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Craft Beer Culture and Creative Industries in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

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ABSTRACT

The research offers a case study of the development of local craft beer culture as an interconnection between craftsmanship, knowledge, creativity, as well as the interconnection of history, culture and geography of the space. The article focusses on the actors and processes leading to the development and spread of craft beer culture in the second largest city in Bulgaria – Plovdiv. The role that craft beer bars and festivals play in the co-construction of urban spaces, bring to focus a particular neighbourhood. The re-vitalisation of Kapana (The Trap) district is used as an example of the significant role creative business and industries have in the re-contextualisation and reuse of urban space. This paper follows the crucial role that craft beer bars and festivals, as creative industries, play in not only the development of the craft beer culture in Plovdiv but also for urban development and destination branding.

KEYWORDS

Craft beer culture; craft beer festival; creative industries; Kapana district; Plovdiv

Introduction

In this paper,¹ I problematize the role creative industries play in urban development, paying particular attention to craft beer bars and craft beer festivals as examples of creative industries and events. In order to stress why such an approach is relevant I bring to the discussion three analytic categories: “craft beer”, “craft beer culture” and “creative industry”. Questions posed in this paper are: What are the local and national specifics of craft beer culture and craft beer bars? How are creative industries such as craft beer bars and festivals connected to the formation of a local beer culture?

Craft beer production and its surrounding culture in Bulgaria lack scientific attention. To help fill this void, I trace the actors and the messages/channels they use to introduce the craft beer culture to residents of the second largest city in Bulgaria- Plovdiv. In doing so, I hope to reveal how global tendencies are appropriated locally, as well highlighting the role craft beer plays in local development, neighborhood revitalization, and region branding.

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a case study of the development of local craft beer culture in Plovdiv. I argue that the driving forces of the introduction of the craft beer to the city are craft beer bars and local breweries. In particular, I pay attention to the specificity of the Plovdivian craft beer culture and the main actors in its development. The transformation of a central city neighborhood (Kapana) is presented as part of the re-contextualization of the urban space; a space where the role of craft beer bar and craft beer culture play important roles.

Methods and sources

The research presented here traces the development of the national and regional specifics of craft beer culture in Bulgaria. As the problems of cultural and image creation are central to this research, I utilize qualitative methods combined with data analysis of visual and textual sources whenever possible.² In order to understand the development and specifics of the craft beer culture in Bulgaria I engaged in informal conversations with consumers, festivals' participants, brewers, craft beer bars owners, and bartenders. These conversations were combined with direct observation and visual anthropology. This paper covers the period since 2015, and traces the development of craft beer culture in Bulgaria since then. Observing the transformation of Kapana district in Plovdiv, as well the participation in craft beer related events, workshops, and beer festivals allowed me to experience the specifics of the local craft beer culture. Participating in these events allowed me to gain a deeper my understanding of the processes, actors, and local specifics of the development, practice and values of the local craft beer culture. The geographical scope of the field research is not limited to Plovdiv. The craft beer scene in the capital city Sofia, and two smaller Bulgarian cities, Pazardzhik and Sinemoretz, are also examined. Such comparisons allowed me to identify factors that may be specific to Plovdiv and the surrounding region. Additionally, I conducted six unstructured in-depth interviews with selected informants such as brewers and craft beer bar owners from Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, and Sliven. This method allowed me to collect more detailed information about motivations to enter craft brewing as well as values embodied in craft brewing more generally.

To analyze how craft beer culture is communicated and promoted, as well to understand the values embodied in it, I primarily use information from the local and national press, and more specifically the appearance of craft brewers on TV shows and their interviews with various other media.

As the research concentrates on how and what is communicated about craft beer, I use web-pages of the breweries in order to analyses the content craft breweries and craft beer bars generating to advertise and popularize their products. Interpreting websites' content allows me to shed light on social and cultural patterns that influenced the circulation of meanings and practices embedded in craft beer culture. New social media like internet forums and blogs also form part of my research as a new means of construing meanings and practices adopted by consumers. The use of qualitative methods does not exclude quantitative analysis. I use statistical data to trace economic aspects of craft beer both nationally and internationally. However, I have embedded the statistical data in the overall qualitative design.

Craft beer

In order to grasp the embodied meanings that local actors attribute to craft beer I follow the definition used by the Association of Home Breweries in Bulgaria. According to the Association "craft beer is produced in small, usually family breweries which produce original, special beers with high quality, traditions and are interesting for consumers (quoted and translated by Ivanov 2016: 65). Besides the uniqueness of the product, and the small scale and artisanal production, craft beer is recognized as an "informed choice ... that satisfies specific needs of consumers" as they shift "from a low price to a higher price product "(Ivanov 2016: 80).

Another characteristic of craft beer is related to the duality of the brewers, as they are simultaneously producer and consumers of craft beer. Indeed, Campbell suggests that the particular specifics of the craft beer product-consumption are a co-constructing relationship. He defines the term 'craft' as referring to "consumption activity in which the 'product' concerned is essentially both made and designed by the same person and to which the consumer typically brings skill, knowledge, judgment and passion while being motivated by a desire for self-expression. Such

genuine craft consumption is then distinguished from such closely associated practices as ‘personalization’ and ‘customization’ (Campbell 2005: 23).

With respect to the relationship between brewer and consumer, Reid and Gatrell (2017b: 37) point out that “craft brewers are not only intimately connected to the product they make but also to the customers who drink their beer”. Thus, “craft brewers make beer for people like themselves”, while the “people who make craft beer also drink craft beer.” (Reid and Gatrell 2017b: 37).

Craft beer culture

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines culture as “the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society” (Oxford English Dictionary 2020). Craft beer culture involves a particular understanding of beer making and consumption. Craft breweries and craft beer lovers share a common passion for quality, creativity, authenticity, and taste. These shared values unite people from different countries and cultures into an informal society that pays respect to production technologies, consumer behavior and creates its customs such as beer festivals, beer tasting events and similar forms of coexistence and co-creation.

Craft beer culture might be approached as an opposition to what Ritzer (2008) calls the *McDonaldization of society*. This concept uses the fast-food restaurant to demonstrate the worldwide homogenization of cultures due to globalization. In that sense, craft beer culture is an example of *de-McDonaldization*, by fighting the uniformity of industrially produced beers and introducing a local, craft product, based on creativity, while paying attention to beer quality instead of quantity.

Craft beer culture is a sub-category of consumer culture, focused on a specific culture of production and consumption of a niche product. According to Miles (2018: 13), consumer culture is “about the relationship between the material and the cultural”. Consumer culture is a representation of the meanings, reflections, and values attributed to particular good. Miles (2018: 13) concludes that consumer’s culture “lies at the heart of the relationship between structure and agency in contemporary society”. From a production standpoint, craft beer culture is related to the knowledge of the technological specifics in brewing diverse beer styles as well to the ability of distinguish the role of different ingredients and brewing regimes. Craft beer culture is characterized by shared knowledge and experimentation that leads to the development of personal beer taste as well as to innovative beer styles. Curiosity about novelty is part of brewers and consumer’s perception of craft beer. A craft beer related lifestyle and shared patterns of behavior are part of the beer culture.

