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Introduction

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The ever-increasing urbanization and development of cities across Europe have led to a significant reduction in the amount of natural infrastructure and open space that is available. The optimal liveability of a city must be characterised by a robust cultural infrastructure. In fact, there is a growing body of research that suggests that communities are more satisfied with their quality of life when cultural infrastructure in a city is well developed (Bianchini, F., & Parkinson, M., 2002 ; Navarro, O., de Abreu, E. S., & Camargo, M. L., 2018; Kaltenborn, B. P., Krange, O., & Nygaard, L. P., 2015; Zhang, Y., Wang, Y., & Chen, J., 2015; Iwata, O., & Kawasaki, K., 2017). However, this frequently comes at the expense of natural infrastructure which is eaten away to make space for other important development - this, in turn leads to unfavourable effects on the environment, such as the creation of urban heat islands, increased air pollution, and decreased biodiversity. Therefore, in order to achieve sustainable development, it is essential to strike a balance between the cultural and natural infrastructure that exists in a cityscape. The purpose of this introduction is to provide a context to this publication which draws from the 2022 UNeECC annual conference entitled *Culture and Nature – Partners in Dialogue* held between the 5th and 7th of October. This introductory paper will also conduct a brief analysis of how three city councils in Europe were able to achieve a healthy balance between their cultural and natural infrastructure with the aim of improving the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Cultural infrastructure is a vital component of the urban environment that contributes to the identity and liveability of a city (Borg and Russo, 2017; Kaltenborn et al., 2015). Cultural infrastructure includes museums, galleries, theatres, and other cultural amenities that provide opportunities for cultural expression and engagement (Kaltenborn et al., 2015; Navarro et al., 2018). This is often developed as part of urban revitalization initiatives, which aim to attract investment and tourism to a city (Borg and Russo, 2017; Navarro et al., 2018). However, the development of cultural infrastructure can lead to the displacement of natural infrastructure, such as green spaces and waterways, leading to adverse environmental impacts (Dixon et al., 2016; Navarro et al., 2018).

Natural infrastructure, such as parks, green spaces, and waterways, provides ecosystem services that enhance the environmental quality of a city and improve the

well-being of its inhabitants (Dixon et al., 2016; Pauleit et al., 2011). Natural infrastructure plays a crucial role in reducing urban heat island effects, improving air quality, providing recreational opportunities, and promoting biodiversity (Dixon et al., 2016; Pauleit et al., 2011). However, natural infrastructure is often threatened by urban development, as land is converted for buildings and other infrastructure (Pauleit et al., 2011). This can lead to the fragmentation and loss of natural habitats, leading to adverse environmental impacts such as reduced biodiversity, increased urban heat island effects, and reduced opportunities for recreation and relaxation (Dixon et al., 2016; Pauleit et al., 2011).

Striking a balance between cultural and natural infrastructure is a challenging task that requires the collaboration of stakeholders, citizens, and city councils (Borg and Russo, 2017; Puppim de Oliveira et al., 2018). Effective policies and regulations are also necessary to ensure that development is sustainable and does not lead to the loss of natural infrastructure (Borg and Russo, 2017; Dixon et al., 2016).

Barcelona is a city that has successfully balanced cultural and natural infrastructure through the development of its urban park system (Pauleit et al., 2011; Salvati et al., 2019). The city has developed a network of parks that serve as green lungs for the city while also providing recreational and cultural amenities (Pauleit et al., 2011). The park system has been developed in collaboration with citizens and stakeholders, and effective policies and regulations have been put in place to ensure that development is sustainable and does not lead to the loss of natural infrastructure (Salvati et al., 2019).

Copenhagen is another important case which managed to strike a balance between natural and cultural infrastructure – this was possible through the development of its green roof policy (Borg and Russo, 2017; Wamsler et al., 2015). The city has implemented a policy that requires new buildings to have green roofs or facades, which help to mitigate the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, and promote biodiversity (Borg and Russo, 2017). The policy has been developed in collaboration with stakeholders and citizens and has been supported by effective regulations and incentives (Wamsler et al., 2015).

The development of the green belt (Dixon et al., 2016; Zimmermann et al., 2017) is yet another important initiative taken by Bavaria's Capital, Munich. The green belt is a network of green spaces and waterways that surrounds the city and serves as a recreational amenity for citizens (Zimmermann et al., 2017). This project has been supported by effective policies and regulations that ensure that development is sustainable and does not lead to the loss of natural infrastructure (Dixon et al., 2016).

The above examples demonstrate that a collaborative approach between stakeholders, citizens, and city councils, supported by effective policies and regulations, is essential for achieving a balance between cultural and natural infrastructure in a cityscape. The Barcelona case study shows that the development of a park system can provide opportunities for cultural and natural infrastructure to

coexist, while the Copenhagen case study shows that the development of green roofs and facades can promote natural infrastructure while also providing cultural amenities. The Munich case study shows that the development of a green belt can provide recreational opportunities while also preserving natural infrastructure.

Cities require the balance of multiple infrastructures to function sustainably. Cultural infrastructure and natural infrastructure are two components that contribute to the identity and liveability of a city. However, the development of cultural infrastructure often results in the loss of natural infrastructure, leading to adverse environmental impacts. Finding a balance between cultural and natural infrastructure is crucial for achieving sustainable development. The case studies demonstrate that a collaborative approach between stakeholders, citizens, and city councils, supported by effective policies and regulations, is essential for achieving a balance between cultural and natural infrastructure in a cityscape.

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The UK City, Boroughs and Towns of Culture Programmes

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Abstract

Following the perceived success in the UK of the Glasgow (1990) and Liverpool (2008) European City of Culture Programmes there was a recognition that these programmes could bring both cultural, scientific, economic, and social benefits to the designated cities. Given that ECoCs were only rarely allocated to member states and the impact of BREXIT in the UK, it was decided to hold a UK competition every 4 years to identify UK Cities of Culture. The competition is run by the government Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and early winners were Derry-Londonderry (2013), Hull (2017) and Coventry (2021). They will be followed by Bradford in 2025. The UK Cities of Culture initiative was also widely considered a success and this led to the Boroughs of Culture programme which started in 2018 in Liverpool and then London (2019) and Manchester (2020/1). This paper describes and critiques the challenges and successes of the programmes and looks to possible future changes.

Key words: Cities, towns, boroughs, culture, UK

Definitions:

City: A large town associated with having a cathedral, university, a particular form of government or a large population. There are 76 cities in the UK: 45 in England, 7 in Wales, 8 in Scotland and 6 in Northern Ireland. eg Bradford, Coventry, Derry/Londonderry, Hull, London, Liverpool and Manchester.

Town: usually larger and more important than villages and smaller than cities. There are 935 towns in England eg Bury and Stalybridge in Manchester.

Borough: a single town with its own local government, often forms part of a larger city eg Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral in Liverpool; Brent and Waltham Forest in London.

UK/United Kingdom: England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Britain/British: England, Wales, and Scotland.

1. History

The European Capital of Culture programme was initially called the European City of Culture Programme and was conceived in 1983 by Melina Mercouri, Minister of Culture, Greece. She believed that culture was not given as much attention as politics and economics and that a project for promoting European cultures within the member states should be pursued. The European City of Culture programme was launched in the summer of 1985 with Athens being the first titleholder. In

1999, the European City of Culture programme was renamed the European Capital of Culture.

A 2004 study conducted for the Commission, known as the "Palmer Report", demonstrated that the choice of a city as a European Capital of Culture served as a catalyst for cultural development and the transformation of the city. Consequently, the potential beneficial socio-economic development and impacts for the chosen city are now also considered in determining the chosen cities.

A European Capital of Culture is a city designated by the European Union for a period of one calendar year during which time it organises a series of cultural events with a strong pan-European dimension. Being a European Capital of Culture can be an opportunity for a city to generate considerable cultural, social, and economic benefits and it can help foster urban regeneration, change the city's image, and raise its visibility and profile on an international scale.

In most European countries the award of Capital of Culture is a rare event. Initially the recognition was given to one city each year. Given the general consensus that these events were successful and a 'good thing' it was decided that since 2001, the award of the accolade would be increased and each year two cities across Europe were allocated the status of European Capital of Culture.

For two of the capitals each year, eligibility is open to cities in EU member states only. From 2021 and every three years thereafter, it was decided that a third capital would be chosen from cities in countries that are candidates or potential candidates for membership of the EU, or in countries that are part of the European Economic Area. Since 2021 every third-year cities from European Candidate Countries, (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey), Potential EU members (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) and EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) have been allowed to apply.

2. ECoC and the UK

Prior to BREXIT in January 2020, the United Kingdom had awarded the title in 1990 to Glasgow, Scotland and in 2008 to Liverpool, England. Within the UK (and also elsewhere) both events were widely regarded as great successes as morale boosters, agents of urban regeneration and the sharing of the broader European cultural heritage. The impact of Glasgow 1990 was immense. A formerly run-down post-industrial city was transformed to a bustling and successful focus of culture and economic regeneration. Almost 2 decades later in 2008 Liverpool was called by the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, *'the best European Capital of Culture ... ever'*.

These successes encouraged many UK inhabitants to consider making culture and event-led initiatives a more frequently and more widely available activity. So successful was the experience of Glasgow and Liverpool that immediately before BREXIT in 2020 bids from five United Kingdom cities

(Dundee, Leeds, Milton Keynes, Nottingham, Belfast/Derry/Strahan) to be the 2023 Capital of Culture had been lodged with the EU. Frustratingly (for these cities) in November 2017, a few weeks before the expected announcement of the winners, all were disqualified, because the UK was planning to leave the EU before 2023 (actually on 30th January 2020), the year for which the application was being considered.

Another major influence on the development of culture programmes at this time was COVID-19. This started in China on 31st December 2019 and was declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organisation on the 30th January 2020 and a pandemic on the 11th March 2020. In the UK the virus began circulating in early 2020 and widespread public health measures were introduced from March 2020. Most of these were lifted in mid-2021 and all in February/March 2022. All European Capital of Culture, British City of Culture and UK Borough of Culture programmes were significantly affected by the pandemic.

3. The Idea of a British City of Culture

The coincidence of BREXIT with the world financial recession and the more recent global COVID crisis as well as national political, economic and identity crises and concerns in the UK encouraged thinking about making the Capital of Culture model more widely available across the country.

This was facilitated by 2 key figures with strong links with Merseyside and nationally. Firstly, politician Andy Burnham and secondly, creative TV director (Sir) Phil Redmond. Andy Burnham was born and educated in a Roman Catholic state school on Merseyside before reading English at the University of Cambridge. He is a keen sportsman and lifelong fan of Everton FC and sometime President of the Rugby League. He became a member of the Labour Party supporting ‘aspirational socialism’ and was elected as Member of Parliament for Leigh, Greater Manchester in 2001. He retained this role until he became Mayor of Greater Manchester in 2017. Throughout his parliamentary career he held a number of posts including Secretary of State, and Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Health, Education, the Treasury, and the Home Office. At the time of Liverpool’s tenure as UK Capital of Culture in 2008 he was the UK Government’s Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. On 7th January 2009 seven days after the end of Liverpool’s he spoke at the University of Liverpool of five lessons from the year and announced his proposal for the British City of Culture inspired by his lessons learnt from Liverpool 2008.

‘So here’s where I finish – with a new proposal- one that is inspired by my five lessons of Liverpool and which would create a worthy legacy, capturing the benefits seen by Liverpool and offering them to other places around the country on an ongoing basis....the trail leads back to Phil Redmond. His original idea. It is a permanent British City of Culture.’ (Burnham 2009)

Sir Philip Redmond CBE is a television producer and screenwriter from Liverpool. He created the television series Grange Hill, Brookside and Hollyoaks and for over twenty years ran his own independent production company, Mersey Television. He is Chair of National Museums, Liverpool, and the UK City of Culture Independent Advisory Panel. Sir Phil was tasked with chairing a panel to consider the feasibility of a British City of Culture prize beginning in 2013 it would consider how frequently it would be awarded, but a working assumption could be a four-year cycle. It would also need to consider a core list of events such as the Turner Prize, Brit Awards, Man Booker Prize and the Stirling Prize that the winning city would gain the right to host.

The working group was established in March 2009 and reported in June 2009. It suggested that the designation be given to a city once every four years starting in 2013. The working group stated in its report that the same calendar of events, should not be staged by each designated City of Culture. Rather, they suggested that the events held in the city should be decided on a case-by-case basis. The report lists possible core events, including those run by the BBC, Sony, the Poetry Book Society, the UK Film Council, the Tate, VisitEngland, VisitBritain, the Museums Association, the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, Channel 4 TV and the Arts Council England. Further it recommended that:

'..... Each winning city would be would be the one promising not just to do the core events well, but the one with the best vision for how it will use the award to inspire its citizens and transform its prospects..... 'But the long term test of success is not whether the events ran smoothly - or grabbed attention - but whether going forward it changes the life chances of the people of this city.' (DCMS 2009)

The British City of Culture is a designation given to a city (or a local area from 2025) in the United Kingdom for a period of one calendar year, during which the successful bidder hosts cultural festivities through culture-led regeneration. The UK-wide programme, which is administered by the UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in collaboration with the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, is to *"build on the success of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture 2008, which had significant social and economic benefits for the area"*. Bids solely in Greater London are excluded from the competition, although boroughs and places in the UK capital may submit a joint bid with a city or place outside of Greater London.

The designation is awarded to a city every four years, through a competition, with the inaugural holder of the title being Derry/Londonderry (Northern Ireland) in 2013. Kingston upon Hull was the second holder of the title in 2017, and Coventry in 2021. The bidding process for the 2025 title was conducted between 2021 and 2022, and Bradford announced as the winner on 31 May 2022. The 2025 title is the first to be open to local areas across the UK.



Fig 1: UK Cities of Culture

Year	Winning city	Other shortlisted cities	Date announced
2013	Derry/Londonderry	Birmingham, Norwich, Sheffield	15 July 2010
2017	Kingston upon Hull	Dundee, Leicester, Swansea Bay	20 November 2013
2021	Coventry	Paisley, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Swansea	7 December 2017
2025	Bradford	County Durham, Southampton, Wrexham	31 May 2022

Table 1: The British Cities of Culture

The winners of the first four rounds were either *'left behind'* cities; those located in the devolved nations (Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland); post-industrial English cities of the Midlands and North of England; those with a large ethnically diverse proportion of population, or those exhibiting high deprivation and poverty.

3.1 Derry/Londonderry (2013)

Derry/Londonderry is the second city of Northern Ireland. It is a on the border with the Republic of Ireland.

During the 18th and 19th centuries the port became an important embarkation point for Irish emigrants setting out for North America. Also, during the 19th century, it became a destination for migrants fleeing the Great (potato) Famine. It also had an important role in the World War 2 Battle of the Atlantic. The city languished after the second world war, with unemployment and stagnating development.

Its double name indicates the political and religious divisions which characterise the city. Derry is normally associated with the Nationalists (UK) and Londonderry with the Unionists (Republic of Ireland). The city is closely identified with the 'Troubles'. The 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland are considered to have started with the Battle of Bogside in 1969 and included the infamous Bloody Sunday incident in 1972. One of the major aims of the City of Culture was to help promote '*harmony, tolerance, hope and aspiration*'.

3.2 Kingston upon Hull (2017)

Hull is a port city on the Humber Estuary of east England, it is 40km from the North Sea. Originally it had sea links with the rest of the UK, Europe and the Baltic and later, with the advent of steam ships, the New World and South America.

Historically it had close associations with the whaling and fishing industries, the Civil War, and the slave trade (a former Member of Parliament, William Wilberforce, took a prominent part in the abolition of the slave trade in Britain).

More than 95% of the city was damaged or destroyed in the World War 2 blitz and Hull suffered a period of post-industrial decline and associated social deprivation. The destroyed areas of the city were rebuilt in the post-Second World War period and in the early 21st century the city saw large amounts of new retail, commercial, housing and public service construction.

Phil Redmond, who chaired the City of Culture panel, said Hull was the unanimous choice because it put forward "*the most compelling case based on its theme as 'a city coming out of the shadows'*". (UK Government 2013).

3.3 Coventry (2021)

Coventry is a part of the West Midlands region of England which includes Birmingham (arguably the second city of England) and Wolverhampton. It has a long industrial history based upon bicycle manufacture in the 19th century, and the car industry in the 20th century. During World War 2 the city centre was destroyed by an air raid (November 1940). The city was rebuilt but in the 1970s and 1980s suffered large scale industrial decline.

Only recently has regeneration begun and the City of Culture award was seen as part of this process. The Arts Minister John Glen said it was "*an incredible opportunity for Coventry to boost investment in the local economy, grow tourism and put arts and culture centre stage*". (UK Government 2017).

Its plans were badly affected by COVID and in July 2020 it was announced that the start of Coventry's year as City of Culture had been put back to May 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4 Bradford (2025)

Bradford is an industrial city in West Yorkshire, England. It is located close to the industrial cities of Leeds and Sheffield and developed in the 19th century as an international centre of textile manufacture, particularly wool. It was '*a boomtown of the Industrial Revolution*' and rapidly became the "*wool capital of the world*".

From the mid-20th century, deindustrialisation caused Bradford's textile sector and industrial base to decline and, since then, it has faced similar economic and social challenges to the rest of post-industrial Northern England, including poverty, unemployment, and social unrest. It has a large and growing largely Asian immigrant population and has a vibrant heritage and cultural industry based upon its former mills, its literary connections (the Bronte sisters) and the artist David Hockney. In 2009 it was designated the first UNESCO City of Film.

On 31 May 2022, Bradford was announced as the 2025 winner of the title, following a record number of twenty bids submitted.

Table 2: Population of UK Cities, Boroughs and Towns of Culture

Cities, Boroughs and Towns	Population	Year
Derry	110,734	2020
Hull	261,149	2019
Coventry	345,300	2021
Bradford	536,986	2019
Liverpool City Region	1,551,500	2021
St Helens	180,049	2018
Wirral	323,266	2019
Sefton	275,562	2019
Halton	128,432	2018
Knowsley	149,571	2018
Greater London	8,908,000	2018
Waltham Forest	276,700	2018
Brent	331,616	2019
Lewisham	303,536	2018
Croydon	389,473	2019
Greater Manchester	2,822,000	2019
Bury	190,108	2018
Stalybridge	27,452	2021

4. The UK Boroughs/Towns of Culture

Such was the success of the UK City of Culture initiative with ever-increasing numbers of applicant cities (and despite high planning and application costs which were reducing applications to host big events such as the Olympic and Commonwealth Games), that Andy Burnham and Phil Redmond pressed hard for the introduction of the UK Boroughs and Towns of Culture. So far two cities Liverpool and London have introduced the **Borough** of Culture concept and Manchester (the second/third city of England) has awarded the designation to component **towns** of Greater Manchester.

4.1 Liverpool

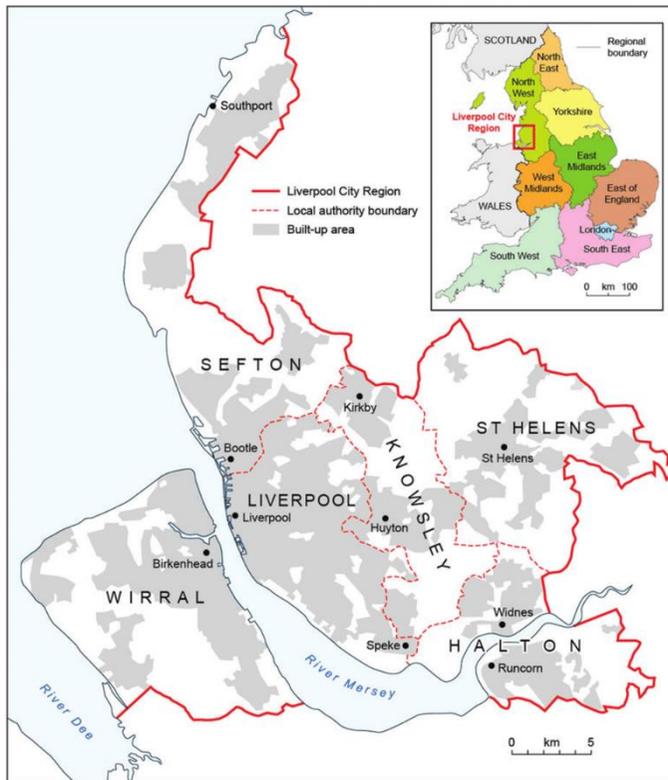


Fig. 2: Liverpool City Region Boroughs of Culture

Liverpool's application was launched in 2018 as part of its wider Culture and Creativity Strategy for the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The project was open to 5 of the 6 boroughs of the Liverpool City Region. Liverpool borough was excluded since it had previously benefitted from the European Capital of

Culture in 2008 and was widely seen to be the dominant unfair recipient of the majority of the cultural budget of the city region.

The strategy was complex with ambitions to meet both market-led outcomes linked to the visitor economy and growth of the city region’s culture and creative industries AND socially oriented outcomes including health and wellbeing.

So far two rounds have been designated: 2018-2022 and 2023-2027. It was decided to allocate the award to each borough on an alternating rota. The original aim (Round1: 2018-2022) had followed on from the success of the 2008 Capital of Culture to ‘continue to use culture as the catalyst for economic growth to raise the bar, build awareness of our cultural assets, grow, and develop the Visitor Economy’. The Second Round (2023-2027) was more focussed on other opportunities, such as skills development and the contribution of culture to the social and health agenda eg via social prescribing.

4.2 London



Fig. 3: London Boroughs of Culture

The London Borough of Culture programme was launched by Mayor Sadiq Khan in 2017. It aimed ‘*To bring Londoners together and put culture at the heart of local communities ... to shine a light on the character and diversity of London’s boroughs and bring culture to everyone*’. He continued ‘*Now, more than ever, there is a pressing need to reach out to our neighbours and celebrate London’s unique*

and diverse culture whilst showing the world that our cultural gems extend way beyond the centre of the capital to all corners of the city.” Greater London Authority 2022.

The designation is awarded annually on a competitive basis to one of the 32 boroughs of London. Winning boroughs receive more than £1.35m in borough funding to create a year-long programme of activities. In addition, other funding and support comes from the City Bridge Trust, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Airbnb.

In 2019, Waltham Forest was the first London Borough of Culture (Waltham Forest undated), and in 2020, Brent (Brent undated) took the title. At the same time six *Cultural Impact Awards* were made which received over £1m in funding for ‘transformative projects’ in the unsuccessful boroughs. Lewisham is the London Borough of Culture for 2022 and Croydon takes the title in 2023, and Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey and Sutton have *Cultural Impact Award* projects taking place in 2022 – 2024.

4.3 Manchester



Fig. 4: Greater Manchester Boroughs and Towns of Culture

The Greater Manchester Culture Strategy (Greater Manchester Combined Authority 2019) aimed to ‘*Celebrate the distinctive identity of our cities and towns, developing cultural programmes that reflect and respond to place*’. The Greater Manchester Town of Culture programme was planned for 2020. It celebrates the

distinctiveness of one town (not boroughs) each year, selected competitively from the ten districts of Greater Manchester. The programme additionally aims to ‘*raise local ambitions for cultural provision, a night-time economy, and increase pride in a place.*’

The programme was supported by £50,000 from the Strategic Project funding from the GMCA Culture budget. This in turn brought in more than £150,000 in addition from Bury Council, Arts Council England, and the Victoria Wood Foundation, bringing the total budget to £200,000.

To ensure a focus on the town when the very best activity is happening, and unlike the other Cities, Towns and Boroughs of Culture, the Greater Manchester Local Authorities are able to nominate the length of their programme (from a minimum of 3 months to a maximum of 6 months). This aims to provide flexibility if a place has a particularly strong summer, autumn, or winter programme.

As a result of COVID restrictions in 2020, it was decided to postpone Bury’s Town of Culture programme to 2021. Using a hybrid programme of online and offline activities the year started with a 24-hour *United We Stream* party being beamed into four million homes in more than 22 countries around the world. Stalybridge ran its 2022 programme for a 4-month period.

Borough/Towns	Year Round 1	Borough	Year Round 2	Method
Liverpool	2018	St Helens	2023	Allocated
	2019	Wirral	2024	
	2020	Sefton	2025	
	2021	Halton	2026	
	2022	Knowsley	2027	
London	2019	Waltham Forest		Competitive
	2020	Brent		
	2020-22	Barking & Dagenham, Camden, Kingston, Lambeth, Lewisham and Merton (Cultural Impact Awards)		
	2021	Postponed		
	2022	Lewisham		
	2023	Croydon		
	2022-24	Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Sutton (Cultural Impact Awards)		
Manchester	2020	Postponed		Competitive
	2021	Bury		
	2022	Stalybridge		

Table 2: UK Boroughs of Culture

4.4 The Leeds 2023 Year of Culture Anomaly

As mentioned above and following Glasgow (1990) and Liverpool (2008), the UK had been allocated the European Capital of Culture for the third time in 2023. Five cities and regions were shortlisted, and a decision was promised in November 2017. Leeds' bid was widely expected to be successful. However, prior to the announcement and because of Britain's intention to leave the European Union (BREXIT), all the UK bids were disqualified by the EU. As a result, the Leeds and the other bids were ignored.

