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CONTENTS

The role of events in developing the cultural side of a city: Assessing events organized by European Capitals of Culture	3
Claudiu Coman, Maria Cristina Bularca, Adrian Otovescu	
Cadet education in the Russian Federation: search for a management model	19
Margarita Toporkova	
Modelling of Teaching for Pre-School Children with Mental Retardation	29
Olga Shapko	
The true and fair view concept: the palette of controversial points (of “worth banning” to “worth keeping”).....	39
Yana Ustinova	
Senior Optimist pursues a better Future Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic	48
Amos Avny	

The role of events in developing the cultural side of a city: Assessing events organized by European Capitals of Culture

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Abstract. People today are continuously searching for new experiences, and thus the events organized by a city can play an important role in influencing peoples' decision to visit a certain city. In this regard, the title of European Capital of Culture can offer a city competitive advantage and it can help it improve its cultural as well as its social side. Hence, through the events organized while holding the title of European Capital of Culture, cities can better promote themselves as cultural cities, but they can also offer citizens and tourists diverse and interesting experiences and entertainment opportunities. Thus, we focused our research on the city of Aarhus. The purpose of our research was to assess the way Aarhus promoted itself through its events while having the title of European Capital of Culture in 2017, in order to extract some guidelines that could be further used as frame of reference by other cities in their development and promotion strategies. After analyzing one of the events organized by Aarhus-GrowOP - the only opera festival in Denmark designed for children, our findings revealed that the city used cultural events as a way to develop itself and attract tourists. The event was well organized, it was in line with the concept of the entire program of the city and through it, Aarhus aimed at integrating new and young audiences into its cultural life.

Keywords: cultural destination, events, capital of culture.

1. Introduction

In today's society dominated by technology and digitization, people's preferences in terms of cultural, touristic and social activities are constantly changing. With people being always on the move and having the liberty to travel or live in any place they desire, cities are in the need to effectively build their brands and to promote themselves in order not to just attract tourists, but also to offer them experiences that live up to their expectations.

In this context, a growing competition between cities can be observed, and in order to become more visible and attractive, cities develop strategies in which process like marketing and branding have an essential role. [1]

In this regard, obtaining the title of European Capital of Culture can be a major opportunity for cities to grow, build strong identities, gain popularity and create positive associations among people. Even more, organizing events that appeal to both to citizens and tourists is also important for the development of the city and of people's feeling of belonging to that city.

Taking into account the aspects previously mentioned and the idea that having the title of European Capital of Culture can provide cities with the opportunity to develop alternative methods of promotion, the paper focuses on analyzing the activities carried out by the city of Aarhus in the year it held the above mentioned title. Thus, the purpose of the paper is to assess the way the city of Aarhus promoted itself through the events it organized, during the period in which it was European

Capital of Culture, in order to extract information and strategies that can be used as a frame of reference by other cities in their promotion strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Place branding

Brand and branding are two concepts which have been defined in multiple ways over the years, and applied to products, services, cities, nations or institutions. While a brand can be considered a name, a logo, image, symbol or a combination of these elements that aims to differentiate a certain product or service [2], branding can be seen as the process of building and managing identity, the process that adds value and vitality to products or services [3]. In a similar way, branding involves actions like planning, designing and promoting the name and identity of a brand, actions that help it build its reputation [4]. When the international commerce started to develop and flourish in the 14th century, many forms of branding appeared, such as: services branding, corporate and place branding [5].

The expansion of branding to places, cities, nations and organizations has been and still is, a subject of interest for many researchers.

In a broad and simple way, place branding refers to strategies and activities that are meant to improve the image and the brand of a place, thus being "a way to make places famous" [6]. Implementing and applying branding strategies to nations or places is becoming more frequent due to the increased competition for attracting tourists [7]. However, in comparison with product or service branding, there are some different aspects that must be taken into account in place branding. Thus, Simon Anholt firstly states that when branding places, it is very important for public institutions, the government and members of the society to clearly and effectively communicate with each other if they want to influence the opinion of the public [8]. Next, paying attention to the image of the brand, of the city, is also vital since it can influence the brand's reputation, then important is brand equity and the idea that reputation is an essential element that must always be managed, but also innovation in every sector of the city is vital in order to progress and make the brand more visible [8].