Craft beer festivals and bars as part of cultural industries, the experience economy, and cultural landscapes

In this paper, I aim to show how craft breweries, craft beer bars, and craft beer festivals operate as a creative industry, and how they are part of creative economies. I use the definition of creative industries provided by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 2010):

Creative industries are cycles of creation, production and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs; constitute a set of knowledge-based activities, focused on but not limited to arts, potentially generating revenues from trade and intellectual property rights; comprise tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value and market objectives; are at cross-road among the artisan, services and industrial sector; and constitute a new dynamic sector in world trade (UNCTAD 2010: 8).

This definition shows that creative economy is a concept that traces the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology. Reid and Gatrell (2017b) suggest that the creative side

of craft beer culture is mutually co-constructed by brewers and consumers. According to them, “...creativity reflects a shared collection of socio-cultural relationships that might reside in place – or across a common industry, such as craft beer. For that reason, creativity is a highly contextualized set of values, interactions, and practices” (Reid and Gatrell, 2017b: 35)

UNESCO (2016), for its part, states that cultural and creative industries stem from individual creativity, skill, and talent, and have the potential to create value by using intellectual property. They also assert that these industries are distinguished by sectors in which goods and services cannot be reproduced on an industrial level and, as a result, the scale of their operations is small or medium-sized.

Craft brewing, as small scale production based on craftsmanship and creativity, results in a product with added value that comes from individual skill, talent and innovativeness as well from the embodied values (e.g., commitment, passion, vision of what is craft beer, etc.). As noted by Wesson and De Figueiredo (2001: 92), craft brewers are “often motivated by a love of brewing as by profits”. This makes craft beer production not only an innovative economic activity but also “astonishingly un-business-like” (Day 2015), Craft brewers have a passion for good quality and creativity. Craft beer festivals can also be recognized as examples of creative and cultural events as they commercialize contents that are intangible and cultural in nature (UNESCO 2016). Describing the experience economy as critical to cultural industries, Richards (2012: 11–18) emphasizes that “in Western consumer society experiences have been developed as commodities”. What he calls “the search for excitement” has become the driving force for tourism and leisure consumption. Richards refers to the experience economy as based on innovative cultural products that provoke consumption of intangible expressions of culture “such as atmosphere, creativity, and lifestyle”. In that sense, craft beer festivals might be seen as a creative cultural activity that “trades” with emotions and experiences. Craft beer festivals are valued for showcasing the authentic, local, innovative and unique with respect to beer and brewing techniques. Furthermore, the organizer of the festival not only invites the visitor to experience new beer tastes but also to be co-creators of the local craft beer culture. To provide a closer look at the local context of craft beer culture and beer tourism, and craft beer festivals as part of the leisure and cultural tourism, I argue that the combination of iconic place (cultural urban landscape) and locally produced craft beer can play a crucial role in destination branding for cultural and creative tourism based on experience and co-creation.

The notion of a cultural landscape is introduced in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO. Cultural landscapes represent the “combined works of nature and of man”. The globalized and urbanized people of today interact less with the nature and more with the urban environment which they inhabit. The Cultural Landscape Foundation (CLF) offers an extended definition of cultural landscapes. According to the CLF, “cultural landscapes can range from thousands of acres of rural land to homesteads with small front yards. They can be man-made expressions of visual and spatial relationships that include grand estates, farmlands, public gardens and parks, college campuses, cemeteries, scenic highways, and industrial sites. Cultural landscapes are works of art, texts and narratives of cultures, and expressions of regional identity. They also exist in relationship to their ecological contexts” (CLF 2020).

In this paper, I analyze the case of the transformation of a Kapana district in Plovdiv as the co-construction of an authentic cultural landscape that fits perfectly with the ideology of craft beer culture. In addition, I will trace the development of that neighborhood as a neolocal place, dedicated to the cultural and creative industries. Neolocalism, as a “place-based concept”, has been developed “as a response to globalization” and “the emergence of stable, familiar, and predictable landscapes, products, and quality that has been driven by homogenized economic processes and economies of scale” (Reid and Gatrell 2017a: 92). According to Shortridge neolocalism is related to the distinctiveness of places and involves the “deliberate seeking out of regional lore

and local attachment by residents (new and old)” (Shortridge 1996: 10). Parnwell (2007: 996) approaches the neolocalism as a “grassroots activism” that is “framed and driven by local communities”. Based on these theoretical insights on neolocalism, I argue that the Kapana district might be considered a neolocal place– with authentic atmosphere, a home of art and crafts, bars, and experiences (festivals, concerts, sports events, street art and culture), innovative and creative industries and their products (including craft beer). What is more, the craft beer establishments located in that district, together with the events dedicated to promotion of the craft beer culture, are representative of the activism of local people to re-define place.

Craft beer – the Bulgarian context

While beer is popular in Bulgaria, only recently has craft beer become a focus of producer and consumer interest. As has happened in other countries, Bulgarians have developed a taste for beer produced by small-scale breweries. Considered as conservative, the Bulgarian beer consumer has gradually developed a taste for different beers. The first commercial microbreweries, craft beer bars and restaurants emerged in the 2008. According to the German portal for statistics *Statista*, in Bulgaria at that time there were only 3 registered microbreweries. The development of the business niche was slow. Six years later the numbers of small-scale, independent breweries doubled. The intensification of the Bulgarian craft beer sector sped up after the 2016, a result of the success of the already established craft producers, and the development of craft beer culture that saw a raise in the number of craft beer shops (both physical and online), festivals, and thematic bars. The number of small-scale breweries increased from 7 in 2017 to 16 in 2018.

According to Ivanov (2016: 80), “at the onset of the second decade of 21st century there started a wave of developing new “micro” and “small” enterprises. Despite the competitive pressure from [industrial] leaders ... they adapt successfully and establish themselves on the market by managing to attract more real clients”. The popularity of craft beer identified by Ivanov is reflected in its continued growth; by 2020 there were 20 craft breweries in Bulgaria.³ As noted by Ivanov, craft beers offer an alternative to the homogeneity of mass-produced beers, as they offer an expanded variety of styles and flavors.