However, in 2023 a disappointed City of Leeds, as '*an act of defiance*' (Kully Thiarai, the creative director and chief executive 2023), crowned itself the self-appointed culture capital of the UK. This illustrated the successful image of Cities of Culture and their importance to the regeneration and repositioning of successful cities.

5. Emergent Themes

Reviewing the City, Boroughs and Towns of Culture described above a number of interesting general themes emerge.

5.1 Mega and Small Projects: High and Popular Culture

All projects have access to lower budgets than those available to the original European Capitals of Culture of Glasgow and Liverpool. This is largely the result of the events being held by cities, boroughs and towns with far smaller populations and thus smaller budgets and human resources to plan, organise and execute the year's events. As examples, for the UK City of Culture programme Derry/Londonderry was funded by a population base of 111,000 compared with Coventry, a city in the West Midlands industrial conurbation with a population of 439,000; Bradford the newly appointed City for 2025 has a population of 536,986. In the Liverpool Boroughs of Culture programme Halton Borough with a population of 128,000 had to compete with Wirral with its 323,000 inhabitants. (Table 3).

One result of these differences has meant a reduction, though not an elimination, in the number of mega projects and the necessity to manage the expectations of the public and devise realistic programmes. Mega projects have the 'wow!' factor employing famous and popular performers and holding events which attract international and national publicity and audiences and generate the 'feel good' factor amongst the population. They are 'safe' in terms of attracting audiences but expensive and absorb a large proportion of the smaller budgets available and publicity received. Also, they produce short term (although sometimes more memorable!) benefits as a result of the 'parachuting in' of celebrities and organisations. In the case of Liverpool 2008 headliners included former Beatles Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, the Berlin Philharmonic and the Klimt Exhibition. In the example of the Liverpool Borough of Culture programme the Borough of Knowsley year was dominated by the opening of the Shakespeare of the North Theatre possibly to the detriment of publicity of the imaginative, extensive small scale community projects. At its discussion of the future Stage 2 Cycle from 2023

onwards the Liverpool City Region (unpublished minute) discussed the relative return on investment of the mega and small projects. One point of debate was to consider *'not having to hold large scale events in every borough each time'* and to *'encourage people to travel to these (boroughs) when they happen'* perhaps by offering incentives such as 'Culture Passes' to encourage the use of public transport (for which the Metro-Mayor has responsibility).

By comparison small intensive projects and activities are cheaper, involve a wider cross section of the local community, are based on co-production, celebrate local personalities, events and histories, develop the pride, participation and skills of local inhabitants, are accessible to a larger proportion of the population and arguably have a longer and lasting impact on their lives. They are also cheaper! The Liverpool Borough of Knowsley is an excellent example of this approach with many activities including the *'Serious Nonsense Festival'* (www.cultureknowsley.co.uk/the-serious-nonsense-festival) and *'22 voices'* (<https://www.cultureknowsley.co.uk/twenty-two-voices>) initiatives.

5.2 Co-creation and Co-production

The importance of co-creation and co-production involving individuals and organisations working together to create and perform events is increasingly important. This is particularly the case in the Boroughs of Culture programmes which often focus on local communities which are seen as disadvantaged and not traditionally catered for or involved in 'cultural' activities.

Much co-creation involves partnerships between professionals (ie experts) and communities. Co-creation is seen as important and frequently a condition of receipt of funding. For many communities this is often the first time they have engaged with 'experts' and are taken seriously. For professionals, it provides opportunities to keep their practice grounded and stimulated in reality, as well as providing a much-needed income. For locally based towns and boroughs co-creation is seen as a justification for spending hard-earned council finances for the benefit of local communities whether they be disadvantaged through lack of skills, poverty and opportunity or isolation. Excellent examples of co-creation can be seen in many recent programmes, most notably those of the City of Coventry, the Boroughs of Brent and Waltham Forest (London) and Knowsley (Liverpool). All these are characterised by broadening the engagement of the whole population and providing them with a voice and active involvement in creative activities as creators and/or performers. This gives them ownership as participants not just passive recipients as audiences and spectator of 'others' culture. Their voices are listened to, and they influence the content and focus of projects. This may enhance their self-respect and ambition and change their lives.

UK Cities of Culture such as Derry and Coventry were at the forefront of co-creation using *'local, cultural, grassroots, heritage organisations, and resident collectives'* in an attempt to *'mobilise local skills, capabilities and interests; to 'give ownership.'* (Derry) Coventry valued *'local and latent creativity'* and *'engaged hyper local level co-creatives with city communities, faith groups, community*

centres, libraries, primary schools, community radio stations, police, arts organisations, to shape and design activities.'

At the Borough of Culture level St Helens (Liverpool City Region) aimed to *'capture the imagination of local communities, and collaborate with organisations, venues, artists, creative groups, musicians, dancers, writers, theatre practitioners, schools, colleges and other partners.'*

Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of Brent Council claimed *'we built Brent 2020 with our community. They came with the ideas, stories, and the histories.'* Similarly, Graham Morgan, Leader of Knowsley Council Culture 2022 argued it *'isn't just about theatre and art but it is about how people live, their lives, what enriches us and excites us and what makes Knowsley the place it is'* when describing its successful Sculpture Trail. Knowsley's *Cultural Conversations* programme sought to *'uncover the stories of people, places and magic to inspire a programme of events, exhibitions, activities and performances.'*

5.3 Digital and Remote Technologies

The period covered by this paper coincided with the increasing use of remote technologies and the responses of organisers and audiences to COVID. These were important in influencing the delivery of (and access to) programmes as well as the nature of the programmes.

Online access to programmes was particularly important for those unable to participate personally because of the health risk of face-to-face contact or a reluctance or inability to travel to performance venues. It facilitated engagement and participation by a larger and more diverse audience. For example, Brent had over 2,000,308 social media hits and a total audience of 843,481 comprising 209,000 live attendees and digital 634,000. Over its year, Coventry's live events attracted an audience of 522,000 (385,000 ticketed + 137,000 un-ticketed) but as of October 2022 these had attracted an online audience exceeding 500,000 which with online storage access was increasing all the time.

The application of new technologies influenced not only the number and diversity of participants and audiences but also the nature of the activities. For example, Brent showcased a *Digital MusicFest* and *Podcast Festival*. The Coventry year also embraced new technologies. A *'Reel Store'* digital art gallery was important, but their drone-based Firework (Lights) display was most innovative and attracted a live sell-out audience of 28,000 and a live online audience of 15,00 viewers. Here over 360 drones were programmed by Somerset-based Celestial Productions to produce *Our Wilder Family* drone show. As well as being technologically innovative the show helped Coventry respond to its Green Agenda by replacing smoky fireworks with illuminated drones.

5.4 Volunteering

Fundamental to the success of the Cities and Boroughs of Culture programmes is volunteering. Volunteering is a long-established process within the charitable sector. Without the contribution of volunteers many charitable and cultural organisations would not survive economically. Almost all of the cities and boroughs have existing volunteer pools, examples include the Bury Voluntary, Community and Faith Alliance (VCFA) and Sefton Community Volunteers Service (CVS) on which they built.

In the United Kingdom recent mega events have been dependent on the input of volunteers. Examples include the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games, the 2008 Liverpool European Capital of Culture (Impacts08 2010) and the 2012 London Olympics (Harris, 2012; DCMS, 2012)

Apart from relatively menial signposting and welcoming roles, EoC volunteers create, design and deliver programmes. In addition, Dr Oyinlola Oyeboode of the Warwick Medical School suggested a large number of benefits which volunteering may give to the volunteers themselves. These included mental wellbeing, self-worth, the development of social interactions and friendships (sometimes across generations and cultures), skill development, growth in confidence, physical activity and health, research skills and learning and the development of pride in their city. In other words, volunteers gain as much as they give!

Knowsley recruited 4 types of volunteers:

- Event Makers who welcomed, signposted and provided information to audiences and participants.
- Community Makers who helped communities to share untold stories through arts, culture and heritage events and projects.
- Heritage Makers who researched and archived untold heritage and devised heritage tours and pop-up events which celebrate local heritage in each town and borough.
- Gallery Volunteers who welcomed and supported visitors and assisted paid staff.

Coventry, as part of their 'City Hosts' initiative, used volunteers:

- at transport hubs to greet and say farewell to visitors
- to meet lots of new people
- to provide information on artworks, installations and events
- to contribute to the co-creation of events
- to participate in skill-enhancing training
- are encouraged to participate by being provide with discounts through the City of Culture Loyalty Scheme

5.5 Responses to Covid

COVID had an immense impact on the cultural plans devised by the various cities, towns and boroughs. Responses reflected human nature and local commitment. Understandably many saw COVID as a threat but others as an opportunity and this stimulated creative responses.

In general, COVID encouraged digital engagement and delivery (streaming performances) and programme content although some of the more disadvantaged communities and individuals were unable to benefit due to ‘digital poverty’. Overall, streamed activities attracted larger and more diverse audiences as seen above in Coventry.

The 2021 UNeECC Conference was planned to be held in Galway but the traditional face to face conference had to be cancelled and was replaced by a zoom webinar organised by the Moore Institute of the National University of Ireland, Galway and run in conjunction with UNICA. It was entitled *UniverCities & Culture* (<https://youtu.be/rpPELdaVEL8?t=25>) (<https://mooreinstitute.ie/uneecc-march-2021/>) and attended by 50 presenters. It was subsequently published online as *European Capitals of Culture: The Art of Reimagining*. <https://uneecc.org/conferences/past-conferences/68-online-special-issue-and-webinar-recording>

Many live events were threatened. Brent moved all its events online with the exception of *Rise* the launch of its year. Sefton (Liverpool) had arranged 43 events. Eleven were cancelled, 14 were transferred to online and the rest continued using a combination of flexibility, adaptability and creativity.

Of the small staff responsible for the Borough of Sefton, the Culture Team Manager (also responsible for Theatres, Libraries and Museums) was temporarily moved from the Borough Culture Year Programme to staff the borough Burial & Cremation team which was oversubscribed because of COVID!

Sefton also planned an ambitious *Horrible Histories* parody and satire programme with a particular focus on the Tudors & Elizabethans. This was cancelled and then rescheduled. Then the location of the newly arranged event was found to clash with Queen Elizabeth II’s death and the location of the Book of Condolences and cancelled. Another Sefton event, a performance by the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage of his live poetry, in April 2020 had to be cancelled, but was rearranged as a Live Stream attracting a large audience a year later in April 2021

In Halton (Liverpool) the major project of the year *Life in a Day* (of the Runcorn Silver Jubilee Bridge which crosses the River Mersey) was cancelled. The bridge was planned as a major part of the heritage of the borough providing the lowest surface railway and vehicular river crossing of the Mersey. A large proportion of the Year’s budget (£111,247) was spent on the project using funding from the Borough of Halton, Liverpool City Region, the Arts Council, and the Welcome Back Fund. A well-known and highly respected Merseyside Arts

Organisation ‘*Walk the Plank*’ had been commissioned to design and organise the event with the local population. Sadly it was cancelled at the last minute disappointing thousands of the potential audience. Equally sad was the fact that no alternative was provided.

In the Manchester towns the themes developed aimed to overcome the sadness and chaos associated with COVID choosing the themes of ‘*Happiness*’ (Bury) and ‘*Slow Down*’ (Stalybridge) rather than historical and heritage themes.

5.6 Funding

Irrespective of local enthusiasm and commitment to culture and ‘having a good time’, adequate funding is vital to the success of the Cities and Boroughs of Culture programmes. Local authorities certainly do not have the resources to fund expensive cultural activities on their own, particularly in an economic recession or during a period when central funding (devolution funding) to the boroughs is being reduced as is the case in the UK.

Some look towards the 1% Rule levy on developers introduced in the USA between 1934 and 1943 for federal and state projects. This approach spread to Europe and Scandinavia in the decades starting in the 1950s (Netherlands 1951, France 1951, Stockholm 1963, Ireland 1978, Norway increased to 1.5%, and Denmark also 1.5%).

To justify this spending most cities and boroughs have developed their own Culture Strategy. Liverpool City Region has its Culture and Creativity Strategy which is used to justify spending 1% of its annual £30 million devolution funding from government to support cultural activity, public art and arts in public spaces which will support key developments that will kick start delivery of the Strategy. In London a £1.1 million grant is allocated to each borough comprising 30% match funding, 25% in cash and 5% in kind. Elsewhere it is common to insist any central contribution is match funded (ie funds raised by the councils).

Apart from local council support which is of fundamental importance, the rest of the funding is a combination of local and national sponsorship. Major national funders are the Government Department of Culture Media & Sport, the Arts Council, the British Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the British Broadcasting Corporation national and local. Sir Phil Redmond (personal communication October 2022) is of the opinion that the publicity provided by the BBC is of vital importance to the success of the City and Borough programmes. In addition, additional funds are available from the Government to encourage activities which support transient strategic initiatives such as the *Levelling Up Fund*, the *Metropolitan Fund*, and Health and Wellbeing initiatives.

Many Trust funds and Charities support relevant cultural projects. Examples include the *Paul Hamlyn Trust*, the *Spirit of 2012* charity which encourages happiness (in Bradford, Hull, and Coventry) and the *City Bridge Trust* (which supports diverse communities in London).

Other charities and trusts support projects with a local relevance; examples include the *Victoria Wood Fund* supporting creative activities in the comedienne’s hometown of Bury and the *Shakespeare North Playhouse Trust* which supports Shakespeare-related culture in the recently built Shakespeare North Playhouse in the previously culture-starved Prescott, Knowsley. In St Helens the local Rotary Club funded a city heritage trail.

Large industries also support City and Borough of Culture programmes not least as part of their Corporate Social Responsibilities. Coventry had a particularly thorough and creative approach to partnership aimed at providing sponsorship financially or in kind. They developed a Business Support Network and a 100 Club. They enrolled at least 48 corporate partners:

Category	Number	Examples
Development	8	Adient, Birmingham Airport, City Electrical Factors, Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Friar Gate, Jaguar LandRover, Listers, SCC.
Major	2	Pail Hamlyn Foundation, Coventry Building Society
Regional	1	Arena
City Champions	10	Patrick Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Severn Trent Water, Backstage Trust, Orbit, Exasoft, PetXi, Esmee Fairbairn, Coventry College, Foyle Foundation,
Transport	2	Avanti West Coast, National Express
Others	7	Cadent Foundation, Radcliffe Trust, Jerwood Arts, Linbury Trust, Legacy Trust, Saintbury Trust, Art Fund
International	1	British Council,
Delivery	6	West Midlands Police, Heart of England
Honorary	1	Positive Youth Foundation

Table 3: Coventry City Partners

London’s 2019 Borough of Culture, Waltham Forest, accessed funding which included Official Funding Partners: National Lottery, Arts Council England, Heritage Fund and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation; The Mayor of London’s initiative supported by the Mayor of London, the City of London, Airbnb; the Winning Borough’s Fund; Headline Partners: Mail, UberEats, Blackhorse Mills, Taylor Wimpy; Volunteer Programme Supporters: Kind, and Service Store; Presenting Partners: Hill, Countryside and Urbaser Ltd and ten local business members of a Culture Makers Club and 1008 individuals as Partners.

Major partners frequently include the local professional sports club (eg St Helens Rugby League Club) and the local University (eg Hull University, Coventry University and the University of Warwick for Coventry). Motives vary, but apart from the obvious public relations value of links with a high profile and successful cultural extravaganza with the local community, universities can provide expertise to assist long term research and evaluation programmes and also benefit from links with activities which may yield high quality research publications.

Most, but not all, bids are competitive. The annual Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture is allocated to each borough on a rotating 5-year basis and so long-term planning is possible and no time is wasted on making unsuccessful applications. Where the model is competitive (as in the UK City of Culture and the London and Manchester Boroughs) there will inevitably be some unsuccessful applicants. In this situation and similar ones *'consolation awards'* may be made to some unsuccessful bidders.

As part of its City of Culture programme Bradford has a *'Runners Up Fund'* which allocates £125,000 to runners up with *'good ideas.'* London allocates annual grants of between £50k and £200k to a total of £600k for *'Exemplar Projects'* in six boroughs and in addition offers 6 *Cultural Impact Awards* per year to a total of £1m. In addition, in Manchester, Bury Town of Culture allocated funding of £500 plus in-kind support from the town's cultural partners The Met Theatre and Bury Art Museum to 6 local artists to a *Micro Commissions and Grants Application Fund*. In Liverpool, Halton allocated small *Community Grants* of £5k. All of these are aimed at encouraging applications by ensuring a greater number of winners as well as rewarding creative initiatives.

5.7 Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of the Capital, Borough and Towns of Culture process. It has two main objectives: to justify expenditure in an honest and objective manner and to improve future cultural programmes. Councils are concerned about their public relations and the political power of the press and social media. Tommarchi (2022) claims that for Councils it is *'impossible to fail'* and hence some evaluation is in fact PR and in reality glossy political hype rather than objective truth. However, there are notable exceptions. Waltham Forest's monumental evaluation (Waltham Forest: undated) is most helpful by identifying honestly areas for improvement and of disappointment. Also, the reports prepared for (internal) council meetings provide useful insights.

For universities, whilst claiming to research for truth, using objective, unbiased approaches, in reality, *'the piper calls the tune'*. In which case their commissioning agency is often the local council. In addition, most researchers are not without a political stance and agenda and other academic researchers are more concerned with the volume of research rather than its quality. Much research is carried out and published *'for its own sake.'* Other research is short-lived whilst longitudinal studies may be of more value.

The City of Culture programmes usually utilise the expertise of the local university sector. Derry's programme was officially evaluated by England's University of Warwick although Queen's University Belfast established its own research group. Coventry was evaluated by a partnership between the Universities of Coventry and Warwick; and Bradford with the University of Bradford. The partnership model utilising two local universities started in Liverpool 2008 with IMPACTS 08 and was continued by Coventry. This is a useful approach giving access to a broader range of expertise.

An interesting development has been The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded *UK Cities of Culture Network*. This is important since the AHRC is a major funder of UK research. The project is run by the Universities of Hull and Warwick and strongly advocates '*turning evaluation into policy*.' ie research should influence and improve practice. It should be across geographical, professional, and disciplinary boundaries and barriers.

The project advocates:

- an extensive open-source data warehouse
- a cumulative repository of findings
- baseline methodology insights
- learning from research and evaluation

But challenges remain including:

- using shared methodologies
- presentation in a standard format
- the need for longitudinal surveys
- evaluations being at a reasonable cost.

The evaluation of the Boroughs and Towns of Culture programmes with their smaller budgets tends to use smaller scale evaluation programmes. The involvement of universities is carried out by individual researchers rather than the large scale teams involved in the evaluation of the better resourced Cities of Culture. Some of the most critical evaluations are to be found in the minutes of Borough councils sub-committees (eg Brent's Wellbeing and Scrutiny Committee (London Borough of Brent 2022) and Liverpool City Region's *Next Cycle* paper (Liverpool undated).

Much academic research is short lived and applied *en passant* to the programme of the year of the City or Borough or Town. It may rarely provide a comprehensive picture of the pre-existing situation, and the follow up and long-term impacts are short lived as individual researchers and teams move on and funders disappear. Some evaluations such as are longer-lived and provide useful insights into the long-term impacts of the programmes and legacy. A good example of this is the Beatrice Garcia initiated *Impact 08*. This is a joint research initiative of the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University which from 2005-2010 evaluated the social, cultural, economic and environmental effects of Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture. In 2010 *Impacts08* became the *Institute of Cultural Capital* and has continued to examine cultural values and policy, policy and major events and cultural assets and social value. Included in this is a project lead by Dr Rafael Ganga of John Moores University which is examining the Borough of Culture programme (2022).

6. Conclusions

6.1 Success: the UK Cities, Towns and Boroughs of Culture programme has been a great success. Applications to all the programmes continue to grow and recently in early 2023 The City of Leeds has unilaterally announced itself to be the '*self-appointed culture capital of the UK.*'

Leadership CEO and Creatives: the vital importance of the leadership and commitment of the Chief Executives of the individual cities, boroughs and towns to the programmes goes without saying. These are locally elected politicians who see opportunities to attract regional and national funding to supplement their, often meagre, budgets. Also, the cost of cultural activities tends to be less than capital projects. At a more altruistic level many of the local level staff (and councillors) of the local authorities value the opportunity to raise the 'feel good factor' for often deprived communities. In addition, the Creative Directors appointed by each City of Culture Programme (eg Katy Fuller, Hull; Chenine Bhathena, Coventry; Sharaz Gulzar, Bradford) are of vital importance and increasingly constitute a group of experts available to advise future initiatives.

6.2 Formalisation & Creation of Cultural Strategies: a major benefit is that all successful bids must be based upon an existing, or the development of new, cultural strategies not only by the cities, towns and borough councils but by participating and contributing organisations. In Liverpool tangible legacies have been developed by St. Helens, Wirral, Sefton and Halton Boroughs. This has also occurred in Bury, Greater Manchester. This helps ensure a coherence, quality and financial and resource commitment to the year.

6.3 Partnerships & Networks: there is little doubt that the process of bidding for, and the execution of, cultural years requires partnership working to ensure a full and appealing programme. Councils and their communities, local charities and arts organisations, industries and local sports clubs all work better together outside their traditional networks. Most successful programmes include activities and contributions from a wide group of sectors including arts, health, police, education, sport, industry, local authority and the voluntary sector.

6.4 Realistic Plans: the smaller the city, town or borough, the less financial and human resources are available. Many small planning teams develop a commitment and momentum to their project. The excitement engendered can lead to what the planning team in St Helens (Liverpool City Region) claimed were '*ambitions greater than our resources.*' Similarly small teams may simply lack the employees to ensure successful delivery over the year, especially when confronted by COVID outbreaks or financial recessions or Government cuts as was the case in Sefton Borough (Liverpool City Region). Liverpool City Region has had 50% cuts to its Central Government funding since 2008.

6.5 Sharing Resources, Projects, Expertise and Core Teams: given the lack of local money to support the cultural programmes there is a move to share resources

both within and between cities, towns, and boroughs. This can lead to similar (or sometimes identical) projects being commissioned or used. This is particularly the case in adjacent boroughs. It is also tempting to use the same local authority employees in adjacent or neighbouring boroughs. At a regional and national level the organisational vision and expertise is vital and the pool of creative expertise may be shallow. Whilst the sharing of contacts and ideas frequently leads to enhanced creativity and reduction of time wasting on ‘recreating the wheel’ it can lead to a loss of distinctiveness and identity and the possibility of blandness.

6.6 Evaluations: there is little doubt that the evaluation of all programmes and their component projects is vital and obligatory. Short-term one-off evaluations are of little value when trying to assess the long-term legacy. There is a move to ensure some degree of standardisation so that different programmes can be compared, leading to enhancement. However, given the many different cultural programmes devised for different areas this may be unrealistic. The larger scale Cities of Culture programmes are attracting University partnerships to evaluate their programmes. In addition, evaluation may absorb a disproportionate percentage of the overall budget particularly in the less well funded local towns and borough programmes.

6.7 The Changing Agendas: the agendas vary from place to place and from time to time as political agendas change and evolve. Economic and capital developments as part of a regeneration agenda may give way to a social and wellbeing agenda. Long established communities may focus on their heritage, traditions and famous citizens whilst newer changing communities may prioritise the celebration of diversity and integration.

6.8 Support and Stimulation: aims may vary from supporting (propping up?) and publicising existing communities and their traditions to stimulating the adoption of new ideas, technologies, cultures and values. A future, not past, orientation based upon aspirations not nostalgia and heritage is frequently an objective of a programme.

6.9 Heterogeneous Communities: satisfying and respecting the needs and interests of boroughs and towns with different socio-economic groups, cultures and heritages is always a challenge. For example Wirral Borough must meet the needs of (post?) industrial Birkenhead and the elite coastal commuting suburb of West Kirby; in Knowsley, Kirkby New Town with its social deprivation, crime, poor education and industrial estate must co-exist with the rural, agricultural village of Cronton with its coalmining heritage and in Sefton: the programme must meet the needs and interests of the inhabitants of the Victorian seaside resort of Southport, the Port of Liverpool Container terminal at Bootle and the rich and famous (professional footballers?) of Formby and Ainsdale. To ensure the success of the programmes it is vital that most activities are spread geographically across the boroughs and appeal to the whole community and reflect their identities. Examples aimed at achieving this frequently include whole-borough trails such as the *Owl and the Pussy Cat Trail* based upon Edward Lear’s children’s stories in Knowsley and the St Helen’s

Heritage Plaque Trail embracing historically and culturally important locations such as the Sankey Canal and St Helen's Rugby Football Club.

