

TALKS & LECTURES

Entrepreneurship and sustainability in the cultural/creative industries.

BIP Program (November 13-17, 2023 in Romania, Timisoara)

A Report by Regina Hammer & Lukas Greiderer

The West University of Timisoara, faculty of arts organized the blended intensive program (BIP) on the subject “Entrepreneurship and sustainability in the cultural/creative industries”. within the EU ERASMUS programs. BIPs combine a short physical group mobility, minimum five days, with a virtual phase.

In the virtual phase, students and teachers of the five collaborating Universities met online in zoom meetings in order to present themselves and (to get) to know about their universities and their personal activities. On site several external guests gave insights into specific fields of entrepreneurship and sustainability.



*Abb. 1: Faculty of Arts Timisoara
Photo: Lukas Greiderer*

Participants came from Romania (WUT Timisoara), Austria (KU Linz), Belgium (Sint Lucas Antwerpen), Italy (Academia de Belle Arti Aldo Galli, Como), Portugal (Politècnico de Braganca). The Universities emphasize on applied arts including IT methods and innovative designs, fine arts, art theories, economic studies, business administration, management. So, we had a variety of perspectives on the given argument.

Virtual Phase: From Branding to Collaborative Co-Languages

In the virtual phase from the 23rd to the 25th of October the docents of each university read lectures to their appropriate research fields.

Diana Andreescu from Timisoara, Faculty of Arts and Design, started with “Personal Brand. Vision and Passion.” She underlined the potentials of a brand to build bridges between individual ideas and motivation to social influence and estimation, because a brand can provoke social interaction. It could implant your ideas into a circuit of personal motivation and socio-cultural needs and values.

The second lecturer *Fulvio Alivisi* from Como presented his family business Alvisi e Alvisi, nowadays a global textile design business, producing textiles from small beginnings for more than 100 years already. They had started with adopting the designs of the British Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th century. He underlined the importance of being able to adapt adopted design and production to the wishes of the market without losing authenticity. This impact would have been the secret of their success. According to what he said, institutionalized flexibility would be the most difficult and one of the most important challenges for the creative industries to maintain stability.

The third online lecture was presented by our professor *Siglinde Lang*, Austria. She gave an insight into her research work: Study of Arts Entrepreneurship, which she based on case

studies about startups. In her interviews she had asked about founding ideas, success definitions, forms of companies, income structures and business aims. In the end she compared entrepreneurs in the arts/culture sector with traditional business entrepreneurs and came to the conclusion that in creative industries the passion and mission are more important than the profit. In most cases, the first business aim remains the basis for the further development of the arts/ cultural businesses.

José, a senior student from Portugal, – his professor was in Brazil at that time - presented the CANVAS BUSINESS MODELL, which he declared as a basic tool for their university business studies. The Canvas Business Modell is a very useful template to make a first image or version of a business/financing plan for yourself. It consists of a lot of different, important steps to check if you could start your idea successfully. The Portuguese students in Braganca had their main emphasis on business and marketing which proved to be quite useful in our collaborative groups later on.

Last but not least *Laura Braspenning* came up from Antwerpen. She led us into the world of common language creation for people from different backgrounds who are working together in cross-disciplinary cultural or creative situations: “Creating language for Co-creating.” That motto seemed to be quite appropriate for our common studying and learning situation. Through the presentation we gained new perspectives and alternatives to questioning ourselves and finding a shared language through visual representations.

In a following final sequence students presented themselves with photos or videos and short statements. That gave the idea to have met and greeted our colleagues already three weeks before we met in Timisoara. After three days of online classes however the group was prepared for the journey to Timisoara.

Guest Lectures in Timisoara: A Wide Range of Talks & Presentations



Abb. 2: Gallery in the attic, Photo: Marina Weinzierl

On Monday 13th of November, we met at the Faculty of Arts and Design in Timisoara with a warm welcome and we were showed around in the university building. We got to see classrooms, ateliers of painting, sculpturing, textile design, interior design, graphic design, photography and a very impressive exhibition gallery under the roof in the attic which many of the foreign students envied a lot.

After a walk through the old centre of Timisoara we returned to the university, where our lectures began. Our lecturers were docents from the West University of Timisoara or invited guests, mostly alumni from the UTV Timisoara, or local Arts entrepreneurs who covered a large variety of issues.