Ani Kodzhaivanova, a financial analyzer working for the national magazine *Capital*, states that the development of the craft beer in Bulgaria is growing in small steps (Kodzhaivanova 2018). According to her analysis, this is due to the small size of the Bulgarian beer market and the less wealthy and conservative Bulgarian consumer. Quoting statistics from the Union of Brewers in Bulgaria,⁴ she concludes that “it is not a surprise that the market share of the craft beer in Bulgaria is about 1% from the total beer consumption” (Kodzhaivanova 2018).⁵ That makes the Bulgarian craft beer market almost insignificant. However, “for 5–6 years of existence the Bulgarian craft beer brands are rising in numbers and have reached 20 craft breweries. In Sofia and the biggest Bulgarian cities we can spot more often craft beer shops or bars (Kodzhaivanova 2018).

The owner of one of the first craft beer brands, Ailyak, reflects on the slow but constant growth of the craft beer production and consumption in Bulgaria. “On the one hand, this is good, because there is an opportunity to educate consumers and so there is potential for growth; but on the other hand, as an underdeveloped market, the one that has to develop it is you yourself, and that requires considerable investments that are not always available”. He also stresses that the competition in that small market niche is crucial “because this is how the level of Bulgarian boutique beer rises and more and more people start to look at the small bottles of beer not as something hipster and overrated, but as a quality beer with a different taste.” He concludes that the rising consumer’s interest in craft beers is also related to the fact that “the taste of the Bulgarian people is changing little by little and is shifting from quantity to quality” (Tsaneva 2019).

Kodzhaivanova (2018) presents different elements of the craft beer culture. The first is the spirit of sharing knowledge and know-how among craft brewers. They are a community based on mutual support “often working together in a creative business environment.” Commenting on craft beer consumers she states, “in addition, similar to wine consumption of the craft beer also creates specific community and culture of its own”. As distinctive elements of that culture, she refers to consumption “rituals”, craft beer festivals, craft beer workshops, and craft beer tastings.” What is more, regions with developed craft beer production and consumption also became attractive touristic destination for beer lovers”, stressing the rising importance of craft beer in locality branding (Kodzhaivanova 2018).

According to Ivanov the profile of Bulgarian craft beer consumer is the following: “mainly men, aged about 44, they earn average to high incomes and live in large towns and cities.” He makes the assumption that those characteristics are due to three main factors. As first he points out the higher alcohol strength of craft beer which, he believes, attracts men more. He emphasizes that “the higher price at which these products are sold” limits the consumers who can afford them. According to him the price of craft beers “is to a considerable degree affordable for people with average and high income”. Ivanov’s third factor is the access to craft beer, that is “much easier” in the large towns and cities. Ivanov’s study is based on consumers who purchase artisanal beers (Ivanov 2016: 87). In addition to commercial craft brewing, there are, according to Temelko Pankov, approximately 1,500 Bulgarians who are homebrewers (Kirilovski 2017).⁶ Bulgarian consumers predominantly buy beer off-trade, to drink at home. On-trade sales (bars, restaurants, and clubs) are around 20–25 percent of the overall market (Brewers of Europe 2019: 12–13).

According to Euromonitor International (2019), the Bulgarian craft beer market is “small but expected to grow”. Euromonitor’s experts confirm the conclusions of Kodzhaivanova and Ivanov that Bulgarian craft beer consumers are predominantly “in the big cities and especially among the young adult generation”. The motivation for trying the unconventional beer is described as an “increasing demand for novelty flavors and higher-quality beer” (Euromonitor International 2019).

Craft beer culture and the localized taste

Most commercial craft brewers in Bulgaria started as homebrewers, and engaged in self-education by reading books, following blogs and homebrewers’ forums on the internet, watching online DIY videos, and exchanging practical knowledge with other enthusiasts locally as well as worldwide. They shared their beer with friends and families and thus developed a small circle of followers and craft beer lovers. In 2015, the founder of one of the leading craft breweries, Ayliak, Georgi Hristov recalls his first steps in homebrewing. According to Hristov, the personal experiments with the technology of brewing are crucial for the development of a beer culture. He defines the basic knowledge and practical experience a homebrewer should achieve as key elements of the beer culture: the knowledge of the technological specifics in brewing as well as the ability to distinguish the ingredients and the diverse beer styles. In an interview with the Bulgarian newspaper *Economic* Hristov shares his initiation in homebrewing as an important step in the development of a personal craft beer culture:

Surely, the road to the successful development of craft beer culture goes through home brewers, that is why, even today, I experiment with different brewings at our place. I think we have to help home brewers by any means. I knew nothing about beer except that it was a straw-yellow carbonated drink, and although, as a child, I didn’t make a difference between a beer house and a brewery, I succeeded by reading proven international books on brewing and by trying to make a beer at home that both our friends and I liked. I learned the hard way that no matter how well you manage to push things on sheer enthusiasm and heart, sometimes, there are obstacles that require resources. (Tsaneva 2019)

Hristov makes an important observation about the specifics of craft brewers’ community and culture. His personal story shows the craft brewers’ search for authentic taste that comes through the experiments with the ingredients and the techniques. Those experiments are grounded in practical and technological know-

how, learned through self-education and active communication with other home brewers that are learning by sharing experiences.

Besides that, the democratic character of the craft brewing community and the education of consumer's taste and curiosity is crucial for the development of the craft beer culture (Ivanov 2016). According to Ivanov, those who prefer craft beers are motivated by the distinguishing taste as well as the variety of styles craft beer offers. He stresses the curiosity that guides craft beer lovers to reject conventional tastes and, instead, search for authentic, uncommon and distinctive beers. The consumers' curiosity and respect toward the craft brewer's expertise and the unique craft beer that is produced are an important characteristic of the craft beer culture. In his analyses of what motivates consumers' preference for craft beers rather than ordinary industrial mass beers, Ivanov states: "they [microbreweries] are forced to offer their clients a unique product through which to justify its higher price" (Ivanov 2016: 80). Being distinct from the industrial mass-produced and standardized taste is something that Bulgarian craft brewers claim as characteristics of their products. In a passionate confession revealing their motivation to run a brewery, the pioneers from one of the first Bulgarian craft breweries, *Glarus*, assert that:

Once we saw and tried the plethora of tastes, colors and aromas that go with the different styles of beer, we knew there was no way back to the ordinary, bland pale lager which is swamping the market and thus robbing people of the right to taste something different (Glarus 2018).

This quote reveals an opposition to the mass-produced beers, questioning their quality and criticizing their lack of diversity and bland taste. Thus, the brewery declares its willingness to be part of a revolution in the way beer is produced and how it tastes. On their website they have published a manifesto for "a revolution in all aspects of beer making" that might also be considered a declaration of what the craft beer culture is and why it must be promoted. The criticism toward mass produced beer is very strong, as well as the respect toward traditions in brewing and the honoring of authentic taste. The manifesto is based on three basic statements:

1. **No** more mass produced, bland lager which tastes the same regardless of the brand. **Yes** to ale – a different type of beer that allows so much more variety in taste.
2. **No** more beer pasteurization. **Yes** to the full spectrum of filtered and unfiltered beers. We are gentle on our beers and they repay us with wonderful character.
3. **No** more cheap adjuncts like rice and corn. **Yes** to the best ingredients sourced from the top malt and hops producers around the world including some from Bulgaria.

