

UNeECC
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Impact & Legacy of the European Capitals of Culture Programme

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PhD Workshop

Moderators:

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Daniela Şilindean (Head of Romanian and Foreign Language Department,
Director of the Extracurricular Activities Program DEA, "Victor Babeş"
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Supporting pillars of successful doctoral research

The PhD Workshop facilitates two introductory interventions to encourage participant to be “tuned-in” for the declared aims of the workshop. The present contribution is the first one to depict the “way of life” of doctoral students to help them become integrated members of the scientific/research community of their own chosen fields. The metaphor of the “four-legged-chair” as pillars of pursuing successful doctoral studies will be elaborated on: (i) student-supervisor cooperative learning, (ii) peer-to-peer learning, (iii) self-organized learning and (iv) problem-solving learning environment.

Patterns of ECoCs: how emotional experiences are explored, through culture

This research aims to enhance the knowledge on how European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) become places generating emotions, through culture. The scientific field of this study encompasses both quantitative and qualitative research methods, addressing spatial and geographical issues. The study considers Bidbooks and Cultural Programmes of ECoC starting from 2015 to 2023, Monitoring and Evaluation reports of ECoCs, alongside tourists' reviews. This extensive database reveals that even from the outset, when designing ECoC programmes, feelings and emotions are taken into account - either by addressing specific emotional experiences or particular feelings linked to these spaces, or by trying to create and build new emotional experiences through the cultural agenda. This study raises new questions and challenges regarding place-based emotions and long-term ECoC legacy, as the results highlight feelings of belonging, memories from the past and introspection, local identity and transformative experiences.

Health As A Value In University Students

Objectives: Values influence our everyday choices. Health is one of the core values (Losonczi, 1989; Barcsi, Dinnyés & Pusztafalvi, 2022). The preferences that emerge from the ranking of individual values refer to mental and behavioural characteristics and differences (Losonczi, 1989; Deutsch, 2011; Rucska & Kiss-Tóth, 2021). The health status of a society is important, so a healthy youth is a worthwhile investment for Hungarian society (Barabás, 2006). The education system also plays a major formative role in transmitting value hierarchies, even across generations (Varga, 2015). Our main aim is to demonstrate the role of values in improving health, thus demonstrating the importance of health education in education and training institutions.

Methods: Our data collection method was questionnaire, using a validated attitude questionnaire (IRVS Value List, WHO WBI-5), extended with own questions, completed by 380 people in total. Data were processed using SPSS 24.0 statistical software. Differences were considered significant at $p < 0.05$.

Results: Health ranked first (4.83) for importance and third (4.16) for implementation. Wilcoxon signed rank test results show that the importance of the value system is significantly more frequent ($T = 54851$ $Z = -12.310$ $p < .000$ (1-tailed) $r = .631$ (Mdn = 108) than the implementation of values (Mdn = 99), respondents care about values but do not act on them.

After principal component analysis, one of the strongest data sets was the "Importance of Health Value", with the strongest value set being health (4.82), but also including the values of joy of life (4.66), happiness (4.76), harmony (4.58), contentment (4.56), pleasure (4.20), kindness (4.64) and family (4.77).

Conclusions: Education for healthier lifestyles should be promoted and preferred, regardless of age, taking into account needs and circumstances. We consider it important to develop a preventive approach and to create an inclusive educational environment.

Timișoara 2023 - the forgotten cultural heritage

Beyond delightful statistics, the content of cultural events must focus our interest much more. Starting from the basic question about what lesson did Timisoara 2023 teach to its visitors or even volunteers, what novelties did they discover about this city and its surrounding region, I wish to raise the question about the major names of the city's culture. They are absent in the program, were absent from the events. I made a list with best known personalities in the region, although a workshop with professionals would seriously enlarge it.

This city was widely marginalized, especially during the communist times. It was about time to be allowed to "shine" while holding the title of capital but the core of its culture – architecture, personalities, pluralism – was seriously shadowed by plenty of events with little if any connection with the local/ regional identity. Obviously, the main question is when will the local heritage put into light since we lost such a major opportunity.

I intent to explain why I drew the above-mentioned list, how I selected the names and to draft explanations why these personalities were not honored during the ECoC year. Issues related to pluralism, multiculturalism and dialogue are involved by default.

Urban innovators and the regeneration of derelict spaces in Timișoara, European Capital of Culture 2023

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) program is an initiative of the European Union, which aims to promote cultural diversity, stimulate creativity and strengthen European identity. In this context, urban regeneration processes have become a key element, and urban innovators play a key role in revitalizing derelict spaces in ECoC cities.

The present research aims to explore how urban innovators, through creative initiatives, contribute to the regeneration of abandoned spaces and transform them into cultural, social and economic hubs, taking as a case study Timișoara, a city that held the ECoC title, in 2023. Through qualitative analysis and direct and participatory observation, we investigated activities carried out by different local actors, in both public and private abandoned spaces, in the context of the ECoC 2023 program.

The spaces analyzed are part of the processes of urban regeneration of degraded urban areas, through physical, social and economic interventions, with the aim of improving the quality of life and creating new opportunities for the community. The success of these interventions is also due to urban innovators, individuals or groups with transdisciplinary skills and knowledge, able to identify community needs and create dynamic community spaces, through innovative and sustainable solutions. In the context of the European Capital of Culture, urban regeneration in Timișoara was driven by cultural events, which served as a catalyst for initiatives to revitalize public spaces and built heritage, generating collaboration between local authorities, communities and the private sector.

Our research highlights how urban innovators, through artistic projects, social initiatives and creative enterprises, have transformed old abandoned spaces into living and dynamic places, contributing to the economic, social and cultural revitalization of certain neighborhoods in Timișoara.