Thus, in the context of globalization and the rapid development of society, there are some aspects that highlight the importance of branding places while having an approach oriented more towards people. [9] Some of this aspect include: the fact that the costs for international traveling are not as high as they used to be and people have the opportunity to travel to more places, which is why in order to stand out, more and more places need to effectively differentiate and promote themselves as tourist destinations, but also the fact that people desire more diverse cultural experiences and are attracted to new and different cultural traditions [9].

Thus, place branding is also seen as the activities developed by local governments in order to attract people and increase the economic and social capital of a place: city, country. In this regard many governments try to promote a positive image regarding the quality of life of people living in that certain place, by adopting specific slogans, or by organizing specific events such as festivals, or sports events [10]. In other words, place branding refers to attracting people who can then "choose to live, work, study or just visit a certain place" [11]. Even more, place branding focuses on peoples' perception about the brand and the process involves activities that are meant to influence the opinion of people in a manner that is beneficial for the place [12].

Place branding is closely related to place marketing, and in order to successfully brand a place, attention should be paid to both marketing and branding approaches [13]. In place marketing, the place must be developed in a way that is adapted to the

needs of the consumers [14]. However, place branding can be considered a separate process and should not be confused with place marketing, that mainly focuses on external people, on the consumers and their desires, while place branding also focuses on internal processes. This means, that the shape and core essence of a place is firstly formed in the mind of residents and citizens, who may act as representatives and ambassadors of the brand, and that the opinions and the identity of locals must stand at the basis of the process of building a place brand [13].

While approaching the subject of place branding the concepts of image and identity are also relevant. Brand identity is the element that helps creating and establishing the essence of the brand [15]. Identity is managed by the brand, or in this case, by the city, and it can also be considered an asset, that helps the brand differentiate itself, express its unique characteristics, build awareness and make the brand more visible [16]. Visual identity also plays an important part in branding a place. Thus, in the process of differentiation, brands could gain competitive advantage through the logo, slogan and symbols that they use, and symbols that are easy to remember can help the place (city, region) position itself and be more visible [17]. The image of a brand represents the way consumers perceive the brand and it consists of people's beliefs and opinions about the brand [18]. Thus, a place brand is also based on people's associations about the place and about what that place offers [19].

Hence, there are three main objectives related to a place brand: a) positioning-establishing the target audience and the how the place wants to be perceived, b) the feeling of belonging and identification with the brand of the community and lastly, c) the brand has to be able to create positive associations among people [20].

2.2 Destination and city branding

Destination branding and city branding are concepts that are often used interchangeably. Strategies used in order to brand destinations and places emerged around the 90's when cities like New York developed and adopted strategies meant to help them build the image (Fig. 1.) of the city through slogans such as "I love New York" [21].



Fig 1. New York logo and slogan.

Source: BestDesigns, <https://www.bestdesigns.co/best-design/the-i-love-new-york-logo-is-an-iconic-widely-imitated-tourism-symbol>

Another clever example of city branding strategy is the one implemented by Amsterdam, which adopted the slogan "I amsterdam", with emphasis on "I am" [22], which is represented in Fig. 2.



Fig 2. Amsterdam logo and slogan in 3D letters

Source: The conversation, <https://theconversation.com/rescaling-through-city-branding-the-case-of-amsterdam-71956>

The process of destination branding is complex, it involves cooperation and revolves around the image and identity of the brand. Thus, Cai Liping's model of destination branding places identity at the center of the process, and states that this type of branding involves relations between brand image building and brand element mix. In this regard the first step of the process is to choose some brand elements that will be used in order to identify the brand. Then, those elements (slogan, logo) help differentiate the destination and create associations in the minds of people, associations that also reflect the components of a brand image: attributes, affective-meanings given to the attributes and attitudes [23].

