




Rijeka 2020

European Capital
of Culture

A SHORT GUIDE





This city is the anchor of the world because its citizens bear flags of all colours. Rijeka can be diagnosed and it is called openness. I believe that it is one of the reasons why it has been elected as the 2020 European Capital of Culture.

In these times of the repositioning of the identity of Europe, the mosaic continent faced with the tumultuous post-modern questioning of all values, Rijeka offers an image of sense. It is just that simple. Our city embodies everything that the future Europe wishes to be, everything it declaratively already is and everything that European cultural policies strive for. Acceptance is the key. Openness is the starting point, tolerance is a mechanism, and harmony is achieved only through the full acceptance of diversity.

The unusual force that granted such a special power to Rijeka is called history. The magical potion that we have sipped throughout the centuries nowadays runs through new generations. Is there better proof for that than the fact that Rijeka functioned under 6 different states in less than 100 years of the 20th century? Under such circumstances the citizens of Rijeka had no other choice but to refine their power of tolerance to perfection, and then open their hearts to the values that must exist in a cosmopolitan environment. For us, that was the only possible and the only right path to take.

As a result, today our city lives and breathes its authentic openness. Tourists on our streets are not regarded as unusual newcomers and mimicry is an option for anyone. The cultural production is not bait, it is a way of life. The architecture is not just a perfect setting for photos, it is an inspiration for the life being nurtured here. We faced economic downfall in our country's transitional economy, but we were able to turn it around and survive. Now we are revealing the magic that worked wonders for us to the rest of Europe.

There is no need to send special invitations – Rijeka is already the place where you want to be, you just have to admit it to yourself. Rijeka is the city that bears your flag as well. Europe, here you are at home.

— Vojko Obersnel,
Mayor of the City of Rijeka

Rijeka



Rijeka is a city with a turbulent past creating a historical map filled with contradictory, sometimes controversial and bizarre details. Politically influenced by monarchism, fascism and communism, a unique and distinctive multinational, multi-religious and multicultural city has developed. Freedom, tolerance and openness are precisely the features that make Rijeka remarkable in an international context.

Certain moments in political history of Rijeka were particularly dramatic, such as the so-called March on Rijeka, the moment when Italian writer and proto-fascist Gabriele D'Annunzio entered the city with his troops in 1919. He established his own state supported by legal documents in theory and repression in practice, thus establishing the first fascist state in the world. During two world wars the city was divided much like Berlin decades later – the western part was under the Kingdom of Italy, and the eastern formed part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The city centre was split by a barbed-wire wall erected along the Dead Channel. Conflicts from that period are reflected in the exodus of almost 50,000 Italians after the Partisan army conquered Rijeka after World War II. Rijeka has been a part of fantasy and nostalgia of numerous ethnicities as well as the cause of extensive political turmoil.



GENIUS LOCI

The post-war immigration encouraged the development of the city's urban structure which in return encouraged specific cultural processes created by youth. The first rock scene in Eastern Europe was formed in Rijeka during the 1950s and 1960s. Its beginnings were marked by the opening of the Husar rock and disco club (1957-1964), the first Yugoslavian rock band named Uragani. Such a base proved fruitful for the new music and performance scene of the 1970s and 1980s that relied heavily on punk. The first punk group in Eastern Europe, the Paraf trio, was formed in 1976 in Rijeka. A large number of then young drivers of Rijeka's urban scene are nowadays active in the cultural life; the actions started then were an inspiration for generations to come: techno community, subcultural movements, the LGBT scene which in recent years has gathered initiatives relating to queer culture and club life.

The scene

INSTITUTIONS

12 cultural institutions create the core of the cultural scene, six of them established by the City (Croatian National Theatre Ivan pl. Zajc, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, the City of Rijeka Museum, Rijeka City Library, Art-Kino and the Puppet Theatre), three established by the County (the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral, Natural History Museum, and Ivan Matetić Ronjgov Institution), two established by the state (State Archives in Rijeka, the Croatian Museum of Tourism in Opatija) and one institution established by the City of Opatija (Festival Opatija).

