

**UNeECC CONFERENCE 2025**

**CULTURAL BRIDGING:  
EUROPEAN TERRITORIES &  
CULTURAL METAMORPHOSES**

15-17 OCTOBER 2025

UNIVERSITY OF AVIGNON, FRANCE



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**The Universal Pedagogical Index - UPI - as a long-term message of pedagogical culture to preserve viability**

*Dr. Szabolcs ZALAY*

In my presentation, I present the Universal Pedagogical Index, which means the use of the dimensions and components of pedagogical culture in a complex system. According to my research hypotheses and test results, pedagogy i culture determines the quality of life in the case of a particular pedagogical entity, thereby preserving a cultural heritage that has preserved the image of the wholeness of the world. A pedagogical situation or an independent entity (for example, a teacher, lesson, pedagogical organization or system) can carry this image, depending on its quality. This measure can be called the Universal Pedagogical Index. Several research and development projects deal with the objective measurement of the quality of pedagogical work, and there are promising initiatives to compare different pedagogical entities (sessions, lessons, teachers, organizations, educational systems, etc.). Pedagogical culture is complex and multifaceted, so it is difficult to characterize its quality with a single indicator. Based on my research, however, I claim that we now have an increasingly accurate picture of the factors influencing pedagogical efficiency, and based on these, a complex system of indicators that takes into account all the defining aspects of pedagogical work can be developed. The introduction of the Universal Pedagogical Index can bring many advantages. It enables a more objective and comparable evaluation of pedagogical work. It can be used to identify the areas to be developed at different levels. It contributes to making more effective educational management decisions.

## Health As a Value and Health Behaviours

*Katalin Julianna Dinnyés*

### **Introduction:**

Health as a value has been present in the consciousness of human communities since ancient times, as evidenced by early lifestyle research. Values play a fundamental role in shaping our lives, influencing everything from daily decisions to consumption patterns and overall lifestyle choices. The negative effects on the health of university students are well documented, impacting not only their individual well-being but also placing a burden on the healthcare system. In light of these observations, examining the well-being, health status, and health behaviours of university students remains a highly relevant topic [1], [2].

### **Objective:**

Our main aim is to demonstrate the role of health values in shaping health-related attitudes, life satisfaction, overall well-being, and health status.

### **Methods:**

Data were collected through a questionnaire-based survey consisting of 67 items, grouped into several main categories. Validated instruments were employed, including the IRVS Values Importance and Achievement Scale, the WHO Well-Being Questionnaire, the Life Satisfaction Scale, and the Health Attitudes Questionnaire, supplemented by our own questions. A total of 380 university students completed the questionnaire. Data were analysed using SPSS 26.0 statistical software, with significance set at  $p < 0.05$ .

### **Conclusions:**

We believe it is essential to emphasise health as a core value within higher education institutions. The development of a preventive mindset and the establishment of an inclusive educational environment should be prioritised. Promoting a health-conscious lifestyle across all age groups is equally important.

### **Funding:**

This output was created as part of the 2024/2025 academic year *University of Pécs – University Researcher Scholarship Programme*, supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office.

**Keywords:** health status, health education, universities, values

## **A Note on Research Design: Aligning Publication Strategy to the Research Journey**

*László Imre KOMLÓSI*

My intervention in the UNeECC Doctoral Workshop has the objective to contribute to the discussion among international doctoral students about their central problems encountered in the course of their research process. For doctoral candidates, one of the kernel issues in their research design is to come to terms with the current publication landscape. Research results are obtained via close collaboration with supervisors and peers, and by choosing the right methods of data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. According to earlier scenarios, research papers were submitted to highly ranked journals and editors sent back detailed reviews to help improve papers for final publication. These papers used a high rejection rate, so publication was very competitive. For the past fifteen years, however, open access journals, MDPI (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute) publications or a plethora of scavenger journals (even with a high impact factor) have appeared, radically changing the academic traditions in publication. Publications with a different business model caused (i) the introduction of high processing fees and (ii) a less rigorous reviewing process with a relatively superficial editorial feedback. My presentation aims at elucidating the current state of affairs and recommend a viable research design including a feasible publication strategy.