Panel 1

Assessing community building and public participation in ECoC cities

Panel chair (1st session):

Romanița Jumanca (Lecturer, Victor Babeș University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timișoara)

Panel chair (2nd session):

Edit Kővári (Associate Professor, University of Pannonia)

Panel chair (3rd session):

Ștefana-Oana Ciortea-Neamtiu (Lecturer, West University of Timișoara)

Positioning and interactions of key actors from the independent cultural creative industries on urban regeneration projects in the context of ECoC TM2023 and beyond

The purpose of this communication is to analyze the positioning and interactions of the main independent actors from the creative cultural industries, in the context of Timișoara's exercise of the title of European Capital of Culture in 2023, as well as their perspectives to continue the cultural effervescence of the creative sector, for the benefit of urban regeneration processes. The interviews with representative stakeholders, their thematic analysis and the content analysis of ECoC TM2023 related documents combine to portray the dynamics and effectiveness of the city's creative spaces and the role of actors in local territorial co-production, with media analysis providing additional data. The research complements previous literature on politico-territorial arenas by highlighting spatiotemporal reconfigurations that trigger synergies and tensions in an urban environment with a long-standing multicultural tradition. We analyze the response of creative cultural industries faced with a major cultural project with obvious potential for development, and the ability of independent actors to carry forward the legacy of ECoC TM2023, through their involvement in urban regeneration.

Population participation in the national program Timisoara European Capital of Culture 2023 - a sociological review

During the years 2023 and 2024, at the initiative of the Project Center of the Municipality of Timisoara, several sociological studies were carried out regarding the involvement and access of the population to the activities carried out within the national program Timisoara European Capital of Culture. These studies concerned both the evaluation of the Tm ECC 2023 program and its social impact, as well as local cultural consumption, attendance at local cultural institutions and the population's interest in cultural life. The present paper aims at a comparative and integrative analysis of the conclusions drawn from these researches.

Government Policy and its effect on the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

An assessment of how government policies impact on the activities of the 'Liverpool Phil'. This will include a literature review of government and Arts Council England documents and the responses of the national arts sector. The specific impact of the policies on the Liverpool Phil will be assessed over recent decades through interviews with the administrators and artists. In addition a survey will be undertaken to compare the activities of the orchestra over recent decades with particular reference to the performance programmes, recruitment and diversity of the performers and conductors and community engagement.

The Audience – from pen and paper to desired reality. Three case studies – programs for audience development in Timisoara ECoC

My contribution aims at focusing on audience development programs that have been active within Timisoara 2023 ECoC context. Audience development and audience engagement have been for a long time two very dear concepts for all the cultural institutions and cultural policy makers. Audience development has been ceaselessly encouraged by means of European cultural policies and it has been established as a priority in the cultural field. My paper presents three case studies of cultural and educational entities in Timisoara that focused on audience development programs within the context of Timisoara 2023 European Capital of Culture.

The first is a unique theatre project – The Parallel City – site-specific, immersive, using local mapping as a starting point, created with a large team (consisting of local and international professionals). The project has continued and has grown branches into the legacy of the Timisoara ECoC. My second case study focuses on the four major state universities in the city which have organized ample programs either in the framework of Timisoara ECoC 2023 or by including in their cultural agendas the events scheduled in 2023. The third case study is a theatre festival, Eurothalia, organized by The German State Theatre in Timisoara with a specific formative program developed in its 2023 edition.

Beyond numbers: cultural events in Timișoara 2023 ECoC

Timisoara’s 2023 programs fostered an enduring appreciation for arts and cultural initiatives, inspiring ongoing cultural projects, community development, and revitalization efforts for the city’s historical buildings.

The city’s future cultural programming aims to foster growth in the arts and build on the achievements of CEaC 2023.

Investments in sustainable projects ensure Timisoara’s cultural impact will endure, positioning it as a lasting European cultural center.

The collaboration between local communities, cultural institutions, and international organizations has been strengthened, emphasizing unity in diversity. Timisoara’s success as a cultural capital paves the way for further growth and international recognition in the arts.

Pannon Community Hub: a success story of how to build a community among generations with culture

Veszprém won the ECoC title in 2018 December 14. It was a marvelous event not just in the citizens' life but also for the University of Pannonia. In the presentation team our role was to represent the youth in Veszprém, focusing on the different generations. Therefore from 2019 the aim was to create a HUB where the local representative of generations can come together with the help of different cultural programs, have conversations and build networks. The Pannon Community Hub was opened 2021 September to fulfill this vision. Up till 2024 April there were 812 events with 15.930 participants in a place that can hold about 70 people at a time. This place is also the seat of the UNeECC secretariat. The presentation is about the Pannon Community Hub development, the strategy, the function, the programs and events, the generation bridge and its legacy.

Cultural mediation programme @UMFT — art and medicine, creating a community

At the Victor Babeş University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Timișoara, we have implemented a cultural mediation programme which aims to bring together and introduce students in medicine to art. It is called Live@ the Museum and we have already organised 10 sessions at the National Art Museum in Timișoara, but also in private art galleries. Our main goal is to bring students closer to art. The method that we have used was organizing out of the box cultural mediation sessions, discussing subjects such as the need for art in today's digital world, women artists, cultural diversity, medicine and art. We have also managed to publish the first therapeutic journal where art meets personal experience and the feelings that the students experience. It was a 4 year project which comprises 500 works of young doctors to be. The volumes Soul and Perspectives are written in English, German and Romanian and underline the fact that art and feeling have no barriers. In conclusion, in the cultural and academic landscape, we encourage students of different nationalities, to have a voice, be part of a cohesive cultural community, as participants, artists, writers.