Some institutions are especially complex, such as the Croatian National Theatre Ivan pl. Zajc which includes an opera ensemble, a ballet company and a drama theatre with Croatian and Italian ensembles. If we include education institutions (the Music School Rijeka, Secondary School of Applied Arts, the Academy of Applied Arts) to the above mentioned, the volume of Rijeka's institutional culture is outlined more clearly. All of the above institutions have around 600 professional employees.

NON-INSTITUTIONAL SCENE

Non-institutional culture includes a number of organisations and individuals that, led by common interests, merge together to realise less conventional creative projects. Civil society organisations in the field of culture have an important role, especially in the field of contemporary art. The spirit of non-institutional culture has its roots in subcultural and counter-cultural movement of the city's youth from the 1980s. In 2016 the City of Rijeka co-finances programmes of 60 independent organisations in culture.

CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Newer elements of Rijeka's cultural life are the creative industries, companies that erase boundaries between culture and business, based exclusively on commercial principles. The sector includes publishing, media, marketing agencies, software companies, design, etc. As an illustration, there are 47 companies in the field of design and architecture in Rijeka. Taking into account a rapid development of start-up companies, Rijeka has a significant potential for the development of a vibrant cultural sector.

All three segments of Rijeka's cultural scene include around 1,000 professionals.



128,624 inhabitants

44 km² of land area

gusts of bora
winds of up to

160 km/h

23 nationalities

2 theatres

5 museums

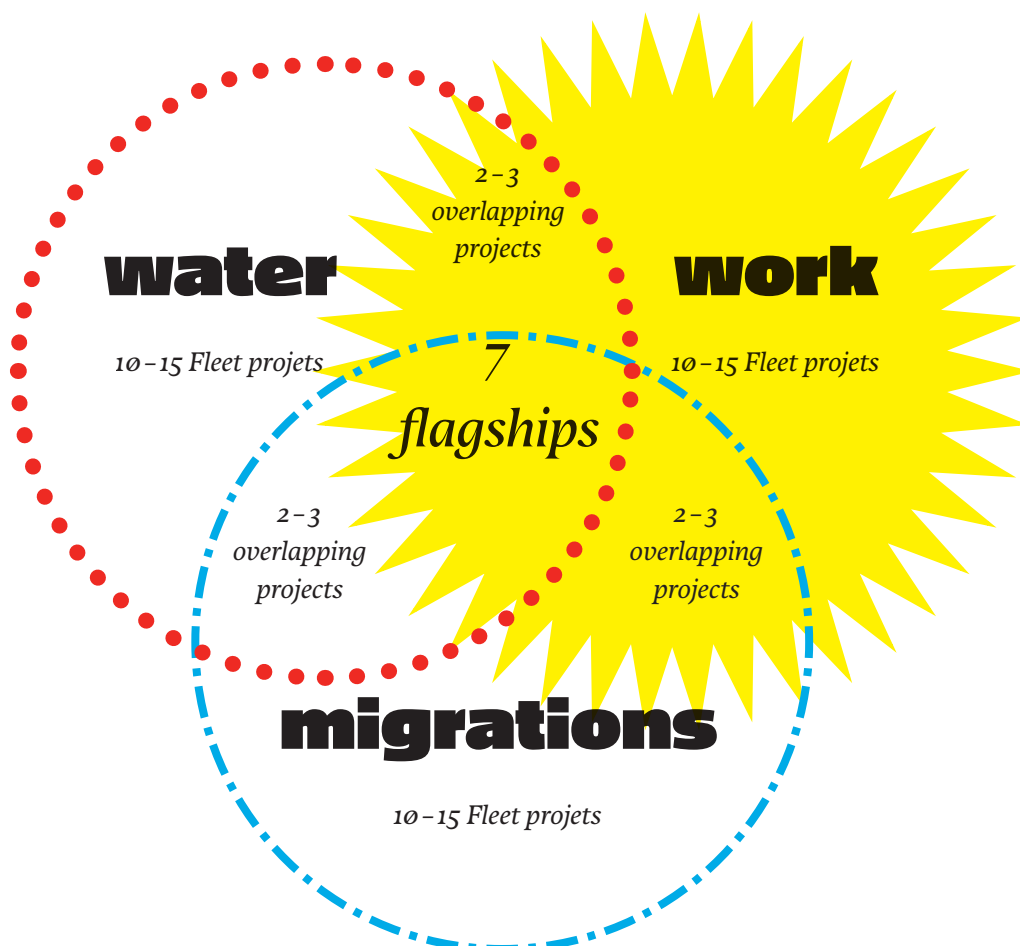
249.5 l/m² of rain measured on
29/9/2013 – a world record