6.10 Community Priorities: For most inhabitants the over-riding priority is to have fun and enjoyment, to feel good and develop their own civic pride. For the city, town and borough authorities it is overcoming the commonly expressed view that '*art and culture is not for me*' or '*art is frivolous*' and that there are higher priorities for public expenditure and efforts such as housing and social services.

6.11 Entitlement or competition: fundamental to the Cultural Years is whether the years are decided by an annual competition (London, Manchester) or whether the years are allocated by right following a regular rotational cycle (Liverpool). The advantages of the competition are that success is (should be) decided on the merit of the bid; the disadvantages concern the financial cost and disappointment and disillusion associated with a failed bid. As a response to these costs many cities, towns and boroughs (London, Bradford, Brent, Waltham Forest) have developed smaller funds which recognise a good application which did not win the full accolade but is worthy of (seed funding) support. The allocation model has the advantages of assuring all boroughs or towns that they will eventually have the honour of hosting the cultural year. This will also help them to develop a long-term strategy and vision and assemble a Cultural Year task group which can build on its evaluations and experiences.

6.13 When: the start and end of the year of culture is normally defined by the calendar year ie it starts on January 1st and ends on December 31st. This has many obvious benefits. An alternative, suggested by one of the boroughs, was that it should start in late spring and end in the autumn (eg April – September). The yearlong structure allows events (indoor and outdoor) to be matched to the season and daylight hours. The shorter duration should allow maximum use of better weather and overcomes some resistance to socialising in dark cold and wet conditions.

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Through the Looking Glass

Nature in Art as Cultural Metaphor through the Ages¹

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Abstract

As the most creative product of cultural activity, art functions as a looking glass through which the world is presented to us. This article provides a concise introductory overview of the relation between nature and culture in art as its manifestations illustrate the mindset of European civilization throughout history. The first part focuses on a number of considerations about culture, nature, their interrelationship, civilization and art. The second part zooms in on a historic overview of how nature gained its place in art, that is, how it was depicted in its own right or how it has been used to convey a cultural message. Either way, the artistic representation of nature in art seems to bear witness of the Zeitgeist of the time and place it was conceived, hence intrinsically functions as a cultural metaphor.

CULTURE and NATURE INTERRELATIONSHIP

The interrelation between culture and nature has been an issue ever since the beginning of mankind. Man has always had a clear and direct impact on his natural environment, as is proven by bigger and better harvests, but unfortunately also by present-day issues of climate change, energy- and water shortage. Yet, as humankind is the emanation of the latest phase in natural evolution so far, man himself is an inherent part of nature. Even in a biblical perspective man - and/or woman - is the final link in the creation of the natural world².

Being the most evolved and intelligent species so far, homo sapiens sapiens had to become the caretaking custodian of this world. And as a good housefather or -mother, man has always tried to make the best use of all the available natural resources and set the world to his hand. Hence, through his interventions and

¹ This contribution was presented as keynote at the UNeECC Annual Conference ‘Culture and Nature – Partners in Dialogue’ in Kaunas 2022. The presentation was accompanied by a kaleidoscope of images of artworks, which for copyright reasons were not included in the article here. However, the reader can easily retrace the pictures from internet by googling the artist’s name and/or the title of the specific work referred to.

² See Michelangelo Buonarroti’s ‘Creation of Adam’ (1512-) in the Sistene Chapel in the Vatican, or ‘Elohim creating Adam’ (1795-1805) by William Blake.

interaction with nature, mankind has become the safeguard and recreator of the world.

CULTURE

If we look at culture as the result of human intervention on nature, we stress the contrast between culture and nature, and implicitly assign a hierarchical relation between the two.

In this paradigm, nature is seen as a virgin state which is, however, unstructured, without rationale, chaotic even. Man has to struggle and act for survival in a potentially hostile environment. Metaphorically it is the result of a playful and whimsical creator³ who continuously challenges mankind to solve the problems and obstacles he meets on his way (after all, did not God put the snake in the apple tree⁴).

Culture, on the other hand, is the result of human intervention, associated with structure, ratio and reflection. Man reacts on the opportunities for well-being in a man-made hospitable environment. Man is not at the mercy of a higher force, but is himself shaper of the world.

Throughout the ages, the culture-nature dichotomy has sometimes been connected to a value judgement of good versus evil. Safety, security and community are to be found in fortified dwellings or castles, later in cities, which serve as sheltered havens against dangers from outside, be it rogues, foreign invaders or ferocious animals. Forests, mountains and seas bring hazards, abandonment and solitude, in a life-threatening environment. It is not surprising that Little Red Riding Hood or Hansel and Gretel found their misfortune in the woods and Pinocchio got swallowed by a whale. Even the idyllic landscapes of gods and elves can be threatened by satyrs lurking behind trees. And did not Dante at the beginning of his 'Divina Commedia' get lost in a dark forest from where he had to start his journey through hell and purgatory to finally get a glimpse of the 'heavenly city'⁵.

Fortunately, these days both the urban environment or city (as the cultural 'topos' par excellence) and the rural environment or countryside (as the natural rural 'topos' par excellence) both make up an integral part of our ecosystem, meeting different but complementary requirements of both individuals and society. The country serves as the lungs for the cities, who in their turn provide all possible amenities to make life more comfortable. Our human habitat needs essential contributions from both natural and cultural resources. Although they accommodate different requirements in human life and society, nature and culture are juxtaposed

³ See 'God the Geometer', a 13th Century Bible Moralisé, or William Blake's designer -God in 'The Ancient of Days' (1794) and cf. his 'Newton' (1795).

⁴ See Michelangelo Buonarotti's 'Original Sin and Expulsion from Paradise' (1512-) in the Sistene Chapel in the Vatican.

⁵ See 'Dante and the Heavenly City' by Domenico di Michelino (1465)

and intertwined as essential and complementary parts to consolidate a sustainable environment.

Today, our holistic view on nature, culture, individual well-being and social cohesion has led to a completely new vision on our human living space as the 'bucolic city-scape' in which the cultural human being osmotically incorporates nature in his daily environment where he lives and works. And as man has the responsibility over the complete eco-system and has to cherish both his natural and cultural heritage, participation and responsibility of the citizens as user-owners should be taken into account in developing plans for both urbanization and nature conservation⁶.

The 'maintenance' of nature supported by science and technology, has to function as an instrument in combatting climate change and as an actor in the conservation of bio-diversity and water-supply. Nature is not static, but has to be subjected to change in order to survive. The idyllic landscape with windmills becomes a functional landscape with wind-turbines, thus supplying the basis for a new esthetic appreciation as well. Hence, we have to cherish and optimize our natural heritage by allowing and promoting technological sustainable innovation that allows for nature-friendly cultural evolution.

Sadly, however, these days military conflicts and political quarrels put a serious mortgage on our culture and on nature. The present abuse of natural resources as a strategic, even military instrument is a perverse weapon aimed at undermining European unity and democracy. As such our whole culture and civilization are threatened in a direct or indirect way. The artificially imposed scarcity of energy supplies, minerals or food (think of the wheat from Ukraine) brings the calamities of the war zone to places far beyond the area of the battlefield. Unfortunately military conflicts have always played such a horrifying role on civilization everywhere in the world. Though man's technological inventions and medical knowledge have considerably increased life expectancy and the comfort of living, mankind has not been able yet to contain the devastating impact of his own destructive power.

NATURE

But not only man, as the custodian of nature, does not always act as a good housekeeper. We should not overlook the fact that nature itself is not always purely

⁶ In this context I want to refer to the Modernism for the Future Programme which resulted in the 'Subjective Atlas of Kaunas' for ECoC 2022. For this project 40 Creative residents mapped Kaunas' contemporary identity through their personal interests, experiences and domesticity. By showcasing urban, natural and everyday spaces and artifacts they invite the reader-user to reflect on the past and find inspiration for the future, as the contributions pinpoint both the enjoyable spots and the sour stains of the city.

benevolent. In fact, it intrinsically possesses destructive powers stronger than any negative intervention of man in the past.

About 65 million years ago, for instance, an enormous meteorite struck earth and destroyed much of the flora and fauna at the impact. But its indirect influence was even more far-reaching as it caused the climate to change which resulted in the disappearance of the dinosaurs and other species. And new scientific methods and archeological findings are identifying even more cataclysms to interpret the evolution of life on our planet and unveil the myths and mysteries that have been passed on by countless generations throughout our existence. We all know of other, later examples in European history of natural disasters that shook our human society and civilization. In the 16th century BC a volcano eruption devastated the island Thera (present-day Santorini) and the ensuing tsunami brought about tremendous destruction to the island of Crete and the Minoan civilization. In 79 AD Pompei, Herculaneum and several surrounding villages were buried under the ash and lava by the eruption of the Vesuvius - the great Roman historian Pliny the Elder even lost his life at sea trying to get closer to witness the calamity better. And even today earthquakes and tsunamis keep hitting the lands bordering the Indian Ocean, with losses of lives, destruction of nature and the human habitat, bringing disease and impoverishment.

The realization of both the benevolent and the destructive power of nature has strongly influenced our metaphorical use of nature in aspects of our life and civilization, mostly stressing only one side of the medal, however. In most religions baptism and other transgressing rites involve the purification with water, symbolizing its benevolent life-giving power. Fire, on the other hand is often metaphorically associated with the end of life, witness the burning of the dead.

Yet, destruction in itself can be the beginning of new life and chaos may bring new order. The great fire of Rome under Nero in 64 AD destroyed all wooden housing and made many victims, but later on allowed for a safer living comfort in the city through well deliberated urbanization. And the destructive lava streams of volcano eruptions or the ashes of burnt forests afterwards provide the basic sediments for new fertile soil.

There is indeed a circle of life for nature, but also for culture and their interrelationship. Civilizations rise and may collapse as the result of external or internal menaces. The fall of the Roman empire was the result of the devastation by foreign invasions in a weakened state and a society that had lost track of its own heritage and values. That is why, especially in these troublesome times, we all have to exert common responsibility to uphold our cultural heritage and secure our natural habitat in order to safeguard civilization.

CIVILIZATION

Civilization builds on the intellectual, material and social heritage of society, and gives shape to our common memory.

Intellectual heritage comprises the accumulation of knowledge of mankind through the ages, as it was passed on from generation to generation. The evolution of science, medicine and technology, and the ever progressing insight into the intricate nature of nature, man and society, all add to the cognitive rucksack of civilization. In addition, an inquisitive mind, perseverance, imagination and creativity are necessary intellectual competences for its growth. Without these our knowledge would come to a standstill and human evolution would stop.

Material heritage such as economic prosperity and well-being in general, build on our natural resources and on human insights and inventions, that is, the result of our intellectual activities. Architecture, music, the visual arts, but also gastronomy, community feasts and processions, are (im)material manifestations of our heritage as well. Their preservation is a guarantee for the conservation of the necessary historical perspective needed for the further development of a sustainable future.

Social heritage can be described as ‘community building memory’. It focuses on how individuals have learned to relate to each other and the other, and can best function in a group to create a sustainable habitat for all. It comprises mainly emotional and attitudinal elements such as respect, solidarity, social and shared individual responsibility.

Shared moral and cultural values and their historical perspective are at the core of what we perceive as a European civilization, the formation and formulation of which has grown over several millennia. The Greco-Roman and Christian roots, which are mostly recognized as the basis of European civilization, have through the ages been supplemented by influences from other cultures and continue to do so in a present-day global context, the European motto being ‘in varietate concordia’. But the principles of the French revolution (although not entirely a success in itself due to extremism), i.e. ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’, which laid the foundations of our modern democratic insights, continue to lead our ‘social contract’. This common social awareness and the knowledge of its roots and its heritage are crucial to the understanding of European culture.

Culture connects people, individuals and the community, local and global, past and present, ratio and emotion, art and science, tradition and innovation. It is in culture that we encounter each other’s identity, learn to respect each other, and learn from one another. Hence, culture has a positive, emancipatory and integrative power that transcends the superficial differences and helps us find the core of our humanity and civilization. As such, the initiative of the European Capital of Culture must remain playing an important role to help safeguard this cultural encounter and exchange of ideas and achievements as the beating heart of a sustainable civilization.

ART

Art is the sublime expression of culture in human civilization. In its many forms it is the product of our cognitive, emotional and creative faculties. On the one hand, art can be the mirror of our mind, heart and soul, and on the other hand, be instigator of emotions and ideas in itself. Art stimulates consciousness and intellectual growth, and as such intrinsically carries an educational and emancipatory dimension. Art does not only depict the world as it is or as we perceive it, but it can also shape our perception of the world. Thus art is the ultimate language of man as 're-creator' of his universe (– and remember the Bible starts with 'in the beginning was the word').

The reality that precedes and inspires the art work is reported, or translated into the art work through the artist's creativity. The artist paves the way for reflection in the beholder, hence stimulates individual intellectual cocreation. Even when the artist may aspire to objectively render real nature one can only wonder how truthful it is. Plato considered that what we perceive as reality is only a reflection or shadow, hence, a bleak semblance of the truth. Be it as it may, a totally objective rendering of reality is utopian as the artist is a human being, a subject, and as such will always produce a 'subjective' view on nature. Even a photographic picture of a landscape depends on the artist's programming of the camera and the choice of the lens. As such, art can be deceptive as it is like a looking glass where left is right and vice versa, or according to how the glass was shaped, deformations in the image create a completely different image which we have to interpret.

THE CULTURAL METAPHOR OF NATURE IN ART

The degree of subjectivity in rendering reality or presenting nature can differ considerably from one artist to the other, from one school, art movement or period to the other.

Let us now have a look at how nature has been used metaphorically in art to 'tell a tale of culture, values and civilization' since the beginning of mankind. The examples are mainly limited to the visual art forms.

In prehistoric times already, man 'registered' nature on the walls of the caves he lived in, such as the ones found in Lascaux, France or Altamira, Spain. One could be tempted to compare this with our present-day interior design aiming at the esthetic embellishment of our homes with paintings or pictures. However, anthropologists have mostly identified this prehistoric artistic activity as attestations of man's wish to exert influence on his environment. The paintings mainly depict animals and humanoid figures of hunters or warriors and can be seen as the pictorial diary of their daily struggles, such as hunting for food and defending what was

theirs, say as a kind of prehistoric facebook. Yet, it seems likely that they can also have functioned as an instrument for incantation in order to effectuate a future that would be benevolent to the artist and his community, such as a safe and successful hunt.

In Egyptian civilization, the depiction of nature is concentrated around life along the Nile⁷. The river stands for fertility as it proves indispensable for the irrigation of the fields, and hence survival. Grapevines, which yield the necessary agreeable fluids, and the papyrus plant, which provided new material to write on as a more refined replacement of clay tablets, are the preferred flora in Egyptian art. As for the fauna, some animals were venerated as gods : e.g. Horus, the god with the falconhead, Sobek, with the head of a crocodile, Anubis, the jackal-headed man, Bastet, the cat-headed goddess. As such they were also mummified after death⁸ like the divine pharaohs. In both cases, the functionality of the vital flora or the divine fauna seems to have been the decisive argument in the choice of the ancient Egyptian tableaux. Nature for the ancient Egyptians, however, was not only of this world. The underworld of the afterlife, *Durat*, was as real to them as the earthly world and the crossing from one to the other place is depicted as a long journey over the river⁹. Hence, their visual rendering of what they consider as their natural environment, during or after death, remains basically functional.

The ancient Greeks also described the passing over to the Elysian fields of their heroes as the crossing of the mythological river Styx . The depiction of these heroes and their gods, who lived on Mount Olympus, is to be found on the multitude of mosaics, vases, bronze and marble statues recovered from the many archeological sites throughout the ancient Greek world. Over the years, the human figures become more and more people of flesh and blood, especially in sculpture, as the static male nude 'kouros' or female 'kore' of the Archaic period are superseded by the ideal dynamic statues of e.g. Praxiteles¹⁰ (4th century BC) in the Classical period. Hence, the rendering of human physical nature obtained a more esthetic dimension. Reality was challenged, however, by what they saw as the idea of

⁷ For different scenes of life at the river or harvests check for frescoes at e.g. the tombs of Amenhotep IV in Luxor, or other tombs in Thebes.

⁸ E.g. the many mummies of crocodiles found in the temple complex of Kom Ombo dedicated to the god Sobek.

⁹ Beautiful fresco to be found in the tomb of Sennedjem in Deir el Medina (Thebes).

¹⁰ See e.g. his statue of 'Hermes with the infant Dionysus' in the Louvre, or his 'Aphrodite of Knidos', the last one which we unfortunately only know from a Roman reproduction such as the 'Venus de Milo' in the Louvre, but which was described by Pliny the Elder. See also the 'Nikè of Samothrake' by Pythokritos (2nd C BC) in the Louvre from the later Hellenistic period.

beauty, which Plato defined as harmony and proportion. Both aspects were certainly realized in the well dimensioned bodies of the Grecian statues¹¹.

The ancient Greeks, however, not only depicted their gods and heroes in their stately posture, but also reported on their more earthly pleasures. The scenes of the god Dionysus accompanied by fellow drinkers and lush strings of grapes, engulfed in greedily consuming intoxicating liquids, would eagerly be taken over by the Romans with their god Bacchus and gratefully be used in later periods until today¹².

The Romans primarily adopted the artistic models and standards of the Greeks, but they also added new themes which correspond to their largely military interest. The competing athletes and the soldiers fighting foreign armies to protect the nation are now supplemented by gladiators who fight to entertain the masses. However, these seemingly bloodthirsty Romans also promoted the heartwarming dimension of the natural environment in the visual arts. The frescoes recovered from the ashes in e.g Pompei and Herculaneum clearly show that the loveliness of the countryside was brought into the houses, to embellish the rooms and create a more enjoyable rural setting for living in a bustling city. Furthermore, great attention was given to the landscape setting of the rural villas of the rich and famous, such as Emperor Hadrian's villa in Tivoli.

After the fall of the Roman empire in the West, much of both culture and nature had been devastated and the population concentrated on survival, as gangs of thugs raided the country and food was scarce. On top of that, the population was at the mercy of foreign raiders such as the Vikings. Violence, hunger and diseases imposed their toll on demographic decline. However, little by little out of chaos grew a new order. Life became better organized, greatly thanks to the leading role of the many monasteries that were founded as from the 8th/9th C, where people could find refuge in times of trouble. Furthermore, the monks not only took care of the safety and spiritual salvation of the farmers around the monastery, but their agricultural planning and community cooperation yielded better crops. Their knowledge of the healing power of plants and the importance of hygiene, which they made available for the whole community, also resulted in boosting life expectancy and comfort of living, hence contributing to the physical wellbeing of all. Hence, the monastic garden figuratively brought back glimpses of the garden of Eden.

But the monasteries were also places of intellectual and cultural activity. The monks not only provided schooling for children and taught people to read and write, but they also ensured the preservation of knowledge and insights from the past by copying the texts that had survived the calamities of the times before. The illuminated manuscripts that were copied in these monasteries, mostly relating to

¹¹ If one might want to look deeper into this, I can advise two books by Umberto Eco, 'History of Beauty' (2004) and 'History of Ugliness' (2008).

¹² See e.g. the painting of 'Bacchus' by Caravaggio (1596) in the Uffizi, Florence, or his 'Young Sick Bacchus' (1594) in the Galleria Borghese in Rome.

the scripture¹³ but also philosophy, history¹⁴ and science¹⁵, bear witness of both the intellectual and artistic proficiencies of the monks. The miniatures that were drawn in the margin of the text, the embellished letters, or the accompanying pictures illustrating scenes in the text, with their bright colours and golden coverings, are of the most exquisite artistic craftsmanship and they sometimes also display a playful imaginative touch of the copyist. This explains how also literary works¹⁶ were later illustrated by these scholarly artists.

In contrast with the functional dynamism of the monastic approach to daily reality, the feudal hierarchy sought relief in the imaginary world of the courtly novel. Knights, noblewomen and minstrels evolve in lush gardens that form accommodating settings for amorous scenes, and where mythical creatures such as unicorns can find their way into the natural scenery. These frivolities for the better off nobility were not entirely superficial escapism though. The stories and the idyllic scenery with its fauna and flora were used symbolically to propagate courtly values and mystical experience. Hence, they served an educational purpose¹⁷.

Or the less fortunate, peasants and serfs, painters like Pieter Breughel the Elder brought moralizing messages in a less sophisticated manner, such as in 'Proverbs' (1530). Whereas the courtly novel depicted idealized characters or role models, they focused on man's weaknesses in a sometimes perverted nature with all kinds of monstrosities, such as 'The Garden of Earthly Desires' (1517) by Hieronymus Bosch and the many apocalyptic renderings of 'the last judgement' on the church walls of that epoch, such as the baptisterium of San Miniato in Firenze. Educational moral effect was obtained by imposing disgust and fear. Franciscan theologian Bonaventura even stated that the depiction of the devil becomes beautiful when it renders the devil's ugliness fully.

What is clear is that these medieval artists were not afraid to visualize man's deepest fears and uncanny nasty habits, as so lifelike and lively described in

¹³ See e.g. the 9th C Gospel book the 'Book of Kells' (also named 'Book of Columba') in the Trinity College Library, Dublin, and the many illuminated Psalters, Breviaria, Antifonaria and Books of Hours such as the early 15th C 'Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry' illustrated by the Limbourg brothers.

¹⁴ See the 'Spiegel Historiae' of Jacob van Maerlant (early 14th C) in the Royal Library of Den Haag in the Netherlands with f.i. the illuminated story of Roland's heroic fight against the Saracens at Ronceval.

¹⁵ See the 'Liber Astrologiae' (around 1400) in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

¹⁶ See the 'Roman du Saint Graal' (14th C) in the British Library, London; the 'Roman de la Rose' (14th C) in the Library of the town of Mons, Belgium; and even a 15th C French translation of Boccaccio's 'Decamerone' in the Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal, Paris.

¹⁷ See the tapestry series from Flanders of 'The Lady with the Unicorn' (around 1500) in the museum of the Cluny Abbey, Paris, which represent the senses in a courtly scenery.

the literary work of Geoffrey Chaucer 'Canterbury Tales'(end 14th C) and Giovanni Boccaccio 'Decamerone' (1353)¹⁸.

By the end of the Middle Ages feudal society was in decay and the center of power moved to the cities with the rise of the guilds, thus creating a new social order and allowing for a new perspective on society and civilization, i.e. the Rinascimento, the Renaissance, a 'rebirth' in many ways. Ancient philosophy is rediscovered and science knows a boost. The classical pursuit of harmony and serenity make their entrance again in art.

In the northern European renaissance, the Flemish Primitives of the 15th and 16th century like the brothers Hubert and Jan Van Eyck¹⁹ and Quinten Metsys²⁰ (a fellow townsman of mine) are exponents of the rise of the cities and the guilds. Their craftsmanship is characterized by a refined and detailed painting technique that is aimed at rendering reality in a pure naturalistic way. Great attention goes e.g. to the perspective of the floors and the texture of the clothes, but also to the landscape, sometimes visible through the open window and which hints at the locality of the scene indoors²¹. These artists' meticulousness applies to both civilian and religious scenes.

In the southern European Renaissance, nature is rediscovered in its full glory as reflection of divine perfection, but also of esthetic enjoyment. Sandro Botticelli brings us idyllic scenes of graceful gods and figures in an accommodating natural setting²². Leonardo da Vinci with his Vitruvian man (1490) reconnects with

¹⁸ However, though Boccaccio's work precedes Chaucer's in time, the 'Decamerone' already shows some characteristics of the more open mindset in the Renaissance, whereas the 'Canterbury Tales' still exhume the pure medieval courtly moral.

¹⁹ They are best known for the polyptych altarpiece 'The Adoration of the Lamb' (1432) which they painted for the St.Bavo Cathedral in Ghent. The work is considered as one of the ultimate masterpieces in European art. Jan Van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Portrait' (1434) of an Italian merchant and his wife, residing in Bruges, witnesses of the international trade community of that time in Flanders.

²⁰ Metsys' work 'The Moneychanger and his Wife' (1514) depicts a typical though questionable scene in an urban industrious environment focused on trade. The handling and especially lending of money at a profit was absolutely forbidden for devout Christians, leaving this 'despicable' trade to the Jewish money handlers. That is probably why the wife is holding a book of devotion with the portrait of the Virgin and Child on it. In 1605, however, the Flemish Jesuit and theologian Leonardus Lessius provided a clever moralistic argumentation to bypass the restrictions of the past in his 'De Iustitia et Iure' (1605). His reasoning enabled the creation of the 'montes pietates', where Christian people were welcome to borrow (and lend) money, which in their turn lay at the basis of the foundation of the banks in Flanders.

²¹ See e.g. Jan Van Eyck's 'Madonna with Chancellor Rolin' (1434), but also the clever use of the mirror in Van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Portrait' (see also two notes above) which allows the beholder to have almost a 360 degrees view of the setting.

