

AIMING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE URBAN TOURISM? THE CASE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN MAJOR CITIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

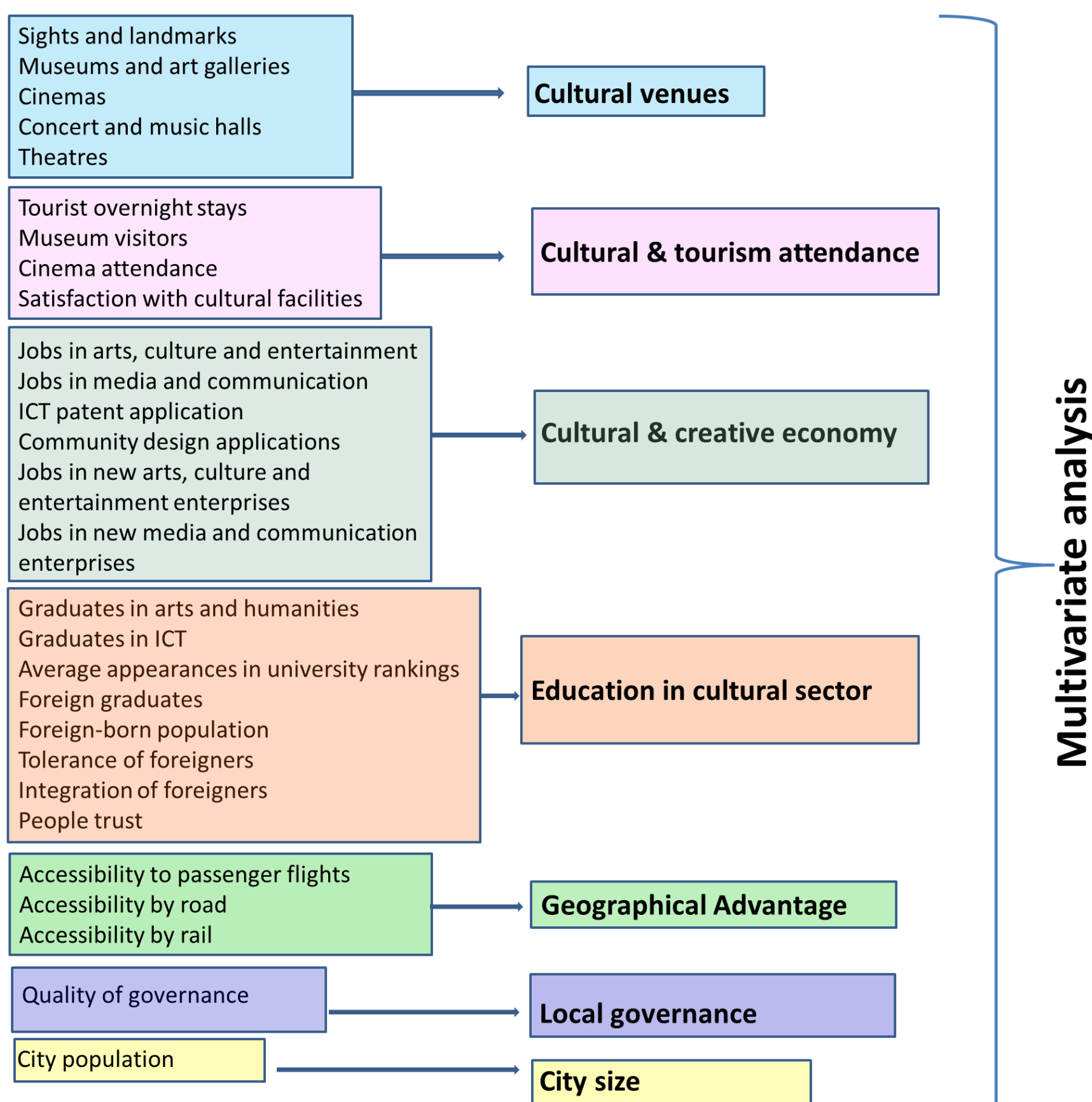
Tourism plays a major role in defining the identity of a territory and is strongly connected with the cultural and creative economies of the place, especially in the urban areas. While it can have a positive economic impact, researchers are stressing the sustainability of the process. From this point of view, urban tourism is less researched. The urban cultural activities lead to innovative ideas, new forms of technology or architecture, experiencing new business models, new paths to sustainable development, new competitive opportunities for innovations and value generating activities (Kourtit et al., 2013; Stanborough, 2011; Opoku, 2015). The role of culture in cities development is undeniable, being identified at least three major directions in which culture contributes to urban functions amplification (Grams & Warr, 2003). Cultural activities contribute to urban economic development, creation of social relations using the creative capacity of the inhabitants (by building a strong spirit of belonging) and to the growth of civilization level in the entire area (Palmer, 2018). The tourism and post – communist cities. In the last years we witness a growing capitalization of the urban and communist industrial heritage for tourist purposes, together with the growth of its popularity and interest specifically from foreign tourists. The official and non-official representations successfully coexist and are part of the product of communism heritage and revolution (Sima, 2017). As Mihalic in 2017 said, the redraw of the tourism in Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) meant wide processes: Europeanization and resizing, transformation and marketing, new tourist products launching (rejuvenation, diversification) and transition from tourism in the communist bloc to international tourism. The present research aims to investigate the role of related industries (cultural vibrancy, creative industries) in building city tourism attractiveness in a sustainable manner.

