It was Novi Sad. Without the intention of contemplating this decision, another date is very important: November 1, when projects would be made public and presented for the first time<sup>26</sup> projects that had been entered into the application book, and could be realized in perspective. A total of 450,000 Euros was invested in the project.

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<sup>24</sup> Vuk Vuković, Janko Ljumović, Milina Kovačević, *Smjernice za razvoj programa kulture* [Guidelines for the Culture Development] (Herceg Novi: Opština Herceg Novi, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> The same expert team, who formed the *Smjernice za razvoj programa kulture* [Guidelines for the Culture Development], joined the development of the Culture Development Program for the period of 2017–22, as a document which is primarily a priority of Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural policy, a legal obligation that many Montenegrin cities do not have.

<sup>26</sup> "Evo koji projekti iz aplikativne knjige Herceg Novi EPK mogu biti realizovani," (1<sup>st</sup> part), Radio Jadran, <https://radiojadran.com/evo-koji-projekti-iz-aplikativne-knjige-herceg-novi-epk-mogu-biti-realizovani-1-dio/>, acc. November 1, 2016.

## Frenemies: how Herceg Novi became an enemy itself

It seems that Herceg Novi remained in the ruins of the past. The wrong strategic moves, indirectly damaged by the war of the 1990s, and therefore isolated in many segments, even in the area of culture that is in question in this paper. Over the past decade and more, nothing has changed in terms of cooperation in the region, co-production and animation of cultural local capacities; finally, the culture was marginalized, and as such in the organizational and budgetary sense, passed with a very small percentage of monetary and professional interest. No one has fundamentally dealt with the statistical data and the evaluation of the field of culture, or micro/macroeconomics of cultural activities.<sup>27</sup>

This media reconstruction of the participation for candidacy of the European Capital of Culture has assumed a number of general places that the authors of the bid book formatted according to previous experiences and books with offers to finance previous candidate cities. The projections of the applications of other cities, and the implementation of such experience as a reference for the signers from the expert team who synthesized the cultural offer of the city, were first deceived by a portion of the cultural elite that was not involved in this engagement, then by the NGO sector – which was only fictitious at the end in Brussels – represented by as many as four members, finally citizens, who were the last who met with those formatted projects offered to the European Commission for Financing.

Since the very beginning of the preparation of the candidacy the project had more interpretative constraints,<sup>28</sup> referring to the scope of understanding, opinions for public debate were not formed, and then is clear the unraveling of the unique support and cooperation of the city authorities with the citizens. Moving the focus to reexamining the relationship of truth and society was taken over by one of the local news portals, Radio Jadran, which asked the city authorities a number of issues concerning Herceg Novi as a candidate city. In that manner the public has been informed from the article of this portal that, from the date of publication,<sup>29</sup> none of the authorities answered the questions regularly set up and sent to the municipal officials.<sup>30</sup> Such knowledge, the same portal transferred only after the end of the final competition. This media communication has continued in the following article,<sup>31</sup> and brought new truths. Then the dismissal of the director of the Herceg Novi's Tourist Organization was revealed, and after more than half a year, readers were given the

<sup>27</sup> Ruth Towse, *Ekonomika kulture* (Beograd: Clio, 2012), 31–102.

<sup>28</sup> Lack of guidelines later adopted, which the project of the European Capital of Culture 2021 at the beginning will more closely define.

<sup>29</sup> Posted July 2016, during the last preparations of candidacy.

<sup>30</sup> "Zašto ćute inicijatori projekta Herceg Novi – Evropska prijestonica kulture 2021," Radio Jadran, <https://radiojadran.com/zasto-cute-inicijatori-projekta-herceg-novi-evropska-prijestonica-kulture-2021>, acc. June 15, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> "Bojana Blagojević nije smjenjena ali, u TO HN se sve pita..." Radio Jadran, <http://radiojadran.com/bojana-blagojevic-nije-smijenjena-a-u-to-hn-sve-pita>, acc. June 15, 2018.



results of the competition for the subsidy of this institution. These extorted news stories were emerging as a media truth, without a pejorative meaning, which possibly existed earlier on the basis of rumors, and now publicly confirmed. Following this kind of journalism, questions of dignity were raised, as the general evaluation of the notions of truths that are created by media, especially if we consider that the same portal has so far made selective representations of local reality. As Divna Vuksanović says in the second volume of her book *Filozofija medija: ontologija, estetika, kritika* [*Media Philosophy Volume 2: Ontology, Aesthetics, Critique*]: the media did not suppress or tend to abolish the truth, but it has largely become technically mediatized, which has changed not only its medium of realization, but those important components that once made the notion of truth.<sup>32</sup>

While information as a concept of communicology can be viewed in many ways, this text considers its appearance and the effect it leaves on human consciousness. Because of everything they did not know, the citizens of Herceg Novi believe in their city, yet expressed feelings of disappointment because of the loss of money and the prestige the title would have brought. It seems that this project has ended, since the coalition of the two parties has been broken,<sup>33</sup> that it was terminated by the citizens' association and the Election, with which it all started and ended thereafter. Indeed, the citizens recognize this missed opportunity as a bad and malicious attempt to obtain more money for private purposes.

The project of the Capital of Culture for Herceg Novi seems to have remained a missed opportunity to generate European aid. However, if it were realized, by such cultural policy, one suspects the funds would have been spent in an uncertain and disproportionate manner. This is a project that an association of citizens attempted to make, with instant cultural products, trying to place an aesthetized image of the circumstances in which the project of the cultural capital develops, and through the media profiling of information, mislead the audience. Local cultural politics, clearly, can be politicized from this angle, as noted Philip Boland regarding Liverpool gaining Capital of Culture status in 2008. Through critical analysis he presented an interpretation of the acquisition of the title of the city, the initial economic and architectural potentials and, finally, the transformation of a social picture that should provide insight, and then support, different cultural geographic and socio-economic realities, as well as cultural practices and experiences.<sup>34</sup>

Herceg Novi is changing cultural policy as a consequence of subsequent political elections. No strategy for the Cultural Development Program has been adopted for a period of five years; there exists no official agenda for future cultural and artistic activities. By purpose, and arbitrarily, cultural workers are elected by political party distribution, not by their knowledge and profession. It seems that every municipal

<sup>32</sup> Divna Vuksanović, *Filozofija medija, tom 2: ontologija, estetika, kritika* (Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2011), 9–25.

<sup>33</sup>HN: Izbor raskinuo koaliciju sa DPS om," Radio Jadran, <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/politika/152623/hn-izbor-raskinuo-koaliciju-sa-dps-om.html>, acc. January 6, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Philip Boland, "Capital of Culture – you must be having a laugh! Challenging the official rhetoric of Liverpool as the 2008 European cultural capital," *Social & Cultural Geography* 11, 7 (2010): 627–45.

mandate additionally violates the identity policy of Herceg Novi, a town with a long cultural tradition, which recently has become exclusively influenced by political currents.

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