Residents' evolving perspectives on the impact of the European Capital of Culture on personal well-being and Timisoara's development as destination through a placemaking principles lens

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programs aim to enhance urban regeneration, encourage engagement with local culture, and elevate city profiles, making them more appealing to both residents and visitors. However, the influx of events during the title year can significantly impact residents' daily lives. This study explores how Timisoara's designation as ECoC in 2023 influenced residents' perceptions of personal well-being and their city's transformation as a destination, through the lens of placemaking principles. Seventeen residents participated in the study, providing monthly journal entries throughout the ECoC program year. This repetitive, time-bound approach captured the evolving perspectives on the program's effects. Axial coding identified five major themes: place pride, connectedness, heightened atmosphere, emotional exhaustion, and their interconnected subthemes. The findings reveal that residents experienced increased opportunities for cultural engagement and social interaction beyond the usual spatial boundaries of cultural production within the city. However, challenges in balancing the impacts of destination development with personal well-being were revealed through feelings of being overwhelmed by the abundance of activities and interactions, which extended beyond the typical scope of daily life in Timisoara.

Community Building through Japanese Cultural Experiences

Aim: to share an experience in hosting an event at ECoC which was successful and can be used as model for organizing future events that foster a participatory culture in the community and further build communities through intercultural exchanges

Method: Creating events that give personal meaning to participants while tailoring each event and the overall venue to have meaning for the community, leading to memorable experiences that will result in returning participation in the future

Conclusion: Having components in cultural events which individuals can relate to on a personal level is critical to giving them a meaningful experience that will motivate them to share the events with others and come back to future events, resulting in better participation and a larger, more active community.

Strengthening Interculturality in Timisoara through a Documentary Play

Abstract: Timisoara is a city of interculturality and it has proven this once again during the European Capital of Culture program in 2023. The current study underlines this idea through a case study starting from a theatre play presented in late 2023: "Sidy Thal" was the first cooperation between the German State Theater Timisoara and the State Jewish Theater Bucharest, a multilingual work in Yiddish, German and Romanian.

It is a documentary play depicting a real event: Four people died and seventy were injured on November 26, 1938, during a guest performance by the Jewish-Bukovinian singer Sidy Thal and her ensemble at the Timisoara Theatre, when an anti-Semitic attack was perpetrated by the extreme right-wing nationalist Iron Guard. Four people died and seventy were injured. History was transformed into a documentary play by playwright Thomas Perle and director Clemens Bechtel based on the research of Maria Mădălina Irimia from the "Wilhelm Filderman"-Centre for the Study of the Jewish History in Romania.

The case study highlights the importance and impact of this documentary play, through its presentation in the media and the follow-up like the presentation during the National Theatre Festival in Bucharest in October 2024 or the unveiling of a commemorative plaque dedicated to the victims.

Community building among Interact volunteers from Timișoara in the year of the Capital of Culture

Creating communities is a constant concern for all fields of activity. The Timisoara 2023 European Capital of Culture Programme was explicitly oriented towards activating the community and creating a sense of belonging to the city's cultural sphere. One of the means to achieve this is through personal involvement and volunteer work. The present research refers to the young people of Interact, a community of volunteers made up of high school students who develop projects with social impact.

The perception of the representatives of the Interact clubs in Timișoara about the volunteer activity in the year Timișoara 2023 European Capital of Cultural was captured during the individual interviews conducted on this topic and they bring forward challenges and opportunities that the young volunteers encountered.

The role of higher education and cultural organisations in promoting intercultural dialogue

Abstract: Timisoara's cultural environment is changing continuous and it's cultural diversity plays an important role not only in the history of our city, but also in the present and is an essential condition of the community that lives in the capital of the Banat region. Timișoara is a living example of how intercultural dialogue can lead to a prosperous coexistence of different cultures and ethnic groups. The city is a cultural melting pot where people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds live together for centuries and learn from each other. Through its history and its current role as European Capital of Culture, Timișoara shows how cultural diversity can not only enrich a city, but also make it a symbol of tolerance and openness in Europe. This paper aims to aims to redefine the role of educational and cultural institutions in the context of intercultural dialogue in Timisoara European Capital of Culture.

Culture and European culture: the basics

The presentation aims at highlighting the basic knowledge discussed around the concepts of 'culture' in general and 'European culture' in particular. It reviews critically the bibliographical corpus available and the official texts legitimated by supra-national bodies, such as UNESCO and the European Union. 'Culture' and 'European Culture' are two concepts widely discussed in the Western world and beyond. The concept of 'culture' constitutes a corpus of research from the late 19th century and onwards, when numerous researchers gave their own definitions, according to their own ideals and the prevailing world views (Herder, Tylor, Levi-Strauss, Hegel, Weber, Williams). UNESCO's definition has been adopted by the European Union and it is an holistic approach of all aspects of human and social life. Main aspects of the concepts, such as 'diachrony' and 'synchrony', cultural characteristics, and preferences are also explored. 'European culture' in its evolution is explored through researchers and authors such as T.S. Eliott, J. – Cl. Trichet, P. Valéry, G. O. y Gasset, Condylis, and Babiniotis, while the concepts of 'multi-culturalism' and 'inter-culturalism' are further clarified. Mouzelis' analysis for the differing modes of national cultural policies' integration into the EU ones, such as the European Capital of Culture Action, is adequately discussed.