²² See Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus' (1482) and 'Primavera' (1482), both in the Uffizi, Firenze.

the ancient ideal of perfect dimensions and the golden ratio in nature, Raphael produces manierist compositions of classical themes²³ and Michelangelo equals the Grecian strength of bringing marble to life with his *David*, *Mozes*, the *Pieta*, but also *Bacchus*²⁴. These artists were often experts in more than one art form and as such were themselves archetypes of the ideal ‘uomo universale’ of the anthropocentric Renaissance²⁵.

Only few artists such as the painter Giuseppe Arcimboldi with e.g. his ‘Four Seasons’ (1565) reacted against a too normative classical line with the inclusion of more uncanny creative imagination. His portraits composed of fruit and vegetables at the same time amaze and amuse. In a humoristic way they illustrate that man is part of nature and as such they implicitly question the idealized position of mankind.

17th C Baroque brought the Renaissance preference for the perfect nature and human body to exuberant extremes. The possible underlying ethical message is largely indebted to the dramatic imagination and creativity of the artist as emotional expression supersedes the physical form such as in Bernini’s marble statues²⁶. The lavish interior decorations of the many palaces bear witness of this new affluent artistic style²⁷. In the low countries baroque painters such as Pieter Paul Rubens profited from the euphoria of the counter-reformation in Flanders. The Catholic triumph over Protestantism had to be displayed through overwhelming ‘rich’ artworks for the glorification of the ‘true church’²⁸. Hence the resurgence of the

²³ See his ‘School of Athens’ (about 1510) in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican

²⁴ The statue of ‘David’ (1504) is in the Academia Gallery in Firenze, but an even larger copy overlooks Firenze from the hill at Fiesole, the village where the framing story in Boccaccio’s ‘Decamerone’ is situated. ‘Moses’ (1515) can be visited in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli and the ‘Pieta’ (1499) in St.Peter’s Basilica (Vatican), both in Rome. ‘Bacchus’ (1497) resides in the Bargello National Museum in Firenze.

²⁵ The polymath Leonardo da Vinci was painter e.g. the ‘Mona Lisa’ (around 1510), one of the most visited paintings in the Louvre, and his ‘The Last Supper’ (around 1496) in the Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. He was also engineer and scientist, as proven by his many drawings of the human body, but also of newly invented technological machines. The younger Michelangelo excelled as sculptor (see the former note) and as architect and painter of the frescoes in the Sistene Chapel in the Vatican such as ‘The Last Judgement’ (around 1540), but he also wrote poetry.

²⁶ See Bernini’s marble statue of the ‘Extasy of Saint Teresa’ (around 1650) in the church Santa Maria della Vittoria, Trastevere, which even exhumes an almost erotic experience, or his funerary monument of ‘Blessed Ludovica Albertoni’ (around 1674) in the San Francesco a Ripa church, where you almost hear her last breath, both in Rome.

²⁷ See e.g. the ‘Triumph of Divine Providence and Barberini Power’ (1639) by Pietro da Cortona on the ceiling of the Barberini Palace in Rome. The Barberini were a rich and influential family that yielded a couple of popes and were important patrons of the art.

²⁸ Several baroque churches were modeled on Italian examples. Especially the reinstalled Jesuit-order was architecturally active with the Charles Borromew church in Antwerp and the smaller Saint Michael’s church in Leuven. Rubens was involved both in the designs for the outer front of the building in Antwerp and the decoration within, the latter unfortunately destroyed in fire later on.

many biblical scenes that complement other themes²⁹. Nature is used to strengthen dramatic effect and display abundance, as can also be seen in the real garden of Rubens house and workshop in Antwerp itself³⁰.

The 18th C showed us a bipolar artistic evolution of Neo-classicism on the one hand and Rococo on the other. The first movement is in line with the rationalism and empiricism of Enlightenment and the sometimes revolutionary attempts of the citizens to challenge those in power (see *infra*). The second is related to the out of control exuberance of a waning aristocracy that has lost grip on social reality and tries to cocoon in its own dreamworld³¹.

In architecture and gardening, we see a clear difference in evolution between France and England. The contrived and luxurious planned gardens in Versailles still breath of the totalitarian but unworldly power of the Roi Soleil Louis XIV and his 'puppet' court. In England, the local aristocracy chooses for an outspoken classical Palladian style for their houses and a landscape garden that tries to be a harmonious reflection of real nature³². Very often, however, a more artificial romantic touch was added with the addition of a grotto or ruin, still aspiring a realistic rendering of nature though. Landscape painting gained wide appreciation through the works of Thomas Gainsborough³³ and John Constable, and their enjoyable and heart warming works bore witness of the stable society in England.

In France, however, the attack on the Bastille in Paris as start of the French Revolution on 14 July 1789, overturned the old social order of nobility and church vs the people. The ensuing chaos of continuous internal quarrels among the new citizen-leaders afterwards³⁴ finally brought Napoleon Bonaparte in the saddle, unleashing war throughout Europe. A resurgence of royal power by King Charles X was definitively toppled by a new revolution in 1830, iconically depicted in Eugène Delacroix' 'Marianne' ('Liberty Leading the People') (1830). The same moved realism is to be found in Théodore Géricault's 'Raft of the Medusa' (1819), in which the storm and the sea, really become active characters in the scene. This was a novel use of 'humanized' nature in art, giving rise to the further romantic movement.

²⁹ See Rubens 'Descent from the Cross' (1614) in the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp and compare it with that (1435) of Rogier Van der Weyden in the Prado in Madrid. Whereas the Flemish Primitive Van der Weyden isolates the action from its natural setting and creates the somewhat static though dramatic effect through the facial expressions, the baroque Rubens presents the action in situ and focuses on the physical efforts of the characters against a desolate and threatening background to stimulate passionate emotion.

³⁰ For some images, check the website of the Rubens house [www.http://rubenshuis.be](http://rubenshuis.be)

³¹ See Jean-Honoré Fragonard's swing 'La balance' (1770), and Jean-Antoine Watteau's 'Fêtes Venitiennes' (1719)

³² A nice example is the use of the 'haha'ditches, who visually bring the animals 'into the garden', but physically keep them outside.

³³ See e.g. Gainsborough's 'Forest with Cottage, Sheep and Resting Shepherd' (1749) and his 'Portrait of Mr and Mrs Andrews' (1781).

³⁴ See Jean-Louis David's 'Mort de Maras' (1793)

The interest in the classical world gave a boost to archeology. Artists traveled along with expeditions and illustrated the exotic beauty of the excavated ruins, often making use of their creative expression to make the scenery more picturesque. The remnants of the ancient civilization are often represented in an idyllic setting with a melancholic touch³⁵. Thus, classicism in a way becomes intertwined with the imaginary dreamworld as another forebode of romanticism.

This romantic tendency to render the intrinsic beauty or power of nature while hinting at human emotion whether enjoyment or fear, clearly finds its way in landscape painting, beautifully illustrated by the paintings of the German painter Caspar David Friedrich³⁶. Nature becomes flavoured with the artist's subjective emotion, is used symbolically and, in a certain sense, becomes a humanized subject in itself.

This kind of neogothic-romantic artistry is brought to further heights by the 19th C Pre-Raphaelites John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and other symbolists. The artists in this 'brotherhood', who also lived a 'Bohemian style', focus on historical themes and mimesis, the imitation of nature, but interweave this with almost transcendent passion and sentiment, creating a kind of esthetic mysticism³⁷. This sugar-sweet and sensuous pictorial story-telling was later picked up by the Dutch painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema³⁸. The Arts and Crafts movement, with as most famous representative William Morris, interwove different visual art-forms such as weaving, printing, etching, stained glass painting, etc., perpetuating the role and status of 'the decorative arts'³⁹. This last movement in its turn inspired Art Nouveau or Jugendstil and Art Deco⁴⁰, who then introduced a more stylized abstract deformation of nature and objects, however.

The politically turbulent twentieth century has yielded many artistic trends, whether in 'movements' or individual artists. In all of this modernist art, nature mostly plays a symbolic part as an element to convey a more intellectual and cultural message.

The impressionists want to convey the soul of nature by displaying their impressions of it⁴¹ whereas the expressionists present the world in a distorted way in

³⁵ See e.g. 'The Temple of Trojan' in Philae (1838) by David Roberts, or 'Stonehenge' (1850) by John Constable.

³⁶ See his 'IceSea' (1824), 'Rügen' (1818) and 'Wanderer in the Mist' (1820).

³⁷ See Millais' 'Ophelia' (1852) and 'Lorenzo and Isabella' (1849).

³⁸ See his 'The Roses of Heliogabalus' (1888), 'The Education of the Children of Clovis' (1861), or 'The Finding of Moses' (1904).

³⁹ See the tapestry 'Flora' (1885), a collaboration of William Morris and Edward-Burne-Jones.

⁴⁰ See Gustav Klimt's 'Judith'(1901) and Alphonse Mucha's many theatrical posters of especially Sarah Bernhardt and designs for commercials such as the 'Job cigarette papers' (1898)

⁴¹ See Eduard Manet's 'Dejeuner sur l'herbe' (1863) and Claude Monet's 'Le pont japonais'(1899), a bridge in his own garden in Giverny. When visiting Paris one should certainly go to the Musée Marmottan for Monet's enormous waterlilies paintings.

order to evoke emotional effect⁴². In both movements, though, the artist has become a conscious inspirator for intellectual activity in his public rather than a reporter.

Figurative art, in its turn, tends to concentrate on the psychological nature of the human character or nature⁴³, whereas a-figurative art explores the boundaries of space, form, colour and material⁴⁴.

The surrealists and Dadaists such as René Magritte⁴⁵ and Salvador Dali⁴⁶ play on the de- and re-composition of the elements of nature to create a new imaginary world that surpasses the real world, or that makes us question reality. Other artists provocatively present everyday objects ('objet trouvé') as works of art⁴⁷ and as such also make us question reality.

And new trends will go on further in the 21st century as the capacity of imagination and creativity is an inherent part of our human nature. Luckily, artists do not merely work from an ivory tower, cocooned in the here and now; they build on the artistic exploits of their predecessors and may explicitly pay tribute to them by bringing their own version of previous artworks, which also contributes to preserving our artistic heritage⁴⁸.

⁴² See Vincent Van Gogh's 'Field of grain with cypresses' (1889) or his many sunflowers. See also Franz Marc's 'The Foxes' (1913) or 'The Tower of Blue Horses' (1913).

⁴³ See Pablo Picasso's 'Femme en larmes' (1937), Paul Cézanne's 'Mont Sainte Victoire' (1886), and Fernand Léger's landscape painting 'Nu dans la forêt' (1910).

⁴⁴ See Piet Mondriaan's play of squares and colours, Juan Miro, Vasily Kandinsky, the wrapping-art of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, e.g. 'Surrounded Islands' (1983) in Miami.

⁴⁵ See e.g. his 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' (1929), 'Les amants' (1928), his bowler hat paintings 'Golconda' (1953) (raining men) and 'Calcomanie' (1966), or 'L'Empire des lumières' (1950) and 'L'île au trésor' (1954)

⁴⁶ See e.g. his 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus' (1937), 'The Temptation of St Anthony' (1946), 'The Persistence of Memory' (1931).

⁴⁷ See the 'Mosselpot' (1964) of Marcel Broodthaers or 'L'urinoir' (1917) of Marcel Duchamp.

⁴⁸ Cf. here e.g. Marcel Duchamp's 'L.H.O.O.Q' (1919) referring to Da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa' (1503), Dali's 'Atavisms of Twilight' (1933) to Jean-François Millet's 'Angelus' (1858), Magritte's 'La signature blanche' (1965) to Uccello's 'Hunt in the Forest' (1470) or his use of Botticelli's Flora in 'Primavera' (around 1480) on the back of his bowler-hatted man.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the ages, man's view on nature changed along with the evolution of the consciousness of his own place in the world. Nature evolved from a divine creation in which mankind was considered as the passive culmination point, to a material asset in the care of an active human individual and society. As such it is mankind's responsibility to make the best possible use of these natural resources and certainly not to abuse or neglect them. Nature and culture are the two dimensions that make up our ecosystem. Hence they have to be harmoniously reconciled to ensure the survival of our civilization, an ambition we all have to share.

As art in its many forms is the ultimate language to picture reality, propagate ideas, disseminate imagination and inspire emotions, it can really tell the tale of our civilization.

In the above historical overview we have seen that nature in art has had many forms and that its use served different purposes, showing an evolution characteristic for the mindset of the times. The functional use of art in prehistory or ancient Egypt bore witness of how man was experienced as at the mercy of the gods. The ancient Greeks foregrounded man's own physical nature, focusing on the esthetic dimension. The Romans brought into perspective the loveliness of the natural environment, adding an aspect of enjoyment. In medieval times nature was used to convey courtly values and accompany mystical experience, hence aiming at educational impact. The Renaissance artists strived for perfection and innovation in their craftsmanship, hence optimizing professionalism. The flamboyance of Baroque art, whether in painting or architecture, aspired full dramatic effect in the message of the art work. In later periods art further developed as conveyor of e.g. political ideas, psychological expressions and emotional experiences. Nature became a humanized actor in its own right, was stylized, even deformed, being used in a symbolic way by the artist. becoming more and more alienated from reality.

The classical view of ancient Greece on beauty in nature and art was 'harmony and proportion', a technical definition concentrating on the skills of the artist as craftsman. But in the ancient platonic world of ideas, esthetics was also intertwined with ethics, as beauty was linked to truth and goodness. The quest to achieve all three of them made up the ambition of man's soul. Hence, a beautiful work of art according to Socrates was the spiritual externalization of the soul.

The 18th C English philosopher Edmund Burke in his treatise 'A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful' (1757) described beauty as the expression of pleasure and serenity.

Today, we want to cherish the beauty of nature, but the definition of its beauty in art is not clear anymore. Harmony and proportion, pleasure and serenity, craftsmanship and pictorial accuracy may still be important, but it is the creative and subjective input of the artist that prevails in our appreciation. Innovation in imagination will probably stay in the lead in art, just as innovative technology will continue to shape our life in the future.

As such, art will stay on bearing witness of the world we live in at a particular moment in time and space. It will continue to be the reflection of how mankind perceives his 'Umwelt' and how he (re)acts on it. The way in which nature will be used in art will most likely still be illustrative as cultural metaphor of the mindset of civilization in the 'there and then', i.e. remain the mirror of the 'Zeitgeist'.

Arts Space: Enhancing Workplace Efficiency by Group Transformation Methods

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*“Memory dissolves the fight our ancestors fought
into peace. Finally settle our common affairs:
this is our job, and not a trifle one either.”
Attila József: At the Danube*

Abstract

The present article is a partial account of research in progress which is aimed at the creation of Transformative Cultural Space (TCS). In TCS, regardless of specific cultural backgrounds of the group members, the same system of norms can be built and workplace cooperation in groups of diverse composition can be made more effective. Our explorative research¹ is based on influencing and changing community attitudes by introducing new, reflective interpersonal mindsets to the group members via group sessions involving cultural co-creation. Our theoretical starting point is the “Realist Group Conflict Theory” (RGCT) claiming that there is competition between groups for different resources which always leads to group conflict. It creates incompatible goals that lead to a change in the norms of the inner groups. They provoke negative reactions towards other groups whose norms are not the same as theirs. The Realist Group Conflict Theory posits that social and economic inequalities between groups lead to conflicts and tensions within society. According to this theory, dominant groups maintain their power by creating and enforcing social norms that benefit them, while subordinate groups challenge these norms and seek to establish their own. Art forms can function as bearers of norms by reflecting and reinforcing the dominant culture's values and beliefs. Art can also challenge established norms and provoke discussions about social issues. In this way, art can be used by both dominant and subordinate groups to promote their respective views and agendas. Overall, the relationship between Realist Group Conflict Theory and art forms as bearers of norms is complex and multifaceted, with art both reflecting and challenging social norms in different ways. The RGCT, which proposes the integration of social and individualistic dimensions, states that this conflict is necessary as higher-order goals reduce conflict between groups over time. We have found, however, that it does not explain how the norms can and should be restored.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the *14th International UNeCC Conference “Culture and Nature – Partners in Dialogue”* in Kaunas, Lithuania, 5-7 October 2022 under the title: Human nature and culture: sublimation and transformative cultural behavior via artistic co-creation.

We have elaborated a novel, alternative practice that is able to restore community norms to dissolve and surpass underlying or emerging conflicts. We examine the conceptual framework of the cultural space, together with the emotions and the "I", which play a central role in the development of group dynamics.

Humans strive for social relationships. Most of the groups - constituted by individuals - are not harmonious, often just the opposite. Conflicts arise due to interpersonal factors. At the same time, people have more similarities than differences. If we focus on the similarities, the common origin can be grasped. We presume that human beings possess systems of norms that are identical in origin and positively mirror each other. In this way, an almost identical system of values can operate within groups. We reach back to and re-create this similar common origin through the arts by using art forms.

The decisive momentum is a series of co-creative work sessions which bring about a social-cultural space very different and free from everyday workplace conditions. The decisive impetus comes from a series of shared creative sessions, which are different from the everyday norms of the workplace and therefore create a neutral socio-cultural space in their freedom. The ultimate aim is to experience how to act effectively in groups with diverse cultural backgrounds of the group members at work. The purely cultural-artistic environment is to facilitate the surfacing of hidden aspects and unconscious/subconscious properties of the human constitution focusing on latent cultural needs and relaxed, unbiased creation. Such a Transformative Cultural Space – created during work-sessions – is void of everyday conflicts, biases and preconceptions concerning workplace or any other interpersonal contexts imbued with loaded complexities since the focus of attention is on cultural sublimation.

The paper describes the dynamically shaped processes of co-creation in the creative space which enables the group members to develop reflexive and positive mindsets towards social interactions. We have designed a gradually evolving process: proposal (choice of artwork areas), creation of active space, joint creation, free reflections and transformation.

Key words: neutral-space, art forms, restored norms, transformative cultural space, co-creation, cultural sublimation, community attitudes, reflective mindsets, force and space

AXIOM

We presume that art forms function as bearers of norms. Their messages revive the norms in a condensed form in a *neutral space*. After all, it is a symbolic representation of life, including work, family, relationships, feelings, values, etc. Value-carrying qualities emerge in narrative-discursive environments, which affect the economy (workplace) and affect society on the whole. According to our base principle, regardless of culture or gender, a *neutral space* can be created with the help of the arts, which follows the norms. These norms are, as we assume, *a-priori*, they exist independently of experience; yet they are internalized entities in every individual. This shows a consistent pattern. According to the conceptual framework and the related terminology, re-establishing a-priori values, achieves a proportional change in the individuals which shall affect the group around them. The dynamics created in groups can be described in a methodologically rigorous

sense which becomes suitable for data analysis and data interpretation. The dynamics and change in thinking that occurs in groups can be described in terms of a function, which makes it suitable for data analysis and interpretation.

Our view on this is similar to Margaret Mead's statement: "To the Arapesh, the world is a garden that must be tilled, not for one's self, not in pride and boasting, not for hoarding and usury, but that the yams and the pigs and most of the children may grow. From this whole attitude flow many of the Arapesh traits, the lack of conflict between the old and young, the lack of any expectation of jealousy or envy, the emphasis upon co-operation." (Mead 1935:135.)

THE AGE WE LIVE IN

The 21st century has become a global market. The whole world seems to be free prey. Due to cyber space, we live in a weightless economy, where the focus is no longer just on production, but on services and their perceived quality. At the same time, the welfare state plays an increasingly important role in the economy which no longer seems to meet the basic needs of a job and salary exclusively. *Actors in the economies are looking for their well-being in different cyber space realities, however, seeking humanistic solutions.* This has introduced a new type of a plot system. It is not just management anymore but a participatory sharing in which life quality is important. Economic actors are seeking their welfare in the various realities of cyberspace, but we are seeking a norm-abiding, humanistic solution. It is a new type of system. It's no longer just management, but a participatory sharing where quality of life, norms are important.

Why do we need to deal with this topic at all?

In the past ten years, one of the co-authors has had associations with several companies whose problems have been around norms, morality, work ethics and workplace culture. With the works of art, she was able to show a way towards change. Her method brought alternative results, which, by conceptualizing them, made the relationships between groups within companies more economical, whether it had to do with organizational structure, production, or growth. The ratios she achieved stabilized the company's position or strengthened its position elsewhere on the market.

The reflections of the participants involved in the sessions showed that by evaluating the re-emerging values, a new path had to be taken towards cooperation. It became conspicuous that the selfish, but frivolously normalized way-of-life of our days has a serious negative impact on the economy. Instead, the ideal of a virtuous and pure life, common norms higher than individual interests ought to prevail in all human interactions. This is what can be established in a co-created cultural space with the help of works of art.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

Kantian norms exist a-priori in all of us. To evoke them, you need to find a medium that can show the standards in proportion. It does not declare good or bad qualities but relates and relates. Just as a person is to be constantly related to a group and to group members. It does not show good or bad qualities, but it proportions, relates, treating the situation as a process. In the same way that one must constantly relate to the group and its members.

In our Western cultural literary heritage, one example is Shakespeare's world of moral standards and norms which shows the way. The classical music of Vivaldi, Bach or Mozart or the obvious layer of folk songs in the music of Kodály and Bartók, as examples, bring folk poetry to mind. In the same way, the world of folk tales cannot be left out in understanding our world views. Folk tales can be traced back to the same roots which do vary from culture to culture in specific ways. We have found that introducing the world of folk tales in a neutral space is effective as it evokes the same expectations in almost all participants, in all groups, regardless of their back-stage culture. The role of traditions and their impact on human life is discussed in Ellis Potter's *The Cloud of Knowing* (Potter, 2018). Ancient traditions can be found in the cultures of the East and the West alike.

The world is my imagination according to the Schopenhauerean thought. Man is not only of a material nature, but also possessor of cosmic knowledge. The origin of this transcendent knowledge is not only based on our traditions, but is also carried by our genes. By creating a *neutral space*, they become sensitive. They take shape as products, as creations. The process that the individual goes through to change his or her self-image will affect the group. It spreads in the group like waves in a pond do. Once the process is brought to awareness and is being practiced, it spreads through the group like ripples in a pond. This will have an impact on the outside world as well (e.g. home, workplace, society, economy). Individuals will bring the moral standards originating from within in a revived form, they will bring them into operation at the same level within the group.

CULTURE SPACE AND CO-CREATION PROCESS

The groups arrive with an established operating principles and relational patterns. The relational framework is derived from the environment and the social context. Added to this information is the functional context, which comes from the psyche itself, on the basis of which we make decisions on an emotional basis as the meanings get selected by our consciousness. According to Mach's Principle and Post-Einsteinian Relativity Theory (Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Mach's Principle, Hiroshi Okamura, Tadayuki Ohta, Toshiei Kimura, Kichiro Hiida, Progress of Theoretical Physics, Volume 54, Issue 6, December 1975, Pages 1872–1878,) everything depends only on relationships. We assume that there is an *absolute space* that can be evoked with the help of art. This evokes the climate where the norms operate. Thus, the groups can accept it as a framework.

Science used to be equal with two notions: knowledge and intellectual power. Today, safety has become a third factor. Do we accept a certain amount of risk? Should we tolerate a certain level of risk? The answer to these questions largely depends on the value system of the people who are affected by the given problem. That is why it is important to build a value system in people that has a self-identifying power.

Where is this system located? How can we make it attractive? We cannot get answers to these questions from the outside. Cultural phenomena, especially art, can provide an answer to this comprehensive question and its connections.

By arts we mean painting, drama, fiction, music, sculpturing. In our practice, a kind of dynamics emerges from the proportions in the arts. We learn about various measures and relationships of forces. The outlined proportions, regardless of cultural education, create a universal system of norms in the neutral space. Complex systems mutually influence each other.

Through self-organization – adaptation and attitude – a new way of thinking and problem solving is created. Achieving reflexivity causes a qualitative change.

Describing the creation of the *neutral space* is not an easy task. Aristotle was the first to talk about neutral space or null space. There are five elements in man - fire, water, air, earth - and the fifth element, quintessence, ether. The universe is formed from ether, and man is a part of it. Since the place of norms is also found here, they must first be revived within the group, in the individuals, so that they can influence the group.

The basic idea in Seneca's teaching is that all kinds of things are neither good nor bad, but both good and bad at the same time. It depends on the individual, his attitude, the way he sees the world, and in it himself, his own life.

We are able to create this relationship in a neutral space. During the development of group dynamics, it keeps developing by storms, it becomes norm-following and then functional.

We achieve the formation of standards through artistic means. Life can only be perceived with a higher-order ability: *intuition*. The task of the artist is to confront people with the deeper reality that he or she has come to know with the help of intuition. This is how the artist expresses his or her aesthetics, and through this, ethical behavior.