2. DATABASE AND METHODS

STUDY AREA

The present approach takes into consideration 49 cities and agglomerations from 11 former communist countries located in the Central - Eastern part of the EU. Their population size varies from 50000 to 2 million inhabitants, while their selection was very much dependent on the availability of data.

LIST OF CONSIDERED INDICATORS:

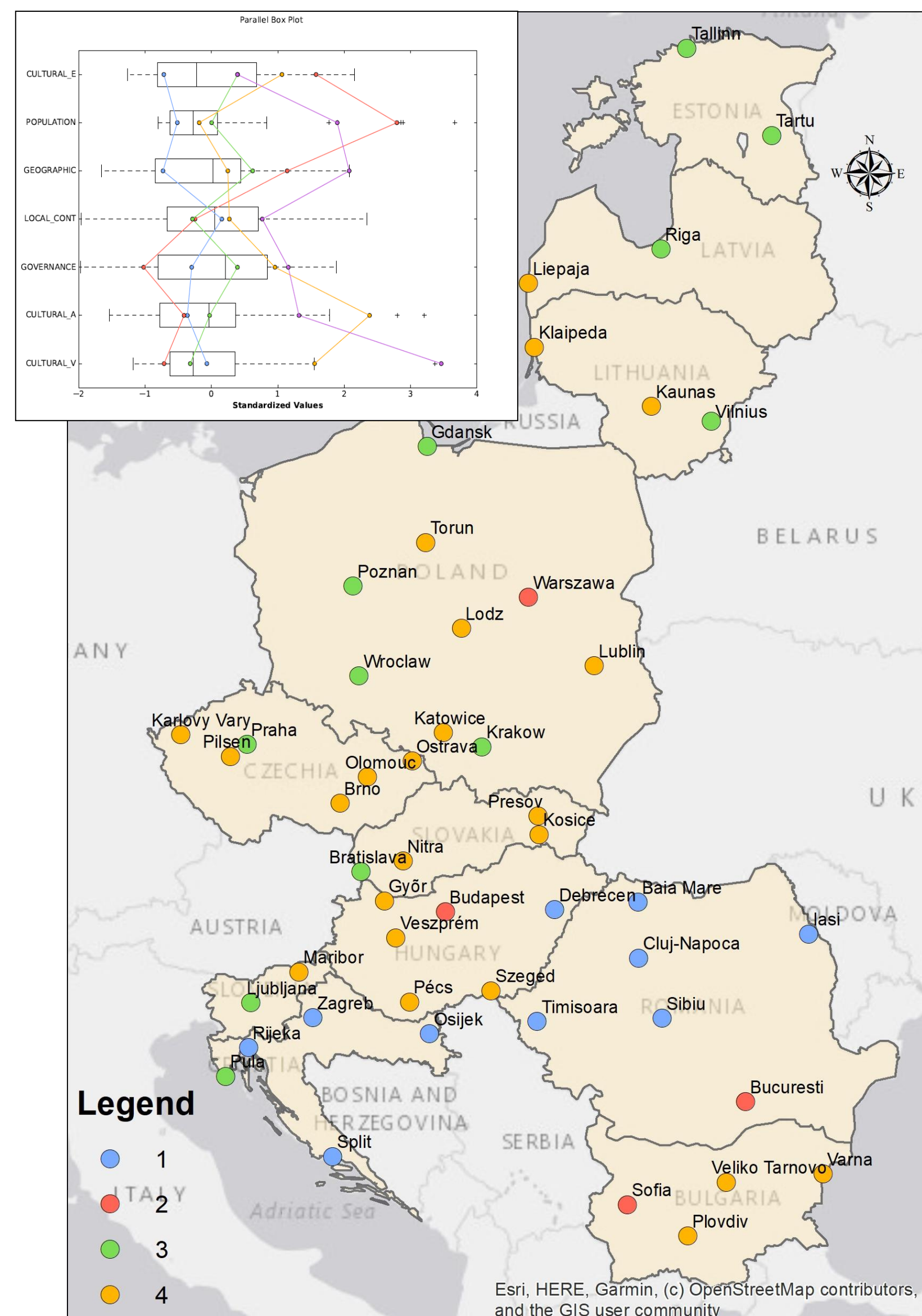


In order to assess the role of connected industries in building the attractiveness of the cities, the present research takes into consideration a database provided by European Commission, **Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor 2019**. A selection of seven sub-dimensions based on 28 indicators is measuring cultural vibrancy, creative economy and the dimension of enabling environment. These sub-dimensions are analyzed using multivariate statistics in order to highlight typology of cities.

Correlation Matrix

	Population city	Cultural venues	Cultural & tourism attendance	Cultural & creative economy	Education in cultural sector	Geographical Advantage	Local governance
Population city	1.000						
Cultural venues	-0.137	1.000					
Cultural & tourism attendance	-0.006	0.555	1.000				
Cultural & creative economy	0.617	0.047	0.359	1.000			
Education in cultural sector	0.050	0.160	0.087	0.052	1.000		
Geographical Advantage	0.511	0.147	0.211	0.557	-0.099	1.000	
Local governance	-0.142	0.418	0.282	0.193	-0.019	0.272	1.000