80 sport clubs

120 NGO's in culture

20 galleries and
exhibition spaces

Rijeka in numbers



The clusters: Water – Work – Migrations, together with the term Port, form our City’s narrative and value system. At the same time, they mirror and reinforce the European Union’s foundations of respect for diversity, open dialogue and transparent cooperation.

Regardless of political will or democratic tradition, these values should never be taken for granted, but must be revitalised by each generation. It is precisely the true and constant danger of collectively losing sight of these values that makes them so valuable and so fragile. They must be defended seriously, strategically and culturally.

Our Cultural Programme provides the conditions for artists and citizens of Rijeka to defend and develop these values. They are challenges on which the future of Rijeka and Europe depends. We are convinced that Rijeka 2020’s concept and implementation can inspire other European cities to face similar developmental problems with an appropriate cultural response.

PORT

Rijeka is the largest Croatian port. It was also the largest port in former Yugoslavia and one of the two competitive, main ports of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, alongside Trieste, for nearly 50 years. The city’s ups and downs follow the ups and downs of its port. The port’s fate was the city’s fate. Despite significant economic shifts, the port maintained a strong position in the economy of the city. Much of this is now being opened for a different kind of urban development.

The port is a common, magnetic concept with which all citizens of Rijeka still identify, despite the fact that modern ports, including the port of Rijeka, do not wield the same cultural influence that historical port cities displayed, where seamen became emissaries of cultural exchange, bringing global experiences, new vinyl LPs, new fashion and trends. The historical port of Rijeka played a role similar to the Internet, a global information hub which significantly shaped the spirit of the city.

WATER

“Put your finger in the sea and you’ll be connected to the entire world.”

Together with the port, the history of Rijeka developed in a context made up of shipyards, a refinery, a torpedo factory, shipping and fishing industries, and military and naval academies. Life and labour by the sea and with the sea are a distinctive part of our city’s existence. However, the sea is not the city’s only water. Rijeka is a city that thrived on fresh water; its immediate hinterland has an average annual rainfall of 3,500 mm. Our surroundings include dozens of fresh water springs. The city is named after the Rječina river that once represented the border between two countries, and two distinct parts of the city. Since the 17th century, the city’s coat of arms includes the inscription “Indeficienter” (inexhaustible), under the image of a jug from which water flows unfailingly.

One of the city’s fresh water sources springs at the very heart of the city, supplying the whole of Rijeka and its region with fresh water. Water is both a strategic resource and a public good that provides, one which provides countless possibilities for sensible and environmentally responsible use.

Rijeka is a city marked by water and named by water – a fluid city, both literally and metaphorically.

WORK

As an essential human right, work has been completely transformed over the past two decades. In the 1990s, due to the war and a catastrophic privatisation process, Rijeka lost almost 25,000 industrial jobs, as well as the status and identity of an industrial city. In the de-industrialisation processes, which affected many cities, the economic strategy of turning towards the service sector did not bring expected results. Rijeka has yet to discover its full potential in the sphere of intellectual and creative work.

In these times of deep economic and social crisis, accompanied by high unemployment, existential issues arise: what is the fate of

work and workplaces in the era of new technologies and industries? Will traditional forms of employment, stable workplaces with full hours and rights, survive after 2020? What will the position of employees be in science, healthcare, education and other spheres of public interest? What fate might befall those that must adapt to a life based on occasional and temporary work? What will the position of employees be in cultural institutions? Of independent artists? Can we talk about a connection and interdependence between the “work of art” and the “art of work”?