(Glarus 2018)

That manifesto is an interesting argument of the craft beer movement and stands in opposition to the large-scale producers and their products. According to Rao (2008) the craft beer movement is a "revolution" and a social movement against the industrially produced, low quality, homogeneous beers. The manifesto of Glarus is a demonstration that Bulgarian beer producers are part of an international identity movement to reshape production and consumption of beer. As specified by Rao (2008: 43), "identity movements, informed by a 'we' feeling, arise to challenge dominant organizations or categories and seek to realize new collective identities by building new organizations that emphasize democracy, participation, and empowerment". The enthusiasts from Glarus act as spokespersons representing the craft beer community. As such they are following the same construct that Rao has identified. According to Rao, "beer enthusiasts were able to construct a "hot cause" (the undesirable taste of mass-produced lager) and relied on "cool mobilization" (small brewpubs using traditional methods to brew distinctive beers) in order to spur the revolution" (quoted in Withers 2017: 16). The message is clear - craft beer culture is co-constructed by both producers and consumers, as an opposition to the bland, pasteurized, low quality beer produce by large breweries In contrast, craft beers are defined as high quality products made

with “best ingredients”, and which honor a diversity of unique, tasteful beers produced by innovative brewers. Analyzing the consumers’ motivation for craft beer consumption Borer (2015: 297) suggests that consumption of craft beer is “acts of resistance” against the pop-culture and mass-market - a revolution against the globalized taste and production practices.

In order to spread the ideology underpinning the craft beer culture, Bulgarian craft brewers engage in consumer education. One of the main points they stress are the differences between craft and industrial beer. The claims for artisanal accuracy are also used as a key argument in the validation of the higher prices of craft beers (two to three times higher than the industrially produced). Analyzing consumers’ motivation to purchase a craft beer, Ivanov concludes that a key motivation is “the opportunity for an informed choice of a product or service that satisfies specific needs of consumers that shifts the focus from the low price to the product of high value for which it must be paid” (Ivanov 2016: 78). In other words, a major motivation for craft beer consumption is based on the valorization of product uniqueness. Those values attributed to the purchase are part of the informed choice as well as a sign of a craft beer culture that producers and consumers share.

The embodied value of craft beer production and the claim for quality over quantity influences not only consumers’ choice but reflects the values of craft beer consumers. Ivanov identifies some of their characteristics and motivations, but does not pay attention to the symbolic negotiations that, according to Withers (2017), are part of the consumers’ involvement in local craft beer cultures. He bases that assumption on Flack’s suggestion that the consumers’ choice of beer is a “sociological marker or symbol of self-definition” (Flack 1997: 46). Baginski and Bell (2011: 155) suggest that the purchase of craft beer represents elite consumption due to its character as a “high order prestige good” motivated by a “highbrow” consumer’s choice. Murray and O’Neill (2012: 900) define the craft beer consumer as “sophisticated” and “discerning” in order to reveal the culture and informed choices behind craft beer consumption. Those authors stress the importance of not only product quality and taste, but also suggest that craft beer is a product with higher social prestige and value due to the specific cultural craftsmanship embedded within the product. Withers further develops the understanding of craft beer consumption as an act of revolution against the mass-market. He draws the conclusion that “craft beer consumption is a means by which to explore taste, identity, and popular culture, and a way for consumers to combat product boredom due to market homogeneity. Through “consuming craft” the consumer artfully advocates and uses taste to negotiate symbolic boundaries and recognize “like-minded people.” In this sense, consumers contribute to the growth of this market through consumption as a means of distinction and personal taste negotiation” (Withers, 2017: 16–17).

The role that breweries play in those processes and in the education of the consumers and the development of craft beer culture is important. The role of the aforementioned breweries *Ayliak* (based in Sofia) and *Glarus* (based in Varna) has been noted, but they are not the sole influencers and promoters of craft beer in Bulgaria. Other breweries, *Divo Pivo* and *White Stork* (both based in Sofia) are breweries that started at the very beginning of the development of a craft beer market in Bulgaria. All of them realized the need to identify and develop their customer-base; beer drinkers who shares their passion for good quality beer. Nowadays these breweries are well recognized and might be classified as market leaders. Over the years, they have used their websites and social media channels to promote the craft beer culture. To reach a broader audience, all are quite active in different local and national media. In media interviews they define craft beer, why and how they produce it, and why it differs from industrial one. Their personal stories are well represented and are part of consumers’ informative choice, but they also serve as a motivation for new entrepreneurs to open their own breweries. Thus, the family of craft beer consumers and producers grows over the years. Other popular breweries on the craft beer scene are *Rhombus* (Pazardzhik), *Hills* (Plovdiv/Perushtitsa), *Blek Pine* (Sofia), *Beer Bastards* (Burgas), *Kazan Artizan* (Bistrithza), *Metalhead Brewery* (Burgas), and *Trima i Dvama* (Sliven). All the breweries are

owned by Bulgarian citizens, so can be thought of as local. The first entrepreneurs in the craft brewing industry were based in the largest Bulgarian cities of Sofia, Varna, Burgas and Plovdiv. With the development of the market and rising consumer interest, beer lovers from other smaller Bulgarian cities have also invested in breweries - *Trima i Dvama* from Sliven, *Can Supply* based in Blagoevgrad and *Meltum Brewery* situated in Lovech.

The most popular styles of craft beer in Bulgaria are India pale ale (IPA), American Pale Ale (APA), NEIPA (New England India Pale Ale), Porter, and Stout. Recently some microbreweries have invested in the development of more locally related beers, using typical Bulgarian flowers, roots, seeds, fruits or vegetables. The creativity is endless, but what is important is the development of tastes that are localized. The rising number of breweries that offer these innovative beers shows that Bulgarian consumer is more willing to experiment and that the local beer culture is established. As leaders in the localization of the craft beers I point out *Rhombus*, *Trima I Dvama*, *Ayliak*, and *Glarus*. *Rhombus* offers beers with lavender and rose oil named *Lavender Porter* and *Damascena*. Their *Orpheus Gruit* is made with collection of Bulgarian herbs, namely mint, thyme, juniper, salvia and lemon balm. Another popular vegetable in Bulgaria is the beetroot, which inspired the brewmasters at *Rhombus* to use it in creating their red IPA *March*. Another creation of the same brewery is a *Berliner Weisse* with Blackberries and *Lactobacillus Bulgaricus* и *Streptococcus Thermophilus*. *Lactobacillus Bulgaricus* и *Streptococcus Thermophilus* are the bacteria that transform milk into yoghurt. In Bulgaria, yoghurt is considered as one of the national foods and Bulgarians proudly declare that they are the inventors of it.⁷ *Ayliak* also developed a beer with *Lactobacillus Bulgaricus* working in cooperation with the Center for Applied Studies and Innovation based in the University of Sofia. The microbreweries *Glarus* and *Trima I Dvama* both offer beer with herbs that popular in Bulgaria for making for tea. Thus the beer with a taste of tea become one of those new, localized Bulgarian craft beer trends. *Glarus* launched the *Rhodopi Dreams*⁸ as part of their *Glarus Signature* series. That is a lager beer with *sideritis plant* (known in Bulgaria as *Moursalski Chai*). Based in the small city of Sliven *Trima I Dvama*, also does not hesitate to experiment. As part of their original selection consumers might taste their nonconventional beers *Chai Malko* (a blonde ale with chamomile and honey) and a gose style beer *Gose Yana*⁹ with *Nectaroscordum Siculum ssp. Bulgaricum* more popularly known in Bulgaria as *samar-dala* (chives).