Panel 2

Art and technology – new forms of cultural expressions

Panel chair:

Mariana Cernicova-Bucă (Associate Professor, Politehnica
University Timișoara)

People, places, partnerships: the legacy of ECoC program for Politehnica University Timișoara

The core idea of the project that won Timisoara the title of Capital of Culture was about empowering people, about valorizing places and connections with the final purpose of bringing change for the better in the city, through culture. TM 2023 became an opportunity for those seeking to be part of the change occasioned by the unfolding of the Capital of Culture Program. However, true change can be observed only in the legacy of the program, by assessing how behavior has been influenced, which issues have raised awareness and gained support, what places have been transformed or repurposed and by assessing whether long-lasting partnerships have been instilled. One of the more dynamic institutions, part of the city life for over 100 years is the Politehnica University Timisoara, an active member of the ECoC family, and the scene for a variety of projects and events throughout 2023. Using qualitative research methods like participatory observation, individual interviews and media monitoring this paper analyses five of the most important projects run by the university or within the university as part of the ECoC effort: UPT Creative Campus, Spotlight Heritage, Bright CityScapes, MV Sci-Art, Parallel City and their legacy for the people, places and partnerships of Politehnica University Timisoara. Results show that significant changes in the university structure and modus operandi received momentum due to involvement in the ECoC program and that a shift in the mindset of many students and professors in this technical education institution can be detected, due to the numerous occasions to prove that when science/technology and art meet new paths of societal development are fostered.

Community-driven discourse through social media reactions to cultural mega-projects

As Bodø serves as the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2024, it provides a unique case for examining public engagement and discourse in large-scale cultural initiatives. This study investigates how and why the general population engages in discussions related to such mega-projects, which aim to influence regional development. It employs a multimethod approach that includes netnography, qualitative content analysis of survey data, and in-depth interviews of the members of three local online communities. The study indicates how community members independently shape the discourse around cultural initiatives and reflects on broader societal values and regional aspirations. The findings shed light on effective communication strategies that promote engagement, mitigate misinformation and polarization, and have potential to provide significant implications for practitioners and policymakers.

Gamification and virtual experiences as the future of cultural tourism. Exploring the attitudes of (non) travellers on immersive technologies

Extended realities technologies are (re)shaping the concept of modern cultural tourism, offering new opportunities for both heritage interpretation and presentation on- site, and distant, through the emerging virtual tourism model. Immersive cultural tourism is aimed to benefit the cultural heritage in multiple ways, including preservation and sustainability of endangered sites and locations overburdened by over-tourism; the emergence of the new, completely virtual tourism market, turning non-travellers into travellers; and enhancing the on-site experiences, making cultural heritage and cultural experiences more attractive to the non-consumers of cultural venues, resulting with the new type of cultural tourist – the immersive one. One more significant creative industry is also impacting everyday life, including cultural tourism – the video game industry. The immersive experiences in cultural tourism are also framed by the expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and combined with other technological trends it could lead to unique touristic experiences, co-created by the travellers themselves. The paper aims to detect the trends of immersive travel and predict their future developments. It tries to detect the experiences, attitudes, and opinions on immersive cultural tourism through an online questionnaire. The expected result could be used to predict customer decision-making regarding virtual travel experiences.

Enhancing sustainable supply chains in ECoC ecosystems by using blockchain technology

Integrating blockchain technology into supply chain management offers a transformative approach to enhancing sustainability practices within Emerging Circular Economy and Circular (ECoC) ecosystems. This study explores blockchain's potential to address key supply chain challenges such as transparency, traceability, and accountability, which are critical for promoting sustainable practices. Blockchain's decentralized and immutable ledger system ensures accurate, real-time tracking of materials and products, reducing waste, improving resource efficiency, and supporting closed-loop systems. By providing an unalterable record of transactions, blockchain enables stakeholders to verify the origin, authenticity, and compliance of products with environmental standards, fostering trust and collaboration across the supply chain. Additionally, smart contracts within blockchain can automate and enforce sustainable practices, ensuring adherence to predefined ecological criteria. Case studies from various industries illustrate blockchain's practical applications and benefits in enhancing ECoC ecosystems' sustainability. Findings suggest that while blockchain offers significant advantages, its implementation must address technical, regulatory, and social challenges. Overall, blockchain technology emerges as a promising tool for advancing sustainable supply chain practices, contributing to environmental sustainability and resource conservation in ECoC ecosystems.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design using in-depth interviews to investigate blockchain's impact on sustainability practices within ECoC ecosystems. Key stakeholders in supply chain management across various industries will be interviewed to gather detailed insights into their perceptions, experiences, and the effectiveness of blockchain integration. The interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using ATLAS.ti software to identify themes, patterns, and relationships within the data.

Conclusion: This study demonstrates blockchain technology's largely positive impact on sustainability practices within ECoC ecosystems. Key findings highlight benefits such as enhanced transparency, traceability, accountability, and automated sustainable practices. While challenges like technical complexities, regulatory hurdles, and social acceptance exist, these can be managed through strategic planning and stakeholder engagement.

Panel 3

Impact of culture for the future of urban services

Panel chair (1st session):

Flora Carrijn (President of UNeECC, KU Leuven - University of Leuven)

Panel chair (2nd session):

Codruța-Diana Simionescu (Senior Lecturer, West University of Timișoara)

(Re)creation

The presentation introduces and reports on the project for the reuse of religious architectural heritage as a continuation of community building and socio-cultural integration and co-operation.

We will explore the process of identifying the community's interests and participation, the regulatory restrictions from the different levels of authority, the architectural and technical implications, and the financial requirements. Different examples will be given to illustrate the multifold sustainable recuperation of former spaces to the benefit of the citizens but also to the preservation of cultural heritage and European values.

European Capital of Culture in Nova Gorica and Gorizia 2025: Going borderless towards crossborder conurbation?