MIGRATIONS

Rijeka is a city of political discontinuity, marked by numerous migrations both to and from the city. Different cultures have intertwined/ clashed/re-joined. Fortunately, the result is a tradition of tolerance as a fundamental value. During the entire 19th and 20th century, Rijeka as a strong industrial city attracted new residents, so it is no wonder that to be a citizen of Rijeka today means to live in a city with 22 national minorities, where daily papers are published in two languages (four until recently), regular radio broadcasting in Italian and a Roma neighbourhood whose inhabitants are integrated into the working and social life of the city.

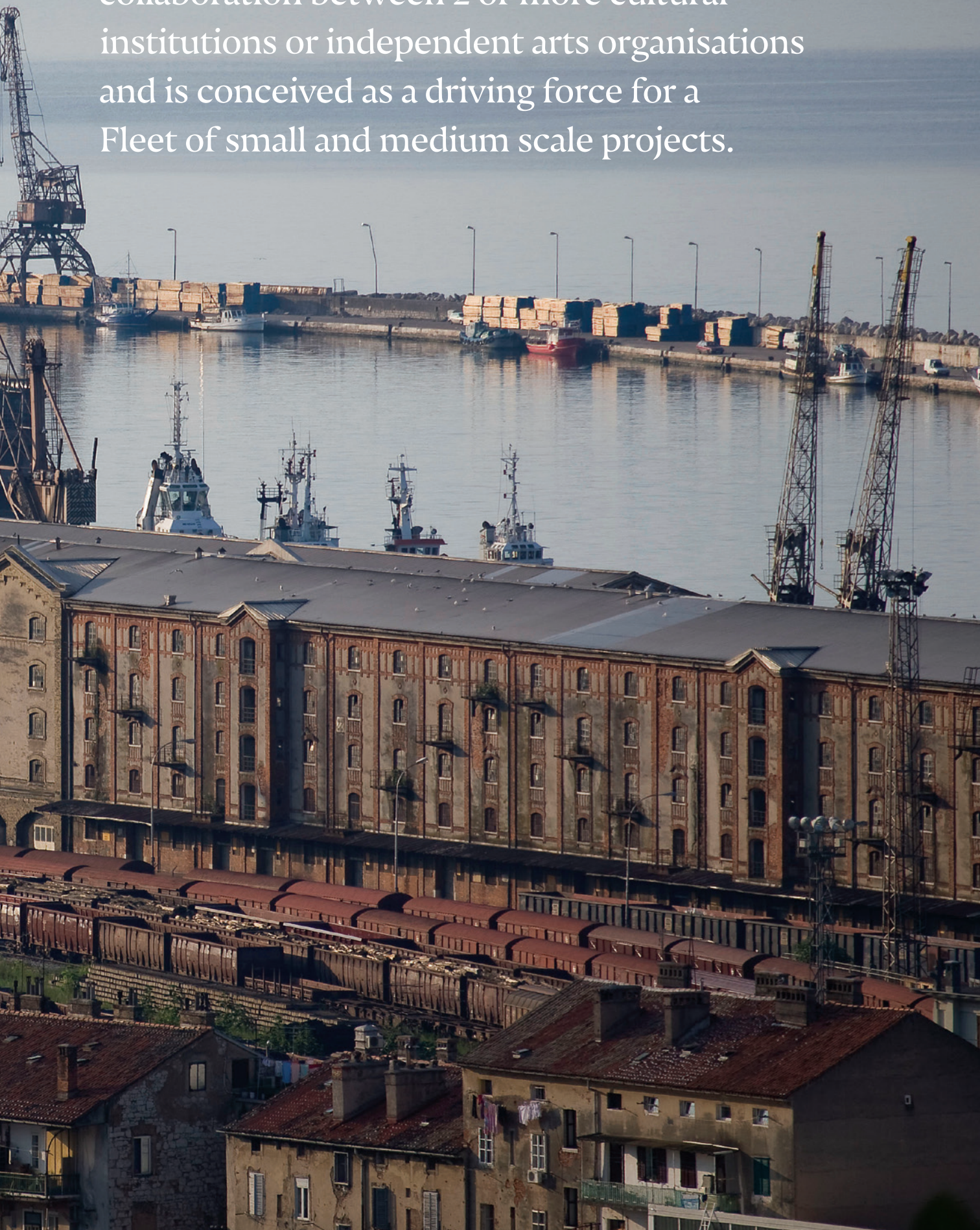
As in the past, Rijeka is recognised today as a liberal and open city which has always opposed discrimination.