# Cross-Border Narratives in European Capitals of Culture

*Maria Elena BUSLACCHI*

This paper examines the narrative construction of cross-border territories through the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) initiative, with a primary focus on Gorizia/Nova Gorica 2025 and comparative reflections on Lille (2004), the Ruhr region (2010) and Mons (2015). These cases illustrate how cultural programming, digital infrastructures, and artistic interventions are mobilized to reimagine territorial identities and foster transnational cohesion.

In spite of some cross-border existing precedents, the joint designation of Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Gorizia (Italy) as ECoC 2025 under the slogan “GO! Borderless” stands as landmark in the initiative’s history. The shared history of the two cities is well represented by the frontier cutting one of Gorizia’s principal squares in halves, symbolizing both geopolitical division and the potential for cultural reconciliation (Fabbri 2020: 12). The ambition carried out through the ECoC’s project is to transform this historically fractured space into a “living laboratory for deeper cooperation across nations with different political systems, languages and cultures” (GO! 2025 Bid Book: 8).

Comparative cases further illuminate the role of ECoC in shaping cross-border imaginaries. Lille 2004 extended its programming into Belgium, emphasizing metropolitan integration and cultural mobility (Ba and Zentelin, 2008; Delecosse, Delhuyenne, and Leloup). According to García (2005: 842), “Lille 2004 was not just about cultural celebration, but about redefining the city’s role in a transnational urban network”. Mons 2015 similarly leveraged its Franco-Belgian location to promote cross-border artistic collaborations, while Ruhr 2010 reimagined a polycentric industrial region as a unified cultural space. As Sassatelli notes, such initiatives “construct a symbolic Europe through cultural performance, where the local and the transnational are continuously negotiated” (Sassatelli 2009: 108).

This paper draws on cultural policy and place-making analysis to argue that cross-border ECoCs function as “symbolic laboratories” where the tensions between local specificity and European integration are actively mediated (Delanty 2011: 67). These initiatives not only reflect but also shape the evolving frameworks through which societies interpret and represent their identities, histories, and futures.

Key-words : Gorizia/Nova Gorica 2025, Lille 2004, Ruhr 2010, Mons 2015, cross-border identity

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# **Strategic engagement: The evolution of audience development in European Capitals of Culture**

*Igor MAVRIN*

Audience development has become a strategic pillar in European cultural policy, especially within the framework of the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) initiative. As cities across Europe leverage cultural programming to foster social cohesion, inclusion, and participation, the imperative to reach diverse and often underserved publics has grown. Despite its centrality, audience development remains unevenly conceptualized and implemented across ECoC cities, varying in scale, intent, and sustainability. The tension between symbolic cultural prestige and meaningful public engagement raises critical questions about the role of cultural policy in democratizing access and participation. This study investigates how ECoC cities define, prioritize, and operationalize audience development, particularly in the period 2020 – 2029. The research seeks to understand how strategies reflect broader European objectives, local community needs, and long-term cultural transformation goals. By analysing official city bid books, this study identifies patterns, innovations, and challenges in engaging diverse audiences, and aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how cultural mega-events can serve as catalysts for inclusive cultural citizenship.

**Keywords:** Cultural participation, Inclusive engagement, Cultural citizenship, Policy implementation, Urban cultural strategy

# **Postcards, Industrial Landscapes, and Migrant Memory: A Critical Reflection on Digital Heritage Practices**

*Zoë VANDENHENDE*

*Co-authors: Roberta PIREDDU*

This paper explores the intersection of industrial heritage, migrant memory, and digital heritage practices through the reinterpretation of postcards depicting Belgian mining landscapes from the era of Italian labor migration, drawn from the digitized collections of KU Leuven Libraries.

Treating postcards not merely as nostalgic artifacts but as dynamic memory props, the study draws on critical heritage theory, memory studies, and participatory methodologies to argue for a reframing of memory as a continual, negotiated process. It examines how industrial imagery encoded in postcards carries fragmented, subjective traces of labor and migration histories, and considers how digital platforms and community-driven reinterpretation can recover and amplify these narratives.

