

# **Can large-scale cultural events lead to cultural scepticism?**

**Tracing unintended consequences of Stavanger2008**

**European Capital of Culture**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This article explores the consequences of large-scale cultural events on citizens' belief systems<sup>1</sup>. In 2008, the Stavanger region on the West Coast of Norway underwent a colossal series of arrangements and activities as the European Union's European Capital of Culture. Specifically, this paper explores if the status Stavanger experienced affects attitudes toward alternative impulses and foreign peoples. We focus on possible change in inhabitants' cultural scepticism, in terms of their tolerance for cultural diversity, typically associated with the influx of foreigners and immigrants (see Goot, 1993; Lijuan and Scheer, 2004; Woodward, Skrbis, and Bean, 2008; Bay, Hellevik, and Hellevik, 2007). Creating an open and inviting atmosphere has been an important aim - among others - in planning and promoting large-scale cultural events (Langen and Garcia, 2009). Ambitions in such directions were especially pronounced for the Stavanger

region as Cultural Capital 2008 (SCC08), signalled by the chosen “Open Port” motto (Rommetvedt, 2008).

Previous research has emphasised that attitude change is more likely to result from strengthening or renewing existing or latent values rather than from introducing radically new ideas (Bohner and Wänke, 2002). By echoing and underlining norms of tolerance and inclusiveness, massive artistic expressions and spectacular events might spark the hearts and minds of local inhabitants in positive directions. From such reasoning, one could argue that cultural arrangements would widen inhabitants’ perspectives, particularly in line with the idealistic expectations of those who advocate for large-scale cultural events (see Allport, 1954). An alternative logic, however, stressing more complex mechanisms of forming attitudes may lead to different predictions. At the outset, a rational organizing principle for large-scale events within a region typically implies staging performances at the geographical mid point or centre. It follows, therefore, that activities and arrangements normally cannot be equally accessible to all. Thus, we expect that inhabitants living near the centres of main activities might naturally be more exposed to and involved with the activities than more distant others. Hence, citizens in the larger region consist mainly of two groups: (1) those living near the centre with easy access to performances and activities and (2) those living more distant from activities, with less opportunity to become involved (see Kolstad, 2002). In line with Boyko (2008), we contend that those who live beyond the centres of main activities may experience certain reactions, such as feeling deceived or even provoked. They will perceive themselves as excluded and perhaps a bit degraded. Feelings of relative deprivation in such a context may lead to increased negative attitudes toward novel ideas and foreign customs (Hernes and Knudsen, 1992). This alternative argument implies that inhabitants who live in

localities at some distance from cultural events, and are thus exposed less to those events, will develop increased cultural scepticism.

In a globalized world, developments in all spheres—international, national, and local—shape individual beliefs (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthaart, 2009). Thus, when investigating attitudinal consequences of specific events within a limited geographical region, one must keep in mind outside circumstances, especially how the mass media conveys external developments.

Scepticism toward foreign ideas, customs, and peoples has a strong cultural component - in addition to economic concerns - that tends to be triggered in times of perceived political anomie and economic downturn (Hernes and Knudsen, 1992, 1994; Knudsen, 1997). External developments will thus interact with local processes in shaping individuals' beliefs. Hence, we argue that outside developments may modify the impact of large-scale events on inhabitants' views. The global financial crisis of 2008 and intensified public debate about immigration in Norway and Europe during the same period are factors that could interact with local influences related to Cultural Capital in shaping citizens beliefs<sup>2</sup>. Hence, local attitudes must be understood in relation to outside developments, especially at the national level. Typically, if national surveys indicate Norwegians' tolerance for cultural diversity is stable, a possible local decrease among potentially excluded groups will be interpreted as support for an alternative hypothesis, postulating that scepticism is a reaction to perceived degradation and relative deprivation.

Langen and Garcia (2009: 9) noted that previous research on the impacts of large-scale cultural events has been limited in at least three ways. First, such studies have tended to ignore socio-cultural and attitudinal consequences, although these could be considered as more important than economic consequences. Indeed, Hall (1992) observed nearly two decades ago that this narrow

focus is often adopted because such impacts may be more difficult to measure and may be less politically palatable. Second, a number of studies have lacked proper research design to empirically grasp intangible social-cultural impacts within a complex framework. Although scholars have applied a broad array of approaches, in reality few studies have used quantitative methods or experimental designs to estimate specific outcomes. Third, many studies have taken a short-term approach, typically involving ex-post assessments only, making causal inferences especially problematic.