City branding can be considered an important process that helps a city gain competitive advantage, develop economic capital, tourism, but also a process that determines citizens and the local community to identify with the city [24]. In this regard, the objective of city branding does not only resume to the development and promotion of the elements that make the city special and attractive to outsiders (tourists, investors), but also to residents, thus increasing their sense of belonging [25]. In other words, in order for locals to positively promote the city they live in to other people, and act as its brand ambassadors, they must identify with the city and must be satisfied with the cultural and social life they have within that city.

City branding is also represented by a set of strategies whose aim is to help the city emphasize and promote its strength and opportunities that it offers, strategies that can contribute to improving the city's current reputation. However, city brands cannot be built over night: the process is complex and involves leadership, collaboration between authorities (the government) and members of the community [26].

Since cities usually have common infrastructures or opportunities that they can offer, the challenge is to establish and communicate that core elements which make the city more attractive than other cities. Thus, by having an identity, a city is also assigned a personality, traits and values that it stands by [27].

The city brand has become today an essential tool for promoting tourism and is mainly used to create the image of the city [28], as well as to build its reputation. Nonetheless, as in the cases of people, cities may sometimes fail to properly express their values and fail to earn people's trust. In this regard, a series of factor than can influence the credibility of a city were identified. The six factors are represented by: the city's ability to determine people's loyalty, to facilitate the development of strategies and policies, to create positive associations and feelings, to prove that it is indeed different from other cities, to send personalized messages to stakeholders, and its ability to correlate its history, with who it is in the present, and who desires to be in the future [29].

While city branding encompasses elements such as: uniqueness, authenticity and image [30], the image created and projected must correspond to the reality. In this context city branding requires concrete actions, such as urban development, building the community, or organizing events. The image created through these actions can attract tourists, investors or even new citizens- that can improve the cultural, economic and social life of the city [31]. Another essential element of city branding is creating a story. Stories must not just be added to the name of the city, but they must be created within the city, properly associated with it and presented to the public. [32]

City branding must also be approached in relation to the concept of culture. Thus, city branding can be the process that helps cities progress and thrive and a main preoccupation of cities should be to find ways to combine "culture, history, social development, infrastructure, architecture and landscapes in order to create an identity that is accepted and shared by most people" [33].

Culture is a concept that takes many forms and that favors innovation [34]. In this regard, the importance of culture for a city brand is highlighted by the fact that it is often used as a technique to renew and improve the economic, social or environmental dimensions of the city [28]. While the term culture is derived from the Latin word *colere* that means to cultivate [34], in a broad way, culture is tightly linked to society and the way people live: it consists of values, beliefs and behaviors that people share within a society, thus giving them "a sense of belonging and identity" [35].

In the context of cities, culture is an important dimension that must be developed and must be taken into account in order to help cities thrive and in order to offer citizens a rich social and cultural life. Thus, the importance of culture is also highlighted by Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, who stated in the *Global Report for culture and sustainable urban development* that "culture lies at the heart of urban renewal and innovation", and in the case of a city, its cultural aspects, as well as the elements that offer citizens a sense of identity and the elements that enhance and increase the vitality and prosperity of a city, must be strengthened and developed [36]. However, in the attempt of developing the cultural side of a city, one should also take into consideration the fact that today, people's mindsets and values "have shifted from communal living to a culture of individualism and personal autonomy" [37].

Thus, in a society dominated by technology some future trends regarding the cultural side of a city can be observed. These trends can be represented by *glocalization, integration and technological support for culture* [38]. Glocalization refers to processes such as globalization and localization of culture, processes that take place in the same time. In this regard, in a world where multiple cultures exist, glocalization can be understood as the process in which global influences interact with local influences, them affecting many aspects of a society, especially culture. Integration is linked to the concept of interculturalism according to which cultures can be mixt, one culture can borrow elements from other cultures. Next, technological support for culture refers to the use of technology in order to develop cultural elements and make culture available for people [38].