An important role is played by the leader of the session, who does not coach, perform, present, educate – but conveys artistic values. He or she is a creative creator, scientist, psychologist, and thinker at the same time. He or she has to believe in the power of fine arts, that they have a specific place and role in people's lives, that their lives can be made richer and more colorful by experiencing them. With an aesthetic experience and spiritual knowledge, the sessions develop the way of seeing and the world of taste, thereby affecting the

norm system. The arts take a break from the daily routine and give you a boost. They enable us to look at problems from different perspectives. Classical works shed light on the current problems of our time, help us to understand them, and increase our ability to empathize.

Fine arts also affect emotional intelligence and through them the norm system. Several studies have dealt with the extent to which emotional intelligence can be influenced and taught. (cf. Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews, 2001). According to our experience, it can be established that "the ability to observe one's own and others' emotions..." within the group serves to guide the thinking and the actions of the participants. In other words, the standard system can be transferred (Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

The method itself can be short-term or long-term. In each case, the objective is different. It moves in a multifaceted and broad perspective. It can be tailored to the needs of the given group. We can work with classical, shape-following creators as well as with Euclidean geometric shapes. Euclid is the father of geometric shapes. He wrote about geometric shapes for the first time. Axioms (axioms) referred to forms representing value. The group conflicts that occur in sessions are also constructive. Louis Kriesberg (2007) indicates in relation to American group conflicts that positive values and new goals can also emerge from the conflict: respect, understanding, cooperation.

DISCUSSION

In our research we have examined joint creation as a process with a goal. We have assessed it according to usefulness. What can be utilized in marketing, in the communications field and in industry. In our research we looked at co-creation as a process with a purpose. We evaluated it according to utility criteria. How can workplace levels be run more efficiently? Whether and what can be improved in marketing communication, and whether the number of conflicts arising from cultural diversity in the workplace can be reduced by changing the framework of norms.

The goal was always to generate new ideas and collect suggestions. The effects of joint creation were investigated in the media, in mass procurement and consumer attitudes. Joint creation required the involvement of people in teams. So we examined the individual in groups.

The novelty of our practice is based in two main things. We do not want to use human hidden values for a purpose, but we would like group members to discover their human-selves. Because of this, they become creative. In this new active area, other lines of force operate, new motivations appear in human lives. These reflections in the creative space begin to affect other environments as well, such as private lives, social relationships, workplace behavior and value systems. A person cleansed of hedonia becomes capable of eudaimonia, i.e. self-actualization (cf. Csíkszentmihályi 1990).

Sometimes while working in the group, we examine the person, the individual. The individual with their newly launched, self-identified value system. The individual with their internal transformation, with their effects on the other persons.

For a long time, decisions depended on goals, budget and timing. Now the decision is shifted to human values. Are we ready to see and understand the complexity of being a human being? Are we able to notice the lack of norms in society due to focus on production and profit making exclusively? Do we want to restore the original state of human beings?

RESULTS

Forecasting is necessary in the economy. Science usually establishes the forecast using a qualitative method. At the same time, economic instability can also characterize future states. A small change in people can make a big difference. Sensitivity can play a role as an important factor in reflexivity.

The purely cultural-artistic environment is to facilitate the emergence of hidden aspects and unconscious/subconscious properties of the human constitution focusing on latent cultural needs and relaxed, unbiased creation (see the “Flow-state” described in Csíkszentmihályi 1990). The transformative cultural space can provide for the relevant environment and set of conditions for creative activities and innovative attitudes in people.

In such a space - created during work sessions the focus of attention is on cultural sublimation. The foundation of the transformative cultural space is the theory of sublimation originating in cultural anthropology (e.g. Mead 1935; Róheim 1943), according to which symbolic cultural constructs function as a defence-mechanism against “conflict-ridden human anxiety.”

Thus, we have designed and follow during the joint creative sessions a gradually evolving process from proposal (choice of artwork areas) to creation of active space, to joint creation and free reflections and transformations.

Relating to the research described in Ramdhani, Thontowi and Ancok (2018), it is possible to examine the relationships of people who do not belong to the groups and are not directly involved in the given occupations. Assuming that the negative patterns within the group create emotional distortions outside the group as well, it would be necessary to investigate what kind of effect the norm system achieved in the art classes has outside the group.

THEORETICAL CONSEQUENCES

A group is a system that strives for balance and tries to achieve this through regulation. Interdependence creates a psychic field, the forces acting in it shape behavior: habits, norms, behaviors linked to hierarchies, leader selection.

People are surrounded by groups throughout their lives, they are never alone. The world reacts to the image they create of themselves. The external group defines quality and the individual accepts it accordingly. In response, the individual further strengthens it or suppresses it. As a result, the resulting group dynamics face very strong workplace and organizational situations.

The group is usually created with a purpose. Individuals want to become group members or a group simply satisfies their needs. The more functions a group realizes the more people stick to it. It's difficult to separate conflict from emotions.

In our culture, education focuses much more on negative things (unpleasant quarrels, frustrating communication, etc.) than on positive ones. A good leader not only needs professional qualifications but also needs to be socially mature. This requires emotional intelligence. Our abilities show relatively quickly what our qualities are, with which we can assert ourselves within a group (family, school, workplace). Charity (2013) shows that those who are more empathic and respect others can become leaders within a group sooner with the help of their more advanced communication. Today it is not enough for a group leader to be experienced and intelligent. The secret of their success is to be found in emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is based on respecting basic human norms and enforcing them with others. Deliberately and knowingly breaking the norm is considered a crime. This is also condemned by society. The ideal of honor, together with the value of the norm, is on the rise. We are convinced that classical arts serve as a reference point for this.

SESSIONS

“Our work will not be directed toward convincing those who do not wish to be convinced. But it will supply firm points of support for anyone who reads it without prejudice.” Julius Evola (1995:17)

The groups we worked with consisted of people working in different fields. They came from a different environmental and social background (in terms of education, qualification) and the workplace status (manager, middle manager, employee) also differed. There was a session where the boss also participated in the exercises. There were women-only groups as well as mixed groups. The sessions lasted for a shorter period of time (1/2-3 days, 8 hours per day), in the case of another group, weekly for 1 year (1 x 4 hours per week). In all cases, there was a

change within the group. Managers and management repeatedly requested the sessions. In several cases with extended groups.

From these contrasts, it seems that the changes within the group do not depend on environmental factors, social status, gender; rather, the changes created within the group were caused by artistic identifications within the individual. The fact of identity and identification can be an area of further research.

The strengths and motives originated elsewhere within the companies. On the other hand, the methodology worked in the groups because it targeted the same force fields, which are the same in all people.

In his field theory, a 'field' is defined as 'the totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent' (Lewin 1951: 240). The behavior of individuals was very similar during self-identification. It created an identical neutral space/field. It enabled the group to be in a state of acceptance without conflict.

At the same time, the neutral space (the artistic occupation) can be controlled. It would be interesting to examine what kind of mechanism certain works of art trigger within the group under guided leadership, and whether its dynamics change.

Brown's statement is thought-provoking: "a group exists when people in it realize their fate depends on the fate of the group as a whole" (Brown 1988: 28).

After all, there is no manipulation or conflict in the artistic/neutral space. It is based on individual. Thus, the group dynamics is not given by the recognition of the fate of the group, but by unity, but by the state of consciousness that we are all the same. In this way the groups that took part in the sessions were somewhat formal ones, but at a certain level, they were transformed into informal groups. A group without a group. This could be a new experimental possibility. Relating Kurt Lewin's words: '*There is nothing so practical as a good theory*' (1951: 169).

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Measuring the Social Impact of European Capital of Culture – A Case Study of Esch2022

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Abstract

Measuring the social impact of a European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is indispensable to truly understand the programme's effects on the social well-being of the resident population and visitors alike. With an aim to measure the social impact of Esch2022, we have established a comprehensive methodology spanning 20+ studies together covering 55+ impact indicators reflecting the ECoC objectives as set out by the European Commission. Topics researched range from social well-being, through economic impacts, to links between culture and nature. The studies are very diverse and include barometer telephone surveys of the resident population, on-site interviews with visitors, self-reporting by cultural actors, statistical analyses of economic data, participant observation in cultural third places, or professional media monitoring, to name just a few. Methodological challenges abound, from limited data to Covid-disrupted baselines, but the conclusions gained are priceless. Indeed, impact measurement can not only be an effective ex-post reflection tool but can also help focus ambitions and support strategic decisions before and during the title year. "You can't improve what you don't measure", as Peter Drucker said, and this could not be truer for the most prestigious European cultural programme aiming to shape minds, hearts and quality of life of thousands.

Key words: European Capital of Culture, ECoC, social impact measurement, social well-being.

Introduction

The European Capitals of Culture (ECoCs) are first and foremost a cultural event, but 'being a European Capital of Culture can also boost the long-term socioeconomic development of cities. They often take this opportunity to regenerate themselves, improve their creative and innovative potential, develop new and more sustainable forms of tourism and raise their profile. Being a European Capital of Culture can also foster social and territorial cohesion within city boundaries and beyond, strengthen citizens' roles in the city's development as well as their participation in the shaping and making of cultural expressions.'¹

¹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *European capitals of culture: 30 years* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019), 1.

Indeed, this is also the ambition of Esch2022, where, together with 10 other municipalities in the South of Luxembourg, and 8 municipalities in France, in the Communauté de Communes Pays Haut Val d'Alzette, Esch-Alzette in Grand Duchy of Luxembourg holds the 2022 ECoC title. 'Culture, nature, identity, Europe—how can they be integrated and rethought in the context of a region that is reinventing itself at the heart of Europe? This is the question that Esch2022 asks under the slogan 'Remix'².

How successfully Esch2022 will answer this question and meet its overall objectives to safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe, highlight the common features they share, increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space, foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities³, and advance the promotion of nature along with sustainability efforts to protect it, can only be determined by a comprehensive impact research programme, in which the social aspect plays a prominent role. This abstract presents ongoing efforts in this respect.

Literature review

The European Commission lists several motivations why the cities should evaluate the results of their title year: the need for coherent evidence-base 'to better grasp the benefits of being an ECoC, especially its medium-to-long term cultural, social and economic legacy in host cities' common ground to compare its impact from one city to another, (...) benefits to other cities across Europe, willing to learn from the ECoC experience'⁴, and help to European Union institutions assess the cumulative impact of the action.

Scientific literature has mostly been focused on individual aspects of ECoC's impact assessment, such as tourist stays⁵, political impact⁶, urban

² Sam Tanson, "Intro by Sam Tanson, Minister for Culture of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg", in: Christian Lamour, Frédéric Durand, Corina Tursi, Nicolae Popa, Pauline Bosredon, Thomas Perrin, Fabienne Leloup, *European Capitals of Culture and Cross-border Urban Cohesion: Best practices guide and toolkit for evaluation* (CECCUT, 2022), 2.

³ *European Commission, European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) 2020-2033 Guidelines for the cities' own evaluations of the results of their ECOC, Annex 10 - Guidelines for the cities' own evaluations of the results of each ECOC*, (Brussels: European Commission, 2018), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ Martin Falk, Eva Hagsten, "Measuring the impact of the European Capital of Culture programme on overnight stays: evidence for the last two decades.", *European Planning Studies* 25, no. 12 (2017): 2175-2191.

⁶ Suzana Žilič-Fišer, Karmen Erjavec, "The political impact of the European Capital of Culture: 'Maribor 2012 gave us the power to change the regime'." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 23, no. 5 (2017): 581-596.

regeneration^{7,8}, community reputation and pride⁹, innovative capabilities in art production¹⁰, to name a few, or – alternatively – on methodological questions¹¹ that still abound. There is also large body of practitioner publications by past ECoCs.

Nevertheless, the specificity of each ECoC has thus far left the impact measurement field very fragmented. Our approach was therefore aimed at systematising the lessons learned and combining them with the expectations as laid out by the European Commission.

Method

We collected and reviewed 190 data sources about the region, Luxembourg and Europe, including studies on culture, socio-economy, tourism, environment, spatial planning, urbanism, mobility, integration, education, research, innovation, European values, identity, and evaluations by other ECoCs (Liverpool, Mons, Aarhus, Luxembourg 2007, Marseille, Matera etc.).

As our methodological framework, we have established a comprehensive matrix spanning 20+ studies covering 55+ impact indicators reflecting the ECoC objectives as set out by the European Commission, partially adjusted and complemented to fit Esch2022 context.

Topics researched range from cultural quality and social well-being, through regional and economic impacts, to links between culture and nature.

The studies are very diverse and include barometer surveys of the resident population, on-site interviews with visitors, self-reporting by cultural actors, statistical analyses of economic data, participant observation in cultural third places, or professional media monitoring, to name just a few. Several indicators are

⁷ Panagiota Papanikolaou, "The European Capital of Culture: the challenge for urban regeneration and its impact on the cities." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*2, no. 17 (2012): 268-273.

⁸ Zeynep Gunay, "Conservation versus regeneration?: Case of European capital of culture 2010 Istanbul." *European Planning Studies* 18, no. 8 (2010): 1173-1186.

⁹ Suzana Žilič Fišer, Ines Kožuh. "The impact of cultural events on community reputation and pride in Maribor, The European Capital of Culture 2012." *Social Indicators Research*142, no. 3 (2019): 1055-1073.

¹⁰ Nils Asle Bergsgard, Kari Josendal, Beatriz Garcia. "A cultural mega event's impact on innovative capabilities in art production: The results of Stavanger being the European capital of culture in 2008." *International Journal of Innovation and Regional Development* 2, no. 4 (2010): 353-371.

¹¹ Pedro Gomes, Alejandro Librero-Cano. "Evaluating three decades of the European Capital of Culture programme: a difference-in-differences approach." *Journal of Cultural Economics* 42, no. 1 (2018): 57-73.

considered in each study, the objective being that together, studies would cover the totality of the indicators planned.

We have encountered multiple methodological challenges concerning the culture-related data in the South of Luxembourg with regards to: complexity, regionality and recency of data, timing, temporality, continuity, sample size, availability, accessibility of existing studies, as well as issues concerning the completeness, representativeness and comparability of data. For a small ECoC, questions of data collection speed and research partners' capacity were also relevant. The pandemic of Covid-19 has had a very significant impact, from the establishment of baselines (2020-2021) to influence on data concerning tourism, cultural participation, stakeholders priorities, citizen participation, economic impact, local collaboration, cultural projects' organisation, integration along with opinions on European identity aspects and more.

Results

Research is still ongoing but below we present three illustrative excerpts.

Impacts of Esch2022 on the region (illustrative excerpt):

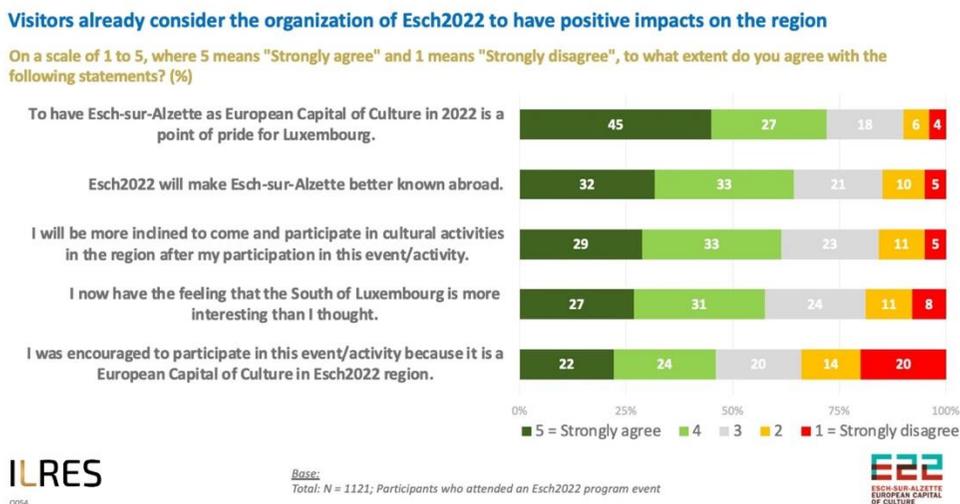


Fig. 1.

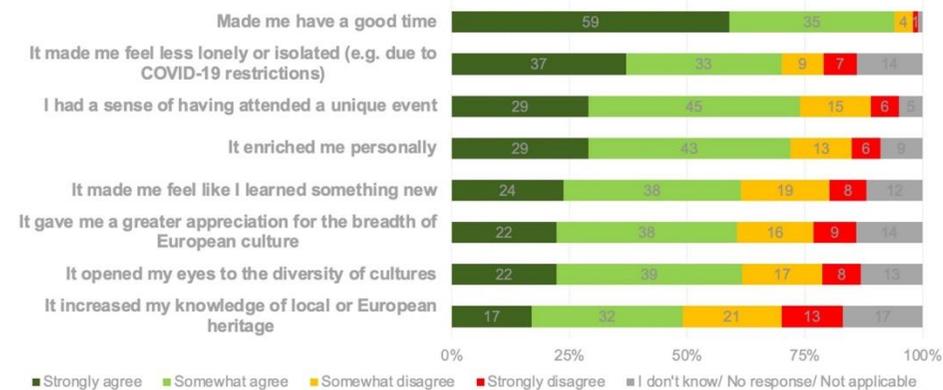
Source: Survey conducted by TNS Ilres and Esch2022 ASBL¹².

¹² Survey by TNS Ilres and Esch2022 ASBL (face to face and online). This event satisfaction and evaluation survey started in March 2022 and will end in January 2023. Over 1121 respondents had participated by the end of July (data in the graph)).

Impacts of Esch2022 on the participants (illustrative excerpt):

Participants are positive about various impacts they experienced by participating in an Esch2022 event.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (%) **Attending this type of event/activity:**



ILRES
0043

Base:
Total: N = 1121; Participants who attended an Esch2022 program event

E22
ESCH-SOUP-ALZETTE
EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

Fig. 2.

Source: Survey conducted by TNS Ilres and Esch2022 ASBL¹³.

Impacts of Esch2022 on nature (illustrative excerpt):

¹³ Ibid.

Number of projects by REMIX category

Total number of projects : 162

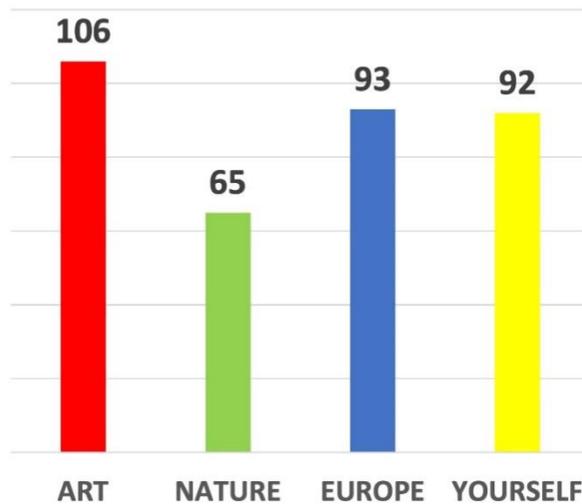


Fig. 3.

The expected social impacts of Esch2022 related to nature are an inherent focus of the programming of the ECoC as well as its organisational approach. Both will be included in the impact measurement work. Indeed, multiple projects directly address the Remix Nature stream which combines two priorities: ‘the appreciation of the beauty of our region and the idea of a sustainable coexistence’ (esch2022.lu).

In terms of ECoC management as such, the Esch2022 Sustainable Development Charter ‘is a citizens’ initiative, the outcome of discussions and consultations between the numerous players in the area of sustainable development in Luxembourg. Esch2022 will be the first European Capital to acquire such a tool.’ (Esch2022.lu)

Moreover, the ELO project (with support of the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development) is the information platform for event organisers who want to integrate sustainability into their projects and for visitors who want to identify more easily events that apply sustainability principles. ELO focuses on 6 core actions: Food & beverage; Local economy & production; Mobility & accessibility; Waste management; Tourism & accommodation; Communication & merchandise.¹⁴

¹⁴ Esch2022, *Digital ELO brochure*, (Luxembourg: Esch2022, 2022), 1-2.

Discussion and suggestions

The research is ongoing, but the first results are already suggesting that Esch2022 is having positive effects on the region, and the event participants consider the organisation of Esch2022 to have a positive impact on their own lives. Impact studies on active participants of the programme and its various stakeholders (cultural players and project owners, policymakers, team and volunteers) are also underway. Same applies to the impact on nature, where social awareness about both the natural richness of the region and the need for sustainability efforts are being built through multiple Esch2022 projects as well as through the internal ECoC processes and procedures.

Besides shedding light on the impact of Esch2022, the team aims to leverage the research work as an opportunity to shed light on the gaps in the system, encourage new collaborations and research initiatives – even if some might only start delivering results long after 2022. This could be in fact a very significant legacy of Esch2022 in itself.

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Imbalance between Nature's Provisions and Entrenched Cultural Patterns: Dignity and Cultural Needs in Impoverished Communities

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to highlight the underlying complexities in community-level decision making concerning improvements of well-being and life quality in impoverished communities.¹ We hope to raise awareness of growing inequalities in resource distribution in almost all societies today. One aspect of the study is the critical analysis of the mindset of politicians and administrators who rule the local public services and the development funds. The paper also shows the Janus-face of the “pushes and pulls” at work in impoverished community developments. It is shown how entrenched cultural patterns in the mindsets of shareholders, stakeholders, community leaders and community members may result in conflicting solutions in the efforts to improve life conditions in impoverished communities of marginalized populations. The paper attempts to provide a balanced view on the diverse cultural embeddedness of all the participants involved in these complex socio-cultural processes.

Two examples are provided to analyze the difficulties in negotiating perceived cultural needs and interests of the involved parties. One example concerns the economic and cultural consequences of inequality in water management in small villages in South Africa, the other addresses issues concerning unbalanced and unequal economic and social relations in small Gypsy villages in Hungary.

In the first case the reluctance of politicians and authorities is witnessed towards a fair provision of physical needs (water and sewage) to deprived communities in South Africa. The second example is from small villages in Hungary which observes an opposite phenomenon. Despite legally determined provisions of infrastructure improvement with available funding, impoverished local communities may decide to refrain from accepting further physical improvements in their community environment in the fear of losing the status of “marginalized minority members in poverty” which secures individual families of these communities significant state support provided on a permanent basis rather than

¹ The paper is based on partial results of an ongoing research “Ethical Considerations in the Representation and Negotiation of Community Needs in Diverse Cultural Settings” between the University of Extremadura, Spain and the Széchenyi István University in Győr, Hungary.

applying for project-based development funds for their communities. In this case, mentally entrenched cultural patterns are shown to block responsible community decisions. The distinction between shareholders and stakeholders is introduced as a fundamental conceptual framework for the study. Both case studies are meant to throw light on the danger of a growing gap between affluent communities and marginalized, underrepresented communities in terms of economic, social, cultural, and educational consequences.

Key words: impoverished communities, natural resources, cultural needs, mentally entrenched cultural patterns, non-deterministic socially responsible decisions, deprivation, human dignity.

1. Prelude and Upbeat

Our presentation is an attempt to provide a *novel conceptual link* between **NATURE** as *Providence* and **CULTURE** as a *human design* based on social practices and human-made legal regulations.

We make efforts to show *inherent conflicts and contradictions* and *propose plausible solutions* to easing sometimes irrational states of affairs. Despite the quest for a novel conceptual link, our method is fundamentally *empirical*: we have witnessed and examined growing *inequalities in resource distribution in deprived and “left-out” impoverished communities* and imbalanced and undesirable infrastructure developments.

Our research findings presented in this paper are meant to raise awareness about *underlying complexities in community-level decision making* effecting *improvements of life quality* in marginalized and underrepresented communities. It is almost trivial to note that *exercising power* by determining the practices of *wealth distribution* and *resource allocation* has been the cause of constant struggle for rights in human history.

We introduce the term *entrenched cultural patterns* when we analyze the conflict of interests between *shareholders* and *stakeholders* that often lead to antagonistic relations. An important aspect of our study is the *critical analysis of the mindset* of both

- (i) politicians and administrators (i.e. *share-holders*) who rule the local public services and the development funds on the one hand, and
- (ii) local community leaders and community members (i.e. *stake-holders*) who need to have the abilities and competences to speak up for their interests on the other hand.

We show how important it is to help marginalized communities with *negotiation techniques* to reduce and overcome unfair discrimination and deprivation in order to *effectuate their life quality in real terms*. We make a point in showing *the Janus-face of the “pushes and pulls”* at work in impoverished

community developments who are in dire need of basic natural resources. We attempt to provide a *balanced view on the diverse cultural embeddedness of all the participants involved* in complex socio-cultural processes.

2. Two empirical cases

Two examples will be provided to show the difficulties in *negotiating perceived cultural needs and interests* of the involved parties.

