

## European Capitals of Culture:

### The Art of Reimagining

*(call for contributions)*

In 2020 European Capital of Culture (ECOC) status was awarded jointly to Galway in the West of Ireland and to Rijeka in Croatia. While the actual ECOC for both cities have not been totally cancelled, their offer has been much reduced by the nature and impact of the global pandemic. Universities often play a major role in the ECOC of their city either in forging research focused on the arts throughout Europe, in working with city councils in evaluating the bid or in defining new cultural and educational initiatives within their local communities. In Ireland, NUI Galway was due to host the University Network of European Capitals of Culture (UNeECC), an academic network that comprises almost 50 member universities from 20 countries located in cities which have been, are or will be European Capitals of Culture. In place of this annual conference, we are instead inviting interdisciplinary contributions to an **online Special Issue of the University Network of European Capitals of Culture**. This Special Issue is an opportunity for us to learn more about how Capitals of Culture in Ireland and Croatia have adapted their programmes and to understand better the pan-European responses to the impact on artists, cultural workers, local communities and universities. Our aim is to define and examine how the global pandemic effected European cities, culture and education. What future for our cities and our lives can we collectively envisage in this creative November Special Issue?

The ECOC is a prestigious designation that encourages local communities and visitors to actively participate in and to experience newly commissioned artistic work that is at once local and European in its celebration of what is unique to the cultural life of individual cities. The European Union founded the initiative in part to help generate a collectively binding cultural understanding and artistic set of networks and practices across the European union. The designation comes with significant funding and investment that can act as an incentive for regional development and urban infrastructural transformation. In Ireland, the ECOC was to be a celebration of 'language, landscape and migration': so much of the West as a designated *Gaeltacht* is devoted to the preservation of the Irish language; the west coast's intricate waterways connect Ireland to the rest of Europe making the landscape a major historical and contemporary site for migration and the translation of culture.

Taking its lead from these themes, this special issue explores the interconnected ecosystems that make up each Capital of Culture: Europe, Cities and Education. The following set of questions are meant to engage creative responses from contributors but also to inspire other new questions from an interdisciplinary pan-European range of academics, artists, cultural workers, university administrators, postgraduate students, and community activists in fields including languages, arts, humanities, architecture, medicine, social sciences, business, politics, administration and technology.

### Europe

- How has the European Union faced the challenges that the global pandemic has created?
- What are the disparities across Europe which have been highlighted in the emergency wards of hospitals, food and medical shortages?

- What about the discrepancies throughout Europe in the communication of experts vs the decisions of politicians, or the different member states? What about a common European approach?
- How can the EU be responsive to the new and urgent needs of European Union members in ways that are collective and premised on equality?
- How have the 2020 ECoCs Galway and Rijeka been impacted by the pandemic and how have they adapted? What about cultural life in former ECoCs? How has the preparatory work or the bidding process in future ECoCs been affected?
- What is the future of the European Capitals of Culture project?
- What has been the experience of artists and cultural organisations during the pandemic?
- Can European Capitals of Culture benefit artists?
- How can European Capitals of Culture strengthen European cultural ties across communities in the European Union?
- How are governments and city councils responding to the crisis unleashed by the pandemic for artists, cultural workers, cultural arts organisations?
- How can the EU devise a united response to support artists and practitioners who make European Capitals of Culture possible?

### **Cities**

- How do we see our cities and our lives now and in the future?
- How have European cities and 'creative' city spaces been transformed by the global pandemic?
- It is ecologically sustainable for the success of Capitals of Culture to be evaluated through the high levels of new tourism and travel?
- Is there a growing desire in local communities not to return to the environmental damage of car fueled landscapes, high carbon footprints?
- Is there less appetite for attendance at the large social cultural events such as festivals and packed gallery exhibitions?
- Are the technologies often used to track cultural touristic footfall in our cities by local councils and other private bodies including universities ethical?
- Should the success and impact of ECoC's be determined by more nuanced qualitative forms of assessment?
- Are City Councils and private companies the best and most appropriate organisations to lead ECoC's?
- Has the concern about Covid network tracing through privately sponsored mobile apps raised questions about privacy that might impact future evaluations of European Capitals of Culture?

### **Universities**

- Will university campuses and the way we teach and study and interact need to be redesigned? How have online teaching and creative student assessments changed university environments?
- Has creativity and the arts found articulation in new forms of assessment and engagement?
- What creative practices and modes of communication have emerged to find articulation for the personal and public sense of anxiety or solidarity?
- What is the impact on university life?
- What is the impact on university administration and organization?
- What issues of inequality have been further revealed in our universities?
- How have universities engaged with local authorities in these times of crisis?
- How have universities encouraged forms of research that has been responsive to the needs of their local communities during the pandemic?
- How have university hospitals benefited from this research focused educationally aligned designation?

- So many arts and cultural humanities subjects are practice-based. How have changes to online learning and cultural arts engagement transformed practice-based assessment? What might be the longer-term impact on the creative arts education in higher education?
- Scholarly communities and paradigms for career success often depend on international and pan European conferences, speaker series, networks of active affiliation. How has this changed?
- Are some universities taking advantage of the pandemic to axe humanities and arts cultural focused programmes that are hard to measure in terms of economic success?
- How will public shared learning environments such as libraries adapt to the new challenges?
- Are universities marketing their programmes to international high fee-paying students in need of reform focused on their educational values, management systems and economic models for community education?

We gladly invite the following forms of multimedia and multi-lingual (with accompanying English translation) submissions:

- Research articles
- 'Document Essays' with curated photo-based material
- Recorded-media-based responses/provocations
- Interviews with practitioners/artists/researchers also welcome
- Visual artwork (photographs, paintings, murals etc.)
- Creative writing
- Manifestos
- Architectural imaginings
- Music
- Etc.

Potential contributors are required to submit an abstract or proposal of 150 words along with a short biography by 31 August. The special issue will be published under the auspices of the Centre for Creative Arts Research at NUI Galway's Moore Institute for Research in the Humanities and Social Studies. <https://mooreinstitute.ie/research-centre/centre-for-creative-arts-research/>

Full submissions with agreement for online publication due 15 October 2020. Please send any enquiries and abstracts to the editorial team through:

[catherine.morris@nuigalway.ie](mailto:catherine.morris@nuigalway.ie) and [patrick.lonergan@nuigalway.ie](mailto:patrick.lonergan@nuigalway.ie)