In the following, we attempt to overcome the shortcomings of prior contributions. Thus, this article is among the first to focus on the non-economic effects of cultural events in terms of inhabitants' beliefs. At the same time, this study applies multivariate methods and adopts a quasi-experimental design that involves measurements before and after main events. In this manner, the following analyses may fill a gap in the research literature. To evaluate theoretical arguments empirically, we analyse data from two representative surveys carried out in the Stavanger region late in 2007 and early in 2009; that is, before and after the region was named a European Cultural Capital 2008 (SCC08). By comparing the difference in cultural scepticism between those living close to events and those living further away (Inside Central Axis vs. Outside Central Axis) prior to the Cultural Capital period and after, an empirical basis for discussing attitudinal consequences can be provided. In addition, survey results at the national level for the same period, just recently made available, provide a relevant framework for evaluating potential changes in the region within a broader context.

## **THE SETTING**

In 2008, after a comprehensive process that started nearly ten years prior, the Stavanger region celebrated its status as a European Capital of Culture along with the city of Liverpool in Great Britain. Stavanger is the fourth largest city in Norway, centred in the middle of the much wider Rogaland County. Its neighbouring city is Sandnes. Together, the two cities and surrounding municipalities form an urban area in the geographic middle of the region, totalling a little more than 200,000 inhabitants. This amounts to nearly half of the total population of Rogaland County, which in itself is home to near 10% of Norway's 4.8 billion people.

Since the early 1970s, Stavanger, previously known for its canning and shipping industries, has been a centre for exploring and producing oil after it was discovered in 1969 under the North Sea, west of the region. Given its significant role in developing this new and increasingly important industry, Stavanger has been labelled 'The Oil Capital' of Norway. Government agencies related to producing oil and gas, the headquarters of large national and international companies, and industry-related businesses are located there. Discovering oil fundamentally changed the economic basis for the whole region. From being an economically challenged place in 1960, Stavanger city and Rogaland County have gradually grown into one of the wealthiest areas in Norway. During this period, the pattern of cultural consumption and taste of inhabitants has undergone marked changes (Rosenlund, 2000, 2009).

Higher wealth levels over the last generation have strengthened inhabitants' self-image and politicians' ambitions. According to observers at the national level, representatives from the region are less modest and display stronger self-confidence on the national scene than they previously did. For example, increased aspirations combined with local determination led to the successful bid to establish a new university in the area. In 2004, University of Stavanger became

the fifth Norwegian university, following concerted and lasting local efforts spanning several decades. Future challenges, however, go beyond consolidating the position of the oil capital. It has been documented that available reserves are limited and that the Norwegian production of oil and gas has seemingly reached its peak. Although expected high oil prices for years to come are likely to keep investment and activities at high levels, there is a recognized need for developing an alternative, long run economic platform for the region. Hence, major political and academic institutions have mobilized to attract innovative ideas and highly skilled professionals and workers. One pillar judged as critical for developing the region in the future is a dynamic and strong cultural sector. It is against this backdrop that Stavanger's bid for status as the European Capital of Culture should be understood, along with the new university and parallel efforts ranging from profiled chamber music festivals to international sporting events. Rather than being labelled the Oil Capital of Norway, the Stavanger region aspires to becoming the country's 'Culture Capital'.

In its bid to be selected the EU's European Capital of Culture in 2008, Stavanger deliberately chose the bold motto 'Open Port'. This concept expresses a vision of openness toward the outside world, implying keen interest in innovative ideas, and an emphasis on cultural diversity and dialogue, with tolerance of foreign peoples and customs (see [www.Stavanger2008.no](http://www.Stavanger2008.no)). With its long-standing tradition as the gateway to Europe and the US, the area in recent decades has also welcomed a large influx of newcomers from different nations to the oil industry. The Open Port vision stresses renewed and strengthened commitment to inclusiveness and diversity. It has been observed that the intrinsic relevance of culture and emphasising values such as openness and tolerance appear more pronounced in the SCC08 program than in previous culture capitals

(Rommetvedt, 2008; see also Fossåskaret, 2009). Thus, studying the postulated link between the Stavanger 2008 event and inhabitants' cultural orientations appears especially relevant.