Furthermore, the local culture of a city also has an important role in the development of the city. Considering that "culture provides knowledge about our existence as inhabitants of a city" [39], by being aware of the culture of the city, citizens can feel more connected to it, them developing a stronger sense of belonging. Thus, culture can be used in order to promote the city, to help it thrive from an economical point of view, but it can also represent an essential element that can influence citizens' quality of life [39].

Cities are essential to cultural tourism, them being considered one of the most important elements of European cultural tourism. Usually, large numbers of tourists

favor visiting urban centers that are also historic centers and when they visit such places tourists try to experiment the local culture by engaging in the locals' diverse day to day activities [40].

Since today people's needs and desires are constantly changing, cities could take advantage of the development of technology and offer tourist enhanced experiences. In this regard, cities could use virtual reality tools or augmented reality in order to offer "an immersive experience, tailored to the visitor" [41]. However, while it can be beneficial for a city to offer tourists personalized experiences, it is also important for a city to take into account that tourism does not resume to only to offering visitors experiences that suit their needs and desires but tourism should also "preserve the culture and identity of host cities" [42].

In this regard, a previous study that gathered the opinion of people about diverse landmarks of various cities by using the database of TripAdvisor, managed to determine some cultural heritage indicators [43]. The first indicator is represented by *visitors' attractiveness in relation to socio-cultural facilities*, and it comprises the cultural events organized by the city, its creative activities, or its museums. The second indicator, is the *visitors' logistic conditions*- which refers to many elements including transport facilities such as taxi or transfer to airport, and the third indicator is the *visitors' connectivity and the quality of spatial conditions*- such as heritage sites or green spaces [43].

Nonetheless, the digital age we live produced many changes regarding people's needs but a shift of paradigm can also be observed in the context of the sustainable development of cities. Hence, to the elements comprised by the so called traditional paradigm: environmental balance, economic development, and social inclusion, one more element could be added, and that is culture. Even though the traditional paradigm does not pay attention to the power culture can have in developing cities and countries, in today's society many countries, companies and organizations recognize the importance of culture in developing and elaborating strategic plans [44]. Even more, the sustainability of a city should be assessed by focusing on its culture, its creative economy and the environment that favors synergies and connections between them, and thus such connections can contribute to "the formation of networks and can promote urban entrepreneurship" [45].

In other words, given the complexity of culture, and the diverse elements through which a city can express its culture, when approaching the subject of development and sustainability it is essential to acknowledge that by promoting and enhancing its cultural side, a city can progress and can also attract more visitors.

However, while countries and cities started to focus more on cultural aspects, previous studies reveal the European cities that are considered cultural cities, or that have a vibrant cultural life, still fail to address and efficiently make use of their cultural heritage or reuse their cultural heritage buildings [46]. Nonetheless, there are cities that integrate and manage well their cultural assets. Thus, a previous study on the city of Madrid and one of its main districts, Barrio de la Letras, revealed that the city focuses not only on tourism and trade, on promoting and selling products or services, but also focuses on promoting its cultural side [47].

2.3 Role of events in developing the cultural side of a city

More and more people today desire to live in cities with rich cultural life, that offer them many opportunities and that are open and tolerant with different cultures [48]. The cultural resources of a city are represented by many elements such as: local history, festivals and events, art activities, places of entertainment, universities and architectural buildings [49]. Thus, it is important for a city to have a rich and vibrant cultural life [50], and events are a major part of the cultural life of a city.

While being a complex term, the term "event", is known to have multiple meanings. Taking into account its Latin roots, an event can be described as "a happening, a social activity, a set of circumstances", but over time the word received other meanings too, including "something that happens at a given place and time, a competition or adventure" [51].

Events and cultural activities have an essential role in developing and promoting cities. Events help the city gain competitive advantage, they can offer new meanings to a city, they provide new opportunities for entertainment, they improve the quality of life of the city, they can help the city develop partnerships, they promote intercultural communication and bring together people from different cultures [52].