While forming the final Cultural Programme, the theme of migration imposed itself as important content / the cause of diversity. We understand that Rijeka, Croatia and all of Europe must prepare for future scenarios involving immense changes of population, increased mobility, physical and intellectual nomadism and transnational exchange. Rijeka, however, already knows this story. So many emigrated, through our port and from our countryside, some have returned, some have nurtured their native culture in other countries and on other continents. We want RI:2020 to provide creative links between the experiences of emigration and immigration. We want to understand the tendency towards cultural nomadism and intercultural lifestyles.

Programme of Rijeka 2020



We have prepared an artistic strategy with seven interdependent Flagships which can grow and adapt. Each Flagship is led by collaboration between 2 or more cultural institutions or independent arts organisations and is conceived as a driving force for a Fleet of small and medium scale projects.





27 Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods throughout Rijeka and Primorje-Gorski Kotar County lack local cultural centres and developed models of citizens. They are not yet equipped to open to unexpected impulses, to share with other European neighbourhoods, distant but facing similar challenges. 27 Neighbourhoods provides multiple opportunities for practicing exchange, stretching across the entire EU, forming an informal network of inter-neighbourhood cultural actions, stretching beyond 2020. The impulse is to develop community skills that both Rijeka and Europe need. Shared space.



Brick House

The idea of the Brick House is a response to a limited cultural offer adapted to children and youth, to the issue of free time co-opted by global companies for profit, to growing modern illiteracy. The Brick House instills creativity into the free time of the young and, in the long run, builds foundations for a meaningful adulthood. It is a living room rooted in the right of every child to access cultural content, information, learning and entertainment. A place where every child is free to develop potential, to express themselves. Within the mixed community, the Brick House becomes a space for developing early intercultural competence, as a key to the future development of our city and Europe.




Seasons of Power

Rijeka has survived occupation, liberation, monarchies, crumbling empires, de-railed socialist experiments. This Flagship delves into the world of totalitarian regimes, structures of power and fear, transforming Rijeka's spoken and unspoken narratives.

Many Season of Power actions take place in and around local memoryscapes – buildings (the D'Annunzio's Palace), memorial sites (Goli otok, Kampor camp on Rab), museums (Lipa), monuments (Victory monument, Podhum), military complexes (Sv. Katarina, former barracks of Spanish Civil War volunteers, currently the university campus), glorious remnants (Tito's yacht Galeb) and lost places where history was officially forgotten.



Coast Lines



Alive and moving, physical and virtual path following traces of life by the Adriatic Sea.

A series of 15 specially designed installations are built throughout the city and region. They are connected by local transport, including boats to some islands. A necklace of historical/natural points of departure, placed at the root/home of each narrative. The guided tours are designed for active participation and coordinated travel (electric bus, boat, on foot).

The expertise of four museum institutions which manage the project guarantees the knowledge and relevance of the chosen sites. This synergy of museums, together with independent artists and tourist associations, produces cultural tourism services. The project inspires the museum institutions to be more open, more accessible, more experimental with "in situ" exhibitions.



Dopolavoro

Rijeka is a workers' city. Its population grew based on its industries, harbours and resulting job opportunities. In the past two decades, Rijeka lost most of its jobs. It underwent de-industrialisation but never fully transformed from an industrial centre into a knowledge hub.

Rijeka and its immediate cultural surroundings mark a region with the highest rates of unemployment in Europe, staggering when it comes to youth. Precarious work has become a paradigm of the European south. There is a certain elation ignited by the freedom of digital communication as a sector, the colourful cityscape of start-ups and co-working, the economics of sharing. The world of work has never been more exciting. The world of idleness has never been so depressing.