Through the integration of oral histories, participatory annotation, and critical engagement with visual materials, the study advocates for more inclusive, socially sustainable approaches to digital cultural heritage. In doing so, it reanimates industrial landscapes as evolving sites of memory and identity, and contributes to broader debates about democratizing heritage practices in post-industrial contexts.

**Keywords:** Digital Heritage, Industrial Memory, Migration and Identity, Postcards as Cultural Artefacts, Participatory Archives, Critical Heritage Studies, Community Co-Creation, Inclusive Heritage

# The Transatlantic Dialogue: Bridging Differences Through Culture

*Dilchoda BERDIEVA, Ph.D*

*John FORREN, Ph.D.*

Amidst the recent rise in nationalism, populism and isolationism around the globe, pluralistic democracies on both sides of the Atlantic are now confronting challenges on a scale not seen in generations. Declining public trust in the formal institutions and processes of democratic governance threatens to undermine stability and legitimacy and weaken essential protections for fundamental rights and liberties. The rise of disruptive technologies and artificial intelligence – paired with an explosion of disinformation in the public sphere – feeds polarization and weakens public support for core democratic values. Concentrations of wealth and power feed suspicion of cultural and political elites and fuel cynicism about societal commitments to equality and justice. Politically motivated attacks by public figures on rival centers of intellectual and cultural influence – including universities, leading arts organizations, independent news-gathering operations and independent scientific institutions – erode shared understandings of truth, weaken public accountability of leaders and undermine the ability of societies to identify and solve collective problems.

Perhaps more than ever before, civil society leaders and organizations – in arts and culture, in journalism, in education, in the nonprofit sector and in public service – play absolutely essential roles in bolstering the resilience of democratic institutions and in cultivating pluralism and adherence to core democratic norms and principles. *But how can civil society best fulfill these essential democratic roles? And how can non-governmental institutions and leaders work together to address the current threats to democratic life and foster a more just, equitable and free society?*

In May 2027, the Transatlantic Dialogue – an initiative that began in 2008 and continues on a three-year cycle – will address these and related questions from a broad variety of perspectives during a three-day conference held on the University of Luxembourg’s beautiful campus in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. In line with previous TAD conferences, the proceedings in 2027 will feature a unique mix of ‘traditional’ conference presentations from various scholarly disciplines and from leaders in civil society alongside an eclectic program of performances, exhibitions and presentations by visual artists, musicians, writers and other creatives whose work represents the best traditions of cultural diplomacy and cross-national dialogue. Conference organizers especially invite scholars and practitioners to propose presentations that address the following broad questions:

- What are the social, economic, cultural and other forces that are operating now to undermine democratic life, and what can individuals do in their own lives to counteract those forces?
- How can civil society help to build a resilient democratic culture? What are the ways in which artists (broadly defined), scholars and/or NGOs can contribute to public discourse and debate?

- What can people and organizations in Europe and in North America learn from one another about their experiences in democracy building in government, law, or civil society? How can they collaborate effectively in pursuing common goals and interests?
- How does AI impact democratic ways of living? How can we effectively address concerns about that impact?

In this proposed presentation at the 2025 UNeECC conference, we plan to present an overview of the Transatlantic Dialogue's history, purposes, and future trajectory – all with an eye toward encouraging attendees to participate in the 2027 iteration of the TAD. More specifically, we will detail how a small group of thought leaders in Europe and the U.S. collaborated in 2008 to stage the first TAD, focused on the use of culture as a means of bridging differences. We will then trace the evolution of the TAD and its leadership and its impact on intercultural dialogue, culminating with a discussion of our plans for the 2027 gathering in Luxembourg. This presentation is appropriate either for inclusion in a poster session at the UNeECC conference or in a session devoted to presentation of short papers.