Even more, events create dynamic mediums of communication for stakeholders, and many cities base their promotion strategies on events: Barcelona [53], Edinburgh who developed its cultural image through international festivals [54], or Budapest, which is focused on mega-events like Sziget Festival. [55]

Thus, due to their diversity and frequency, events have the power to positively influence the way citizens spend their free time, the quality of their free but can also have an impact on the quality of the time that tourists spend in a certain city. In this regard, tourists can acquire knowledge by taking part in diverse events, including cultural or artistic events [56].

Because of their complexity, events can be classified according to many criteria, and thus there are many types of planned events. Hence, Donald Getz elaborated a typology of events, which comprises eight categories: Cultural celebrations, Political and state events, Arts and Entertainment, Business and Trade, Educational and Scientific, Sport Competition, Recreational, and Private events [57] Each of these categories contains multiple examples of events, that are presented by the author [57,p.404], in the following order:

- Cultural celebrations can take the form of: festivals, carnival, commemorations or religious events
- Political and state events include: summits or royal or VIP events
- Arts and entertainment include: concerts or ceremonies with awards
- Business and trade include: meetings, fairs and markets
- Educational and scientific include: conferences and seminars
- Sport and competition events can be: professional or amateur events, and people can have the role of participants and spectators
- Private events include: weddings and various parties

Thus, cultural events can contribute to increasing the pride of the community, the identity, the image of the city, and implicitly the associations that exist in the minds of the citizens and tourists about the city [58]. Even more, an essential criterion according to which events can be differentiated is size, and in this case, one type of event that cities organize is the cultural mega event. In this regard, even though it is a more complex concept that encompasses many dimensions, the act of holding the title of European Capital of Culture can be considered a mega event, that comprises small or medium sized events that take place during an entire year in the respective city [58].

Hence, when it comes to mega-events, certain features and aspects that highlight the importance and distinctiveness of such events were identified and presented in a previous study [51], and these aspects include the fact that mega events:

- have high prestige and are events that people simply must attend
- they have large scale impact
- they usually attract very large audiences
- they comprise festivals as well as other types of events
- they are public events that are carried out according to specific rules
- the cost for organizing them is high

- they focus on tradition and symbolism

Regardless of size and theme, in the process of organizing an event, the needs of the organization, as well as the needs of the public/tourists and of the participants should be taken into account. In the case of a festival, with respect to organizations, one of their needs could be represented by the need to increase the numbers of visitors during the period in which the festival takes place. With respect to the public, its needs might consist of taking part in a qualitative event which has an appropriate musical setting, and with respect to participants, their needs and interest regarding the culture, the music, and the landmarks of the city should be satisfied [59].

In the context of European Capitals of Culture and their impact on host cities, a study which analyzed the impact of the events organized by the Slovenian city Maribor who held the title of European Capital of Culture in 2012, revealed that citizens from Maribor were prouder of the event at the beginning of the year, but by the time the year ended, people living in other Slovenian cities were more proud of the event than citizens of Maribor [60]. In this regard, the same study emphasizes the idea that it is essential for the organizers of the events to take into account the wide impact that events organized by cities who hold the title of European Capital of Culture have on citizens' perceptions and feelings, but also on the reputation of the city. Even more, attention must be paid not only on the performance of the event but also on the way it is portrayed by the media and to the passive participants [60].

While examining the programs implemented by the city Guimarães in 2012 and Košice 2013, a previous study [61], reveals interesting aspects regarding the impact of the program on people and on the cities. Firstly, the study emphasizes the fact that both cities used to be industrial cities but both of them had potential for cultural development. Even more, even though they adopted different strategic plans, according to the study, when it comes to the impact of the events organized, the two cities have in common citizens' higher levels of pride, the in-creased visibility of the cities and also a higher number of visitors [61].

Furthermore, when referring to a cultural event carried out by a European Capital of Culture, an element that differentiates these events from others is its European dimension. Thus, an event can be considered European when the content and themes of its activities, as well as the mechanisms through which it is carried out and the participants are "European in essence" [62]. In other words, in terms of the content of the cultural event, it should focus on European themes and issues, on the European history of the city; in terms of delivery mechanisms, the event should have European artists, it should develop partnerships with other cities or countries; and last but not least, the European dimension in terms of audiences refers to having as participants European tourists and citizens [62].