These examples of the localization of the taste and technologies for beer production in Bulgaria are part of the global processes of neocalism and the desire to relate the product to local culture and traditions. The use of locally grown ingredients is part of Bulgarian culinary traditions, and the use of regional plants reflect this desire for localized taste. With respect to neocalism, Reid and Gatrell (2017a, 37) state, “in addition to being locally-owned some craft breweries attempt to strengthen their connection with their local communities by naming their establishments and the beers that they brew after local landmarks, historical figures, landscapes, or historical events.” The search for creating craft beer with of Bulgarian character is closely related to the use of local gastronomical knowledge and traditions. Bulgarian brewers are developing localized beer while combing a unique blend of foreign traditions and innovation with local ingredients and tastes. Here the search for authenticity is not based only on a particular locality, but on a mythologized vision of what typical, or traditional Bulgarian products and tastes are. That is why roses and lactobacillus are used as ingredients in Bulgarian craft beers, as well as local tea or spices.

Kapana the creative district of the city of Plovdiv

The localization of craft beer production and consumption in Bulgaria has gone hand in hand with the development of a local urban craft beer culture. The focus here will switch to the specifics of craft beer culture in Bulgaria's second largest city: Plovdiv. The development of the local

beer culture started with the emergence of craft beer shops, beer houses and pubs. Later, with the appearance of local craft breweries and craft beer festivals, the local craft beer scene was extended. The beer culture in the city is closely related with the transformation of Kapana¹⁰ (literary translated as The Trap) neighborhood into an artistic and creative district. It became not only “the home “of craft beer shops, bars and festivals but a place where active young people sheared ideas and co-created the place. I will argue that the transformation of one of the central areas as well as the nomination of Plovdiv for European Capital of Culture for 2019 played an important role in the popularization of craft beer production and consumption. The nomination brought specific artistic energy and intensified the creative sector, focused on the Kapana neighborhood. The case of Plovdiv is chosen as an interesting example of the interconnection between urban culture, iconic urban spaces, creative industries, and the craft beer culture.

The Kapana Creative District project was designed to bring life to this central city space. The transformation of the area started in 2012 when some streets in the district became a pedestrian zone. Later, when the project became part of the Transform Platform, within the Urban Dreams cluster of the Plovdiv European Capital of Culture 2019 program, the pedestrian area expanded significantly. The Platform was dedicated to the “re-thinking and reviving of forgotten and abandoned urban spaces as well as for changing the perception of them” Plovdiv 2019(2019b). This was one of the flagship projects of Plovdiv 2019 whose implementation preceded other activities and was realized in the European Capital of Culture 2019 preparation phase (Visitkapana 2017). As stated in one municipal document, the project is aimed “at bringing about long-term sustainable interference into Plovdiv’s cityscape, as well as rediscovering and revitalizing deserted city spaces by filling them with cultural content” (Plovdiv 2019, 2019a).

The Municipality of Plovdiv believed that the revival of this central urban zone would be possible with the transformation of the area into a creative district. Besides, the creative industries, other distinguishing characteristics of the districts’ new vision became the popping up of different small bars and restaurants. Some of these new businesses dedicated their efforts to promoting the craft beer culture in Plovdiv. Thereby, the new contextualization of the place enabled the introduction of a craft beer culture by making the place attractive to young people and tourists, as well as to those residents with higher incomes.

Re-branding Plovdiv as European capital of culture 2019

Plovdiv cannot be compared to Sofia which is the craft beer capital of Bulgaria. In contrast to the rest of the country, the capital city of Sofia is more dynamic socially and economically and has an environment that provides an excellent basis for the development of a local craft beer culture. The case of Plovdiv is chosen as it is a vibrant city with a underdeveloped, but emerging, craft beer culture. The title of European Capital of Culture, that the city held in 2019 intensified the processes of re-thinking local identity in connection to local culture and urban environment. Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva the artistic director of the municipal Foundation Plovdiv 2019 provides a brief overview of why Plovdiv was awarded and what values were attributed to the candidature. She emphasizes the city’s historical, cultural, and social characteristics arguing that:

Plovdiv is proud of its ancient heritage and its status as one of the oldest European cities. The identity of the city and its citizens are marked by deep layers of the past. The meeting between different cultures, communities and groups has always been the biggest challenge, as well as the best drive for the city’s development. “Together” is more than a path to a more integrated community, it is our vision for making culture more accessible so that it can make our lives more meaningful, our city more vibrant and attractive (Kuyumdzhieva 2019).¹¹

I will argue that the nomination of the city as a cultural capital intensified the popularization of craft beer consumption and the development of a craft beer culture. The main objectives of Plovdiv’s application for the designation were the following:

- City transformation: “We transform forgotten urban spaces, as well as peoples’ mindsets, in order to make Plovdiv a better place to live in and a more attractive tourist destination.”
- Create heritage for the future: “We turn past into future, also through new technologies, in order to create a bridge between eras, generations and cultural and archaeological layers.”
- Master the art of living: “We include slow food, sport, music, the bohemian lifestyle, in order to learn how to live completely and sustainably, to enjoy art and nature to the fullest.” (Plovdiv 2019)

The main messages in the application of Plovdiv for European Capital of Culture (ECOC) designation were translated into strategic goals that Plovdiv should follow. The issue of revitalization of the urban areas, the use of traditions in innovative and creative ways, and sustainable consumption and production were proudly discussed. The parallels between those main objectives of Plovdiv 2019 and the ideology behind craft beer are visible.

A number of studies reveal the transformative effect that craft breweries and bars might have for the revitalization of urban areas and neighborhood transformation (Reid 2018; Gatrell, Reid, and Steiger 2018; Reid and Gatrell 2017a, 2017b; Barajas, Boeing, and Wartell 2017). Indeed, the desire for transformation was one of the leading forces besides the municipal activities leading to the new identity of the Kapana district as a place in the central city dedicated to art, culture and creative industries. From the very beginning of that metamorphosis, the neighborhood accommodated craft beer bars and shops. This renewed city space became an attractive urban spot for locals and tourists as it turned into a pedestrian area with small craft shops, bars, and restaurants, besides having an active cultural and artistic life. Furthermore, due to its new identity and uses the district became a place where the alternative beer scene flourished.

