

From Cultural Events to Urban Governance: Policy Outputs and Urban Development in the 2025 Culture City of East Asia-Macao

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Abstract

This study examines the 2025 “Culture City of East Asia–Macao” as a case of culture-led urban policy, focusing on its identifiable policy outputs and their relationship with broader urban development. The study employs secondary data analysis and policy document analysis, drawing on official statistics, policy documents, survey reports, academic studies, and supplementary media sources mainly from 2023 to 2025. The analysis distinguishes among three levels: direct policy outputs, concurrent urban development outcomes, and long-term cultural legacy. The findings indicate that the 2025 programme generated several identifiable policy outputs, including city branding initiatives, inter-city cultural exchanges in East Asia, community-based cultural programmes, intangible cultural heritage governance, and planning for major public cultural facilities. During the same period, Macao also experienced growth in visitor arrivals, hotel occupancy, non-gaming expenditure, gross domestic product, and service exports. However, these changes were simultaneously shaped by tourism recovery, large-scale events, existing industrial structures, and other policy interventions; therefore, they cannot be directly attributed to the Culture City of East Asia programme. In terms of cultural participation, the overall participation rate remained broadly stable, while participation in multiple types of cultural activities increased, and community-based programmes expanded the spatial reach of cultural services. The study argues that the Culture City of East Asia should be understood not merely as an annual cultural event, but as a platform for policy coordination and urban cultural governance. Its long-term significance will depend on whether the programme can generate sustained outcomes in city branding governance, cultural industry capacity, resident participation, inter-city cultural networks, and public cultural facility governance. Future research should employ longitudinal tracking, comparative city analysis, and participant-level data to assess its long-term cultural legacy and policy effects.

Keywords: Culture City of East Asia, Macao, Cultural Policy, Urban Governance, Cultural Legacy, Secondary Data Analysis

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Problem Statement

In recent years, culture has increasingly shifted from being viewed primarily as a symbolic resource in urban development to serving as an important policy instrument for urban governance, industrial development, and the construction of local identity and image. Many cities have sought to enhance their visibility and stimulate tourism, cultural industries, and urban development through cultural festivals, artistic performances, cultural facilities, and city branding. Such approaches are commonly discussed within the frameworks of culture-led urban development and culture-led urban regeneration. Previous studies have shown that cultural activities and cultural investment can contribute to city image, tourism, and cultural participation; however, their effects are often shaped by existing industrial structures, governance capacity, and local conditions. The relationship between cultural investment and urban development outcomes is therefore not a straightforward causal one (Evans, 2005; Miles & Paddison, 2005).

The designation of a “Capital of Culture” represents one of the more prominent institutional forms of this type of culture-oriented urban policy. Since the launch of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programme in 1985, the initiative has gradually evolved from an annual cultural event into a policy platform integrating city positioning, cultural participation, tourism development, and urban transformation. Existing research has found that host cities often gain greater cultural visibility and tourism attention during the event year, yet the extent to which changes in city image, economic development, and sociocultural conditions can be sustained depends on whether the programme is effectively connected to long-term urban development strategies and cultural governance arrangements (Cox & García, 2013). In particular, short-term exposure does not necessarily translate into lasting changes in city branding. Without sustained cultural programming, governance mechanisms, and post-event follow-up, the effects generated during the event period may diminish once the programme concludes (García, 2017).

In East Asia, the Culture City of East Asia initiative emerged within the framework of cultural cooperation among China, Japan, and South Korea. Since 2014, the three countries have designated representative cities each year to promote regional cultural understanding and cooperation through cultural and artistic activities and inter-city exchange. Beyond cultural exchange, the initiative has increasingly involved the integration of urban cultural resources and broader urban development objectives. In 2025, Macao adopted the theme “East-West Encounter, Asia in Harmony” and carried out cultural exchanges with Huzhou in China, Kamakura in Japan, and Anseong in South Korea, while linking related activities with its existing cultural heritage, tourism, city branding, and public cultural development (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025a). During the same year, Macao also advanced international promotion, community-based cultural programmes, intangible cultural heritage governance, and the planning of major cultural facilities. The Culture City of East Asia therefore provides not only an annual cultural programme, but also an important case through which to examine the relationship between cultural policy and urban development in Macao.