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) project is one of the EU's best-known cultural initiatives and has been recognized and used in recent decades both as an instrument of cultural Europeanization, used by the European Union to cultivate, promote and develop the European way of life, and as an opportunity for (culture-led) urban development of the host city. In 2025, Nova Gorica will hold the title together with the partner city from the other side of the national border, Gorizia. The plans surrounding the entire project are ambitious and primarily relate to the creation of a cross-border conurbation in which, as the official slogan GO! Borderless suggests, "a cross-border European city" is to be created. However, this is relatively far removed from today's reality, which is mainly due to the historical complexity of the region. During my ethnographic fieldwork in both cities, I was particularly interested in how the different local actors, mainly from the cultural and NGO sector as well as activist groups directly or indirectly involved in the ECoC project, envision the future of the city in terms of the project's legacy. By examining the urban development projects planned as part of the ECoC, the accompanying public discourse and the attitudes of the local population towards these projects, I have also tried to understand what kind of urban future is being shaped by the implementation of such a mega-event as the ECoC.

European Capitals of Culture 2016 and 2029 – new context, new priorities, new legacies?

The aim of the paper is to analyse differences in the two European Capital of Culture competitions in Poland (ECoC 2016 and ECoC 2029) to determine if and how cities' attitudes towards socio-economical role of culture developed during the last over ten years. While the first competition was an all-Poland affair raising lots of media interest and engaging biggest cities and their inhabitants, the second one was attended also by many smaller cities, attracted supposedly less attention both from the media and candidate cities' residents. The main assumption is that Polish cities' officials were more reluctant to participate in the competition in 2023-2024 due to more difficult economic situation, the need to face foreign migration, less favorable attitude towards European integration in many political circles, lower social spirit resulting from the threat of war (after Russian invasion on Ukraine) and economic problems (e.g. inflation). Based on literature review, analysis of bid books and interviews with the key people involved in preparing the bids and selected jury members, the paper will present the context of both competitions, the comparison of bids' priorities and goals in both competitions and whether the foreseen role of culture has changed.

Digital culture in Spotlight Heritage Timisoara

Spotlight Heritage Timișoara is a digital cultural initiative of the Politehnica University of Timișoara in partnership with the National Museum of Banat, overlapping heritage in digital and physical formats. Spotlight Heritage Timisoara increases the interest of the wider public in Timișoara's historical neighbourhoods, marginal and neglected, by using guided tours and digital storytelling to empower locals and tourists to see, hear, feel, act, co-create and internalize the city. It is also a model of digital culture heritage crowdsourced participatory city telling to empower citizens and tourists to turn their technological appetite into culture. The project mixes personal memories of people with historical and architectural data, by digitally overlaying an intangible heritage from books, oral stories, archives and art works. The digital and physical itineraries of Iosefin (2019), Elisabetin (2020), Fabric (2021), Cetate (2022), a sum of all previous neighbourhoods and Giroc (2023) offers the visitor multiple routes and possibilities to visit, read and deeply understand the city of Timișoara.

The project mixes personal memories, from past and present, with historical and architectural data, by digitally overlapping the intangible heritage from books, memories, oral stories and art as five women guide our project each year. The digital and physical itineraries of Iosefin (2019), Elisabetin (2020), Fabric (2021), Cetate (2022), all previous and Giroc (2023) neighbourhoods divulge their stories through multiple layers: a museum exhibition, streets exhibition, an online website, a mobile app, an augmented reality app, virtual reality demonstrations and Festival, an international student contest, street theatre, happenings and digital installations, guiding tours and virtual tours, as well as a final catalogue.

Museum exhibitions, street exhibitions, online website, mobile app, augmented reality app, virtual reality demonstrations, festival, street theatre, happenings and digital installations, guiding tours and virtual tours, printed catalogue, guide of standard graphics.

The paper will present the development of the digital artefacts, as well as an impact evaluation on the community. All digital development is in Romanian - English, licensed with Creative Commons License, which allows share and reuse by all and are published on the web and mobile platform and some included in Europeana.

City branding and Timisoara European Capital of Culture in 2023

This theoretical and framing introduction in analyzing the branding of Timisoara from the perspective of the concept of cultural product, will aim to modify this perspective before and after the implementation of the title of European Capital of Culture 2023. Therefore, we propose a framing of the conceptual perception of cultural projects as a driver for the notion of city branding, what can be the symbolic and marketable value of cultural products in relation to the concept of city branding, which are the audiences and cultural indicators that can be considered as consumer goods in this process, what are the assumptions of the concept of city branding in relation to large-scale cultural projects, how important is the dimension of the concept of storytelling in relation to the concept of city branding and what is the role of cultural actors in the conceptual space of city branding. Also, because during the course of the Timisoara European Capital of Culture project, a series of structural fractures of different magnitudes have been observed, which have manifested themselves in the image level, we will also investigate the dimension of cultural management as part of the city branding strategy, especially in relation to the concept of Bid Book and the conceptual routes of the city, positioned as a cultural product in itself. We will thus notice a conceptual and image change of the national cultural program "Timisoara - European Capital of Culture in 2023", with the implementation of the project.

Cultural Vibrancy and Sustainability in the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) Programme in a Region of Culture Case Study: Novi Sad 2022 and Timisoara 2023

For the first time since 1985, the title of ECoC for 2021 had been won by two cities, Timișoara (Romania) and Novi Sad (Serbia), so close positioned from geographical point of view. It was a great opportunity for Timișoara and Novi Sad to shape together a region of culture and to boost cultural cooperation at European and international level. The coronavirus crisis had severely affected the cultural programs of Rijeka and Galway. Consequently, the upcoming cultural events, for the year 2021 had been postponed. Thus, there was a need for an adapted cultural strategy and Novi Sad hosted the cultural events of the ECoC in 2022 and Timișoara in 2023. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the cultural vibrancy and sustainability dimensions of the two ECoCs, in the new context. The research methods are qualitative analyses of the ECoC reports, official papers and documents from different institutions responsible with cross-border cooperation, regional development, thematic web sites and media reports and observatory participation. As cultural planning in the region was multilevel layered (municipality, region, cross-border cooperation, national, European or transnational level), the emphasis was on the organic development of the region.

