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### **ELEUSIS 2021 'EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE': AN IMPACTS ASSESSMENT PLAN**

**Alex DEFFNER**, Dept. of Planning and Regional Development, University of Thessaly

**Theodore METAXAS**, Dept. of Economics, University of Thessaly

**Christina MANTELOU**, Dept. of Planning and Regional Development, UTH

Contact: [adefner@prd.uth.gr](mailto:adefner@prd.uth.gr)

#### **Abstract**

In November 2016, the Greek city of Eleusis was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2021, undertaking a big challenge that hopefully will lead to the development of a new sustainable urban model. The study, conducted by La.Re.Tour research team, proposes an Impacts Assessment Plan, aiming to identify the main effects of hosting the ECoC. In particular, the long term, cultural, social and economic impacts are investigated, while the methodology for evaluating them is analysed.

This title will give the city the necessary boost to achieve an image renaissance, creating numerous opportunities in different fields (arts, tourism, infrastructure, etc). The ECoC initiative is a mature international event capable of shaping trends in major cultural event hosting, but examining its real value requires a well-coordinated assessment. The research study, outlined in this paper, foresees a monitoring framework-tool, taking into consideration multiple data, resulting finally to a balanced strategic planning of intervention and evaluation.

#### **Keywords**

European Capital of Culture, Eleusis 21, Impacts Assessment Plan, sustainable tourism, urban development

## **1. Introduction**

In November 2016, the Greek city of Eleusis was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2021, undertaking a big challenge which involves, on the one hand, meeting the expectations and requirements of this European initiative and, on the other hand, seizing the opportunity for urban development and destination promotion.

The initial research study, named “ELEUSIS 2021 ‘EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE’: AN IMPACTS ASSESSMENT PLAN”, was elaborated by the LA.RE.TOUR (Laboratory of Tourism Planning, Research and Policy) of the Department of Planning and Development of the University of Thessaly, and was delivered to Municipality of Elefsina and the ELEUSIS21 Organizing Committee in order to contribute in the bidding phase of city's nomination as ECoC 2021. The proposed Impacts Assessment Plan, took into account the Eleusis’s new Cultural Strategy, which is to enhance the city’s cultural heritage and to introduce a sustainable urban model.

This paper aims to identify the main effects of hosting the ECoC in order for Eleusis to achieve a better integrated planning, according to its strengths and its development goals. In particular, the long term, cultural, social and economic impacts are investigated, while the methodology for evaluating them is analysed.

## **2. Long term social and economic impacts**

The contribution of culture in urban development is related to the planning and implementation of urban policies, of meeting the needs of potential target markets, of enhancing and promoting the cultural identity of the city image, the contribution of citizens in achieving a high level of quality of life, and, finally, the development of a competitive advantage compared to other cities (Deffner & Labrianidis, 2005; Balsas, 2004).

As Eleusis was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture, the long-term impact will be exceptionally important (Garcia & Cox, 2013), divided into 3 distinct -but interrelated- areas, which are the following:

### Cultural and Image impacts

- The Programme will have a significant effect on strengthening networks and opening up new collaborations in the provision of cultural activities, between local authorities, cultural operators and citizens. It should also encourage new activities to continue (events or festivals established as a direct result of the ECoC year) and increase the capacity and ambition of the cultural sector, by providing the “know-how” in order to pursue other projects in the future.
- The Title will give Eleusis the necessary boost to achieve an image renaissance and to reposition itself as cultural hub (the increased media coverage can result in a sustained legacy of profile change within national and international media, through the presentation of Eleusis as cultural and tourism destination more broadly). It will also encourage attempts to change the perception of the city, based on the desire to develop civic pride and celebrate local narratives associated with the city, creating a strong sense of place (Richards & Wilson, 2004).
- The previous impacts will contribute in achieving the general target set by the cultural strategy of Eleusis, which is to enhance and highlight the city’s cultural heritage.