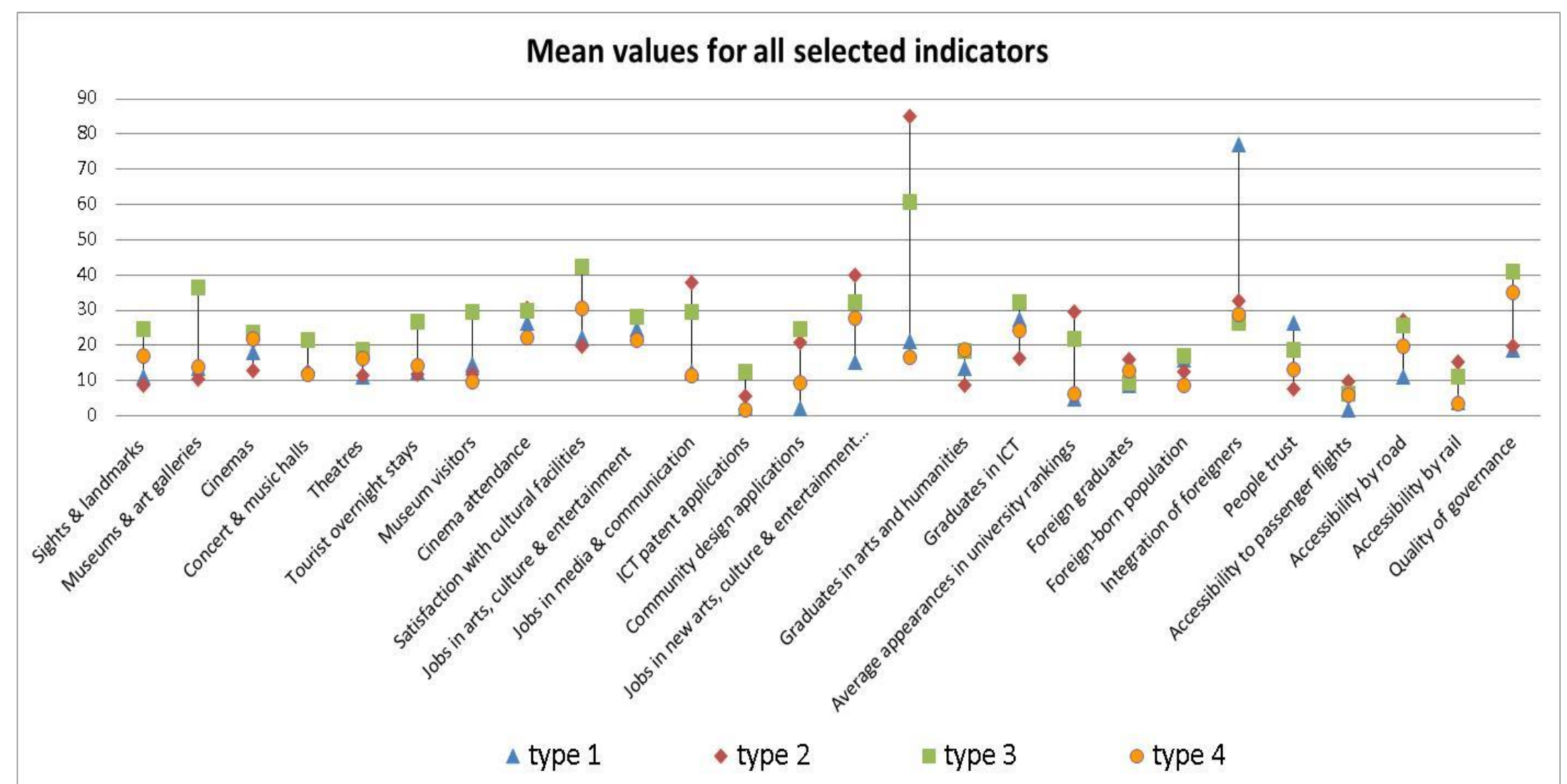
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS



THE TYPOLOGY OF THE ANALYZED CITIES (MULTI-CRITERIA ANALYSIS)

Type 1 includes 10 cities located predominantly in Croatia and Romania, with one capital city (Zagreb) and many cities of regional importance. The European Capital of Culture status owned by Sibiu in 2007 and Rijeka in 2020, the economic expansion of Zagreb or Cluj - Napoca, the multiculturalism and regional tourist potential improvement (Split, Pula, Iasi) are few of the arguments for their future potential.

Type 2 is poorly represented, but the component cities (Sofia, Budapest, Warsaw, Bucharest) are capital cities, having advantages related to accessibility, economic potential and superior tourist capitalization. The indexes values are in general superior or closer to the average. **Type 3** has 12 cities situated in the west or north of the study area, with values clearly above average. They are performing very well in creative economy, accessibility and quality of governance. **Type 4** is the best represented, having 23 cities. Many of these cities were strongly industrialized in the communist period (Plovdiv, Katowice, Košice), but the presence of numerous towns well included in tourist circuits (Varna, Karlovy Vary) and of some strongly promoted areas (Veliko Tarnovo, Brno, Pilsen) guarantee a general favorable environment for cultural activities. They can be considered an example of sustainability and adaptation to the existing conditions.



4. CONCLUSIONS

Eastern European considered cities are in the process of defining their identity from the touristic point of view, but with no clear intention of developing a sustainable form of tourism, mainly because their identity was strongly shaken by the socio-political events of the last century. Most of the cities aspire towards sustainable development practices, therefore entering into a competitiveness which includes sustainable goals but when it comes to tourism, they are struggling to become more visible and to attract more tourists, having an overall negative impact upon their sustainability.

5. SELECTIVE REFERENCES

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