Introducing Spatial Discourse Analysis: A case study of The Nursery 1306, Timisoara

The Nursery 1306 Timisoara was a controversial installation. Proudly representing the European Capital of Culture 2023 for 10 months in the most history-laden square of the city, it was an experiment equally loved and hated. Using a social semiotic approach to spatial discourse analysis, we aim to examine the installation and its relation to the community of the city that hosted it. To do this, we identify the meaning-based resources across the representational, organizational and interactional metafunctions. The analysis also reveals how users add to the overall meanings through their behaviours. The research shows as well the nursery as an active factor of social cohesion and the contribution it had to cultural diversity in the area.

Establishment of Standardized Process Maturity Model: A case study of front office hotel employees in Hungary

In this study, front-office employees in Hungarian hotels have been invited to provide feedback on their job performance, satisfaction, and growth as individuals and professionals in regards to the implementation of a standardized process maturity model. In order to give a thorough grasp of organizational maturity and its implications for service quality and continuous improvement, the research focuses only on the perspective of the employees. In this study, employees from independently owned Hungarian hotels are examined through the modified version of Watts S. Humphrey's 1988 software development maturity model.

Data was gathered from front desk employees by means of an online questionnaire using a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The questionnaire was designed to evaluate standardized process maturity levels, employee performance, job satisfaction, and the perceived influence of process maturity on personal and professional growth. It also included questions about demographics. The standardized process maturity model's implementation is predicted to have a positive impact on these employee-related outcomes.

The data were analyzed using both qualitative word cloud analysis and quantitative techniques such as multiple regression, ANOVA, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to provide comprehensive insights. By emphasizing the critical role that employees play in accomplishing high service standards, the findings attempt to fill the gap in the scope of research that has been conducted thus far, which has mostly concentrated on management perspectives. It is anticipated that the findings will be beneficial to other service industries looking to improve employee engagement in standardization processes as well as overall service delivery, in addition to the Hungarian hotel industry.

Economic impact of hotels and similar establishments in Veszprem District

This study measures the economic impact of hotels and similar establishments on the overall economy of the Hungarian Veszprem District. It is considered to be an individual part of the total hospitality sector. In the study, the 'Local Multiplier' is utilized from three perspectives: direct, indirect and induced effects. Both secondary public data as well as primary data sources, merely questionnaires, were used to collect data. The resulting score for the induced impact (LM3) is 1.96, meaning that for every Forint brought into the economy of the district of Veszprém by the hotels and similar establishments, another extra Forint is generated. The study also finds that revenues of the Veszprem district as share of the national figures have shrunk significantly and development has stagnated in absolute terms over the past four years.

Panel 4

Governance of recent ECoC programmes

Panel chair:
Corina Turşie (Lecturer, West University of Timișoara)

Eurocal Cultural-and-Spatial Identity: Epistemological Foundation and Principles for an ECoC Bid and Legacy

Urban identities are communicated through cultural encounters. The latter are supported by spatial and non-spatial (or 'a-spatial') processes (i. e. cultural co-operation schemes, electronic exhibitions etc.). Spatial cultural encounters have as their privileged 'terrain' the urban public space. The institution of Cultural Capital of Europe (ECoC) has, as one of its core-concepts and criterion of success, the interrelatedness between European / local culture and the city as a spatial entity. Hence, the main question is how the relationship between the ECoC institution and the spatial identity of the European city – ECoC can be epistemologically investigated and how the lessons learnt from 'monographic' and interrelated cases can form a set of principles guiding successful ECoC bids in the future.

The paper draws significantly from the findings of a PhD research under the title "The Identity of the European City through the Institution of Cultural Capital of Europe. Four cities-ECoCs are investigated as case studies: Athens (ECoC 1985), Glasgow (ECoC 1990), Lisbon (ECoC 1994) and Thessaloniki (ECoC 1997).

The analysis of cultural infrastructure (entire and new one) is proposed to be based on a typology, divided in two main categories: those referring or serving culture with a capital letter 'C' ('top-down' process) and those with a case letter 'c' ('bottom – up' process). The latter refer more explicitly to the underprivileged citizens and minorities living in the periphery of the ECoCs or 'pockets' of deprivation, thus tying the institution to cultural diversity and the need for intercultural dialogue and new spatial policies. In both cases it will be presented the cities' spatial identity before the accolade ('being': 'general spatial identity') and the institution's impact after it ('becoming': 'cultural-and-spatial identity'). The new concept of 'eurocal cultural-and-spatial identity' will be introduced and it will be argued that it has to be epistemologically identified and successfully integrated to the ECoCs' cultural and spatial planning and design, so that to deliberately promote intercultural spatial integration and social inclusion. Through this process, candidate cities can make the most of their uniqueness, deliver meaningful urban environments, implement the principle of 'access for all' and prepare for the best management of their ECoC legacy, which has to be integrated to their entire planning and design process from the very beginning of their candidature preparation.

Planning methodologies of the Legacy of the ECoC Programme

Capital of Culture” will ensure the continuity of development cultural sector and ecosystem in Timisoara in the coming years, in line with the vision of the bidbook that won Timisoara this title, capitalizing on the strengths and opportunities, to improve weaknesses and avoid perceived threats, with action directions and a plan of measures co-created with stakeholders. The planning process of the Legacy plan involved data analysis, a participative planning workshops and a public consultation, that problematised the relevance of the initial objectives, the perception of its development process and results, and the way to move forward, considering the core principles and values of the ECoC Programme. The process outlined specific challenges related to the motivation of stakeholders to take part, the continuity of their engagement with the vision and core elements and the form of the plan itself, in the contextual absence of a regulatory frame or external motivator, like the Title year was for the initial planning of the bidbook.