Craft beer culture respects traditions and transforms traditional knowledge into an innovative product. In that regard, part of the industrial heritage of the city is that it was the home of *Kametitza* - the first beer factory in Bulgaria, established in 1881 (Raychev 2002: 129). Nowadays *Kametitza* is one of the leading beer producers on a national level and beer production is a respected part of city’s industrial heritage. That connection with brewing feeds the pride of Plovdivians as “owners “of their local beer. That sensibility toward the local character of the beer eventually was transferred to the locally produced craft beers. In that sense the industrial beer heritage did not negatively affect the development of an alternative beer scene, but rather flourished alongside the local pride toward Plovdivian beer (both craft and industrial). Furthermore, as part of the promotion of the bohemian lifestyle, The Foundation Plovdiv 2019 included, as part of the official program of the European Capital of Culture, one craft beer festival and one dedicated to both industrial and craft beers. Thus, craft beer culture was officially recognized as an important part of the “master the art of living” and images of the city - where slow food, crafts, and slow way of living - were promoted. The connection between this iconic district and the development of craft beer is not unique for Plovdiv. Reid (2018) finds similar relationships between craft beer, the adaptive reuse of urban spaces, and the neighborhood revitalization in some cities in the United States.

With respect to the craft beer drinker, “the craft beer consumer is looking for a unique atmosphere, taste, and overall experience and it is up to the breweries to meet those expectations. The physical space and its associated atmosphere play an important role in achieving the ‘experience’ consumers have come to expect” (CBRE 2016a: 4). The transformation of Kapana into a nice, vibrant cultural area made that almost forgotten part of the city center into a fashionable tourist space with distinguished ambiance and iconic bars and restaurants. Kapana is also home to a few bars dedicated to craft beer- charming places with unique design. The distinct atmosphere of these bars attracts customers. By offering a wide selection of craft beers they introduce and educate visitors on the diversity of craft beers. A report by CBRE (2016b: 2) stresses the importance of the individuality of the location where craft beer will be produced and consumed. It recognizes

the role that adaptive reuse can play in delivering “a unique experience to the consumer not found in other types of conventional real estate”. In that sense the case of Plovdiv is another example of that aspect of craft beer culture; the transformative power to re-contextualize spaces and their usage in order to create a unique environment for beer consumption. That innovative use and design of the places where craft beer is offered is one of the specifics of the craft beer culture.

Craft beer culture in Plovdiv

While the cultural and creative industries have become a trademark of the Kapana neighborhood, it has turned into a place for slow food, street food and craft beer. These have become critical to the neighborhood’s brand identity, and in its destination branding efforts. What the cultural and creative sector, together with entrepreneurs, locals, visitors, and tourists have created is a unique place with a charismatic atmosphere. The Municipality of Plovdiv includes this district in the promotion of Plovdiv as a destination for cultural and creative tourism based on experience and co-creation. Many of the events organized by entrepreneurs, as well as the craft beer festival, became part of the Plovdiv European Capital of Culture 2019 cultural and artistic program. The promotion of the craft beer as part of the Plovdivians lifestyle shows the visibility of craft beer culture, but also its recognition on a regional level.

But how did development of the craft beer culture in Plovdiv start? That story is one of enthusiasm, respect for beer, and vision. The participants in that adventure are the creators of several different places where craft beer might be consumed and purchased. All of them were inspired by craft beer scenes in other countries and have been successful in adapting these examples to create Plovdiv’s craft beer culture.

Jägerhof- the spirit of Bavaria in Plovdiv

Brothers Atanas Antonov and Ivan Antonov were early entrepreneurs in Plovdiv’s craft beer scene. In 2013, they opened *Jägerhof*, a craft brewery to bring the taste of Bavarian beer to Plovdiv. Their interest in brewing was a result of their visits to Germany where they were highly impressed by the character of Bavarian beer houses. Their vision was to introduce the Bavarian beer culture as a mixture of unique atmosphere, food, and high quality beer brewed on site in large fermentation tanks. The interior of their three storey newly constructed building is a modern interpretation of Bavarian traditions. The fermentation tanks, visible from the restaurant, are a central attraction for visitors and, along with the design of the place, contribute to the “authentic” spirit of a Bavarian beer house. To be as true as possible to Bavarian traditions, Ivan and Atanas hired a German brewmaster. The result of decision were two main types of beer *Jägerhof Hell* (ale) and *Jägerhof Weiss* (white, wheat) and several seasonal Kupfer Bier (Copper Beer), Dunkles Bier (Dark Beer), Dunkles Weissbier (Dark Wheat Beer). All of them are brewed in accordance with the German beer purity law *Reinheitsgebot*. At first they only sold beer on tap, but with the rising popularity of craft beers, in 2016, *Jägerhof* launched a 330 milliliters bottle of their main beers. The bottled beer enabled broader distribution and extended the popularity of *Jägerhof*’s beers.

Jägerhof, as the first craft beer producer in Plovdiv, is an important actor in the city’s beer scene. The project was realized with significant investments requiring the construction of a brewery and nice restaurant. Their strategy has been to develop a business around fresh beer and introducing the brand “Bavarian beerhouse in Plovdiv”. They were the first craft beer producer in the city to not only made a significant investment in brewing, but also to develop a successful business model by contextualizing their brand as connected to German beer traditions (Jägerhof 2019).

Moreover, as part of their mission to popularize Bavarian beer culture, the beer house has, since 2013, held an annual Oktoberfest. This is a weeklong celebration of Bavarian beer culture. To bring the spirit of the “original” Oktoberfest to Plovdiv, the staff dress in traditional Bavarian clothes and a special festival beer, symbolically named *Oktoberfest Bier*, is brewed. The festival offers cultural, musical and entertaining programming, thematically related to the Bavarian beer.

The people behind *Jägerhof* were the first to invest in craft beer production and to contextualize the consumption of beer as a symbiosis of ideology, taste, food, and original atmosphere. The idea to bring Bavaria to Plovdiv is a way to introduce traditions in brewing and Bavarian beer styles. *Jägerhof* became the first place in Plovdiv where non-industrial beer was not only offered but was also brewed on site. Thus, *Jägerhof* promote the idea of non-industrial beer and the technology used to produce it. They educate consumers on the variety of beer styles and the diversity of tastes, colors, and textures. Furthermore, they are working toward highlighting the relationship between food and beer. In some respects, in appropriating Bavarian beer traditions to a local context, it could be argued that *Jägerhof* have failed to develop an authentic Plovdivian craft beer culture – with local branding and localized experiences by using the cultural landscape of the city. This stands in sharp contrast to another purveyor of craft beer in the city - Cat and Mouse craft beer bar.