2.1 The first example

concerns the economic and cultural consequences of inequality in water management in two settlements -Khayamadi and Enkanini at Stellenbosch South Africa. Much empirical investigation was done under the leadership of Stellenbosch University in the two settlements (2002-2014), however, no successful results could be achieved. Outcomes of these investigations were mainly of academic import, but no real progress was achieved in the lives of the community members in those townships. The next project H2014-2018 created a social innovation model to reduce inequalities of water services in Doornkop, Soweto, South Africa. We were able to use experience gained from the first project and targeted at understanding the impasse between the regional authorities and the local communities. The first revelation for us was to observe and confirm the reluctance of politicians and authorities towards a fair provision of physical needs (water and sewage) to deprived communities. We had to realize that *Traditional Water Management* did not respect the *complexity of social and environmental specificities* in rural areas, despite some favorable legislation:

Right to water and sanitation and provision of basic services

(Government of SA 1996)

and

UNESCO World Commission on the Ethics of Science and Technology

(COMEST 1998)

In real practice, based on our targeted communication with both the share-holders and the stake-holders, we were in the position to assert that the *human and ethical dimensions* of water services at impoverished informal settlements we *systematically ignored*.

Why was that so?



Picture 1: University team cooperating with the leaders of an impoverished local community

We formulated a few claims:

1. Municipality workers **fear** to physically enter under-privileged territories.
2. Community leader have **failed to receive support** from the municipality in establishing successful cooperation for years.
3. **Racism** is still at every corner in that territory, in every decision taken by the public authorities.
4. **Politics** play a key role in the **impasse for the solution** of the problems.
5. These have led to observed **difficulties in negotiating equal rights** due to prevailing unbalanced and unequal economic and social relations.

Stakeholders confronting shareholders

Project H2014-2018 was designed to tackle that confrontation. The project's aim was to bring the whole Engineering Department to those townships.

Getting off the ground

1. **Eight meetings** were held with the locals in the primary school located between the two impoverished areas.
2. Meeting after meeting, **goals were fixed**. We moved from blaming the other side to building solutions by displaying **lists of needs and necessities** from the poorest area in the local area.

3. The lists were **presented to the authorities**: advances were made little by little.
4. **Trust and confidence** were growing on both sides. Trust – initially – was built between the chief of the Engineering Department and the two community leaders by developing a **clear scheme** led by the university team. The team was composed of South-African and Spanish researchers.
5. The **engineers were introduced** to the impoverished population through the community leaders.

Representatives of the Engineering Department **had never visited the territory of those informal communities**. They had never seen what life was like there. They had to witness the context: sewage running across the streets, water pipes destroyed, no electricity, girls raped at night when they went to fetch water from the tap located far away, etc.



Picture 2: Engineers paying a site visit to the local community

Results

It was agreed upon by the two sides that the Government cannot continue to ignore ethics as a consideration when looking at ways of improving water management in these communities. It was clearly acknowledged that shareholders and stakeholders need to be aligned by *training providers and recipients* of water services alike.

After those meetings the municipality decided to invest in *repairing the water pipes*. *Five main roads* around these settlements were completely rebuilt. A *sewage system was built* for around 50 per cent of the households with the intention of covering the expenses of the other 50 per cent as well funded from next projects.

As for the improvement of overall communication, *courses were given to the population* by the university team in coalition with the community leaders of the two townships to respect and maintain those water systems. After every meeting the research team provided food to the locals.

The decisive role of community leaders

In total 1800 local settlers attended those meetings in a period of two years. Interviews were conducted to measure the *change in mentality* in those impoverished territories. The conclusion was that locals do not trust anyone who come from outside or from abroad. Everything should be explained by the *community leaders*. we realized that this became the key element in our research: Community leaders have to gain and establish trust of the citizens of the townships they represent as leaders from the very first day they get elected as leaders.

The morale

Communities need educated, open-minded, enlightened leaders to build *trust for commitment, cooperation and community voice*.

2.2 The second example

It is results of a research project carried out in small villages in South- Hungary with an almost exclusive Gypsy population². Our case description is to illustrate a phenomenon opposite to the one in the South-African example above. In Hungary, impoverished settlements are entitled to apply for *special development funds*. Professional help for the preparations of project proposals is secured by

² Gypsy people in Hungary insist that they be called “Gypsy” (*cigány* in Hungarian), not Roma or Romani, as their own self-denomination is “*cigány*”.

law for small, marginalized communities. The submission of a project proposal has to be *decided by the members of the community* under guidance of the local self-government, i.e., elected *community leaders*. Successful projects will substantially improve the infrastructure of the communities (renovation of individual family houses, roads and sidewalks, sewage systems, public buildings, kindergartens and schools, community centers, establishing new companies, etc.).

However, as a consequence of systematic and visible improvements, settlements (village communities) may lose their status category as „poverty-ridden settlements” in the eyes of state administration, thus *losing extra community support* to individual families falling under this category. Here is a conspicuous conflict of interest, leading to a dilemma between:

- (i) community leaders
- (ii) community voice
- (iii) individual families
- (iv) individuals

The causes and reasons for poverty are many-fold and solutions to erase poverty certainly present very complex tasks. The reasons may be due to social-economic policy, discrimination, racism, upbringing, socialization, individual and social psychology, values, morals, attitudes, entrenched cultural patterns, etc.

We have to accept that at the end of the day, all human decisions (individual or communal) are outcomes of „*interest assessment*”, whether rational or irrational. We also assume that interests differ on a *plethora of diverse considerations*.

In the communities examined, 90 per cent of the adult male population is *unemployed*, living on unemployment benefit. Almost all women are at home with no outside jobs. Most of the families are extended families in which at least three generations live in one household. Families receive *child support benefits* after the number of children in the family. Families in poverty are also entitled to *additional family support benefits*. Children in these communities have hardly ever seen employed people around them.

Cultural Dilemma I:

1. Some NGO initiatives have offered support to these communities by offering and establishing „Playhouse Daycare Centers” for children and parents together. /See e.g., the NGO *Cheerful Childhood Foundation*/

- (i) Some young mothers and a few fathers make use of the opportunity and spend precious time with their children and other attendees together with professional teachers/educators in these playhouse centers.
- (ii) These families are often openly criticized by the rest of the community

for following practices based on fashionable trends which have nothing to do with the general attitudes and traditional social norms of the village people.



Pictures 3 and 4: Mothers with their children in a Playhouse Daycare Center



Picture 5 and 6: Even older siblings are involved in the activities in a Playhouse Center

Cultural Dilemma II:

Despite provisions of infrastructure improvement granted by legislation (available funding from the EU, national government or local government), impoverished local communities *may decide to refrain from accepting further physical improvements* in their community environment in the fear of losing the special status of “marginalized minority members in poverty” which secures individual families in these communities significant state support (social security under poverty line) or unemployment benefit provided to individuals on a permanent basis rather than applying for project-based development funds for their communities. In this case, *entrenched cultural patterns in their mindset* can be shown to block responsible community decisions.

In both challenging cases of the impoverished communities in South-Hungary,

- (i) attending Playhouse Daycare Centers and
- (ii) blocking responsible community decisions,

the recommendation emanating from our research is a *plausible solution* which is just the opposite than the one in the case of the South-African example above. Here the legal protagonists, the entities with authority should be consistent in giving trainings and discussion forums to citizens of the local communities living under the poverty line. We have tried to show the *non-deterministic nature* of these communicative processes to arrive at responsible social decisions.

Building trust for cooperation in the local citizens for them to acquire favorable cultural and social practices. It must be the responsibility of any opposing sides - shareholders and stakeholders alike. After all, *socialization and education matter* in maintaining humility and cultivated lives for all human beings.

3. Concluding remarks

Our paper is an attempt to redefine the notion *Nature* as used in numerous contexts across the disciplines. Our fundamental assumption is that Nature conceptualized as *Providence* is neutral in terms of securing resources for living beings. (cf. the Great Chain of Being, *scala naturae*). In our view, it is but a *human design* that has caused inequalities by exercising power over other fellow humans and communities.

We also elaborate on the meaning of the term *entrenched cultural patterns* by emphasizing the conflict of interests between shareholders and stakeholders that often lead to antagonistic relations. Exercising power by determining the practices of wealth distribution and resource allocation has been the cause of constant struggle for right in human history. The paper is an attempt to highlight the

underlying complexities in community-level decision making concerning improvements of well-being and life quality in impoverished communities.

We show examples of efforts towards raising awareness of growing inequalities in resource distribution in certain deprived or “left-out” communities. One aspect of the study is the critical analysis of the mindset of politicians and administrators (i.e. share-holders) who rule the local public services and the development funds. It is shown how important it is to help marginalized communities with negotiation techniques to reduce and overcome unfair discrimination and deprivation of basic human right. The paper also shows the Janus-face of the “pushes and pulls” at work in impoverished community developments. It is shown how entrenched cultural patterns in the mindsets of shareholders, stakeholders, community leaders and community members may result in conflicting solutions in the efforts to improve life conditions in impoverished communities of marginalized populations. The paper attempts to provide a balanced view on the diverse cultural embeddedness of all the participants involved in complex socio-cultural processes.

The two examples analyze the difficulties in negotiating perceived cultural needs and interests of the involved parties. One example concerns the economic and cultural consequences of inequality in water management in small villages in South Africa, the other addresses issues concerning unbalanced and unequal economic and social relations in small Gypsy villages in South-Hungary.

Placetelling: Culture and Nature Connection

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Abstract

As recently in 2022 we have had experienced “Kaunas - the Culture Capital of Europe” events here in town of Kaunas, this paper presents the evolving results of narratives in the street reflections “Placetelling: Culture and Nature Connection”. Placetelling is a method to create place narratives, a strategic asset to support communication and promotional processes. It is a particular type of storytelling of places that promotes local development and helps to develop a sense of identity and belonging among the members of the community (Pollice et al., 2020). In this case, the placetelling tells the story of the city to the citizens through rivers - as one of the strategic locations representing city - the confluence of Kaunas was chosen for one of the most important events of the Capital of Culture. After all, it is both a historical and cultural place. The discussion goes around the connection between culture and nature. How nature can be used as the key for the cultural event and for telling city story using it even for the scene. How can we make the connection between culture and nature? The presented personal reflections reveal thinking about the links between culture and nature, about the placetelling and what does the river means for as person individually, how a person experiences a river and how he understands what the creators of the event want to tell him, what it is through the story. And how this story makes a person proud of his/her city, find his/her identity and feel part of the urban community through it.

Key words: Placetelling, Culture, Nature, Experience, Identity.

Introduction

„Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. They are our touchstones, our points of reference, our identity“(UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2006)

Today, with globalization, increased mobility, spatial homogeneity and the loss of cultural uniqueness, researchers are asking: does the concept of 'place' still mean something to individual people (Beatley, 2004; Casey, 1998)? Scientists answer this question positively: places have not yet lost their meaning (Sebastien, 2020). In contrast, the concept of "place" has regained its value in the modern world (Janz, 2005; Kruger and Jakes, 2003). Zonn (2020) emphasized the need to understand the multiple meanings of place that are intertwined with our individual and collective identities. According to Tuan (1975) and Stedman (2003), "Place" is a space that acquires meaning through individual, collective or cultural processes: the multisensory memories, symbols and experiences experienced and felt in a place. Leonard (2013) defines place as a set of spaces made meaningful through people's experiences and ideas. Didion (1979, p. 146) states that "Place belongs forever to the one who establishes it the hardest, remembers it most obsessively, extracts it from himself, shapes it, conveys it, loves it so radically that it remakes it in his own image". Therefore, the concept of place links spatial structures to human experience and refers to human existence.

As Zonn (2020, p. 4) states, "a place is a place that has meaning for someone through experience". In this case, place is the place we can find in space, time and content, and meaning is those elements that give place identity: from an individual or a group of individuals to your family, religious and political institutions, each of which has a unique identity, and experience means the ways in which a place becomes familiar. According to Zonn (2020), place can vary greatly depending on the geographical scale, starting with the body and extending outward to the otherworld, where there is a complex integration between places and between many emerging fields at different levels. And these places and locations can be real or imagined. Meaning depends on the ways in which one physically and socially constructs the constituent elements of a place and forms a place's identity. History, memory and change are integral to the process of building a place's identity in individual and collective contexts. Finally, placemaking and experiences can always be framed in terms of time, from seconds to years to generations and beyond. In this way, the problem becomes dynamic, and a synergy occurs between the identity of the place and the person who defines it.

Lyndon (2005) defined place as “a space that can be remembered”. The way we remember - everything is stories. In his book *The Literary Mind* Turner (1998, p. 4), wrote: “Narrative representation—the story—is the primary instrument of thought. . . . It is our primary means of anticipating, predicting, planning, and explaining. thinking is organized as stories.” According to Diaz-Moore (2006), a very important criterion for evaluating a story is the quality of the story being told. What makes a story about a place, an object attractive? Move? Remembered? Why is this a place people should know and care about? Some good place narrative themes: history, context of conflict, resolution of archetypal experience. Prehistory. In each case, the narrative of the place somehow establishes an internal connection with the listeners/readers. The author argues that if a place is truly a "space to remember," a place must speak deeply about the human condition. If the story is deeply internal, it is memorized. According to Pollice et al. (2020), here we are dealing with placetelling, which is a certain type of place-telling that promotes the development of a place and helps to develop a sense of identity and belonging among community members. It helps local communities become directly involved in preserving their common heritage and passing it on to future generations. Placetelling is a method of telling stories about places, which also includes such important aspects as: Identity: tells about places, understanding their essence and meaning, as a complex emotional attachment; is endogenous: starting from the so-called genetic features of the territory, which are born from the territory to the territory, is self-oriented: it is a process that increases the ability of the territory to create narratives that affect the processes of territorialization and capitalization in accordance with the principles of sustainability (Briguglio, 1995; Greiner, 2014 and Pollice, 2018, cited in Pollice et al., 2020). Arguably, this makes storytelling a powerful tool for interpreting and enhancing local heritage, starting with the living space shared by residents. Placetelling is a technique that aims to strengthen the dimension of identity and project it externally, and the adjective "local" actually means that a community is when it recognizes itself in a territory and represents itself in symbiosis with it (Pollice et. al., 2020).

In this case, the placetelling tells the story of the city to the citizens through rivers - as one of the strategic locations representing city - the confluence of Kaunas was chosen for one of the most important events of the Capital of Culture. After all, it is both a historical and cultural place. The discussion goes around the connection between culture and nature. How nature can be used as the key for the cultural event and for telling city story using it even for the scene. How can we make the connection between culture and nature? The presented personal reflections reveal thinking about the links between culture and nature, about the placetelling and what does the river means for as person individually, how a person experiences a river

and how he understands what the creators of the event want to tell him, what it is through the story.

When presenting theoretical insights on culture and nature

The relationship between culture and nature has been a topic of intense discussion for thousands of years. Since who we are depends in part on where we are, it is no wonder that people have argued about how much influence nature has had in shaping our lives, and, in turn, about how much freedom we have had in creating nature to fit our lifeways. Basic to this discussion are the concepts of human adaptation, local knowledge, environmental values, place attachments, and cultural landscapes (Stoffle et al., 2003). Often in science, the topics of nature and culture are separated. However, Larsen and Wijesuriya (2017) argue that the divide between nature and culture is not universal. Indeed, it is believed that nature and culture very often complement each other and are inseparable. Cultural identity is formed in a specific environment, just as many of humanity's creative works are deeply inspired by the beauty of nature. History's ever-emerging connection between nature and culture helps to recognize inherent aspects of interdependence, as well as to encourage the fruitfulness of experiences and practices developed in the cultural and natural heritage sectors. Today, it is increasingly understood that heritage objects are not made up of isolated natural or cultural attributes, divided into separate realities, but are interwoven, linked by various mutual relationships Larsen and Wijesuriya (2017). The prevailing tendency to connect heritage or build bridges towards it is not accidental: the dichotomy of nature and culture has long been attacked in the academic field (Descola and Pálsson, 1996). It is increasingly seen as a cultural expression of a distinct historical period, rather than a universally valid division related to heritage classification. Heritage thinking has matured in understanding the complex connections between cultural and natural values, attributes and people. In summary, there is a great drive to rethink the boundaries between nature and culture: 1) embedded and related rather than isolated properties; 2) relative rather than unique and different properties; 3) a dynamic network of processes instead of fixed elements; 4) area of experience sharing and mutual learning. Larsen and Wijesuriya (2017) highlight the need to move from heritage as an exclusive domain of expertise to the development of local community perspectives and values that often ignore narrow natural and cultural divides. As stated by Verschuuren et al. (2021), the cultural and spiritual significance of nature was defined as the spiritual, cultural, inspirational, aesthetic, historical and social meanings, values, feelings, ideas and associations that natural features and nature in general have for past, present and future human generations, both individually and

both individuals and their groups. The authors Dutcher et al. (2007) hypothesize that environmental values derive from a sense of connection with nature. Connection describes the sense of identity of self, others, and the natural world. The experience of connection involves the dissolution of boundaries and a sense of common or simple essence between self, nature and others. Connection with nature is theoretically and operationally distinct from other explanations of environmental values, including cultural bias, postmaterialism, and social altruism.

Richardson and Butler (2022) say that a close relationship with nature is like a close relationship with friends and family, - we feel that you know them deeply and intimately. You notice and understand their upcoming moods, expressions and swear words. They can bring you great joy or deep sorrow. Your destiny is tied to theirs - what happens to them happens to you. Or nature may be more familiar with us. We may like it well enough, but there is little intimacy or attention to it. Pretty and Pilgrim (2008) argue that the key link between nature and culture is knowledge. The way people experience the world determines the behaviors, understandings and values that shape people's interactions with nature. Natural knowledge, variously called traditional, local or ecological, is accumulated in society and can also be transmitted through cultural transmission methods - stories. Richardson and Butler (2022) notice, that nature connection is about our relationship with nature – how we think about, feel about, and experience nature. When we feel very close to nature, we recognise ourselves as part of the natural world, and value our relationship with it. Research shows that the closer we get to nature, the happier we are, the more worthwhile life seems. Connecting with nature is much more than just being in nature, it is how we interact with it that is most important. All humans, according to Pretty and Pilgrim (2008), no matter their culture, have an innate connection with Nature based on our common histories as hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists. Psychological nature connection – how we relate to nature in our minds and through our emotions. The science of nature connectedness focuses on the psychology of the human-nature relationship. Research is based on scientific measurements of people's nature connectedness – the strength of their emotional and psychological connections to the rest of the natural world. Noticing nature, engaging in simple activities with nature, and celebrating the good things in nature are key to developing a stronger connection with nature and the benefits to human and nature's wellbeing (Richardson et al., 2021). The effect is powerful, a population survey found the strength of a person's sense of connection to nature was four times more important than socio-economic status in explaining their sense that life is worthwhile (Martin et al., 2020).

But what we do in nature matters more than how long we spend in it. Research shows that noticing nature is more important than simply spending time in

green places. Connection is about moments, not minutes. The journey to connection starts with pathways to nature connection - research has found that some of these pathways are (Richardson and Butler, 2022): 1) Emotions - Noticing and welcoming the feelings nature inspires; 2) Meaning - Celebrating and sharing nature's events and stories. Authors notice that activating the emotions pathway involves seeking, noticing and reflecting on these moments and feelings and meaning activates the meaning pathway exploring our personal and cultural stories and what nature means to us. This includes reflecting on our personal nature stories and experiences. Bring nature into other cultural and seasonal celebrations and events, and invite different communities to share their experiences and practices for celebrating nature (Richardson and Butler, 2022). The case study shows a rich and creative application of the pathways to support a community and strengthen the link between people and nature in an urban space.

When trying to use methodological lens of autoethnography

As autoethnography was used for the study, it's important shortly to discuss this methodological approach. When looking to the methodology, it becomes clear that autoethnography is becoming more and more popular form of qualitative research, seeking to embrace the subjectivity of researcher and as Krieger (1996) suggests, there becomes the need to resituate the 'I' in research and generating a series of affiliations and insights to develop a fuller sense of self so that our understanding of others will not become fractured or artificial.

Autoethnography addresses the need and desire to make the humanities more human by writing in more poignant, vulnerable, and honest ways, as a field not only of facts but also of meanings and values (Bochner and Ellis, 2022). Inspired by MacIntyre and Bruner (1990) Clifford and Marcus (1986), Kreisworth, (1992), the narrative turn Bochner & Ellis (2022) advocated for a way of writing the narrative of history and performing lived experience in which qualitative researchers from many academic disciplines would feel freed to experiment with hybrid forms of ethnographic representation that mix, bend and merges the genres of essay, short story, memoir, journalism, diary, and field research (Bochner 1994; Ellis 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 1996b). Thus, Bochner and Ellis (2022) desired to conduct research that was satisfying and to which they had a personal and emotional connection. The concept of autoethnography is related to ethnographic contextual methods found in anthropology (Patterson, 2014). Anthropologists use qualitative methods to observe and interview people in order to convey their perspectives for cultural studies (Ellis, 2004; Hayano, 1979).

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experiences in order to understand cultural experiences (Ellis et. al, 2011). It connects autobiographical personal experiences with the cultural, social and political arena, giving the researcher an

opportunity to express his or her past lived experiences (Patterson, 2014). Essentially, autoethnography involves the researcher in the study. Autoethnography, sometimes rendered as auto/ethnography or (auto) ethnography (Greek roots: autós = self + ethnos = people + graphia = writing), arose out of field ethnography as a way to include the researcher’s experiences and insights more directly into accounts of the scene being studied (Poulos, 2021), in order to "describe and systematically analyze (graph) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis et. al, 2011).

The researcher uses the principles of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both a process and a product. According to Poula (2021), autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of academic writing that draws on and analyzes or interprets the lived experience of the author and connects the researcher's insights with self-identity, cultural rules and resources, communication practices, traditions, assumptions, symbols, rules, shared meanings, emotions. , values and wider social, cultural and political issues. Autoethnography is defined as a research methodology that illustrates the “relationship between self and others who represent society” (Chang, 2008). According to Wall (2006), “autoethnography is a new qualitative research tool” grounded in postmodern philosophy. Here in the diagrams below (1 Figure) is shown the distinction between ethnography and autoethnography (Patterson, 2014).



Fig. 1. Autoethnographic approach: Autoethnography is a method that connects autobiographical personal experiences to the cultural, social and political arenas affording the researcher an ability to express his/her previous lived experiences (Patterson, 2014).

Autoethnography retrospectively and selectively refers to experiences based on being part of a culture or having or being able to have a particular cultural identity (Pitard, 2017). It involves the reader in a highly personal experience that

fosters empathy and deeper cultural understanding between the reader and the author (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). However, the account of experience must be accompanied by critical reflection on lived experience in order to comply with the conventions of social science publishing. Autoethnographers should “use personal experience to illustrate aspects of cultural experience” (Ellis et al. 2011, p. 9).

Presenting a personal narrative provides the writer and the participants with the ability to give insight on the topic being researched without compromising the integrity of the research. The audience can also play an active role in which the reader can be stimulated and motivated by the thought-provoking social phenomenon with elicitation (Ellis, 2004). Supporters of auto-ethnographers believe that research presented by the active participant is as valuable as being the observing participant. The belief is that one’s story can provide compelling information that can create change (Patterson, 2014). Autoethnographic writing can facilitate communication when traditional ways of communication are insufficient – when haptic knowledge itself pushes against the boundaries of language (Scarles and Sanderson, 2016; Zabulioniene and Panskūniene, 2021).

Thus, the autobiography method used in this study allows the author to talk about the wider social context through personal reflections - in this case, the researcher uses the placetelling method to talk about his lived experience of telling the history of the city. The researcher has become a research participant and describes how he experiences his city and is in it. Therefore, as the results of study there are presented the reflective story of self experience.

When reflecting yourself

Thus, the presented personal reflections reveal thinking about the links between culture and nature, about the placetelling and what does the river mean for a person individually, how a person experiences a river and how he understands what the creators of the event want to tell him, what it is through the story.

2022 is an extraordinary year for MY city (MY - I write with pride). In 2022 Kaunas is the cultural capital of Europe. Various events have been taking place since January, where the organizers invite guests from Lithuania and Europe together with Kaunas to experience a personal transformation in the trilogy of the Myth of Contemporary Kaunas with the motto "From temporary to modern". The three weekend programs are Uprising (January 19-23, 2022), SANTAKA (May 20-22, 2022) and AGREEMENT (November 25-27, 2022). The second event of the trilogy, the reflection of which is presented here, took place on May 21. as the moment of the awakening of the mythical beast of Kaunas.

This event took place in one of the most important (in my opinion) places of the city of Kaunas - Kaunas confluence, where the two most important and largest

ivers of Lithuania - Nemunas and Neris - meet. In preparation for the event, on my way to work, I kept seeing how the city was preparing for the celebration, setting up huge floodlights and stages along the river. As soon as we left, it started to rain. We have already experienced several walks in the rain, so we did not expect anything good. However, I wanted to see for myself what spectacle Kaunas had prepared for the citizens. On the way by trolleybus, it stopped raining. We walked towards Santaka and found a place for ourselves. There were many people. The best seats were already taken, so we stood at the edge, where we could still see something.