Under the Open Port vision for SCC08, more than 1,100 different projects and performances were carried out over twelve months. With its varied and innovative program, SCC08 involved the younger generation and groups from different backgrounds, attracting more than two million participants and spectators. Some activities were spread across the larger county. The main events and performances, however, were staged in the Central Stavanger - Sandnes axis, including two neighbouring municipalities of Randaberg and Sola (see Figure 1, Map of Rogaland County). Fewer activities took place in the North, such as Haugesund city or in the South such as Eigersund city. Both Haugesund and Eigersund are examples of dynamic and culturally active places and historically open ports in their own right. Practical and rational reasons were behind concentrating the projects geographically, as arrangements located Inside the Central Axis (ICA) provided easy access for more people compared to areas Outside the Central Axis (OCA). In short, the geographical distribution of activities suggested that the larger area could be roughly divided into two groups: (1) those close to activities, with easy access and much exposure (ICA) and (2) those farther away with less exposure (OCA). In this article, we use this distinction when analysing the possible effects of SCC08.



**Figure 1.** Map of Rogaland County, Norway. The darker area indicates the Inside Central Axis are (ICA; the four municipalities of Stavanger, Sandnes, Randaberg, and Sola). The white area represents the Outside Central Axis (OCA; the remaining 22 municipalities). Grey areas illustrate sea water in the West (left side) leading to the North Sea.

## ALTERNATIVE MECHANISMS AND HYPOTHESES

The idea of arts and cultural activities as a powerful force in transforming individuals' mindsets has been described vividly in the literature, as well as by well-known artists themselves (see for instance [Barenboim, 2008](#)). Such accounts, together with anecdotal evidence and idealistic



projections from organizers, seemingly fortify the arguments for a postulated positive relationship between cultural mega events and tolerance for cultural diversity. In addition, following arguments in recent attitude research (Bohner and Wänke, 2002), and in line with the early literature on intergroup prejudice (Allport, 1954), one may contend that mechanisms linked to exposure, involvement, and sharing can strengthen dormant or latent values of tolerance, diversity, and inclusiveness; in other words, their level of cultural scepticism. From this logic, we derive the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Easy access and high exposure to SCC08 events will reduce inhabitants' cultural scepticism.*

Nevertheless, the postulated link between artistic experiences and beliefs appear less documented in the research literature. Further, few systematic studies of potential consequences of large-scale cultural events on citizens' mental orientations exist, at least within a Scandinavian context (Langen and Garcia, 2009). Kolstad and colleagues (Kolstad, 2002; Rundmo, Kolstad, and Svarva, 1995; Kolstad, Svarva, and Rundmo, 1995), however, investigated the impact the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer (Norway) had on values and attitudes. Obviously, the Winter Olympic events differed from the European Cultural Capital arrangement in many respects. Parallels exist, however, in the ambitious aspirations and the comprehensive organization of these activities. One may also note that although the focus at Lillehammer in 1994 was naturally on sports and competitions, several large-scale cultural arrangements were staged around these games. It could also be argued that artistic performances and sports competitions have common elements involving spectators and participants, which may suggest parallel mechanisms of forming attitudes and change.

From the Lillehammer studies, we can derive at least two lessons. First, large-scale events do not necessarily affect attitudes in a strong way because measurable changes appeared small or less systematic. Second, effects may go in unexpected directions. Although the Olympic Games traditionally have stressed mutual understanding and tolerance between different peoples, the Lillehammer event seemingly triggered negative reactions among local citizens in terms of increased ethnocentrism.

Available research (see Forbes, 1997) thus suggests that a simple causal link between mega events and attitude change is less obvious, and that the mechanisms at work may be more complex than what appears at first glance. For this study, it is especially relevant to note that such massive happenings can produce side effects or unintended consequences. A recent study by Boyko (2008) indicated that if some groups feel they have less access to activities linked to large-scale events and perceive these events are tailored for others, they might react with a negative evaluation of the very ideas and symbols behind the event. This interpretation is consistent with idea of relative deprivation, as originally coined by Stouffer (1949) and further outlined by Runchiman (1964) and Williams (1975). Relative deprivation has also been applied in the Scandinavian context in analyses of citizens' attitudes toward foreign ideas and people (Hernes and Knudsen, 1992). Simply put, relative deprivation is a feeling of injustice when others receive more than they 'should', in relation to their efforts, their needs, their rank, and such, whether this feeling is based on a real difference or an assumed one. Hence, when others are given better access to a good or service they do not necessarily deserve more than others do, 'justice is fulfilled' through negative responses that could be seen as equalising the balance sheet.