Hence, events have a major role in developing the cultural side of city, especially those events organized in the context of European Capitals of Culture, and analysis of the way cities choose to elaborate and implement strategies and to carry out events is important because such analyses can be used in order to improve the organization of future events. In this regard, useful and relevant are the results of the evaluation report of the program developed by Umea and Riga, cities which held the title of European Capitals of Culture in 2014 [63]. Following the evaluation of the programs the authors provided six recommendations. The first recommendation refers to obtaining political support for implementing the program. The second recommendation is to establish an effective team, while the third is to think beyond culture, meaning that the programs should be designed so as to stimulate the economic progress of the city, to create jobs and also the programs should focus on stakeholders who operate in the economic and social sectors. The last three recommendations refer to thoroughly evaluate and track the impact of the program, to actively target audiences that usually try to ignore culture, and to take consideration developing actions in order to support the sustainability of the city [63].

2.4 European Capital of Culture program

The European Capital of Culture program offers many opportunities for cities to develop and promote themselves as cultural and tourist destinations. The program was developed in 1985 as a way of “celebrating European cultural diversity” [64]. Every year, European cities compete in order to gain the title of European Capital of Culture, (more than 40 cities already had this title), and events organized on this occasion generally positively impact the city, and provide opportunities for its cultural, social and economic development [65]. Thus, ECOC events, can represent an alternative method for promotion and development, for they facilitate the projection of the desirable image to tourists and investors [66].

In this context, the cities that implement successful programs and events are the ones that focus on creating a strong identity for the city that citizens can relate to, as well as on projecting an image that can enhance the city’s cultural identity [67]. Even more, strategies that bring success involve having a clear vision and balance between events organized and infrastructure development, thus creating a program that properly represents the city and helps it stand out from the crowd [68].

The first city who was awarded this title was Athens in 1985 [69], and over the years many other cities managed to implement successful programs among which we mention: Cork, in 2005 with “The city of making” program [64], Sibiu in 2007 [70], and Aarhus in 2017 [69].

In 2017 Aarhus won the title of European Capital of Culture and thus implemented a very complex program. The entire program revolved around the “Let’s Rethink” concept, according to which the city carried out activities throughout the year. With an ambitious and creative program, Aarhus desired to “transform the Central Denmark Region into a cultural laboratory” [71]. The program revolved around the concept of culture, and “Let’s Rethink” was more than just a theme, it was “a mindset for change, innovation and courage”, meant to consolidate the identity of the city [71]. While having the vision to use art and culture as a means for rethinking challenges, and the mission to create sustainable development in terms of cultural, social and economic growth [72], the city also wanted to redefine itself as an international city whose main key elements are culture and creativity [73]. The city wanted to rethink and improve every aspect of its cultural and social life, and it was focused on organizing creative events and mega events that would bring together people with different ages, cultures or interests. Thus, there were organized many street performances, (Off road festival), visual festivals (Visual Art 2017), music and theater festivals, as well as children events (GrowOP festival), [74]. The overall impact of the program was a positive one: 60% of citizens attended the events, more than 1,950 new full time jobs were created and the program received 92% positive feedback from the public. [72]

3. Data and Methodology

3.1 Present study

The current paper presents and describes a previous study [75], that focuses on analyzing the way the city of Aarhus promoted itself through one of its main events during the time it was European Capital of Culture.

Situated in the Central Denmark Region, Aarhus is the second largest city in Denmark. It has a rich cultural life that encompasses many museums, festivals, it is an educational center, Aarhus University having more than 40000 students, and it is a dynamic city that promotes progress and healthy life style: 20% of trips in Aarhus are being made by bike. [76]

Aarhus tried to use culture in a creative way and innovate its cultural life on every level, and the program it developed had positive outcomes. In this context, we considered relevant and useful an analysis of one of the events it organized in order to discover strategies that brought Aarhus success. In this regard we focused our research of one of the city's representative and strategic events, GrowOP Festival, an opera festival for children.