## **Lost Territories and Cultural Metamorphoses: Footsteps at the Bottom of the Lagoon**

*Rasa PRANSKŪNIENĖ*

*Erika ZABULIONĖ*

When discussing the lost territories in the meaning of heritage, it seems important to pay attention to the case of Kaunas Lagoon, as one of the cases, discussing the memories of lost places. In 1956, the Kaunas hydroelectric power plant was launched, and three years later the Nemunas was dammed. The biggest river of Lithuania, Nemunas, was transformed into a vast lagoon - 6350 ha of territory, where villages once stood, churches rang their bells, and mounds rhymed, were under water. Before the lagoon flooded, as many as 721 homesteaders had to move to new places, orchards and woods had to be cut down, wells had to be filled in, and even cemeteries had to be built. In total, 35 villages were uprooted from the bottom of the future lagoon. The lagoon also lost archaeological treasures, such as burial mounds and old graves. And the picturesque Nemunas valley was made into Lithuania's largest lake. The overflowing Nemunas flooded nearby settlements, and Kaunas was also hit by floods on several occasions. And nowadays, when locals are asked where they are coming from, they say: from the bottom of the lagoon. The loss of their homes and birthplaces was heartbreaking for the natives, it was like an exile, and nowadays, due to Kaunas - European Capital of Culture 2022, their memories and stories became alive and even transformed to the cultural movement, called Footsteps at the Bottom of the Lagoon.

Keywords: Lost heritage, Cultural metamorphoses, Kaunas Lagoon

## **Api-Tourism as Narrative Innovation: Reimagining Rural Identities and Heritage Through Beekeeping-Based Experiences**

*Alessandra VITALE*

*Co-author: Marco VALERI*

**Purpose:** This paper explores api-tourism as a form of narrative innovation that reimagines rural identities through heritage storytelling, participatory tourism, and the integration of sustainable and digital practices. It investigates how api-tourism serves not only as a niche economic activity but also as a narrative device to foster territorial cohesion and promote alternative representations of rural Europe.

**Methodology:** The study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach based on a review of academic and grey literature published between 2017 and 2025. The starting point of this time frame reflects the first documented appearance of api-tourism in peer-reviewed literature within the Scopus database (2017), marking the emergence of the field as a subject of scholarly attention. This period also coincides with increased policy focus on sustainable rural development and agroecological innovation, exemplified by initiatives such as FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and the EU's Smart Villages programme. The review explores api-tourism's narrative potential through a cultural management lens, analyzing its symbolic, social, and economic dimensions as articulated across scholarly discourse, institutional frameworks, and illustrative practices.

**Findings:** Api-tourism fosters rural regeneration by constructing local narratives linked to biodiversity, sustainability, and tradition. Beekeeping becomes a storytelling vector that communicates environmental stewardship and cultural resilience. Digital storytelling, immersive experiences, and creative place branding amplify these narratives, making api-tourism a key tool for cultural and territorial innovation.

**Originality:** The paper introduces a novel theoretical perspective by framing api-tourism as a narrative practice. It expands its interpretation beyond economic and ecological impacts, positioning beekeeping-based tourism as a creative cultural product that bridges rural heritage with contemporary values and technologies.

**Future Implications:** Api-tourism holds potential to influence cultural perceptions of rural areas, especially when embedded within regional creative industries and narrative-based policy frameworks. Future research should explore AI-enabled storytelling, transmedia approaches, and participatory co-creation methods in heritage-based tourism.

**Conclusion:** Api-tourism exemplifies how ecological and cultural practices can be reimagined through storytelling and narrative innovation. It encourages a rethinking of rural development models through participatory cultural strategies rooted in care, biodiversity, and local identity.

**Keywords:** Api-tourism; Narrative innovation; Beekeeping heritage; Cultural management; Cultural tourism; Participatory storytelling; Regenerative tourism

## **Knocking on the door of ECOC Trencin 2026: Who doesn't participate?**

*Katarina ROZVADSKA*

*Co-authors: Dana Kubenkova, Zuzana Pestanska, Rafaela Ganga*

As Trencin prepares for its title year as European Capital of Culture in 2026, understanding who participates—and who feels invited to participate—in cultural life becomes a critical question. This paper explores the baseline data on participation in Trencin, drawing from three key sources: a representative resident survey, targeted audience surveys conducted at diverse cultural events, and a thematic analysis of selected cultural projects and events. The thematic analysis focuses on identifying the main topics addressed, the intended target groups, and especially the mechanisms of communication (narratives), organization, and inclusion—such as the presence (or absence) of co-creation elements, use of inclusive language, and on-site accessibility practices.

