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European Capital of Culture (ECoC) and Urban Branding: The Case of Patras, Greece

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Introduction: Theme

- The theme of the presentation is the development of an **attractive urban image** through **city-marketing and place-branding strategies**
- We examine ideas of the impact of **cultural economy** through **alternative forms** of campaign of urban branding
- A question is how cultural capitals of Europe trigger a sustainable process of **urban rebranding** including the implementation of processes of **creativity** and how they support effective interventions **of sustainable regional development**
- **Lessons** from the case-study of Patras, Greece as a Cultural Capital of Europe 2006

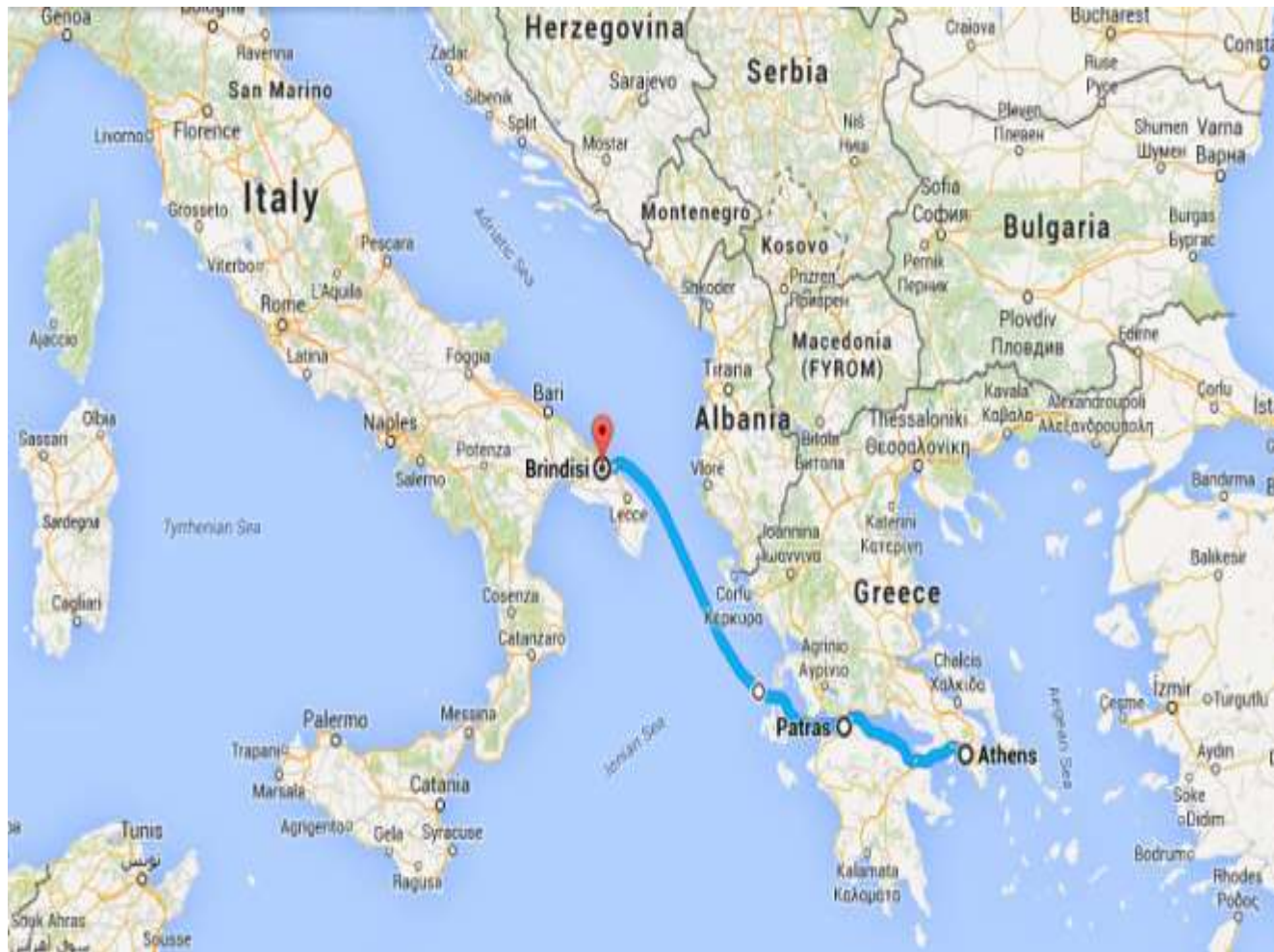
Theoretical Aspects of the Institution of European Capital of Culture (ECoC)