3.2 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the research was to assess the way the city of Aarhus promoted itself through its events, during the time it was European Capital of Culture, in order to extract information and strategies that can be used as a frame of reference by other cities in their development and promotion strategies.

The objectives of the research include: identifying the main strategies that the event used in order to promote the city and attract the target audience, analyzing how the event was in line with the overall concept of the program, identifying the messages sent to the public through the event, and how the event contributed to the development of the city's cultural life.

3.3 Method

The method used in order to conduct the research was content analysis. Although the city organized many thematic events, the event we analyzed, GrowOP Festival, is representative for the strategy adopted by Aarhus in its program, due to the fact that it was a new event that targeted a different kind of audience.

Thus, in order to conduct the research, firstly the official website of the Aarhus 2017 program was analyzed, in order to see how the event is presented within the program. Next, the official website of the event was analyzed, in order to discover the vision of the organizers, their objectives, the way the event was carried out, what type of techniques were used to promote the event. Moreover, other websites that mentioned the event and its outcomes were analyzed too.

4. Results

4.1 The concept of the event

Our research revealed that GrowOP! Festival is an innovative and creative event focused on increasing the interest of children and young people for a type of cultural activity not so popular among them, opera shows. In this regard, the event is in line with the overall concept of the city, because it tries to think of ways to develop and innovate musical theatre. GrowOP! Festival revolves around the idea that even from a young age, children should be exposed to cultural activities such as opera shows. The festival took place between 11 and 26 November 2017, and is the only opera festival in Denmark that is dedicated entirely to children and teenagers [77]. The event desires to rethink and change the way opera is perceived, thus transforming it into a modern art for children. The organizers of the event wanted to create a link between opera and children and determine this new type of audience to participate more in opera events [78]. The 2017 edition included, in addition to opera performances in which music was combined with theater and fairy tales, the newest version of the series of opera for children aged 0-3 years, but also interactive workshops, an international seminar on art and infancy that emphasized how important it is for babies to come in contact with music, and a seminar on youth and talent.

GrowOP! Festival also tries to optimize the collaboration between European institutions and to give young people and children the chance to share ideas and

experiences, having as a central point opera presented in new forms: with stories and characters from fairy tales. The performances included "Fogonogo" a show presenting children adventures while doing various experiments, "Little red biting hood", and also "Snow white", operas that had a language appropriate for the age of the children but also a message that was easy to understand. However, although it also had many international guests, one disadvantage of the event was the fact that some of the performances were only presented in Danish, thus making the people who did not speak Danish unable to attend those shows.

4.2 The objectives of the event

Through its new approach on opera and musical theatre, the event desired to help the city become more visible. Even more, the objectives of the event refer to involving more children and teenagers in cultural activities, developing collaborations with other opera institutions, and creating positive associations among people regarding the initiatives of the city of Aarhus and this type of music.

4.3 Target audience

The unique character of the event is given mainly by the audience it targeted: children, teenagers, and families with children. The event was especially designed for children but the opera shows were also promoted as a cultural event that parents could attend together with their children.

4.4 Messages sent to the public

While communicating with the target audience of the event, the organizers used messages that highlighted the distinctive character of the event, the concern for the participation of children to cultural activities even from an early age. The organizers emphasized that GrowOP! is the only opera event that is entirely created and adapted for children, that it does not only offer musical shows but also workshops and seminars where children could learn about music and bond with their parents.

4.5 Strategies and tactics

The research revealed that, in order to develop the event, promote and communicate information about it, several strategies were used. The first strategy, defined as the "Artscapes remix" [79] is focused on rethinking or creating an interesting theme for the event. While implementing this strategy, GrowOP! managed to stand out from the crowd by promoting opera shows as suitable for a new audience- children, thus bringing this type of cultural events closer to a category of people that did not used to or did not had the intention to participate in opera shows.