By comparing general civic attitudes with event-specific engagement patterns and the design strategies behind them, we aim to uncover which social groups are already involved, which cultural formats resonate with different groups, and where gaps in inclusion remain. This multi-method approach helps us map the social landscape of participation and reflect on how cultural programming and outreach can foster a more inclusive cultural democracy. Ultimately, our analysis serves as a starting point for shaping future strategies that ensure culture in Trencin 2026 is truly co-created, shared, and accessible to a wide and diverse public.

Key words: cultural participation, European capital of culture, Trencin2026, inclusion

## **Greenfluencers in four EcoC cities for sustainable attitude change: A case study of an ECoC Erasmus project and course**

*Edit KŐVÁRI*

Following the legacy to be European Capitals of Culture 4 cities decided to join forces to co-creat again. Environemnet, climate change and green attitude is a vital issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore Kaunas (ECoC in 2022) Veszprém and Timisoara (both ECoC in 2023) and Tartu (ECoC in 2024) developed az Erasmus+ project for 30 months titled *'Let me influence your green self: Skill development in the encouragement of mindset towards environmental awareness and sustainable development is the alliance of ECoC.'* The aim of the project was to develop environmental awareness among university students and to spread the thought of sustainable development among the widest possible age groups at events that attract large audience. We committed to develop an innovative online course material (MOOC) and to mainstream sustainable development in all curricula for higher education students. Recognizing the convincing power of young influencers, the project aimed to reach out to all age groups of audience at cultural events and festivals in the various European Capitals of Culture to encourage environmentally conscious activity and to be active members and beneficiaries of sustainable development. Furthermore our goal was to equip students with communication tools and sustainable attitude to become effective advocates for advancing EU green economy and culture.

Keyword: ECoC legacy, sustainable attitude of youth, greenfleuncers, MOOC

# **Opportunities and challenges of tourism industry in Eastern Transylvania, Szeklerland. Towards a model of professionalization.**

*Emese Emőke TÓTH-BATIZÁN*

The tourism market of Szeklerland is in motion, in developing stage. Both in terms of ethnicity and cultural heritage, the region is richly diverse. It is primarily composed of small towns and rural settlements, its natural environment is breathtaking, bordered by the Carpathian mountains.

The present study is based on a comparative international analysis in which I have examined the tourism markets of three regions: Szeklerland (Romania), South Tyrol (Italy), and the Balaton region (Hungary). Across all three contexts, the key actors of the tourism sector are largely the same: profit-oriented enterprises and civil organizations operating in fields such as transportation, leisure, entertainment, attractions, services, travel, commerce, event management, accommodation, and catering. In addition, both private and public sector actors contribute by providing services related in various ways to tourism.

Despite these structural similarities, tourism in the Balaton region is considered a genuine economic driver in Hungary, while South Tyrol has the same role enjoying additional international recognition. In contrast, the tourism market of Szeklerland is not a key economic driver - yet. This leads to my central question: what is missing from the tourism ecosystem in Szeklerland so that it can become Europe's cultural capital in the future? Under what conditions could the region develop a successful and professionalized tourism market?

The answer, I believe, partially lies in a new model of tourism professionalization that I have developed. While I use traditional tourism ecosystem models as a starting point, I enrich them with additional elements drawn from the perspectives of social sciences and economic sociology. I found the ecosystem framework particularly apt, as it conceptualizes businesses not as isolated or self-contained entities, but as interdependent actors embedded in their environment. Thus, any meaningful change at the level of an entire market must involve activating the full range of ecosystem components.

In the new model of tourism professionalization, I retain the traditional industry actors but complement the model with what I term connective elements or artefacts—factors identified through my research as key drivers of market transformation and professionalization. These include: quality and certification (1), networks and cooperation (2), trust (3), specialization and competitiveness (4), innovation (5), meta-narratives vs. local interpretations (6), the production of tradition (7). These connective elements or artefacts are deeply embedded in the tourism landscapes of South Tyrol and the Balaton region but are either absent or only marginally present in Szeklerland's tourism market.