Nevertheless, it remains necessary to distinguish the policy outputs of the Culture City of East Asia from broader changes in urban development. In Macao, for example, visitor arrivals, hotel occupancy, non-gaming expenditure, gross domestic product, and service exports all increased in 2025. These changes, however, were simultaneously influenced by multiple factors, including the post-pandemic recovery of tourism, large-scale events, tourism policies, and the city’s existing industrial structure. Available data also indicate that Macao’s economy remained highly dependent on the gaming sector, while some statistics on the cultural industries and resident surveys predated the 2025 event year. Such evidence should therefore not be treated directly as policy effects of the Culture City of East Asia. When evaluating the outcomes of cultural events, reliance solely on tourism, economic, or media indicators observed during the event period may lead to a conflation of concurrent changes with policy effects. Previous research on culture-led urban development has likewise stressed the need for caution in the selection of indicators, the specification of time horizons, and the attribution of effects in evaluating cultural interventions (Evans, 2005).

Accordingly, an assessment of the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao should not only identify direct outputs, such as cultural activities, inter-city exchanges, community cultural programmes, and cultural facilities, but also distinguish these outputs from broader urban development trends occurring during the same period. It is equally important to clarify the extent to which the available evidence can support particular interpretations of policy effectiveness. This study focuses on whether the Culture City of East Asia generated identifiable cultural policy outputs and how these outputs were connected to Macao’s existing city branding, cultural governance, and broader urban development trajectories.

1.2. Research Objectives and Research Questions

Against this background, this study examines the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao through official statistics, policy documents, tourism and cultural surveys, and relevant studies. It focuses on identifiable policy outputs generated during the event year as well as concurrent changes in major indicators of urban development

in Macao. Rather than estimating the net effects of the Culture City of East Asia on Macao, the study distinguishes between direct policy outputs and broader urban trends in order to clarify the extent to which the available evidence supports assessments of policy effectiveness.

More specifically, the study has three objectives. First, it identifies the direct policy outputs generated by the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao in the areas of city branding and international exchange, community culture, cultural heritage governance, and public cultural infrastructure. Second, it examines major changes during the event year in tourism, economic development, cultural industries, and residents' cultural participation. Third, it discusses the relationship between these policy outputs and broader urban development trends, together with the limits of interpretation, and considers the extent to which the Culture City of East Asia may evolve from an annual cultural event into a platform for long-term cultural governance.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following three research questions:

What identifiable direct policy outputs were generated by the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao?

What major changes occurred in Macao during the 2025 event year in the areas of tourism, the economy, cultural participation, city branding, and public cultural infrastructure?

To what extent can the available secondary data support an assessment of policy effectiveness based on the identified policy outputs and concurrent urban changes?

2. Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1. Capitals of Culture and Culture-Led Urban Development

Since the late twentieth century, culture has increasingly been incorporated into strategies of urban development and inter-city competition. Whereas cultural policy was once concerned primarily with support for the arts, cultural preservation, and the provision of public cultural services, many cities have begun to integrate cultural activities, cultural facilities, creative industries, and city branding in order to improve urban image, revitalize urban space, and stimulate tourism, consumption, and local development. Such approaches are commonly described as culture-led urban development or culture-led urban regeneration. Miles and Paddison (2005) argue that culture has become an important instrument of urban regeneration, with effects extending beyond economic growth to include place image, the use of urban space, and sociocultural relations.

Cultural activities have attracted increasing attention in urban policy for two main reasons. First, they can generate concentrated public attention within a relatively limited period and spatial setting. Second, they can be linked with tourism, spatial regeneration, cultural consumption, and city marketing. Richards and Palmer (2010) conceptualize this tendency through the idea of the “eventful city,” arguing that when urban events are connected to cultural development, collaborative governance, and long-term urban strategies, their significance extends beyond the short-term attraction of visitors and can become part of a broader process of urban transformation. Whether cultural events can generate sustained urban benefits, however, depends closely on the clarity of policy objectives, the capacity for coordination among public agencies and stakeholders, and the extent to which such events are embedded in existing urban development strategies. Quinn (2010), for example, notes that cultural festivals may simultaneously serve the objectives of cultural policy and urban tourism, but their effects are often constrained in the absence of an integrated policy framework.