Crossing national and local boundaries of cultural policies to ensure the successful implementation and extension of Timișoara 2023 Cultural Programme

The presentation will summarise the development of the Romanian national cultural policy between 2019 and 2023 and the innovations in local institutional and project funding practices at in Timișoara between 2021 and 2023. It will highlight how leadership and institutional cooperation overcame political and legal challenges to successfully implement and extend the Timișoara 2023 Cultural Programme. Moreover, the presentation will underline the good practices that can be transferred to future ECC and other cities aiming at developing strong cultural programmes based on local strengths and community engagement. A key practice identified is using calls for projects to foster community engagement and ownership among cultural entities. Public policy analysis and the realist evaluation of the call for projects will be the methods used to the research supporting the presentation. Public policy analysis involves systematically evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of decision and processes through which these decisions are implemented. Realist evaluation complements this by examining the underlying mechanisms, contexts, and conditions that influence the success or failure of the ECC governance strategies.

Insights into Cultural Participation Trends at Trenčín ECoC 2026: The Case of Garáž

A key objective of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programme is to enhance cultural participation among residents. This study analyses audience data from Garáž, a cultural initiative by Trenčín European Capital of Culture 2026, by comparing survey results from 2023 (n=105) and 2024 (n=162). Garáž begins as a small stage at Pohoda festival and later transforms into a city-based cultural hub, providing a platform for Slovak musicians and multidisciplinary artists. The analysis shows no significant shifts in primary dependent variables between 2023 and 2024, except for a slight increase in cultural participation (4%) in 2024. Demographic changes reveal a higher proportion of women attending in 2024, with a 10% gender gap favouring women, and a younger average audience age of 28 compared to 35 in 2023. Socioeconomic diversity also increased, with lower-income groups more evenly represented in 2024. These preliminary findings suggest that the European Capital of Culture programme may contribute to greater cultural engagement among Trenčín residents, especially by attracting a more diverse audience. However, further research in 2025, 2026, and 2027 will be necessary to confirm these trends and assess the long-term impact of the ECoC programme on fostering inclusive and sustained cultural participation in the city.

Panel 5

Building capacities within the cultural sector and beyond

Panel chair:

Ramona Laczko David (Power Station Coordinator,
Center for Projects of the Municipality of Timișoara)

Capacity building challenges in small ECoC candidate cities

Capacity building challenges in small towns are considerable due to the number of factors: limited number and diversity of local cultural and creative organizations, difficulties attracting talents, sometimes remoteness and connectivity etc. Besides usually there is a limited experience in international cooperation which is a serious drawback in the preparation process of the ECoC programme. We have explored an experience of Latvian candidate cities for the ECoC title, analyzing their learning & development approaches and learning needs of cultural organizations in small cities. Conclusions include suggestions on contemporary learning formats and content which could be helpful to reach capacity building goals connected with internationalization, audience development and inclusion, quality of cultural productions etc.

Fabrikage - industrial heritage after EcoC

Fabrikage is a multimedia exhibition with works by local artists of last year's ECoC that has been shown in three cities: Timișoara (RO), Ajka (HU) and Elefsina (GR). The show aims at highlighting the overlooked industrial heritage of the three locations through artistic reflection. The itinerary exhibitions are accompanied by guided tours developed by local specialists, in order to add a scientific layer to the artistic experience.

An important aspect of the project are the differences in the historical background and development stages, which make each city of last year's ECoC particular. The topic of abandoned industrial spaces is something that comes often in the attention of cultural practitioners. Whether because they offer an alternative to white cube spaces, or because their timeless aspect can serve as background for cultural events, or simply because demolishing them wouldn't be sustainable. The project would encourage the citizens to imagine future possibilities for them.

One of the main ideas of the project was promoting an existing, overlooked heritage and raising awareness towards the possibilities of connecting it through culture. The exhibition itself connects 3 different European areas and viewpoints. It has the prospect of a yearly event, to observe the changes.

Enhancing Capacities for Cultural Growth: Insights from the Timișoara 2023 European Capital of Culture Program

Our study, “The evolution of the cultural scene in 2017-2023 in the context of the Program Timișoara 2023 – European Capital of Culture,” explores the recent transformations, needs, and expectations of those active in the local cultural sector. Key findings highlight the need for capacity building among cultural operators. Using qualitative research methods, including interviews and focus groups with artists, organizations, and public cultural institutions, IRES identified several areas of growth resulting from the Timișoara 2023 Program. Cultural operators improved in co-creation, public engagement strategies, communication, digital tools integration, and meeting funding program requirements.

However, interviewees noted further needs: workshops on cultural management and public relations, consultative support from authorities, better financial access for collaborations, and opportunities for local, national, and international partnerships to exchange best practices. These enhancements are necessary to continue the development of Timișoara’s cultural landscape.

Urban community building supported by digital tools

With the spread of digitalisation, innovation in stakeholder democracy can also be a step towards social equality. A good example is the multi-year process implemented by DUTIREG Nonprofit Ltd., coordinator of the Science, Technology and Educational Platform for Photonics (STEPP) cluster, with an industrial development focus, in the framework of the EPIX (Ecosystem Partnership for Interclusters and smart city eXchanges) project. The main objective was to develop the interconnection between clusters and smart city development through the innovative use of digital solutions. This is why our presentation will show how stakeholder involvement was successfully achieved despite COVID restrictions.

A significant contribution to this work was made by the HROD Community Economic and Social Development Centre, which has demonstrated through its studies in several Hungarian municipalities that social innovation contributes well to community development based on open innovation in both larger and smaller municipalities. We will also present the main lines of our further research work, supported by the DECORATOR and PilotInnCities projects with the support of the Danube Interreg programme.