And it started. While I was looking at the scene ahead, I saw nothing to the left, and when I turned, small boats with torches were sailing down the river from there. So wonderful. Music played. Some musicians, singers - opera soloists, sang on stage, while others kept coming and going in those small boats. There was a lot of music, lights created with lasers and fire. The view was unique. I was very satisfied and did not regret coming at all. On the contrary, I was very happy. Then somehow I started thinking about the city, storytelling and rivers. As one of the most important places representing Kaunas, the two rivers of Kaunas were chosen for one of the most important events of the capital of culture. After all, it is a historical and cultural place. After all, Kaunas is also a city of Hanseatic merchants, a shipping port in the Middle Ages. Nemunas and Neris are the two largest rivers of Lithuania. And how the story was told to the townspeople using the rivers. When the stage for most of the actors was the river. Directly. Not only as a scene on the water, but also chosen for action. Like what comes down the river to the city and fills/fills its life. That which comes and goes, or stays with everything. How rivers create a city's history. It was a great impression for me as a placetelling of the city. And I was very proud of my city, its space, the creators of the event, the ideas of this and other events held in the city. Kaunas EU Capital is something wonderful. Grateful to everyone. How much culture was brought to the city and how many personalities and stories of Kaunas were used and told. It ignited a greater interest and love for my city. I wanted to get to know him even more through history, events, personalities, storytelling. Experience what stories the city, rivers and its environment tell us. Such a wonderful idea to use the river as a resource, as a resource. After all, she is the resource of our city. Both physical and spiritual.

River, water has a special meaning for me. I always come to Nemunas to spend time with him. to talk When hard and easy. When it's sunny or dark. I call Nemunas my father, sometimes my friend. But more like a father, a guardian. That's how I feel about him. Water has a special meaning for me in my life. I have a deep connection with him. Therefore, the river is also full of my stories, personal stories. It absorbs everything that is bad, that you cannot solve, that you do not understand. And greater clarity emerges.



Fig. 2. The moments of SANTAKA, Kaunas - European Capital of Culture 2022
(photo author – Erika Zabulioniene).

Discussing Placetelling

Human and place identities, as Zonn (2020) argues, can be mutually constitutive and begin at the most organic level – the individual and his immediate environment. The most organic level—individual and small-scale—means that telling stories about one's interactions with places—self-defined place—is a valuable exercise in understanding their essential nature, which in turn can inform larger and more complex stories. This general approach is individual, phenomenological, unique,

and small-scale, although the possible goal is to connect these stories to broader constructs. Thus, the personal story presented in this way - by way of self-reflection - perfectly represents this thought of the scientist. Telling your story is a means of describing tangible reality, and it is almost universal. Indeed, Didion (1979) often quotes the idea “We tell ourselves stories to live” (p. 11). The stories told about inhabited places are innate, and the appeal of these stories is intriguing – a distinct and unique statement about the ways in which personal background, experiences, events, history and individual character are somehow expressed in the ways in which place is made (Zonn, 2020).

The presented story also reveals that landscape images (or natural object - the confluence of rivers in this case) reflect not only a person's worldview, but also shape a sense of place, and in doing so, a sense of self (Diaz-Moore, 2006) and a sense of belonging to a place. The concept of place attachment is a widely researched topic in several scientific fields and at different geographic scales. Place attachment has its roots in humanistic geography, where scholars such as Relph (1976), Tuan (1974, 1977) and Buttimer (1980) introduced the concept of "sense of place" to describe the emotional connection between an individual and a place. Van der Star and Hochstenbach (2022) investigate the attachment of residents to place, which we understand as the connection between individuals and their environment (Scannell and Gifford, 2010), and people as important are connected to their environment in many ways, as places take on personal meanings and become part of individuals' biographies (Fenster, 2005). Van der Star and Hochstenbach (2022) point out that an individual's biographies are actively shaped by the social, cultural and physical dimensions of place. At the core of place attachment is an emotional connection between a specific person and a specific place or a general type of place and its characteristics (Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001; Scannell and Gifford, 2014) which varies between individuals (Sandow and Lundholm, 2020). As a process, the concept of place meaning (Birnbaum et al., 2021), place attachment involves people's relationship with place that involves many senses and emotions (Relph, 2007; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). All of these are included in the concept of sense of place (Bugden and Stedman, 2019; Masterson et al., 2019). Although different definitions exist, attachment to place can be defined as: (positive) connection that develops between people and their environment, connecting people to local places through different dimensions – e.g. personal, community, and natural environmental contexts (Hummon, 1992; Low and Altman, 1992; Raymond et al., 2010). Raymond et al. (2010) developed a conceptual model of place attachment as a four-dimensional concept consisting of place identity, place dependence, social connection, and nature connection. Place identity refers to shared feelings about a particular place, both physical and symbolic, that contribute to who we are and how

we define ourselves. Place dependence includes the functional relationship between the place and the individual and place dependence, e.g. residence dependence, social connectedness is the social interaction between an individual and other people, such as a community, that results in a sense of belonging. Nature connection refers to the relationship between an individual and the physical environment in terms of clear natural features and implied meaning (e.g., the historical significance of a landscape).

Place attachment and the associated sense of belonging have been studied in a variety of contexts, from stable rural communities (Raymond et al., 2010) to rapidly changing urban neighborhoods (Brown et al., 2003; Pinkster, 2016). According to Blondin (2021), such attachment is usually understood as a positive relationship and can be expressed in various spatial dimensions, i.e. individuals can make connections with their neighborhood, village, city, province, state, etc. (Gustafson, 2014). According to Morris (2021), residents construct a narrative of preserving a sense of (rural) normality that has been lost elsewhere. Cities, on the contrary, become places of anonymity, deviation and disconnection from nature. According to Diaz-Moore, (2006), the primary connection of the city with the natural environment is important, and according to Pollice et al. (2020) the local community is considered a key and essential element in the development of strategies to strengthen local characteristics. So we see how everything is connected, both man, place and nature, where the community also has an important place. On the other hand, the emotional aspect of place attachment may go beyond place ties (Birnbaum et al., 2021). These include emotional anchors such as historical and cultural roots such as tradition and dialect, as well as imagination and individual sense of place (Relph, 2007). As Diaz-Moore (2006) argues, illustrating what makes places special requires understanding their ever-evolving qualities. For example, The Paleo Project in Fossil, Oregon, describes a place that is a center of learning but is actually a small, socially and economically depressed town eager to strengthen its self-esteem through a sense of local identity. This project embraces the uniqueness of the character of the place by incorporating valuable fossils left by nature. This allows the citizens of Fossil to embrace their unique endowment, which is essential to their local identity. Another example is about the city and the river - the city of Spokane's best times in America happened when its citizens cherished the river and its rich natural environment. The worst times came when they turned their backs on the river, believing that technological gimmicks, be it the railroad or the automobile, offered more freedom and comfort than a river in their backyard. Such an approach provides only the illusion of freedom (Diaz-Moore, 2006). Thus, in the case analyzed in this article, Placetelling provides pragmatic evidence for the importance of the territorial element (in this case the confluence of rivers) and

identity. Identity narratives and immersive narratives speak to places, which become important in defining a truly place-based narrative (Pollice et al., 2020). Speaking about the main symbol of this topic – water – we can notice how nicely other research analyzes different sides of its meaning to people. Rader (2021, p. 59-60) analyzes Alice Oswald's poems in her work „Poetic Mappings: Finding Water's "Sources" in Myths & Language“ and analyzes the meaning and stories of water for people, without which, according to the author, people could not even have become nations. Here's what she says: *„Alice Oswald's book-length poems of Dart and Memorial invite topographical and eco-critical readings. Oswald calls Dart a "sound-map," where (...) the natural world by granting water a voice whereby its poetic conventions shift along with the river's path and its role in human history. (...) Oswald underscores not only the human practice of naming and claiming waterways but polluting them. Both poems foreground the importance of waterways without which landmasses could not become nations (for which epics were written). However, the contemporary epic poems of Dart and Memorial subvert national narratives and highlight layers of history, which are more than allusions because they grant water voice and perspective in (re)telling the story of place and the human relationships to those specific sites. Oswald calls attention to waterways as place and "a pause in movement". Celebrating the endurance and potency of nature and its roots in silence and mythos, Oswald's waterways both define and transcend place“.*

Therefore, the aforementioned narratives are the direct expression of the daily life of local residents, representing the diversity of personal subjective experiences and stories, as local experiences, which are not static. Local identities are like a symbolic and relational complex, which can be understood through the double dimension of sense of belonging (to the local community) and mutual recognition (among members of the local community). On the other hand, narratives that recreate the sense of belonging and heritage of local community members can create compelling narratives (Briguglio, 1995). Engaging narratives explore local history through in-depth knowledge of the tangible and intangible assets present in the area; and share emotions and engaging and original experiences with the local community. In this presented case, cultural features and location help to draw attention to the conscious and experiential use of one's territory.

Concluding remarks

The presented personal reflections reveal thinking about the links between culture and nature, about the placetelling and what does the river means for as person individually, how a person experiences a river and how he understands what the creators of the event want to tell him, what it is through the story. And how this story makes a person proud of his/her city, find his/her identity and feel part of the urban community through it. As Larsen and Wijesuriya (2017) states, cultural sites “adding” natural values to their equation, or vice versa, natural sites recognizing cultural values and attributes without necessarily questioning the respective heritage categories as such. The “synergy approach” does not question the divide between nature and culture, yet suggests that there is room for cross-fertilization and synergy building between the two heritage sectors. According to researchers, as we recognize the massive power and transformative potential of the heritage complex, can such energy be shifted from displacement to empowerment, from disconnection towards interlinkages to wider cultural and natural landscape integrity. It is also important to emphasize how Pretty and Pilgrim (2008) note that time spent in direct contact with nature improves psychological health and well-being, as well as increases levels of physical activity. However, disconnection leads to feelings of biophobia and fear of the outdoors, perceiving that it is a wild and unfamiliar environment. This disappearance of experience seems to create a new lost generation, disconnected from any place and unable to feel an innate relationship with nature. As Diaz-Moore (2006) argues, stories can be made of resource-rich places of genius, but human settlements often operate to extract rather than sustain, thus you need to see your location as a gift.

Therefore, the presented theoretical insights and shared empirical experience reveal the understanding that the value of the place is created and conveyed through stories, and creators here are not only the community, but also each community member can personally recognize and recover, when creating the own development project around it. The presented case of placetelling shows how it can manifest itself in the most unexpected way: how smartly and unexpectedly culture and nature can be combined, and what an indelible experience can be created for a person, a community, a city/place.

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Sustainable Bio-business: What Are Key Indicators?

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Abstract

The relevance and the problem of the research: researchers are interested in the issue of sustainable bio-businesses: bio-business models are analyzed; perspectives of the sustainable bio-business are investigated; the importance of sustainability is emphasized. Sustainable bio-business is important because it is supporting sustainable income growth, opening up new markets, creating new jobs and helping to do deal with climate change challenges.

Object: sustainable bio-business

Purpose: to determine the key issues of sustainable bio-business.

Research methods: the research is based on the analysis, synthesis, systematization and comparison of scientific literature, statistical data and documents.

Main results: it can be stated that the essence of sustainable bio-business is the consideration of social, economic and environmental aspects. There is a strong focus on avoiding waste altogether and turning it into high-quality secondary resources, which will require a well-functioning secondary market.

Key words: bio-business, sustainability, sustainable bio-business

1. INTRODUCTION

The world's fossil resources are not infinite, so as the world's population is growing and the external business environment is changing, new production methods that do not exceed the ecological capabilities of the planet are needed. Thus, in order to meet the current and future needs of the population of the growing world, it is necessary to increase the production of agricultural products, to provide a product with higher added value and to diversify activities, so that a large part of the added value does not go to processors, intermediaries, representatives of companies' retail chains, since in most cases farmers do not produce final products themselves, but only grow biomass. The modern farmer faces many challenges that must be managed: climate change, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, meeting of changing consumer needs, investing in productivity, assessing changes in the global economy, etc. More diverse activities will require more careful management and consideration of sustainable agricultural bio-business.

Sustainable bio-businesses and traditional bio-business are widely considered in the scientific literature, but there is no unified definition of bio-business. Synonyms of sustainable bio-business are such as organic bio-business, agri-bio business, agricultural bio-business, green bio-business can be found in

research papers (Ronzon, T., Sanjuan, A., I., 2020; Lovric, M., et. All., 2020). Sustainable bio-business concepts are presented in Figure 1.

Author	Concept
Leipold and Petit – Boix, 2018	The term sustainable bio-business refers to a business involving the use of biological processes in the energy, forestry, agricultural industries.
Toppinen et al., 2017	Businesses that apply scientific, green and technological principles based on biological agents are considered to be sustainable bio-businesses.
Heijman, 2016	Sustainable bio-business is understood as a sector of organic production.
Motte et al., 2019	Biotechnological progress that helps solving a global problems as part of bioeconomy.
Maunula et al., 2013	Sustainable bio-business is an independent part of the bio-sector (circular bio-economy), where businesses turn natural resources into primary goods.
Raveendran et al., 2019	Sustainable biotechnology applied to agricultural process.

Figure 1. Concepts of sustainable bio-business

After systematizing the definitions of different authors, it was observed that sustainable bio-business is inseparable from various biological processes that take place in social, economic, and ecological dimensions.

Sustainable bio-business not only creates value for stakeholders, but also takes into account of environmental aspects (Ferasso, M., Beliaeva, T., Kraus, S., et al., 2020). They are based on a "positive value cycle", i.e. reusing end-of-life goods or materials in the production cycle. Products are designed ecologically, manufactured using renewable or recycled resources or waste from other sectors, reused, repaired, improved and finally recycled (Donner, M., Gohier, R., de Vries, H., 2020). Sustainable bio-business models have been developed to incorporate sustainability principles and sustainable development goals - to enable companies to respond to sustainability issues and address excessive waste generation (Horvath, B., Khazami, N., Ymeri, P., et al., 2019). Sustainable bio-businesses are an alternative to traditional agriculture practices, horticulture, and animal husbandry; includes areas related to environmental protection, improvement of plant properties by biotechnological methods, reduction of chemical fertilizers on farms, etc.

2. METHODOLOGY

Topical issues related to business development are investigated in this work. The theoretical part is based on the analysis of scientific publications, the situation of different European countries is analyzed too.

Research purpose: the methodology is designed to determine the essential indicators of sustainable biobusinesses.

Research object: indicators of sustainable bio-business.

Research tasks:

1. To distinguish three main groups of indicators.
2. To find indicators for each group of indicators.

The methodology provides which criteria must be considered when assessing sustainability indicators: excluded ecologically, economically and socially sustainable bio-business (FAO (2020); Bohme ir kt., 2016; De Corato ir kt., 2018; Alexieva-Nikolova ir kt., 2021). Sustainable bio-business indicators are presented in Figure 2.

Ecologically sustainable biobusiness	Resource usage	Pesticides; Energy; Water; Nutrients
	Quality of natural resources	Soil quality; Water quality; Air quality
	Biodiversity	Genetic diversity; Variety of species; Habitat
Economically sustainable biobusiness	Performance and efficiency	Labor productivity; Productivity of capital; Land productivity; Efficiency
	Profitability	Labor profitability; Return on equity; Return on assets
Socially sustainable biobusiness	Internal social sustainability	Professional pride; The latitude of the solution; Supervision
	External social sustainability	Animal health and body condition score; Prosperity; Landscaping; Social services
	Disposable income	All income (earned on or off the farm)
	Entrepreneurship	The scale of a farmer's entrepreneurship based on three main aspects: vision, strategy and management

Figure 2. Sustainable bio-business indicators

Sustainability in sustainable bio-business must be ensured in every dimension: economic, social, environmental:

In the social aspect - ensured by improving working conditions, increasing the attractiveness of work, increasing work productivity;

In the economic aspect - by increasing the economic efficiency (improving productivity, production quality, etc.), reducing the cost of production;

In the ecological aspect - environmental protection, applying complex measures to reduce air, water and soil pollution.

3. RESULTS

Although the situation varies from country to country, the EU's main goal is to create a strong basic food supply level, especially in the face of a pandemic, conserving natural resources, developing sustainable growth, adaptation and innovation to bio-based economy. New, innovative biotechnologies and their development encourage the use of renewable biological resources in production and the conversion of them into innovative, sustainable and promising industrial products at competitive prices. Other EU strategies aim to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services worldwide. To promote changes in production,

the EU is developing programs that are expected to encourage to develop sustainable bio-business.

Although the added value is different, all European countries, more or less, are developing sustainable bio-business. Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain generated 64% of the total EU bioeconomy value added in recent years, but when evaluating a more sustainable bio-business, it can be seen that half of France bio-businesses are sustainable (European Commission, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021.). This shows that there is not one single sustainable bio-business model in Europe but several models adapted to local contexts. The Figure 3 shows how many companies are doing sustainable bio-business in each country.

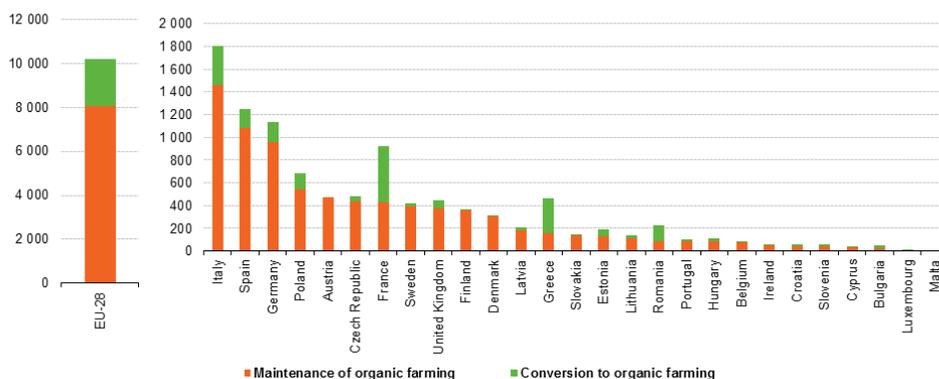


Figure 3. Sustainable bio-business in EU

As can be seen, the sustainable bio-business situation in different countries is different, but there is no doubt that sustainable bio-business has perspectives. Sustainability in bio-business must be ensured in every dimension: economic, social, environmental (Figure 4).

Ecologically sustainable biobusiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - operates in a stable agroecosystem that ensures 1) optimized production, i.e. optimized natural resources (soil, water); 2) maximally closed physical and biological cycles; 3) maximally maintained biological diversity. - operates at the highest level of eco-efficiency, based on the principle of "producing more from less", meaning it adds maximum value using a minimum number of resources and having a minimum impact on the environment. - maximizes the positive impact on the environment.
Economically sustainable biobusiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximizes the added value, should at least be sufficient to compensate the incurred costs. - productive production, maximum productivity. - reduces the risk of agricultural activity; e.g., a change in the interest rate or a sudden drop in price does not stop the activity.
Socially sustainable biobusiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social inclusion, which includes sufficient farmers' right to livelihood, income, health, work and good working conditions, education. - maintaining the identity, which allows the farmer to live according to his values, but the norms of society. - social capital, which creates a broad base of social support for agriculture.

Figure 4. Ecological, economical, and social sustainability

Ecologically sustainable bio-business. The improvement of food processing methods makes it possible to minimize the amount of waste generated during production by using bio-raw materials processing methods. One of such methods is biorefining, which can extract valuable products from agro-raw materials. After squeezing the juice from the berries, valuable pomace remains, which is often thrown away. Such pomace could be used not only in the production of fertilizers. For example, after pressing black currants, 40 percent of dry materials remains in the pulp. From these valuable materials micro components could be extracted by the biorefining method (OECD, 2018; Pieroni, 2019).

Economically sustainable bio-business. The implementation of bio-waste collection usually requires investment, but an economic benefit analysis in Germany showed that the economic results related to waste management are positive if the entire waste management system is optimized. In Germany, an average of 64% of municipal bio-waste is collected. The system collects organic and paper waste separately from other residues. Additionally installed dry fermentation biogas plant processes 10 million tons of food and garden waste per year, which produces 2050 MWh of electricity per year and 9 million tons of compost and generates heat. If all European countries developed such a model, it would be possible to collect 52 million tons of biological waste, which is currently not collected (Kirchher ir kt., 2017; Lovric ir kt., 2020).

The development of bio-businesses can help discover new opportunities to provide food, goods and energy without depleting the limited biological resources of the planet - turning algae into fuel, recycling plastic, making furniture or clothes from waste and producing organic fertilizers from industrial wastewater (Matiuti ir kt., 2017).

Consumers of biological products all over the world are demanding better quality products, and this is becoming one of the main challenges for bio businesses. In order to achieve quality and adapt to market needs, a development strategy based on innovation, quality, and added value is needed (Motte ir kt., 2019).

Socially sustainable bio-business. Different types of biomass can be used in biorefining: perennial grasses, starchy plants, sugarcane, crops, primary lignocellulose and related residues, oil, microalgae, seaweed and waste and can be used to extract food flavourings, functional foods, feed, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food products, phytosanitary drugs, bioplastics, lubricants, detergent enzymes and other biomaterials. It is important to make proper use of local resources, for example, in regions where medicinal herbs are abundant, to create medicinal products with high added value from them; in regions where there is a lot of food waste, to grow insects from which animal fat can be obtained; in regions where hemp is abundant, use it for the production of building materials. Such proper utilization of local resources ensures sustainability and creates an opportunity to offer new products to consumers and creates jobs (Pieroni, 2019; European Commission, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021).

In a general sense, the concept of sustainable bio-business includes (Figure 5):

1. Environmental criteria (ecology, animal welfare, etc.).
2. Economic criteria (profit, added value, growth, etc.).
3. Social criteria (workplaces, safety, ethics, etc.)

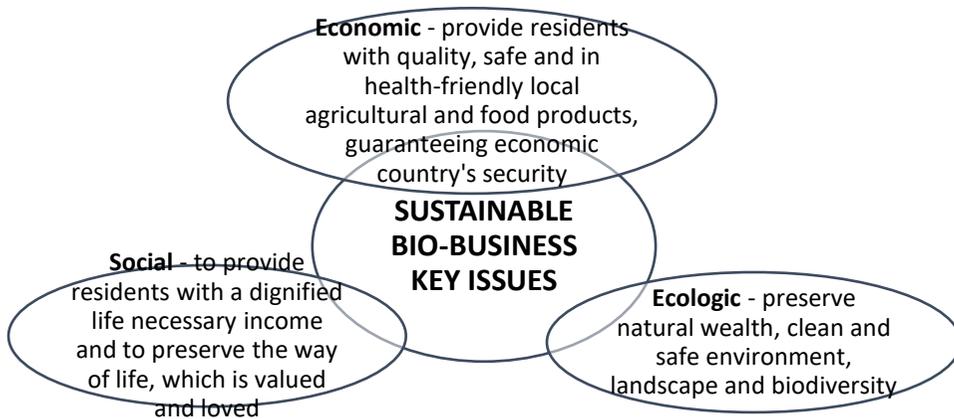


Figure 5. Key issues of sustainable bio-business

Sustainable bio-businesses are strongly influenced by global competition, high waste emissions, changing markets, low digital skills of the population, underdeveloped infrastructure and other challenges, especially the inability to exploit the available potential. Another big problem is that there are not enough food industries in rural areas to process plant or animal products. And when there are no attractive jobs in the region, young people choose to work in the city (Bittante ir kt., 2015; Poteko ir kt., 2019).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Bio-businesses can be developed through innovative business models that respect the principles of social, economic and environmental aspects: they aim for sustainability, efficient use of resources, and are formed through social, environmental and economic factors.

It has been found that the impact of sustainable production on added value, production amount from bio-waste, lack of effective management mechanisms in shaping the development of sustainable products have been increasing. Also, the aim of the sustainable bio-business model is for companies to respond to sustainability issues and address excessive waste generation.

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Spontaneous Learning Spaces in Architectural Education

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Abstract

The paper presents the methodology and results of the architectural programs developed at Széchenyi István University (SZE) in Győr, Hungary. It is well known that spontaneous educational spaces can be created anywhere, whether in the built or natural environment. In order to take advantage of this, the university has designed programs that allow students to independently recognize the unique qualities of their surroundings and actively engage with them. Hidden, concealed, or under-appreciated spaces (e.g. parking slabs, building gaps, shady nooks, rooftops, staircases) are experimentally re-imagined and used to create installations and artworks. The scale and use of materials depend on location, funding opportunities, and theme. Regardless of the objects' dimensions, each ephemeral artistic gesture adds an unconventional cultural layer to its natural or human-made context. The study also highlights the fact that in contemporary times, traditional places of knowledge are being re-evaluated, and for today's generation, discourse-based, practical, and experiential education outside of the traditional classroom has gained significance. This highlights the need for further experimentation and perspectives on the design of unconventional spontaneous cultural spaces and events, considering their great potential to effectively work together with the variety of experiences offered by modern learning tools.