Cat and Mouse – the bohemian character of Plovdivian beer culture

Cat and Mouse is the first craft beer bar in Plovdiv and has existed since 2015. The bar is very closely related to the Kapana Creative District urban transformation project. The bar is one of the first businesses that recognized the district’s potential and thus contributed to its revitalization and transformation from an abandoned central area to a high profile tourist attraction. With the rising popularity of Kapana the bar became an iconic place in the neighborhood due to its design, friendly and knowledgeable staff, large variety of exotic beers, and authentic atmosphere. Cat and Mouse not only became one of the symbols of the creative nature of the neighborhood, but also one of the must-see locations in the city center. That popularity is related with the transformation of the district, but as well with the rising popularity of Plovdiv as the 2019 European Capital of Culture. An example of the bar’s popularity is a New York Times article by the travel journalist Sebastian Modak (2019). Modak notes that Cat and Mouse Bar is the most recognizable venue in the Kapana district.

Cat and Mouse has played a significant role in the adaptive reuse of abandoned urban spaces and the neighborhood revitalization. The role of bars and pubs as part of the creative sector has been recognized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Economic Development (OECD 2014). The OECD acknowledges the transformative role they can play in adaptive reuse and neighborhood revitalization. According to the organization (2014: 68) bars play a significant role “in pioneering new spaces, as cultural hubs developed by creative entrepreneurs who developed creative programming and bohemian atmosphere that is attractive for locals and tourists alike ... design values play a major role in the attractiveness of these venues”. In Plovdiv, Cat and Mouse is not only a good example of these processes but also an example of the co-construction of the creative industries and the urban spaces they occupy. Revitalization of the Kapana neighborhood is impossible without iconic places such as Cat and Mouse. The embodied symbolic, political, and cultural meanings to Kapana are incorporated by the creative industries that choose the district to develop their businesses.

The owners of Cat and Mouse, Dimiitar Semlov and Ivailo Dernev, provide some interesting insights on the symbiotic relationship between their bar and the neighborhood and the co-constructive power of the creative industries. When they opened Cat and Mouse in 2015, the surrounding area was dominated by empty buildings. They recall the beginning as putting “our hearts and souls into creating Cat and Mouse.” They developed an authentic place, paying close

attention to the details. In discussing the Cat and Mouse experience they stress the importance of design:

The bar is renovated with explicit respect to the history of the space and with a great attention to detail. The design is based on natural materials like wood, metal, brick and marble, which are skilfully combined to give true pleasure to the senses. We do not tolerate imitations and that inspired us to create furniture that is almost entirely artisanal (Cat and Mouse 2019).

Notwithstanding the new use of the place Semkov and Dernev are willing to preserve the history of the building and to bring new life to that particular place and the neighborhood as a whole. In their webpage Cat and Mouse summarized the vision and the philosophy behind the bar: “distinctive concept, memorable design and amazing personnel”. The bar soon became “a favorite among Plovdivians and a must-see for any visitor in town” (Cat and Mouse 2019). These representations which Semkov and Dernev share are based both on self-reflection and a desire to promote their business. They see Cat and Mouse as a “distinctive concept”, which offers a large variety of craft beers (both Bulgarian and international) served by a cheerful and well-trained staff. The bar has a memorable design that brings an authentic historical building back to life.

Besides its artistic design, Cat and Mouse promotes craft beer culture. In comparison to *Jägerhof*, where local regional beer culture is the focus, the ambition of Semkov and Derved is to bring the world of craft beer to Plovdiv. They offer 150 types of beer from Bulgaria and around the world; several Bulgarian craft beers are always on draft.

Semkov and Dernev constantly work toward the development of the local beer culture by promoting local and international craft beers, organizing beer tastings and educational workshops as well as offering different cultural activities connecting beer and food. They are active in consumers’ education and the development of the local beer culture in Plovdiv. The aim of the events that became part of the social and cultural program of the bar were to broaden consumers’ senses, taste, knowledge and thus to build a supportive community and educated consumers. Starting in 2017, Semkov and Dernev became nomad brewers, contracting with another brewery to produce beers whose recipes they had created. This included blackberry ale, red ale, an IPA, and some seasonal beers.

Since Cat and Mouse opened, Kapana has significantly transformed. From a district comprising many empty buildings, it has become a busy area with craft industries, bars, clubs and restaurants. Some other bars in the neighborhood have joined Cat and Mouse’s efforts to promotion the craft beer culture by offering craft beer and organizing events such as beer tastings, craft-brewery presentations, and thematic workshops. These have helped to educate consumers on craft beer. Craft beer and the bars that sell it have developed a loyal clientele of beer lovers. Some were familiar with craft beer (e.g., as a result of being home brewers), while others were new to the craft beer.

The craft beer festival Two-three beers fest

As noted above, Kapana has turned into a venue for different urban festivals and cultural events. This influenced the promotion of craft beer culture in the city, and two different craft beer festivals were organized by local activists. One took place in Kapana and another in one of the park areas of the city.

The founders of Cat and Mouse are pioneers not only in the introduction of craft beer to Plovdiv but also in the re-contextualization of Kapana. They were one of the first to recognize the festive potential of the district. Pursuing their mission of popularizing both the district and the local craft beer culture, a year after the establishment of Cat and Mouse they organized the first craft beer festival in Plovdiv: Two-Three Beers Fest (20 and 21 May 2017). The main aim was to promote Plovdiv’s craft beer culture and offer the visitor an opportunity to try Bulgarian craft beers. Thirteen Bulgarian and two foreign breweries participated. Eighty different beers were

available for consumers to taste (BNT2, 2017). According to Cat and Mouese co-owner, Ivailo Dernev:

For us this event is extremely important as we are willing to present the beer as a culture and as a way of living. We believe that as a sensation beer is not very different from wine. It is a beverage that brings pleasure and diverse sensorial emotions. We are happy that the craft beer culture became more popular in Bulgaria among the people seeking the aesthetics in their everyday life (BNT2, 2017).

The festival proved to be sustainable, having its third edition in late spring of the 2019. In 2019, more craft breweries from other countries participated. This is an indication of a more developed local craft beer culture, and also a sign that Bulgarian craft brewers are not hesitant to be compared with their colleagues from abroad.