In order to promote and create positive associations among people, the organizers also adopted the strategy of involving the community in the event, strategy that generates commitment and brand attachment. Citizens were offered the possibility to volunteer at the event and have the chance to also attend the shows.

Another strategy that the event adopted was the strategy of increasing cultural mobility in the region, by attracting and developing new audiences. People were attracted to this event because the shows were presented in a new and interesting manner, they were focused on heroes and fairytales, and the language was adapted so that children would easily understand it. Thus, because the event was designed for children and families with children that usually do not attend this type of events,

through its creative approach, GrowOP! Festival increased cultural mobility in the city of Aarhus.

The strategy adopted for communicating with the public, the media mix strategy is well consolidated. The event promoted itself both in the online and the offline environment. Online, it integrated social media instruments and the information was communicated mainly through the official website of the event, through its Face-book page, and YouTube page where shows were briefly presented, but also through websites of the partners of the event such as, Den jyske opera. Offline, information about the festival was given on the radio station Da Radio Denmark, but also on TV on the TV channel Denmark 1 and on channels for children. The event was also promoted through brochures containing the program of the event.

4.6 Outcomes

Being part of the Aarhus 2017 program, the development of GrowOP! Festival had positive outcomes. Tickets for most activities and shows were sold out, the performances of the national and international guests (UK, Portugal, Italy, Hong Kong) was appreciated [80], and the festival was considered an event that provided high quality artistic acts. Even more, the positive impact on the cultural life of the city was proven by the Prize for innovation of the year that it received in 2018.

5. Conclusion

In the context of globalization, cities compete not only in order to gain popularity and attract tourists, but also to be recognized as powerful, developed cultural centers, that people would also like to live in. When trying to define themselves and create their brand, cities must focus on building their identity and must take into account the opinions and belief of the citizens. Even more, events play an essential role in developing the cultural side of a city and special attention should be given to the process of organizing events but also to the process of evaluating their impact.

The purpose of our paper was to assess the way the city of Aarhus promoted itself through events it organized during the time it was European Capital of Culture. Thus our paper shows that through its overall concept, "Let's rethink", that is very well embedded in the GrowOP! Festival, Aarhus managed to improve the cultural life of the city, by using culture as an element to innovate itself.

Thus, we analyzed a representative event for the strategic approach of the entire program, the GrowOP! Festival. Our findings are in line with other studies regarding the role of events in the life of a city [52], and reveal that the festival analyzed provided new opportunities for entertainment, it improved the cultural life of the city by attracting younger audiences, it helped the city to differentiate itself and also be recognized for hosting the only opera event designed for children.

The concept of the festival was innovative, creative and aligned with the overall concept of the program. The festival had clear objectives, it sent messages that were meant to highlight the opportunities people could have by attending the events and they also emphasized how important it was for children to participate from a young age, to cultural activities. However, one aspect that represented a disadvantage for the festival was that some shows were only presented in Danish and only people who spoke Danish were able to attend them. The strategic plan of the event was well consolidated: the festival used methods to differentiate itself, it offered community the chance to be involved and contribute to developing the cultural life of the city, and it oriented itself towards an audience that was not usually fond of the shows it provided and managed to make the public participate, thus creating positive associations among them.

As other studies suggest [66], our paper supports the idea that events are an essential part of the cultural life of the city, and that the title of European Capital of Culture can be used as an alternative method of promoting and developing cities. Even more, since Aarhus organized events in which it used culture as a way to renew its cultural and social dimensions, and succeeded, our paper is in line with other papers that state that culture favors innovation, cultural, economic and social growth [28, 34]. Thus, the research provides information regarding the way the city of Aarhus managed to thrive while holding the title of European Capital of Culture, through the help of one of the events it organized.

Therefore, while the event we analyzed and the strategies adopted by it can be used as a frame of reference for other cities that desire to improve and promote themselves as cultural destinations, the research also has some limitations. One limitation is represented by the fact that only one event and one city was analyzed. In this regard, a future research should expand and should take into consideration the analysis of other cities that were European Capitals of Culture in order to make a comparative analysis.

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