Translating these arguments in to the local setting with groups ICA of events and others OCA, we formulate an alternative hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Limited access and low exposure to SCC08 events will increase inhabitants' cultural scepticism.*

Although the two alternative hypotheses point to different mechanisms of attitude change, they do not exclude one another. In principle, it could be possible that those more exposed to large-scale events increase their tolerance, whilst those feeling excluded may increase their scepticism. An observed change in only one of the two groups, however, for instance those less exposed becoming more negative, with simultaneous stability for the other, would support one of the hypotheses while undermining the other. We have, moreover, emphasized that local empirical findings should be evaluated against the backdrop of trends at the national level, if possible. Such national data can help provide a relevant point of reference for understanding regional patterns. Thus, for instance, if local stability (no change) for the more exposed group is corroborated by stability for national indicators, an explanation of a possible decrease for the less exposed group appears even more pertinent.

## **METHOD**

The analytical strategy adopted for this study has the logic of a quasi-experimental design. By looking at the geographical distribution of main activities associated with SCC08, the population in the county has been divided roughly into two groups: (1) those living close to organized performances and activities, likely to be exposed frequently, and (2) those farther away with less

chance of involvement and exposure. In geographical terms, the first group includes those living in Stavanger city, in near by Sandnes city, and in the two neighbouring municipalities of Sola and Randaberg (see Figure 1). The second group consists of inhabitants living outside this central axis. These two groups are labelled as ICA (Inside Central Axis) and OCA (Outside Central Axis) respectively. Our strategy approximates a simplified ‘difference in differences’ approach; that is, the difference in the outcome variable between the two groups after the SCC08 ‘experiment’ will be compared to the difference before 2008. In terms of regression analysis, this means focussing particularly on the interaction term for the combined treatment-period variable. Because the two groups could differ in socioeconomic resources and demographic characteristics, we control for such factors in the multivariate analyses. In extended analyses, we also control for structural influences by including municipality fixed-effects by applying a set of dummy variables.

In the fall of 2007 and spring of 2009, two surveys were conducted in larger Rogaland County. Both were based on random samples, covering region inhabitants 15 years of age or older. The mean age was 44.7 years. Except for certain questions relating to specific experiences after SCC08, all questions were identical in the two surveys. The surveys were delivered as both postal questionnaires and conducted as telephone interviews. Main attitudinal questions were asked in the postal questionnaire only, however. The results presented in this paper, therefore, relate to questionnaires mailed to random samples of the Rogaland population before and after SCC08. The net samples sizes used in the following analyses are 1,178 (2007 survey) and 1,112 (2009 survey). For further details about the SCC08 surveys, see Rommetvedt (2008).

### **The dependent variable**

We define the concept of cultural scepticism as the individual's degree of tolerance for cultural diversity, involving foreign ideas, expressions, and peoples (see Goot, 1993; Lijuan and Scheer, 2004; Woodward, Skrbis and Bean, 2008; Bay, Hellevik and Hellevik, 2007). For the empirical analyses, we constructed a scale of cultural scepticism based on respondents' answers to five items:

1. Two persons are discussing possible consequences of immigrants from foreign cultures to Norway. With whom do you most strongly agree, A or B?

A says: Immigrants contribute to increased cultural diversity in Norway, with exciting new foods, music, arts, etc.

B says: Immigrants' ways of living are at odds with Norwegian society. Their foreign manners and customs are a nuisance for those around and may represent a threat to Norwegian culture.

Response categories: (1) I agree mostly with A, (2) I agree mostly with B, and (3) Impossible to choose. In the empirical analysis, item 3 was rescaled to the midpoint between 1 and 2.

2. Our typical national characteristics are likely to disappear more and more. Norway will gradually become similar to other countries. Do you see this as a change for the better or for the worse?