Participating at the conference would allow me to complete my model with operational models developed by other regions and towns which already became Europe's cultural capital and establish connections with professionals who have already supported various European cities and regions in securing this prestigious title. With their assistance, and through the insights gained at the conference, I could better understand the pathways taken by other regions and identify a model that aligns most closely with the specific characteristics of our region.

Once this already proven and operational model is selected, it can be adapted by local scholars, practitioners, NGOs, and governmental bodies (such as Visit Maros, Visit Harghita, and Visit Covasna) to the unique features of Szeklerland. This would represent a significant step forward in the professionalization of tourism in the region. I am strongly committed to applying the knowledge accumulated within academia to practice, and to initiating long-term thinking about the possibility of Szeklerland applying for the title of European Capital of Culture. Participating in the 2025 international conference of the University Network of the European Capitals of Culture (UNeECC) conference would constitute a major step toward this goal.

## **French culture in Senegal in the era of technological development**

*HAN Sohee*

Today, access to past cultures is made possible through the advancement of digital technologies. Also, people can access distant cultures without traveling physically, thanks to modern technological advancements. This trend leads us to reflect on evolution, transformation, and cultural transition through the development of technology.

I have been living in Senegal since 2021. In Senegal, one can notice that French culture coexists with the local culture. The public holidays are based on both the Islamic and Christian religions. One can also find that the past and the present coexist in Senegal. We can still see horses carrying loads on the road. On that road, Peugeot cars also pass by. Even in daily life, cash remains a prevalent form of payment, while transactions through Orange application are increasingly becoming the dominant method. While the Senegal people continue to preserve their indigenous culture, the influence of technological advancements is deeply embedded in their daily lives. In the current social context, French culture is integrating with Senegalese culture in a way that differs from the past.

In this presentation, by analyzing what is currently happening in Senegal, I would like to explore how French culture is perceived in Senegal in the context of technological integration, cultural exchange, and cultural transition. I start from my own experience, in an autethnographic approach, I will examine how technological development has influenced the adaptation of French culture in Senegal. This approach would contribute also to rethinking the presentation, transition, and transformation of the cultures of developing countries at the international level in the era of technological development.

Keywords : French culture, Senegal, Technological development, cultural perception

# **CROSSINGS and BARRIERS**

## **Bridge Metaphor Frames for Cultural Connectivity Scenes**

*Flora CARRIJN*

Culture connects people, individuals and the community. It is in culture that we encounter each other's identity, that we can learn to respect each other and learn from one another. Culture has an integrative and emancipatory power in which both shared heritage and new achievements build up our identity as community and give us ownership of that cultural identity, 'our culture'.

However, when different cultures come across each other, the encounter may yield different results. Either the meeting up can take the form of a hostile confrontation, a 'barrier' that cannot be crossed and may lead to aggression and conflict. Or it can take place in an atmosphere of curiosity and exploration, a 'crossing' seeking the added value in the exchange.

In this contribution, we make use of the 'bridge metaphor' to describe and illustrate the many different forms and attestations of cultural interchange throughout history, with the focus on our European past. The multiple kinds of bridges serve as 'frames' for the various 'cultural connectivity scenes'. This somewhat unexpected method for a possible classification and characterization is inspired by the cognitive linguistic approach of 'scene-frame semantics' as originally introduced by Charles Fillmore in the early seventies.

But before we attempt such an audacious classification of several different attestations of cultural encounters, we need to start with some necessary considerations on how we will handle 'culture' and 'cultural exchange' in this semantico-pragmatic experiment. We first resort to a linguistic analysis of the title of this conference, i.e. 'Bridging Culture', to already bring into perspective different angles on the topic. The overview of the different possible identifying components and characteristics, and the different layers of culture lead to the definition of 'culture' used in this context. Different forms of cultural exchange are introduced and illustrated and related to the overall categorization of multi-, inter- and transculturalism and multiregionality.