Key words: Architectural education, Spontaneous educative spaces, Cultural and social activities, Ephemeral spatial experiments, Creative process

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Introduction

After the COVID-19 pandemic and the urge to adapt educational spaces to a more dynamic and loose space, it became clear the need of developing modern tools for learning and teaching apart from traditional schooling. In this context, it is also important to understand how the physical area of a classroom became a limited resource that no longer could embrace the new methodologies and approaches to contemporary learning. The use of unconventional educational spaces aligned with modern tools has the potential to enhance learning, stimulate creativity and give support for activities that improve cultural exchange and strengthen social connections among students, professors, the community, and the natural and built environment.

The development of innovative types of learning — more interactive, informal, and social — is challenging a conventional lecture theatre, seminar room and specialist lab arrangement. New technologies are interacting with physical space to suggest different kinds of blended and hybrid relationships. (Boys, 2014, p.95)

In Győr, more specifically in the Széchenyi István University (SZE) campus, the city and its natural sources are used as the main context for developing ephemeral spatial experiments by architecture students and visitors during the whole year. While experiencing a certain site, the students are stimulated by their professors and instructors to use the informal spaces as a classroom, inhabiting it, and, consequently, being bound to it. From this connection comes a general raise of awareness about their responsibility towards the city as an invitation to protect it.

Places and landscapes are fluid and multi-layered. They enmesh individual and community sentiment, experiences, conceptual ownerships, emplacement and a lived and variously engaged environment into a complex concept of identity and belonging. They are formed and expressed through the interaction of people, places and things, grounded in ideas, memories, histories, beliefs and values. (Harrington, 2014, p.311)

Therefore, the group becomes a powerful protection resource for the city's heritage and memory while individually they improve their sense of belonging to the local community. Győr, then, becomes a whiteboard where students can "paint, write and perform" their own story, in a respectful and assisted way, merging the complexity of time and space in the image of public, semi-public, private buildings and in the cityscape.

By showcasing the programs – *Creative Week*, *Talent Day*, *Design-Lab*, and *Mokka-Camp* – created collaboratively by several departments of the Széchenyi István University of Győr, the paper shows possibilities of how to instigate students to develop their on-site skills and practical knowledge while performing ephemeral spatial experiments. These are meaningful programs for the university; they

deliberate an unusual and spontaneous atmosphere of change, with an open and safe environment for promoting creativity while allowing the student to effectively work with existing scenarios on campus and around Győr's urban fabric.

This paper is structured in two parts supported by a literature review. It starts with an understanding of the ephemeral spatial experiments: what they are, where they can be placed by the students, how they can be organized in 4 different typologies, and some of the emotions they arise in their authors and their users. The second part addresses the spontaneous educative spaces one can find on the SZE campus during the main showcased programs. It begins with a brief description of Győr and the university's area of influence and is followed by the main information about these events. To conclude, there is a discussion about the interventions' cultural and social values and outlooks for further papers.

1. Ephemeral Spatial Experiments

1.1 The Installations

The ephemeral spatial experiments done by the architecture students investigated in this article can be found on many different scales, consisting of installations, artworks, etc. that temporarily appear in the cityscape, or on the built environment, occupying spots where their existence was not foreseen. These interventions have a transient character, in other words, it has a limited lifetime; they can last hours, days, weeks, or even years. There is also a common sense of uncontrolled time, meaning that the object's existence can be affected directly by environmental conditions as well as human interaction. As a consequence, there is no guaranteed preservation of the pieces during their display.

The tools and materials used may vary according to the location, theme, proposal, and funding opportunities. In general, there is a wide exploration of each component's materiality by combining their plasticity and aesthetic features (e.g. textures, colors, patterns, shapes) with their physical potentials, such as bending, folding, cutting, wrapping, etc., while concurrently dealing with the material availability. Even though the resources might be limited, "elements that are moveable, flexible or malleable can be appropriated, for example, chairs or plants, but also parts of ruins or junk left behind in abandoned spaces. These provide tools that assist in active, bodily exploration of new actions" (Karen, 2017, p.9).

It is also noteworthy to realize that ephemeral spatial experiments do not necessarily need to come with a function. It is free experimentation in a collaborative and creative process. Within this context, the possibility of independent space appropriation by the students and their target group can already add a new cultural layer to the re-imagined space. The project will stimulate actions not intended for those locations; old and new activities merge harmonically and dynamically, bringing a series of unexpected interactions. The students, then, can unfold future discussions about the project occupants' behavior, as well as their role in the whole experiment.

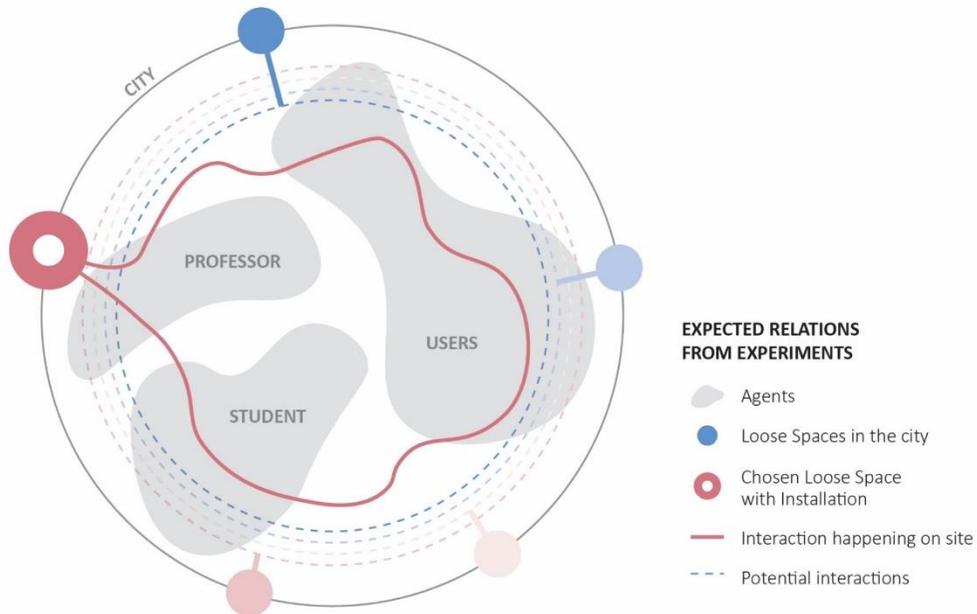


Fig. 1 Diagram illustrating the expected relation between the agents involved in the experiment.

1.2 Re-imagined spaces

As Karen (2017) defines in her book, numerous spaces can be found throughout the city, from more constraining and private ones - that can have numerous rules to control people's behavior and freedom of choice - to more public areas:

"Cities are composed of a great variety of place types. Between the more constraining ones, the private and enclosed places of the city (houses, apartment buildings, office towers, shops, churches, libraries), lie public spaces, often outdoors where definitions and expectations are less exclusive and more fluid, offering greater accessibility and freedom of choice for people to pursue a variety of activities. These are the breathing spaces of city life, offering opportunities for exploration and discovery, for the unexpected, the unregulated, the spontaneous, and the risky." (p.2-3)

Keeping that in mind, the sites chosen as case studies for each experiment are part of a loose space in the built or natural environment. For instance, "sidewalks and plazas are typically both more physically open and subject to less control and regulation, thus offering more freedom of choice of what to do, where, and when." (Karen, 2017, p.2). The freedom these loose areas offer activates them as an attractive spot for further experimentation. Similarly, building entrance halls, staircases, parks, vacant lots, and hidden, concealed, or under-appreciated areas

(parking lots, building gaps, shady nooks, rooftops) can be experimentally explored by the architecture students during their practical exercises.

The reimagined space can have a former assigned use, for example, a designed outdoor public space where other activities are expected to happen. Or it may not have any specific function, such as leftover spaces, but they share something in common, "loose spaces allow for the chance encounter, the spontaneous event, the enjoyment of diversity, and the discovery of the unexpected." (Karen, 2017, p.4). As Ward (2003) argues, "people constitute places even as they move within them; people and their bodies, are not self-contained, but rather a merging occurs, place flows" (p.85).



Fig. 2 Diagram showcasing loose spaces in the city.

1.3 Memory, Imagination, and Belonging

The brief occupation of urban space with ephemeral spatial experiments has several potentials linked to users' interpretations and feelings. This happens as a result of the way people interact with the space and how they feel about it. As the students' interventions covered in this paper are artistic, architectural, or urban works, they have the "power to unite and separate us, to make us belong to a shared reality, or feel rejected and isolated. They utilize our mental capacities of mirroring, empathy, and identification. Consciously and unconsciously, we internalize atmospheres, moods, and human situations and fates" (Pallasmaa, 2021, p.82).

The capability of improving local social and cultural dynamics is intrinsically connected to the way these experiments affect their users. They create fresh memories, evoking new and old feelings of belonging. “People hold past places of belonging in their minds through memory and hold future places of belonging in their minds through imagination” (Ward, 2003, p.88). “Identity, whether personal or group, is created through engagement with particular places in a landscape, and through recognizing and understanding the semiotics that may constitute the meanings associated with these places” (Harrington, 2014, p.309). This practice becomes an engine that can encourage social engagement, inspire people, connect residents to their neighborhoods, and even urge local protection while addressing vitality in a specific area.

Culture, place, community, and identity are not given but are constituted and can be understood as fluid and relational. Place and identity are imbued with cultural meaning and fundamentally involved with bodily experience, remembering, and imagination. [...] Hence the desire to protect something is as implicated with ensuring the future as it is with maintaining the past. (Harrington, 2014, p.308)

The call for protection comes from the understanding that “the past is continually recreated in the present, and in its transformation and emergence gives sense to the future.” (Harrington, 2014, p.7). Not only in terms of heritage preservation but also related to daily concerns in the routine of a city, these projects have the potential to call our attention to marginalized areas and address important issues, such as the cleanliness of public spaces, the nighttime lighting sources, safety impressions, and so on. When approaching ruins with experimental projects, for instance, “these intimations and the air of decay together invite a kind of reverie, offering an invitation to imagine what this place could be” (Karen, 2017, p.8).

Ephemeral spatial experiments can have a significant impact on the way people interact with and feel about urban spaces. They evoke emotions, create new memories, and improve people's sense of belonging to a community. These interventions also have the potential to call attention to important issues and inspire people to take action to improve their local community. Through this process, the students can gain a deeper understanding of their role as architects and urban designers in shaping and impacting the built environment and the people who inhabit it.

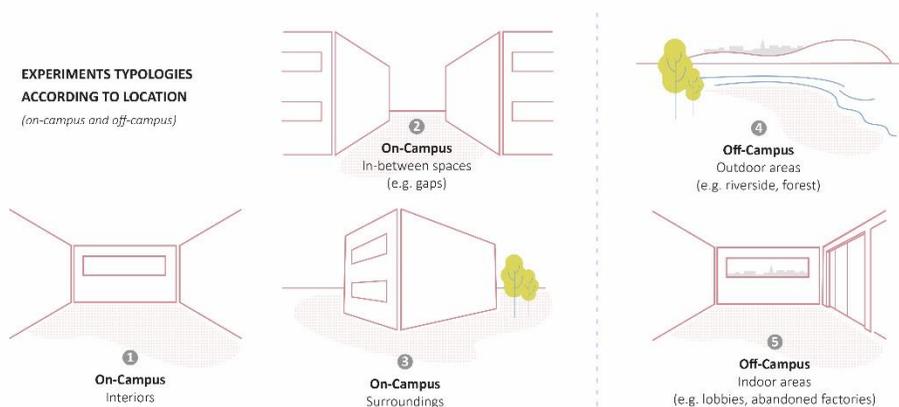


Fig. 3 Experiments typologies according to location

Additionally, the ephemeral nature of these experiments allows for a sense of freedom and experimentation in the design process, giving students the opportunity to push boundaries and test new ideas without the pressure of permanent consequences. This approach encourages creativity and innovation, and helps students develop a unique perspective on design and architecture.

Furthermore, by using the city and its natural sources as the main context for these experiments, students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the built environment and the natural world. They learn to design in harmony with the existing environment and to consider the impact of their designs on the surrounding ecosystem. In conclusion, ephemeral spatial experiments can have a significant impact on architectural design education by providing students with opportunities to experiment with new ideas, gain a deeper understanding of the built environment and its relationship to the natural world, and develop a sense of responsibility towards the community and the environment. It is a valuable tool to foster creativity, innovation and a sense of belonging to the local community.

2. Spontaneous Educative Spaces

2.1 Széchenyi István University Campus, Győr, Hungary

Győr is a city located in northwest Hungary, situated between the capitals of Vienna, Austria, and Budapest, Hungary. The city is well-known for its water sources, including the confluence of the Danube River and the Rába River. The main campus of the Széchenyi István University (SZE) is centrally located in Győr, near its historic center and surrounded by natural resources such as forests, rivers, and lakes. The university has a close relationship with the local government, which allows staff and students to use spaces around the city as case studies during their

experimentation. For example, in 2022, the Creative Week event used the riverbank in the city center as the location for ephemeral artworks created by the students.

The SZE campus is a unique educational and cultural environment that is integrated into the urban fabric of the city. Since the establishment of architecture education, it has been a tradition at the university to use the entire campus area for architectural education outside of formal classrooms and workshops. This approach to learning emphasizes creativity and cooperation and allows students to actively engage in the design process and become aware of their own individual development. The Architect's Atelier, built in 2008, is a physical embodiment of this approach and encourages equal and free communication between students and university lecturers. The flexibility of spaces on campus is still an important aspect of the university's teaching methodology.

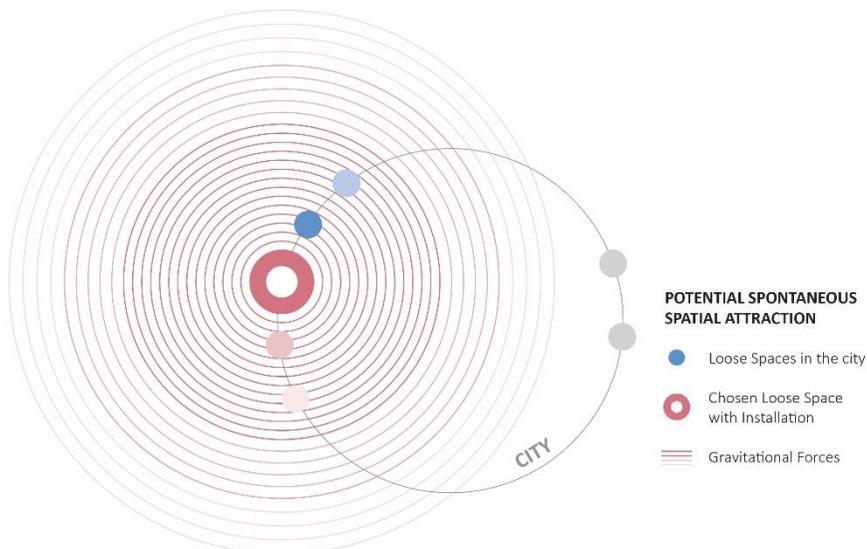


Fig. 4 Potential spontaneous spatial attraction

2.2 Experimental Programs

The university's architecture program offers a range of experimental programs throughout the year, including Creative Week, Talent Day, Design Lab, and Mokka-Camp. These programs are designed to provide opportunities for students (SZE students from bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. levels) to practice architectural design thinking in real-world settings, both on and off campus. On the other hand, the Mokka-Camp happens during holidays, when the campus is open to younger primary school children.

2.2.1 Creative Week

The Creative Week is an annual event for architecture students, where they collaborate with lecturers and students from universities of architecture in Hungary and abroad to create temporary installations in various locations throughout the city. These installations serve as metaphorical representations of architectural ideas and are integrated into the city's cultural landscape. The locations vary from popular urban spaces to abandoned industrial buildings in need of regeneration.

2.2.2 Talent Day

The Talent Day is a scientific program for all students at the university who are working on scientific research. This program is part of the national scientific conference series and is also a part of the university's own ceremony. It is a field day showcasing the scientific and artistic research of university students. On this occasion, students create installations in the central space inside the campus. These installations, made of reusable materials, are designed to communicate scientific concepts. It is unique in that it involves not only architecture students, but also students from other disciplines at the university, who can also participate in the making process.

2.2.3 Design Lab

The Design Lab is an interactive multidisciplinary student research project in which architecture students create experimental sites. Students from various disciplines collaborate to explore design possibilities and create innovative solutions.

2.2.4 Mokka-Camp

Architectural Space House hosts a summer architecture camp that introduces the youngest students to the fundamentals of architectural thinking. Creative projects on a variety of scales are produced, including for example indoor artworks and land-art installations in the woods near the university.

2.3 *Spontaneous educative spaces and the traditional schooling*

The use of spontaneous educative spaces and modern tools in architectural design education can provide a new approach to learning and teaching that goes beyond traditional schooling methods. It allows students to actively engage with the environment and their surroundings, stimulating creativity and encouraging social interactions with their peers, professors, and the community. This approach can also promote a sense of responsibility towards the city and its heritage, as well as enhance the students' sense of belonging to the local community.

The programs mentioned above, Creative Week, Talent Day, Design-Lab, and Mokka-Camp, are examples of how the Széchenyi István University of Győr uses the city and its natural resources as a context for developing ephemeral spatial experiments. These programs provide students with the opportunity to work on

projects that are meaningful to the university and the community, while promoting creativity and innovation in a safe and open environment.

In conclusion, the use of spontaneous educative spaces in architectural design education can provide students with a more dynamic and hands-on learning experience, while also promoting the preservation of the city's heritage and culture. Further research is needed to fully understand the potential benefits and impact of this approach on architectural education and the community.

In comparing more conservative educational approaches to the use of spontaneous spaces for education, it is possible to realize the differences between a solid hierarchical system – that exists in the conventional classroom with a strong frontal spatial disposition – and the dismantlement of this system into more fluid and flat spatial structures during the design process of these experiments.

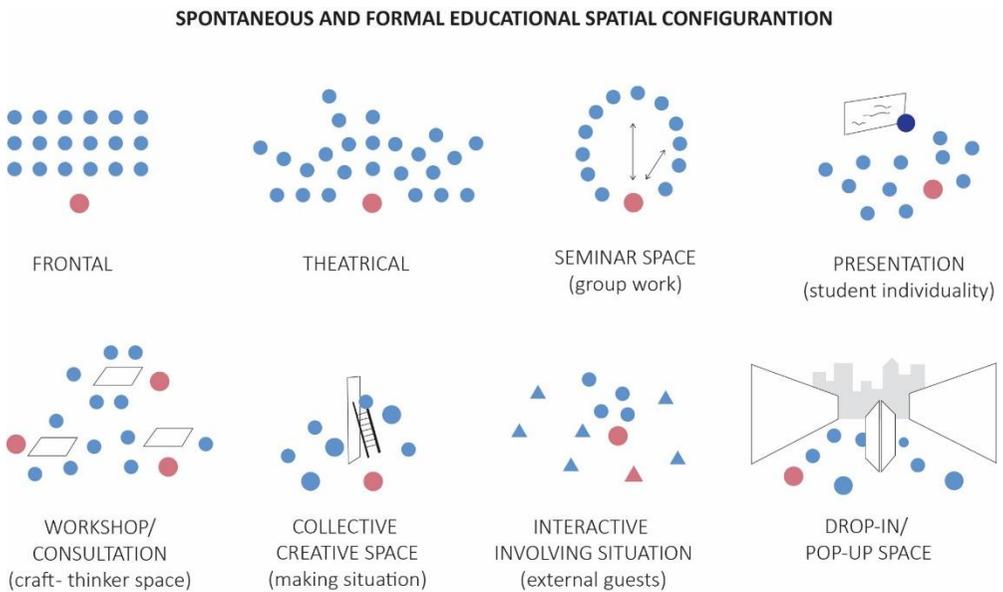


Fig. 5 Possibilities of learning spatial disposition.

In general, these ephemeral projects have the potential of transforming other unconventional areas into educative creative spaces as well. It happens to accommodate different activities that are being developed during the design process of each experiment. Activities such as gathering in small groups, discussing the on-site experiences, making models, using different software to do site simulations, and presenting the final idea need different types of spaces. These support areas do not necessarily need to be in the same place as the experiment, they can take place in other loose spaces in the city, or even in formal learning spaces. Once the students change the environment – they reunite back in the traditional classroom, for

example, or they go to parking lots to do woodwork –, it is the leader’s role to arrange the best spatial disposition to create an atmosphere that allows the intended activity to happen, stimulating participation and interaction.

“As space is part of the didactic arsenal of any educator, a better understanding of the relationship between creative functions and space types [personal space, collaboration space, presentation space, making space, transition space] may help educators to align their particular classroom designs to their students’ needs in the creative process (Thoring et al.,2012, p.6).

Additional to the unusual educational scenario, the flexible work atmosphere leaves room for individual and group expression and performance that once before was not allowed inside traditional learning places. It happens because “in public we can escape the constraints which are typically connected with known social positions and roles or with smaller communities where residents know each other” (Karen, 2017, p.5). In this progressive education method, the members have equal importance while supported by their tutors who can loosely change from a leadership position to colleague assistance.

It is also remarkable to note that ephemeral experiences are strongly connected to their location and conditioning. They are the final product of specific *stimuli* undergone by their creators in a certain period, in an empirical process. That being said, transferring the installation to another area in the city may affect its meaning and purpose. Sometimes it is not even possible to change these elements to an enclosed condition due to their dimensions that cannot fit in the constraints of the physical private space, for example. The potential of using also the urban fabric for developing experiments resides in being able to develop interventions on any scale, unconstrained by spatial limitations.

The temporary character and the possibility of reaching a greater number of people give ephemeral interventions an unpredictable atmosphere just like the experimentation itself. But it is essential to notice that spatial configuration can change in both cases, depending on the professor’s approach to the learning space.

TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING	SPONTANEOUS EDUCATIVE SPACES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong Hierarchy - Specific expected behavior - More Individual-based learning - Space Limitations - School opening hours - Natural light resources (openings) - Limited target group (restrict access) - Controlled environment - Allows different spatial configuration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fluid Hierarchy - Freedom of expression - Collaborative learning process - No spatial boundaries - Environmental limitations - Public access - Temporary character - No assurance of continuity - Allows different spatial configuration

Table I: Comparative between traditional schooling and spontaneous educative spaces.

To sum up, the use of spontaneous educative spaces in the traditional schooling system offers a number of benefits, including the ability to promote creativity and collaboration, the ability to adapt to different learning styles, and the ability to expose students to different types of spaces and environments. However, it is important to note that these spaces are not without their limitations, and it is up to the educator to make the most of them by arranging the best spatial disposition for the intended activity. Additionally, ephemeral experiences are closely tied to their location and conditions, and transferring them to another area may affect their meaning and purpose. Ultimately, the use of spontaneous educative spaces in traditional schooling can provide a unique and valuable learning experience for students, as long as it is approached in a thoughtful and intentional manner.

Conclusion

As a result, the use of spontaneous educative spaces in architectural education gives unique circumstances and experiences for developing projects, on any scale, from big to small interventions, that will help students to flourish with a more critical eye for the site challenges and opportunities. The unpredictability of inhabiting these spaces leads to a more creative and free approach to spatial experiments. It helps the development of resourceful competencies, such as resilience and sensitivity to local conflicts. Also, working collaboratively helps with networking, strengthening social connections, and developing communication skills that will support the student in a long term during their professional life.

Cultural and social activities – whether organised festivals, events or just day-to-day recreational experiences and practices – not only enhance community identity, but reinforce the closely intertwined relationship of the community with the broader environment, both natural and constructed. (Harrington, 2014, p.312).

In conclusion, the use of spontaneous educative spaces in architectural education offers unique opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking, creativity and collaboration skills. These ephemeral projects have the potential to transform unconventional spaces into creative and educative areas, accommodating the spectrum of activities that are necessary for the design process. The temporary nature of these projects provides an unpredictable atmosphere that encourages experimentation and innovation.

The programs such as Creative Week, Talent Day, Design-Lab and Mokka-Camp provide valuable experiences that not only benefit the students but also the local community. These programs foster feelings of belonging and identity, promoting cultural and social activities that enhance community identity and strengthen the relationship between the community and the environment.

However, it is important to note that these types of educational experiences are limited when compared to traditional academic days. It is crucial for educators to understand the importance of incorporating spontaneous educative spaces into their curriculum, and for architectural programs to investigate the daily activities proposed by each professor in order to further promote experimentation and contemporary perspectives in the design of unconventional spaces.

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