- Brief historical overview and key theoretical approaches in the study of ECoC (i.e., ECoC Final Reports-various cities, Richards (2000), Guiso et. al. (2005) etc.)
- **Main issues that emerge:**
 - Definition of ‘**culture**’ broadens – **dynamic view**
 - The role of **creative industries**
 - Urban regeneration beyond “**festivalization**”
 - **Place-branding** is an important part of **urban regeneration** and contributes to **regional development strategy formation**

Official EU Policy on ECoC

- Emphasis on **image enhancement, social impacts and economic impacts (European Parliament, 2013)**
- Models of assessment and the role of **image impact assessment** for communication strategy are important
- Identification of ECoC approaches and successful strategies in the history of the Institution
- The role of city size and relative funding are considered too
- Successful strategies: **Clear vision, distinct programming, infrastructure development, communication strategy, public engagement, good governance / finance and legacy planning for long-term effects**
- **A well-known example: Glasgow** as European Capital of 1990 focused mainly on changing the image of the city, succeeding to attain parallel but generally positive results such as increased tourist flows during the next years

Patras – 2006 ECoC: “Greece’s Gate to the West”



Patras – 2006 ECoC:

Objectives of Strategic Plan

- **Tourism:**
 - Increase of domestic and foreign tourists.
 - Expansion of the market for cultural events.
 - Strengthening the cultural environment.
- **Image:**
 - Increase awareness of the city.
 - Upgrading the profile of the city at home and abroad.
- **Urban revitalization:**
 - Create cultural action areas.
 - Regeneration, infrastructure projects.
- **Business and employment:**
 - Develop creative new businesses.
 - Creating new specialized jobs.

Patras – ECoC 2006: Implementation

- Main marketing pitch: “All Europe, One Neighbourhood” – stressing urban friendliness and openness
- Small and delayed budget
- Small-scale regeneration of many cultural and public sites
- A **great number (127) of small cultural events** of international interest but some were bigger (Ramazzotti concert, Da Vinci Exhibition etc.)
- **Positive expectations** from residents (survey)
- **Great number of spectators** – around 1.000.000 also from neighboring Peloponnese and Western Central Greece as well as from Athens

Patras – ECoC 2006: Implementation

- **Strong voluntarism** because of Patras annual Carnival capacity -1200 volunteers
- Improvement in **tourist flows** for next year (2007) but not thereafter
- **Problems in communication strategy implementation** and marketing promotion despite sizeable share in overall budget
- Improvement in business start-ups of speculative nature, which faltered in the next years as there was **no strategic support** and vision and economic crisis emerged in 2009
- Overall, **residents (various surveys)** did not consider the event very successful: Not many memorable events, substantive infrastructure uncompleted, no perceivable legacy in terms of economic opportunities, regional development, sustainable growth

Urban Regeneration Review

- Lack of a strategic plan and many small projects rather than large projects (**flagship projects**).
- Even the very few large-scale interventions were hampered by the fragmentation of space.
- No **innovative urban design** interventions were made, which would radically change the image of the city.
- **Case-Study: Urban regeneration with Patras Street Seaport** - Regeneration of the urban waterfront of Patras could be an ideal scope of great urban intervention to improve the image of the residents quality of life and the city's competitiveness. The **long public space of the old port** (which is still blocked) can be useable for interesting urban design interventions and can become an area of freedom for tourism, recreation and creative business facilitation

Overview of Landmarks and Branding

Missed Place-Branding of Flagship Landmarks: Trikoupis Bridge



Examples of ECoC Culture Site Regeneration: Theater, Exhibition Center, Historic Buildings