To conclude, the description and illustration of the historical cultural encounters will be connected with the present and future of a common 'European culture'

**'BRIDGING CULTURE':**

Active verb/adjective + subject/substantive

= culture builds bridges (between individuals, communities)

> focus on identity and community building strength of culture

Active verb in present participle + pluri-intended object

= build bridges between / over cultures

> focus on communicative interaction and exchange capacity of culture

Active verb present participle + object

= encapsulate, overarch, encompass, transcend > civilization

> focus on holistic meaning as civilization sSCENES and FRAMES  
'CULTURE'

Identity as individual

Identity as community

Cherishing one's own culture and history should not prevent interest in the other or unknown. The interaction with other cultures and the interchange of ideas and knowledge can even enrich the own cultural growth.

Culture identifying components and characteristics

Territory

Language

Religion

Art (music, literature, etc.), sports, food

However, a shared cultural background and common cultural heritage can easily be disrupted by human intervention, leading to different new cultural identities and 'we vs they'.

Empathy and solidarity within a shared cultural community may then evolve to aversion and aggression. In the best case one can develop a certain acceptance of and sympathy for the others.

e.g. Flanders vs The Netherlands (cultural treaty 1995)

e.g. Irish Republic vs Northern Ireland

Cultural exchange

Localisation

Congruence

Integration

Association

Compatibility

Bonding

## **Preparing the winning Belgium ECOC bid for 2030: the Leuven case**

*Frederik TRUYEN*

As Belgium will host the European Capital of Culture in 2030, 3 Belgian cities competed to be designated: Leuven, Molenbeek and Namur. As part of the Team for the Leuven bid, KU Leuven DigitGLAM participated in the preparation of the bid, focusing on the aspect of monitoring performance. Of course, the goals set out determine what kind of monitoring should take place, and bring with it the challenge to define relevant parameters to define what can count as a success of the ECOC year. It is hence closely related to the ambitions set out:

We will discuss the main strategy and choices behind the Leuven Bidbook, and how a multitude of players co-developed the set priorities, given the particular socio-cultural and economic nature of the city of Leuven, a typical mid-sized center city of about 100.000 inhabitants, however with a typical, very large student population of about 55.000 registered university students and a very large regional hospital.

From the start, it was decided to take on board the whole region of Eastern Brabant, to add the dimension of regional embedding and city-region dynamics to the equation. This complicated the decision-making, but made sure that the lessons learned could be even more transposable and instructive to the many thousand similarly regionally embedded cities in Europe. On the other hand, it offered very layered monitoring possibilities, taking on board people movements and audience development bridging city/region boundaries.

In the paper we will focus on the concept behind the bid, the literature that inspired the bid and also the quite complex setup of the participatory approach developed with a multitude of stakeholders to formulate the in the end very rich portfolio of the bid, and how we aim to obtain and prepare for relevant monitoring data.

Keywords: ECOC; Regional Development; Monitoring; Participatory Design

# **Cultural and Urban Planning & Design in Europe: Setting the context for a post-graduate e-Learning Course**

*Anastasia Michael PAPARIS*

## I

In the context of the EU, there is a major gap in knowledge of cultural, urban planning and design. EU-funded projects are based on an ill-informed background, mainly regarding the comprehensive and comparative knowledge for EU cultural and spatial planning and their relationship. The here proposed post-graduate e-learning course aspires to offer a sound academic and experiential familiarization with European urban environment, setting EU cultural and spatial policies – among them the emblematic ECoC Action – center-stage.

Research across the UK and EU universities proved that the proposed course is unique, while the interest for a comprehensive knowledge of the EU cultural and urban spatial development is growing rapidly. The paper justifies the necessity of such studies, aiming at an inter- disciplinary, inter-institutional and pan-European post-graduate course.

The course has been elaborated in all its details (teaching modules, programme structure, expected learning results, accreditation etc.) to be presented during the conference.

Keywords: Cultural planning, Urban design, post-graduate e-Learning course.

## **Some effects of Brexit on Classical Music in the United Kingdom**

*Dr William CHAMBERS*

This paper describes the Brexit process, the voting habits of the electorate and some of the lies and false promises of those advocating Brexit. The importance of British orchestras to the UK economy and their main sources of income are also described. The impact of the loss of EU funding is compared with UK funding streams and the main impacts on the orchestras is outlined. This leads onto the responses of the UK orchestras with particular reference to international touring and the effects on UK and EU musicians. These are contextualised by analysing the declining role of music in the UK school, university and conservatoires curricula. The paper ends by examining the long-term impacts of Brexit on Classical Music.