What is Rijeka's future with 20,000 students replacing the 25,000 industrial jobs lost in the last 20 years? Dopolavoro means fun after work, but also Europe post labour.



Kitchen

We imagine a place of dialogue, between those who travelled to us and those who travelled away. A place to sit, drink tea or good coffee, share stories. We call this Kitchen, a core space in any "home", where recipes are exchanged, taste developed and honest exchange is possible. Food is an essential cultural instrument, the beginning of sharing. The staffing and the menu reflect the diversity of Rijeka. Kitchen becomes an open workshop in exchanges of ideas, habits, prejudices. An informal pulse that merges and gathers. A workplace: a studio for developing art, a centre for research, a gallery for exhibitions, in the borderlands between city history and contemporary reality. As a platform for encountering migration experiences from other parts of Europe.



Sweet & Salt

Sweet & Salt regenerates dying urban spaces at the very heart of the city. It follows the flow of fresh water through the city, along the riverbanks of Rječina, to the salt sea harbour. Multiple projects honour the memory of lost space, while inspiring modern urban planning. The 6 year Flagship engages citizens in critical debate about their urban environment, stimulated by artistic interventions.



Opening & Closing: Carnival

More than 50,000 people gather every year in the streets of Rijeka at this event, in winter, despite weather or world events. Every individual is affected by carnival. Everyone, visitor or performer, is a constant participant.

Carnival takes ideas from both pagan and Christian origins, as a promise of new growth, transforming hope into a feast of becoming, change and renewal.

By 23 February 2020, when the International Riječki Karneval opens the year officially as European Capital of Culture, our citizens/performers are equipped to meet visitors and European colleagues in a magic encounter between heritage and modernity.

By 14 February 2021, when the key to the City is returned to the Mayor and the Karneval has once again run its course – the end is always a new beginning.



RIJEKA FUN FACTS

Rijeka's neighbourhood of Trsat is a pilgrimage place known as the Croatian Nazareth.

According to legend, in 1291 the Holy House of Nazareth – the one in which Archangel Gabriel foretold that the Virgin Mary would conceive through the Holy Spirit to give birth to Jesus – was brought by angels to Trsat. It remained there for 3 years until the same angels transported it to Loreto near Ancona. In 1920 – on the anniversary of the occupation of Rijeka – Pope Benedict xv proclaimed Maria di Loreto the patron saint of all aviators, which inspired D'Annunzio to decorate his famous red Fiat with a depiction of angels carrying the Holy House.

RIJEKA FUN FACTS

During the millenia of its history and before becoming the European Capital of Culture Rijeka recognized these cities as its capital: Rome, Constantinople, Klis, Solin, Knin, Biaći, Nin, Pavia, Aachen, Verona, Biograd, Bihać, Vienna, Paris, Ljubljana, Budapest, Berlin, Belgrade, Zagreb and Brussels.

RIJEKA FUN FACTS

In 1908, Antonio Grossich, the Head of the Department of Surgery of the City hospital of Rijeka, introduced an iodine tincture as a way for the rapid sterilization of the human skin in the surgical field. This invention became a global standard and has saved numerous lives.



RIJEKA FUN FACTS

Ernst Mach's sound barrier theory was tested in Rijeka by his collaborator Peter Salcher, the professor of physics and mechanics at the R&I Naval Academy who made the world's first photographs of flying bullets. He is also known for making the first photographs with Röntgen rays just 3 weeks after Röntgen held a lecture on the same subject in Würzburg.

RIJEKA FUN FACTS

The torpedo was invented in Rijeka in 1866 based on the idea of an exploding boat protecting the coast. The idea was developed and became an explosive fish, making Whitehead, its inventor, rich and famous. We are not proud.

RIJEKA FUN FACTS

After World War I, Rijeka was in the center of the dispute between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia). U.S. President Woodrow Wilson became the arbiter and suggested that Rijeka becomes a fully independent state that would serve as the home for the League of Nations.



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Diversity is beautiful