Gap Analysis for Creative Brand Development

General ideas	Components			
	Visual and physical elements	Narrations	2006 ECoC Contribution	2015 Legacy and Gaps
Public spaces	Images of public spaces, for example parks, but also regeneration and promotion of some public spaces	References to gathering spaces: St. Nikolaos Pedestrian and Jetty, St. Georgios square and other areas, which have become attractive pedestrian gathering places	Aesthetic regeneration of City Center	Urban life has improved and has become more attractive for locals and for touristic purposes
Buzz and Nightlife	Pictures of crowded places, cafes, bars, and clubs	Various marketing materials narrating instances: for seeing friends, getting together, dancing, staying out late	Lifestyle regeneration of City Center	Buzz feeling is an important part of university and city life
Art and Culture	Visual marketing materials enhancement and promotion of the old heritage	Various marketing materials: Cultural aspects, sites and events of Patras	Regeneration of cultural buildings and sites – Apollon Theater, Odeon, Historic Industrial building etc.	Capacity of culture sites has been improved to host cultural events

Gap Analysis for Creative Brand Development

Diversity and volunteerism	Visual materials showing people from different sites of multi-cultural significance, particularly linked to tourism and specific events	Multi-cultural references and materials	Hosting of a great number and variety of mainly small international cultural events ; enhanced volunteerism	City is open to multi-cultural influence and cross-cultural synergies
Special Cultural Heritage	No specific images – i.e., Saint Andreas Church – attractive as a touristic site for Orthodox Russians and other E. European nationalities	Reference to religious cultural heritage	No reference	Resource untapped
Higher education	No specific images of Universities	References to universities and polytechnic schools	Minimal reference to 2 major national universities and polytechnic school	Higher education potential still untapped for branding purposes

Gap Analysis for Creative Brand Development

Business Development	No specific images	References to entrepreneurial hubs, technoparks, creative sectors, business support	Reference of intention to develop creative new businesses and to create specialized new jobs	No implementation during ECoC event despite speculative entrepreneurial interest, no further development and no synergies with universities
Interregional Hub	No specific images – ie., the Trikoupi Bridge and Port Terminal Facilities	References to New Port, Cruise Dock and Trikoupi Bridge offering economic and recreation opportunities across regions (W. Greece- SE regions of Italy, Peloponnese –Central Greece, Mediterranean Cruising)	Minimal reference	Resource untapped
Other such as food and wine and other local produce	No specific images	Various marketing materials; Enjoying good food and drink of exceptional quality – ie., Agiorgitiko wine etc.	Minimal reference	Resource untapped

Top-Down Enhancement of a ECoC Strategic Plan via Urban Branding

- **Tourism:**
 - Increase of domestic and foreign tourists. What kind of tourist activities ? Cruise, agro-tourism, cultural heritage tourism, religious tourism etc.?
 - Expansion of the market for cultural events.
 - Strengthening the cultural environment.
- **Image:**
 - Increase awareness of the city
 - Upgrading the profile of the city at home and abroad. What the city exports-who are the foreign partners/clients?
- **Urban revitalization:**
 - Create cultural action areas.
 - Regeneration, infrastructure projects. How to enhance vision of infrastructure projects? What is their nature (i.e., transportation hub, south/north, port)?
- **Business and employment:**
 - Develop creative new businesses. In which sector? Generic? Traditional?
 - Creating new specialized jobs. What type of analysts and/or technicians?

Patras – ECoC 2006:

Conclusions and Lessons

- Positive effect **on buzz feeling** of the City, improved local and national perception as a quality university campus-related city, enhanced city capacity for cultural sites, hosting and cultural life for residents
- Overall, missed opportunity for **urban branding purposes**
- With respect to lessons, ECoC planning must include a regional development **top-down strategy**
- In such a framework, **urban-branding questions pose challenges** and are more pressing to policymakers to identify the **right mix of interventions**
- **Larger-scale interventions can be connected with ECoC events in a marketable way** (even if they are not completed during the event) so that there is **memorable ECoC legacy**
- **Flagship landmarks** (Bridge, Port, Universities in the case of Patras) can be utilized through synergies to develop visions and enhanced capacities for the local creative economy and society and to motivate greater numbers of residents to participate proactively
- Focus on **targeted business development and job creation** in creative sectors is necessary to complement infrastructure development and to enhance the effectiveness of the institution of ECoC