Response categories: (1) For the worse, (2) For the better, and (3) Don't know/No meaning. In the empirical analyses, item 3 was rescaled to the midpoint between 1 and 2.

3. One should demand that foreigners coming to stay in Norway live as Norwegians.

Response categories ranged from (1) Disagree fully to (4) Agree fully.

4. I wish that Norway and Norwegians were more open to the world around us.

Response categories ranged from (1) Disagree fully to (4) Agree fully.

5. Today our culture and our country's basic values are in danger.

Response categories ranged from (1) Disagree fully to (4) Agree fully.

One should note that Norwegian research has used the first item for several decades as the central indicator of cultural scepticism (see Bay, Hellevik, and Hellevik, 2007), implying the same concept as used in the present article. Comparable national data for previous periods indicate that inhabitants of Rogaland County on average appear more culturally open than Norwegians do in general, probably reflecting a younger and more highly educated population. In addition, the Norwegian Synnovate survey organization has just made data from national surveys that include this variable available for the years 2007 through 2009. This, together with findings in a recent study from Statistics Norway (Blom, 2008), provides a broad basis for judging patterns of change in our two local surveys of Rogaland County.

A factor analysis of a wider set of attitudinal and political questions in our main (local) survey data suggests that the five indicators presented above together reflect one common factor, which clearly stands out from others<sup>3</sup>. This pattern also holds if the analysis is carried out separately for each year. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha shows a value of .69, which we regard as acceptable, when taking into account the rather crude scales for some items. On this foundation, we have combined the five indicators into one index, presumed to measure respondents' degree of cultural scepticism. Because the original scales for the first two indicators differ from the last three, the combined measure was constructed based on weights from the factor analysis, thus setting all indicators on a common scale at the outset. This factor-based measure was then rescaled, ranging from 0 (little scepticism) to 10 (much scepticism), in order to ease the interpretation of results. The mean of the resulting index is 4.46, with a standard deviation of 2.48.

### **Independent variables**

The variable Year identifies to which survey a given respondent belongs, with 0 for 2007 and 1 for 2009. Whether the individual lives within the central geographical axis or outside it (illustrated in Figure 1), is indicated by the variable Area, with the value 0 for those outside the central axis (OCA) and 1 for those inside (ICA) the central axis. An interaction term was constructed as the product of Area and Year. Thus, a possible effect of the “variable” Area\*Year will indicate a distinctive difference in cultural openness for the two groups (ICA vs. OCA) for 2009 compared to 2007. The logic of our basic argument suggests that if both groups were subjected to the same basic experience during the period, whatever difference existed between the two groups before 2008 should be roughly the same after. Hence, a zero interaction effect should indicate no separate influences of the imagined ‘experiment’. A significant interaction effect on the other hand, would suggest such influences, with other things being equal.

Inhabitants from the two defined areas were not expected to have the same backgrounds. Basic individual characteristics, therefore, were controlled in the empirical analysis within a multivariate framework. Four such control variables have been included in our analysis (see also Hernes and Knudsen 1992). The variable Gender is 0 for males and 1 for females, while Age was measured in years. For the regression analysis, Age was rescaled to start at 0 for respondents 15 years of age. The variable Education covered four levels, from Primary education only (0) to College/University (3). The variable Religious Participation ranged from 0 (Never attends religious meetings) to 6 (Attends religious meetings several times a week). Table 1 displays descriptive statistics.

**Table 1.**

*Descriptive statistics for respondents living inside the central geographical axis (ICA, N = 1,026) and outside the central axis (OCA, N = 1,264)*

AREA (0=OUTSIDE CA, 1=INSIDE CA)		GENDER (M=0, F=1)	AGE IN YEARS	EDUCATION (0-3)	RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION (0-6)
Outside CA	Mean	,52	47,95	1,40	1,61
	Std. Deviation	,50	16,37	,92	1,73
Inside CA	Mean	,51	47,18	1,74	1,28
	Std. Deviation	,50	16,03	,92	1,57
Total	Mean	,52	47,53	1,59	1,43
	Std. Deviation	,50	16,18	,94	1,65

There are seemingly no dramatic differences in background characteristics between those living outside (OCA) or inside the central geographical axis (ICA). The OCA group has about the same proportion of females, but is slightly older, a little less educated, and more likely to tend attend religious meetings more frequently. Nevertheless, the similarities between the two groups appear more striking than the differences, although the two latter differences are statistically significant. In addition, it can be shown (but is not reported here) that there are practically no differences in these variables for the same groups between the 2007 and 2009 samples. Thus, despite living in different communities in the county, the two sampled groups apparently represent similar populations, at least related to basic background characteristics.