### Economic and Physical impacts

- The Title will have a considerable effect on immediate to medium-term tourism trends in the hosting city of Eleusis. This, in turn, can have a significant impact on the city’s economy. Consistent with the target of the city’s cultural strategy to introduce a sustainable urban economy, benefits are expected in the fields of transportation, accommodation, tourist spending and tourism competitiveness. The city can make the short-term boost to tourist numbers sustainable in the years following the ECoC by developing post-ECoC marketing and branding strategies.
- The physical development is mainly related to the creation or transformation of cultural spaces and the construction or restoration of buildings. However the event can also have an impact on the development of other kinds of physical infrastructure, such as road-building projects and hotel stock or other alternative accommodation units (Palmer, 2004).
- The most crucial issue with new physical assets appears to be their ongoing use. The current and future circumstances of the city’s environment (funding, audience, etc.)

will be taken under consideration in order to outline a balanced strategic planning of urban interventions.

- Both tourism and infrastructure development offer opportunities for job creation and provide employment within the two fields and the services related to them. It is also expected that new businesses will be established in the creative sector, connecting arts, design and technology that will generate economic well-being.

#### Social and Political impacts

- The ECoC title will surely have an effect on citizens' perceptions of Eleusis and sense of pride. Through public engagement and representation, the activation of local communities will be achieved, as well as the strengthening of identity and identification with the region.
- Growing or extending the local audience for culture is also a clear goal and impact of the ECoC 2021. Apart from the increase in the attendance of the local population, what is worth monitoring and analyzing is the diversification of the audiences, according to criteria like occupation, education, income, origin, age, etc.
- Volunteer programmes will be developed, as a mechanism for engaging residents and communities and producing a range of positive effects for these groups such as increasing socialization, learning new ways of working, developing skills, improving individual confidence.
- The desired changes in cultural policy and governance mentality can also be a result of the ECoC process, introducing a new participatory model for decision making and planning of public priorities and funding.

The ECoC Programme, as a mega cultural event, aims to raise the international profile of Eleusis and its region, to promote long-term cultural and urban development, to increase the number of visitors coming from the home country or abroad, to intensify the interest of local audiences in cultural activities and to foster self-awareness of citizens, civic pride and social cohesion of the community (European Commission, Ecorys, 2011).

Finally, given the fact that the new cultural strategy of Eleusis aims to put arts and culture in the core of the city's future development, the award will directly contribute in the establishment of the new developmental vision while it will help in achieving targets of the cultural strategy, especially in terms of urban projects (like restoring the old industrial buildings) and physical urban planning.

### 3. Monitoring and evaluating the impact and disseminating the results

Eleusis21 has developed an initial monitoring framework based on the impact assessment plan elaborated by the Laboratory of Tourism Planning, Research and Policy (LaReTour). Now that Eleusis is awarded the title of European Capital of Culture 2021, an independent evaluation steering group should be created in order to take responsibility for implementation of the overall framework and coordination of the evaluation.

During this process, timely monitoring is very important and in the case of Eleusis a 10 year evaluation strategy is proposed (Table 1), commencing at the end of 2016 and running up to 2026, permitting an overall survey and depiction of the potential and actual dynamics of this important cultural event.

<i>1st Period Time BEFORE</i>	<i>2nd Period PRESENT Time</i>	<i>3rd Period Time AFTER</i>
<i>Phase I Announcement (year of announcement 2016)</i>	<i>Phase III (Event 2021)</i>	<i>Phase IV Short Run (1-2 years after the event, 2022 or 2023)</i>
<i>Phase II Pre-Event (1-2 years before the event, 2019 or 2020)</i>		<i>Phase V Long Run (4-5 years after the event, 2025 or 2026)</i>

**Table 1**

This distinction of the time frame of the evaluation into 3 periods comprising 5 phases will define the milestones for the collection of data and the production of baseline surveys and reports.

The impact assessment plan took into consideration reviews published by the European Commission over the last years, several studies conducted by the past ECoC Cities (Herrero et al., 2006), as well as relevant literature on sustainable tourism and urban development (Langen & Garcia, 2009). According to the European Policy Group Guidelines and the experience and best practices of previous models, the initial evaluation framework is set and will be enriched in the following years with the upcoming results.