Post-scriptum: Timisoara 2023 ECoC. Diachronic media monitoring of cultural institutions in Timisoara around the Project (2022-2024 period)

The Timișoara 2023 Capital of Culture project generated an effervescence felt at the level of the entire local/regional community due to its scope and complexity, its trans-institutional implications. From the perspective of our research field, namely communication, we set out to follow and analyze aspects of visibility in the online environment of Timisoara institutions whose specificity is the promotion of culture, especially: museums, theaters, opera, libraries, universities.

As a research methodology we used qualitative content analysis. We followed the presence and activity of Timisoara cultural institutions in the local online press and social networks (Facebook and Instagram), the reactions and sentiment of the public (followers). The monitoring period was the first quarter of the years 2022, 2023, 2024, with the aim of capturing the Timisoara 2023 EcoC phenomenon, pre- / post deployment.

As preliminary results of the analysis of the data collected, we observe a non-uniform involvement/visibility of the monitored institutions, but at the same time a dynamism of them to make themselves visible in the virtual space. Facebook is the preferred network. Public sentiment was predominantly neutral or positive.

Poster Presentation

Dumbravita locality, Timis county: Model of good economic and social practices

Over time, the opportunity to manage one's own development, the choice of political systems and administrations led to the building of human and organizational capacities in general. Capacity development is currently accompanied by concepts such as participatory development, sustainable livelihoods and, more recently, societal resilience.

The unique example of Dumbrăvița (Újszentes) commune, Timis county, always a rich locality, founded 125 years ago by wealthy Hungarian settlers who came from Szentes, joins these desirable ones.

According to a study developed in 2013 by the Consultative Council for Regionalization, Dumbrăvița commune, in Timiș county, was declared the most developed locality in Romania, based on the Local Social Development Index (IDSL). The local policies that ensured success over several generations in the field of quality of social life, cultural education, sports were validated by the fact that at the last census (2022) the population was over 20,014 inhabitants, with a decadal increase of 166.07 % of the number of inhabitants.

In conclusion, we appreciate that over time elements such as history and multiculturalism have created premises for sustainable development in our times.

Accessibility in Romania: A Growing Movement

The concept advocates for creating products and services that are accessible to all individuals regardless of ability, is steadily gaining momentum in Romania. Timișoara 2023, the European Capital of Culture, served as a significant platform for showcasing accessible cultural experiences, featuring sensory-friendly performances, audio descriptions, and tactile elements. These initiatives not only enriched the cultural landscape but also demonstrated the potential for creating inclusive and welcoming environments.

A notable example was the Timișoara 2023 Endlessly event, where Lavinia Chițu and Denis Blidariu provided live sign language interpretation for concerts in Unirii Square. Alongside renowned artists such as Jessie J, Róisín Murphy, Katie Melua, Delia, and EMAA, the duo’s translations ensured that hearing-impaired individuals could fully participate in and enjoy the memorable performances. This initiative highlighted the importance of considering accessibility in large-scale public events and showcased the positive impact it can have on the overall experience.

While Timișoara’s achievements are notable, challenges persist. Beyond cultural events, accessibility should be integrated into various sectors, including education, healthcare, transportation, and public spaces. This requires a comprehensive approach that involves policy development, infrastructure improvements, and ongoing training and awareness-raising programs.

The success of these events underscores the potential for normalising accessibility in Romania and it stands as a pillar for future projects, while constantly focusing on the education of the public.

Places and Therapy, Topos or About Intercultural Communication at Victor Babeș University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timișoara

The paper aims to illustrate how knowledge of cultural and ethical norms contribute to the development of effective medical communication skills and to build trustworthy relationships with patients, but also with specialists in the field. Intercultural dialogue, diversity of students and professors, preparation for interaction with patients from different backgrounds, empathic and ethical communication, linguistic aspects in decoding medical language, etc. – these are just some of the aspects that we are focusing on in our presentation. In this sense, we will illustrate two of the cultural actions carried out in our university – the Places and Therapy conference and the Topos cultural meetings.

Artistic Stimulation – A Way to Trigger the Creative Process

The creative writing workshop I have been coordinating at the “Victor Babeş” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Timișoara served as a space for cultural mediation meetings for students and pupils during the year Timișoara was European Capital of Culture. These meetings were followed by creative writing and drawing exercises. The works inspired by the events we attended are gathered in a volume published in 2024, both electronically and in print (<https://www.umft.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Texte-de-atelier-Calatorii-Elena-Jebelean-EBOOK.pdf>). Public readings and the launch of this collective volume brought us together again with the artists and curators of the exhibitions we had visited, promoting both culture and the institutions hosting it – Casa cu Iederă, Calpe Gallery, La Două Bufnițe Bookstore, Casa Artelor – Pygmalion Gallery, the National Museum of Art, and Cazarma U. The joy of creating together, as well as the interest young people show in our creations, motivate us to continue such experience.

Patterns of ECoCs: how emotional experiences are explored, through culture

This research aims to enhance the knowledge on how European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) become places generating emotions, through culture. The scientific field of this study encompasses both quantitative and qualitative research methods, addressing spatial and geographical issues. The study considers Bidbooks and Cultural Programmes of ECoC starting from 2015 to 2023, Monitoring and Evaluation reports of ECoCs, alongside tourists' reviews. This extensive database reveals that even from the outset, when designing ECoC programmes, feelings and emotions are taken into account - either by addressing specific emotional experiences or particular feelings linked to these spaces, or by trying to create and build new emotional experiences through the cultural agenda. This study raises new questions and challenges regarding place-based emotions and long-term ECoC legacy, as the results highlight feelings of belonging, memories from the past and introspection, local identity and transformative experiences.



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