Keywords: Brexit, Orchestras, Musicians, Employment, Touring

PHD

## **Subtle Musical Protest: The Use of Non-Political Songs Against Repressive Regimes**

*Simona JOCEVIČIŪTĒ*

This presentation explores how non-political songs function as subtle protest tools in repressive regimes. Grounded in cultural resistance it examines how coded language, metaphor, and reinterpretation enable dissent and challenge dominant narratives. Using qualitative analysis, the research investigates historical and contemporary cases through lyrical analysis, audience reception, and media discourse. A key focus is the Baltic States Singing Revolution, illustrating how non-political songs played a crucial role in resisting Soviet oppression. Findings suggest that such songs foster resistance by circumventing censorship while resonating with collective memory, social identity, and emotional solidarity.

Keywords: Baltics, Non-Political Songs, Resistance

PHD

## **Modeling Urban Sprawl: Agricultural Land Consumption from the City of Avignon to the City of Meknès – A Progressive Methodological Approach**

*Nada LAOUNI*

Urbanization is a global phenomenon leading to the continuous reduction of agricultural land, raising major concerns about sustainability, food security, and land governance. This doctoral research aims to model and analyze the spatial and temporal dynamics of agricultural land consumption through a comparative and progressive methodological approach between two territories: Avignon (France) and Meknès (Morocco). The choice of these two cities is based on the complementarity of their urban contexts and the availability of spatial and institutional data. Avignon serves as a methodological test area, while Meknès provides a context for scientific application and validation. The study combines diachronic satellite image analysis and spatial indicators to identify the main drivers of land consumption and to explore scenarios of future urban expansion. The expected outcome is to propose a transferable framework that enhances understanding of urban dynamics and supports more sustainable territorial governance.

Keywords: Urbanization, agricultural land consumption, spatial modeling, sustainability, territorial governance

# **Immersive theatre in BrAIve New (Virtual) Worlds: Reimagining Presence and Audience Engagement**

*Cyrielle GARSON*

## I

This paper explores how immersive theatre has been reconfigured since the COVID-19 pandemic with the rise of VR use cases, and its recent intersection with generative artificial intelligence. By focusing on both in-person VR theatre installations, such as those of the international Avignon and Venice Festival and remote, networked performance practices on social VR platforms such as VRChat, Mozilla Hubs, and Resonite, the discussion situates VR theatre at the intersection of cultural production, heritage storytelling, and creative industry innovation. These experiments in digital dramaturgy with(out) AI invite audiences to inhabit, co-create, and reinterpret narrative environments that blur the boundaries between the real and the virtual, presence and absence, the local and the global.

Through recent case studies and interdisciplinary frameworks, the paper interrogates how VR theatre constructs new modalities of liveness, challenges conventional models of audience engagement, and reshapes the cultural imagination of identity, memory, and place. Attention is also given to the ethical and technological questions of sustainability, accessibility, and narrative ownership within immersive environments. Ultimately, the paper argues that VR theatre is not merely a technological novelty, but a new critical space where societies rehearse and negotiate the stories through which they envision their futures.

Keywords: AI, Vr Theatre, innovation, cultural narratives

**The Translation of Europe :  
« Capitalizing » culture(s) – or not to be ?**

**Some reflections from the « FIL Avignon 2025 » on the ECoCs**

*Gwénaél GLÂTRE*

Through an institutional and interdisciplinary point of view on the European cultural landscape, this contribution aims to question the history of the ECCs on the « longue durée » with the both meanings of « capital ». The Translation paradigm developed at a philosophical and political level could help understanding the issues we deal with from local to global scales, in order to better involve citizens in the European integration process. By crossing different ways of considering culture as an interconnected relationship between languages and social actors, we could analyze the multiple configurations of a public speech occurring when cities become capitals. In this sense, Translation is acting in a narrow path between standardization and exclusion, Peace and War, to regulate conflict as a democratic expression. Allowing a critical position to our livelihood, it could endorse a true political function in the determination of Europe as an open public space and a cultural power on the international stage.

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