A preliminary set of objectives have been outlined as part of the Cultural Strategy (Eleusis21 – Bid Book 2016) and their correlation to several impact examples from the present and future Eleusis21 activities (table 2), will provide a large field for research and surveys that will demonstrate the progress over time in cultural and image, economic and social areas.

<b>Eleusis21 General Objectives</b>	<b>EXAMPLES OF IMPACTS</b> (Eleusis21 – Bid Book – 2016)
<i>Leverage and enhancement of cultural heritage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Enrichment of the Aeschylia Festival</li> <li>– Connection of the contemporary image of Eleusis with its important past in antiquity and the concept of transition (the “Mysteries” ceremonies &amp; the myth of goddess Demeter)</li> <li>– Organization of a series of festivals and events (like the Folk Art Festival and the Annual Arts Exhibition)</li> <li>– Reinforcement of European and international collaborations (alliances &amp; town twinning)</li> <li>– Participation in major art expos e.g. Art Athina and networks like IETM, CAE, On the Move.</li> <li>– Creation of the programme “Eleusis: The Living Museum” which links the whole of Eleusis21 activities with the digital space and new technologies.</li> </ul>
<i>Reinforcement of the cultural infrastructure and development of the arts sector capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of inactive former industrial facilities and their conversion into cultural venues (the area of Olive Oil Press, the Old Railway Station, The Kronos and Iris industrial buildings)</li> <li>– Unification of archaeological sites and Erection of the new archaeological museum.</li> <li>– Design and balanced spatial distribution of cultural venues per urban unit, making equal use of public and private space</li> <li>– Creation of the <a href="http://www.elefsinaculture.gr">www.elefsinaculture.gr</a> digital platform, promoting cultural entities, local artists and cultural activities</li> <li>– Creation of residencies with parallel financing for production, supporting Greek and foreign artists</li> </ul>
<i>Growing a sustainable urban economy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establishment of the “Innovation and Capacity Building Centre” which will support professionals from the cultural and creative sector by providing various forms of lifelong learning</li> <li>– Implementation of programmes like the “Art Industry” and “The future begins here” promoting synergies between different sectors of human activity and shaping the future working environment.</li> <li>– Provision of incentives for the installation of cultural and educational entities in Eleusis.</li> <li>– Creation by Eleusis 21 of the “Volunteers Network” and the “Creative Citizens’ Network”</li> </ul>
<i>Integration of culture in citizens’ everyday life and in the role of the community/ functions of the Municipality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Planning of art education courses for children, young people and lifelong learning.</li> <li>– Implementation of the “Loft Home of Ideas” programme, in order to develop a network of artists and creative professionals.</li> <li>– Operation and support of the “Social Exchange Platform” and the “Friendship Nest”.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishment of Neighborhood Cultural Councils which will link art and the daily lives of citizens</li> <li>- Organization of children’s summer camps and school programmes, focused on artistic education and creative expression</li> <li>- Introduction of projects and events concerning environmental issues (climate change, energy, pollution, recycling) or the coexistence of populations (immigration - refugees, urban uprisings, construction of a national identity).</li> </ul>
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**Table 2**

In this approach, quantitative and qualitative methodologies are used to feed into an overall evaluation of the ECoC, which combines the findings from multiple sources. The research team will track and monitor data corresponding to the general objectives of Eleusis21 (Table 2) and to the specific objectives of ECoC (Table 3). To ensure comparability a set of key indicators (European Commission, Guidelines, 2014) will be used, taking account of baselines and milestones presented above.