We started with Sustainability and Cultural Creative Industries. *Alexandra Szuromi* reminded us of the 17 UNESCO sustainable development goals and how they could be referred to in building up arts entrepreneurship or in managing creative industries.

The second presentation was again about branding. *Dalibor Vasiljevic*, a marketing expert, wanted to convince us that the most important competence in becoming a brand would be the continuous “make yourself useful” as a categorical imperative. We agreed that this presentation was a bit too marketing driven, and business/profit focused for arts entrepreneurs, although “making yourself useful” can sometimes be the only door opener in difficult start up situations.



Abb. 3: Presentation "Sustainability and Creative Industries", Photo: Lukas Greiderer

The next day we got to know *Mihail Caraghiaur*, an interior designer. He presented himself as an expert in technology and art of lightning, using the different light situations of the hours during the day and creating outdoor situations, even indoors. He gave us the example of the famous green house in a park in Timisoara “Casa Ledera”. Some of us later even visited it. Some of us were quite impressed by his ideas to change the character of rooms by influencing on the sensual perceptions with relatively simple interventions. He also mentioned that he profited from his former professional work in a theatre as a stage designer.

The fourth subject was “The art of NFT” by *Samuel Bogdan*. His way of presenting was very relaxed. He started with the question. “Who knows what NFT means?” Some answers were given. He completed and went on asking. More questions were asked by the students. So, we learned a lot about NFT and NFT marketplaces in an interactive dialogue. Some of us pointed out that he did not explain the negative and dangerous sides of the new phenomenon. At the end he invited us in his gallery, where he presented his project IONA as an example. This was the last act on Friday evening of our BIP.

On day three we heard about Intellectual Property and Living Labs, lectured by *Alexandra Petcu* who delighted in a very good common acceptance among our group. Both arguments were recognized as very interesting for arts entrepreneurship activities: Intellectual Property as an important issue for artists and Living Lab as a powerful open system for testing and evaluating complex processes in collaboration and knowledge transfer.

Concerning Intellectual Property *Alexandra Petcu* identified one of the crucial problems within the creative industries – the protection of the author’s rights. She specified what can be protected, and what not, where and how you can apply for registration. She emphasized that a world-wide protection would be very expensive and, in many cases, not even necessary. She convinced us that eventually these questions would be very important when we want to offer out creative ideas to the public, that should still remain our product, but which we wanted to own or commercialize.

In the second part *Alexandra Petcu* presented us the advantages of a Living Lab in comparison to a traditional academic work atmosphere. She said: A Living Lab exists in reality. You have to define the participants according to the levels of the organisation you want to evaluate. You can add more participants/stake holders to the system if you want to test their impact/relationship. She proposed to take the example of the Western University Timisoara and declared: You have to consider 1. The Academia, 2. The Administration, 3. The Private Sector. These three levels can be put on a larger base. Add 4. The Civil Society (including creative industries, culture, media) and 5. The Environment (including ecology, sustainability, climate change). The so established quintuple helix approach seemed really fit not only for evaluating universities, but even for testing innovative systems for co-creation. The evaluation is possible in real time and surging problems can be adjusted. Alexandra told us that they focus mainly on interfaces, because there you can often identify and cure problems.



Abb. 4: Presentation "Living Labs", Photo: Sabine Mayrhofer

The approach of the Living Lab concept was new for many of us and we learned about it with curiosity and interest. This lecture was one of the most interesting of the whole range.

The last presentation was offered by *Theodora Pop* who told her story when she moved from a small Romanian town to Timisoara and established her gallery in Timisoara with an outstanding creative culture and arts concept she had developed and established in her hometown. For example, she involved the visitors in painting competitions and made two painters paint one picture while open for the public. During the Lockdowns of the COVID-Pandemic she also quickly changed her programmes to online exhibitions.

She was very successful concerning the public interest and the number of visitors and never asked visitors to pay for the events, because she was convinced that a culture/arts program should be open for everybody. In the end she had to close her gallery because she was not able to cover the rent and the operating costs. The audience in the class room was very sorry about that and we asked ourselves: Why was she not able to find a solution for this problem? Maybe she didn't try hard enough? Or maybe she started without the right art business plan?



Many of us, as we agreed talking with each other in the intervals, found it tiring to sit for hours and listen to different topics and arguments. But still the mixture was special and at the end of the third day we were looking forward to starting the co-creation phase of our mixed working groups.