## **ANALYSIS**

Table 2 reports the results from a regression analysis. The dependent variable is the index of cultural scepticism as outlined above, while the independent variables are year, area (within central geographical axis or outside [ICA vs. OCA]), gender, age, education, and level of religious participation. We consider the last four variables mainly as control variables in the



present context. Of special interest is the interaction term: Area\*Year, which will indicate if the effect of where one lives (inside or outside) differs from one year to the next; that is, before compared to after SCC08.

**Table 2.**

*Regression analysis with Cultural Scepticism (0-10) as dependent variable. N = 2,290.*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	5,10	,17		30,01
AREA (0=OUTSIDE CA, 1=INSIDE CA)	-,15	,14	-,03	-1,07
YEAR (0=2007, 1=2009)	,87	,15	,17	5,92
AREA*YEAR	-,64	,20	-,11	-3,27
GENDER (M=0, F=1)	-,50	,10	-,10	-5,10
AGE IN YEARS	,01	,00	,09	4,35
EDUCATION (0-3)	-,69	,05	-,26	-12,94
RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION (0-6)	,08	,03	,05	2,72

Before looking at the main results, we briefly inspect the pattern for control variables in the last four lines of Table 2, now within a multivariate framework. These results indicate that women are less culturally sceptical than men, older are more culturally sceptical than younger, well educated are less culturally sceptical than people with little education, and religiously active are more culturally sceptical than religiously passive. All four coefficients are clearly significant in statistical terms and are in line with what should be expected from the literature, including Norwegian research (Hernes and Knudsen, 1992, 1994; Knudsen, 1997).

We now turn to the effects of central explanatory variables reported in the upper three lines of Table 2. First, the effect of area is in no way statistically significant, as judged from the t-value,

which is obviously below a suggested critical level of roughly 2.0 in absolute terms. In this context, with the interaction term Area\*Year included in the regression model, the null-hypothesis of no difference in 2007 between inhabitants from the two areas (inside or outside the central axis) cannot be rejected. This indicates that the level of cultural scepticism on average was about the *same* for the two population groups (ICA vs. OCA) under consideration *before* SCC08 took place, controlling for background factors. Second, the regression coefficient for year is significant and positive sign. This indicates that the level of cultural scepticism for those living outside the central geographical axis increased from 2007 to 2009. On average, they score .87 higher on the index after 2008 than before, amounting to a sizeable one-third of a standard deviation. Third, the picture for those inside the central axis (ICA) is different, as told by a significant effect of Area\*Year. This regression estimate of -.64 for the interaction term indicates that the positive effect (.87) for inhabitants outside the central geographical axis is nearly cancelled out for inhabitants inside. In other words, those living inside (ICA) score on average nearly the same on the index of scepticism before and after SCC08. It can be shown that the difference for this ICA group between the two years is not statistically significant. To summarize, while practically no difference is observed between the main two groups (inside or outside the central geographical axis) in 2007, *there is a marked difference in 2009*. This change comes mainly from those outside the central geographical axis (OCA) displaying higher scepticism in 2009, while those inside the central axis (ICA) score about the same in 2009 as in 2007. In this way, the resulting pattern from the regression analysis makes Hypothesis 2 more credible, while at the same time giving no empirical support to Hypothesis 1.

The regression model applied in Table 2 explains roughly 12 percent of the total variance of the scepticism index; therefore, much remains unexplained. One should note that extending the

model by adding so-called fixed effects with dummy variables for municipalities (26 in all) and voting preferences (nine different political parties) did not change the main conclusions. This extended analysis, however, more than doubled its explanatory power. For the sake of simplicity, these extended findings are not reported in this article, but detailed results are available from the author on request. Finally, various checks that added or subtracted specific municipalities and groups for municipalities did not alter the basic conclusions. This indicates that our findings can be regarded as robust.