Dedicating special festivals to craft beer not only provides a way to evaluate craft beers, but also a mechanism to distinguish craft from industrial beer. Moreover, craft beer festivals as cultural events can facilitate the ongoing development of the local and national craft beer culture. They are places where diverse publics might taste craft beer for the first time, or update their knowledge of local craft breweries and their brands. The festival also provides an opportunity for direct communication between brewers and beer lovers. This communication is extremely important in building consumer trust, respect and devotion to craft beer in general and to a brand in particular. Face-to-face communication between producers and consumers allows direct dissemination of technological knowledge, and social and cultural messages. The founders of the craft beer brand *Vitoshko lale* Pavel Velchev and Deyan Tzholakov reveal the importance of festivals, as a way to advertise their brand and to attract new followers, friends, and consumers. “Actually, we do not invest even a single penny in advertising. We do not have budget for marketing and advertising. What we are relying on is the word of mouth as well as the popularization of our products during the craft beer related events and festivals. What we rely on is the so-called guerilla marketing” (Николов 2019). Furthermore, craft beer festivals are events that bring together brewers and provide them with the opportunity to share experiences with other brewers, to potentially meet new partners, and to establish and maintain friendships. In addition to beer tasting, festivals also showcase music performances, educational workshops, cultural events, and food vendors, that offer food considered as an accompaniment to the beers. Including these elements of entertainment help the brewers reach a broader audience. By offering simultaneous sensorial, material, emotional experiences, the festival is able to promote the craft beer culture. Picard and Robinson (2006) and Getz (2008) problematize festivals as an element of the experience economy. In that sense, the Two-Three Beers Fest might be seen as a creative cultural event that “trades” with emotions and experiences, but also educates visitors and provides an opportunity to learn more about craft beer consumption and production. During the craft beer festival, a visitor might participate in beer tastings, various workshops, competitions, music concerts and other diverse entertainment and educative activities.

Getz (2008: 404) emphasizes that festivals are cultural products that stimulate different emotions, but also engage visitors by providing them with sensory and emotional “provocations”. According to Picard and Robinson the festivals are “way of re-making and re-animating spaces and social life” (Picard and Robinson 2006). They argue that festivals are an innovative form for community and cultural change. Festivals are part of the experience economy and tourism, but also are a place for social and cultural transformation. That dual character of the festivals is important in order to attract beer lovers from across the country and abroad.

Describing the experience economy as fundamental to cultural industries, Richards (2012: 11–18) emphasizes that “in Western consumer society experiences have been developed as commodities ... the search for excitement”, he argues, has become the driving force for tourism and leisure consumption. He refers to the experience economy as based on innovative cultural products, which provoke consumption of intangible expressions of culture “such as atmosphere, creativity, and lifestyle”. In that sense, a craft beer festival might be approached as a creative cultural

event that “trades” with emotions and experiences. That experience is evaluated in terms of its claims to be both local and authentic, local; as well as the quality of the quality of the food and beer. Furthermore, the organizer of the festival not only invites the visitor to experience craft beer culture, but by their participation to become co-creators of the event themselves.

Conclusion

The case of Cat and Mouse in the Kapana district shows that a craft beer bar can have a positive cultural and economic influence on its neighborhood. Reid and Gatrell (2017a: 97) argue that “craft breweries are not hesitant to locate in neighborhoods and buildings that many other businesses deem less than desirable. Cat and Mouse share that philosophy, and were one of the first businesses that appeared in Kapana during the period of its transformation from an almost abandoned central place to a vibrant neighborhood. The owners of Cat and Mouse not only believed in the successful transformation of the neighborhood, they became a main driving force for defining what Kapana should be by creating a successful business model. By being creative and thinking outside of the box, they were crucial actors in the development of the neighborhood as a place for culture, creativity, innovative business and models of leisure and tourism.

As already noted, “the craft beer consumer is looking for a unique atmosphere, taste, and overall experience” (CBRE 2016b, 3–4). The Bulgarian case reveals that connectivity between the craft beer consumption and craft beer culture are strongly related to the place of consumption. The authentic atmosphere of the physical space plays “an important role in achieving the “experience” consumers have come to expect” (CBRE 2016b, 3–4). The first craft beer bar in Kapana is an example of the adaptive reuse of location that delivers “a unique experience to the consumer not found in other types of conventional real estate” (ibid.). Cat and Mouse is not only an iconic bar, but also a key attraction for developing craft beer tourism in the city. TripAdvisor and other online media promote the place as a destination for international craft beer tourists. Bujdosó and Szűcs (2012) define beer tourism as a sub-category of the culinary tourism and stress on “the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences”. Part of such an experience is the ambiance of the neighborhood and the artistic and creative design of the bar. According to Reid and Gatrell (2017b), the revitalization of a neighborhood is closely related to the participation of the so-called creative class. They define the core of the creative class as the “elites, consumers, and leaders”, who are unified by their progressive values. It is the creative class who drive urban revitalization (Reid and Gatrell 2017b: 34). In that sense, the owners of Cat and Mouse and their customers might be defined as part of the creative class that co-create the urban transformation of Kapana district. Furthermore, beer culture itself might be recognized as driving force for urban development and transformation.

Notes

1. I will like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Neil Reid for his editing that improved significantly this paper.
2. Here I use the terms ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ as they are understood in sociology. Qualitative research involves an understanding of human behavior and what governs it, whereas quantitative research looks at the reasons behind various aspects of behavior. The process of measurement is crucial in qualitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships.
3. That is not an official statistic. The number is a result of my personal research on the craft breweries and beerhouses in Bulgaria.
4. The Union of Brewers in Bulgaria is an independent professional association that according to the Article 1 of the Statute of Union of Brewers in Bulgaria is “an association which purpose is to assist and encourage the development of the Bulgarian brewing industry, to improve the professional status of

- brewers, to popularize the traditions and culture of beer consumption”, <http://pivovari.com/images/stories/documents/ubb-ustav-2015-en.pdf>
5. The overall beer consumption in Bulgaria for 2019 equals to 5.6 million hectolitres (Brewers of Europe 2019: 8). A good analysis of the economic trends of beer production and consumption in Bulgaria is offered by the Bulgarian economist Zoya Ivanova in her recent article “Studying the counterparty risk in industrial Enterprises (Along the Lines of The Brewing Industry)” (Ivanova 2019).
 6. According to the Code of Ethics of the Bulgarian Homebrewers Association, homebrewers produce their beer not for commercial purposes, but for their own consumption or to share with friends and family members. See The Code of Ethics and The Constitution <https://homebrewers-bg.org/home/общност/устав-и-етичен-кодекс/>
 7. Similar claims have been made with respect to neighboring Greece and Turkey. For more on the development of the ideology and technology behind the Bulgarian yoghurt see Stoilova (2014).
 8. The Rhodopes (Rodopi in Bulgarian) are a mountain range in Southern Bulgaria.
 9. Yana is a popular Bulgarian girl’s name.
 10. Kapana (The Trap) used to be a craftsmen area till the middle of the 20th century. During the Communist era the Municipality of Plovdiv slowly transformed it into a living area. In the early twentieth first century the district was not a popular urban space, with old and abounded buildings, mostly known as a good parking location for the city centre.
 11. The motto that Plovdiv chose as European Capital of Culture was ‘Together’.

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