<b>Strategic ECoC objectives</b>	<b>Indicative Key indicators</b>	<b>Evaluation milestones (when)</b>	<b>Data sources (how &amp; who)</b>
<i>To safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe, to highlight the common features they share and to increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space</i>	<i>n° 1: Citizens' awareness and appreciation of the diversity of European cultures</i>	Phase I & II	Surveys amongst citizens, Questionnaire - Likert scale, Statistical analysis
	<i>n° 2: Citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space</i>	Phase I & II Phase IV & V	
<i>To foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities</i>	<i>n° 3: National / international recognition of the city as being culturally vibrant and having improved image</i>	All phases (every 2 years)	Surveys amongst tourists & visitors - attitudes & satisfaction factors, International surveys of tourist opinions (questionnaires by mail), Opinion of national or international artists & cultural experts (face to face interviews), authoritative published sources
	<i>n° 4: Increase in GDP and employment positions in city's cultural and creative sectors</i>	Phase IV & V Using as variable – Econometric analysis	Statistical data provided by the Municipality, the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), sector bodies, etc.
<i>To enhance the range, diversity and European dimension of the cultural offering in cities, including through transnational co-operation</i>	<i>n° 5: Total number of events</i>	Phase I & III	Programme data provided by the agency managing Eleusis21
	<i>n° 6: € value of ECoC cultural programmes</i>	Phase II	
	<i>n° 7: Number of activities highlighting European diversity</i>	Phase II	
<i>To widen access and participation in culture</i>	<i>n° 8: Attendance at ECoC events</i>	Phase III & IV	Programme data provided by the agency managing Eleusis21, collection of primary & secondary data Surveys of local residents, e.g. undertaken or commissioned by the municipality or the agency managing Eleusis21
	<i>n° 9: % of residents participating in events, including young, minorities or the disadvantaged</i>		
	<i>n° 10: Number of active volunteers</i>		
<i>To strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector</i>	<i>n° 11: € value of investment in cultural infrastructure and facilities</i>	Phase I Phase IV & V Econometric analysis, regarding GDP and value of investments in national and regional scale	Statistical data provided by public bodies at local or regional level, secondary data – budgeting of annual cultural investment Particular amount compared to the potential one
<i>To raise the international profile of city through culture</i>	<i>n° 12: Increase in tourist visits</i>	Phase II & IV Comparative analysis	Statistical data provided by the tourist board or the relevant public authority
	<i>n° 13: Volume and % of positive media coverage of the city</i>	Phase I & III Phase IV Comparative analysis (of the phases)	Data provided by authoritative media monitoring organisations (press reviews & social media analysis) Database creation – Quantitative variables

**Table 3**



The Phase I surveys have already been planned and implemented by LaReTour, using selected consultation methods. In particular, the consultation process known as “The World Café” has been selected and was implemented for revealing people’s attitudes, opinions and expectations for the award, with very satisfactory results. A broad ‘atypical’ discussion in the city about planning and hosting the event, is in progress.

Lessons learned will be transparent and accessible to all stakeholders, contributing to the creation of a sustainable legacy for Eleusis and the dissemination of the results at a European level.

Eleusis21 will be a success not only if there is an increase on the measurable evaluation indicators, but also if the objectives developed in the long-term strategy are met, and if the projects of cultural programme are delivered on time and on budget, and especially if the citizens, as well as the visitors, of the city are satisfied through the provision of high quality events and services (Garcia & Cox, 2013).

#### **4. Conclusions**

The most important lasting impact of the event is the establishment of structures and networks. The ECoC event can bring about important shifts within the local and the central governance as far as the cultural domain is concerned. Especially in the case of Eleusis, it may be the critical factor for the success of the city’s cultural strategy. The ECoC title can also lead to the introduction of new ways of working, new partnerships, and new strategies (Palmer, 2004). Thus overall, the ECoC marks significant changes in the way cultural activities are managed which will establish new platforms for activity, likely to be sustained in the future.

The ECoC Programme is a mature international event capable of shaping trends in major cultural event hosting, but calculating its real value requires a well-coordinated assessment. The issue of evaluation is linked closely to the issue of sustainability. Evaluation is essential to assess the yearly results, the projects that should be continued and the priorities that require support and these are the reasons it should be conducted in an independent and expert manner.

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