## **INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION**

How should we interpret the special pattern found; that is, an increase in cultural scepticism for the less exposed OCA group and no change for the more exposed ICA group in light of theoretical arguments offered? In attempting to interpret these results, one should keep in mind that before SCC08, there was practically no difference in cultural scepticism between the main groups in question (ICA, OCA), having taken inhabitants' background factors into account. In addition, we note that the observed stability for the more exposed group (ICA) during the 2007-2008 period appears in line with the pattern of two national surveys, which overlap with the SCC08 surveys. According to Blom (2008), using data from Statistics Norway, Norwegians' attitudes toward foreign peoples and customs did not change during 2008, despite heated public debates in the media concerning immigration and foreign customs. Furthermore, recent national data from the Norwegian Synnovate survey organization comparing levels in 2009 with 2007 also indicate stability<sup>4</sup>. Hence, we conclude that our statistical analysis reported in Table 2, together with extended information from national surveys, gives little support for our first hypothesis, which postulated a link between high exposure and less cultural scepticism. For those living

inside the central axis, their tolerance for cultural diversity appears unchanged, in line with the stability observed for the country at large.

In contrast, our results from the multivariate analysis in Table 2 could make hypothesis 2 more credible. An increase in cultural scepticism for those living outside the central axis is in line with the argument that limited access provokes negative reactions. Hence, our findings may suggest that the massive series of SCC08 arrangements - mainly within the central urban axis - have led to feelings of relative deprivation for inhabitants living in areas outside the central axis. This again could have fuelled negative reactions toward the very idea of broad cultural inclusiveness, as signalled by the Open Port motto. In short, those outside the central geographical axis may have felt left out from the grand performances and arrangements, only now and then echoed in the media. The empirical pattern is at least consistent with the logic of relative deprivation (Hernes and Knudsen, 1992). The feeling that some receive more of a good thing than others could have triggered negative reactions toward the basic ideas behind the larger project. Although this must be regarded as a preliminary result, the interpretation offered overlaps with some indications from qualitative analyses of the coverage in the local media during the period (Fossåskaret, 2009) as well as a recent documentary film about the Stavanger 2008 event (Voktor, 2010).

Given only two points in time and rather crude survey data, one should be careful not to draw causal inferences at this stage. The analyses presented may not be regarded as a strong test. There could be other relevant interpretations than the main one offered here, as is not unusual in this kind of studies (Elster, 2007; chapters I and V). Also, little is known about time factor, i.e. for how long time the observed effect will last. Although the empirical patterns appear consistent

with basic arguments and postulates, the final interpretation of our findings should be left open for further discussions and investigations. The hope, however, is that new research related to similar large-scale cultural events, such as those linked to later European Cultural Capital celebrations, can lead to supplementary studies.

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<sup>2</sup> The process of Europeanization is probably a less relevant issue in Norway than in many other European contexts. Although well integrated in European economy and with strong historical/cultural ties to other European nations, the Norwegians have in two referendums decided not to join the EU. Thus, in recent years there has not been any vivid public discourse around the idea/concept of Europeanization as there has in many other nations.

<sup>3</sup> The Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) method was applied in the original factor analysis. The factor results, however, appeared robust, as Principal Component Analysis (PC) and Principal Axis Analysis (PAF) produced the same conclusions as the MLE approach.

<sup>4</sup> Notably, for the central indicator in our combined measure of cultural scepticism (item 1), there is apparently no statistically noticeable change at the national level during this period, even when controlling for the urban/rural dimension. This question ("Two persons are discussing possible consequences of immigrants from foreign cultures to Norway") has been asked in an identical manner in the two national Synnovate as well as the two SCC08 surveys. National surveys and local results for the ICA group thus on average display the same picture of stability in the period. If one selects a subsample of Rogaland respondents within the Synnovate national 2007-09 samples, this will result in applied sample sizes of a little more than 300 respondents for each year. By conventional standards, this seems rather small for detailed statistical analysis. For the central indicator ("Two persons....") applied in our combined index, a preliminary analysis nevertheless suggested a statistically significant tendency of increased scepticism in rural areas in Rogaland, while no change was observed in the urban parts. Without placing too much weight on the latter finding, this pattern is at least consistent with the results from our regional surveys reported in Table 2.