The “Capital of Culture” can be regarded as a relatively institutionalized form of culture-led urban development. The European Capital of Culture (ECoC), launched in 1985, initially emphasized European cultural diversity and cultural exchange among cities, but over time host cities increasingly incorporated the programme into policy objectives related to urban regeneration, cultural participation, tourism development, and international

image building. In their review of previous European Capitals of Culture, Cox and García (2013) found that many host cities were able to expand the scale of cultural activities, enhance urban visibility, and strengthen tourism appeal. However, long-term effects varied considerably across cities, and the extent to which such effects were sustained depended heavily on advance planning, governance arrangements, and post-event follow-up.

The Capital of Culture should therefore not be understood merely as a large-scale annual festival. Rather, it can be viewed as a policy platform that integrates cultural activities, city branding, public space, cultural participation, and urban governance. Its policy significance lies not only in the events themselves, but also in whether they contribute to more sustained forms of cultural resource allocation, organizational collaboration, and urban development capacity.

The Culture City of East Asia has developed along similar lines in the East Asian context. Since 2014, the initiative has been implemented within the framework of cultural cooperation among China, Japan, and South Korea, with annual cultural programmes and inter-city exchanges intended to deepen regional cultural understanding. In 2025, Macao adopted the theme “East-West Encounter, Asia in Harmony” and engaged in exchanges with Huzhou, Kamakura, and Anseong, while linking the programme with cultural heritage, city marketing, community culture, and public cultural development (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025a). During the same year, Macao also organized thematic pavilions and international exchange activities while advancing community-based cultural programmes, intangible cultural heritage governance, and the planning of major cultural facilities. The Macao case is therefore well suited to an examination of how an annual cultural programme connects with existing urban policies from the perspective of culture-led urban development, rather than being evaluated solely in terms of the number of events held or participants attracted.

2.2. Policy Effectiveness, Cultural Legacy, and Urban Governance

Research on culture-led urban development has often focused on tourism, economic, and urban regeneration benefits, yet the measurement and attribution of such effects remain contested. Evans (2005) notes that the contribution of cultural investment to urban regeneration may span economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Empirical studies, however, tend to emphasize indicators that are easier to quantify, such as employment, investment, visitor numbers, and consumption, while effects on cultural participation, local identity, and social relations are more difficult to capture. As a result, the strength of evidence regarding cultural policy effectiveness varies considerably. More importantly, urban development is typically shaped by multiple factors, including industrial change, public investment, tourism policy, and broader macroeconomic conditions. Attributing positive changes observed during an event period solely to cultural policy may therefore overstate the effect of any single intervention.

This issue is particularly evident in the case of Capitals of Culture. In the short term, host cities may experience increases in cultural activities, media exposure, visitor numbers, or public cultural investment, but such changes do not necessarily persist after the event has ended. García’s (2005) study of Glasgow 1990, the European City of Culture, shows that the long-term effects of a Capital of Culture are not confined to economic or physical outcomes. Changes in city image and local identity may also form part of a lasting cultural legacy. Such effects, however, can only be identified through longer-term follow-up and the use of multiple types of evidence.

Evaluating a Capital of Culture therefore requires a distinction between outcomes that are directly observable during the event period and longer-term policy effects. Existing research commonly uses the concept of cultural legacy to refer to cultural, institutional, and urban development effects that persist after a major cultural event has concluded (García, 2005). In the case of Liverpool as the 2008 European Capital of Culture, Liu (2019) identifies several dimensions of cultural legacy, including cultural actors and strategies, cultural networks, cultural provision, cultural participation, and cultural image. This framework suggests that the long-term value of a major cultural event lies not only in short-term economic or physical outcomes, but also in the continued development of cultural governance and the urban cultural ecosystem. Drawing on this literature, the present study distinguishes analytically among three levels: directly observable policy outputs during the event period, potential medium-term

outcomes, and longer-term impacts or legacies. Cox and García (2013) likewise emphasize that without sustained evaluation frameworks and post-event monitoring, it is difficult to determine whether short-term achievements are translated into long-term urban development effects.

On this basis, the effectiveness of a Capital of Culture should not be assessed solely in terms of the number of events held or economic indicators. It is also necessary to examine whether the programme contributes to continuity in governance. Cultural governance in this context refers not simply to the governmental management of cultural activities, but to the coordination of resources and collaboration among public agencies, cultural organizations, communities, industries, and other cities. Richards and Palmer (2010) argue that the capacity of urban events to generate more enduring effects is closely related to the development of collaborative relationships among public authorities, private actors, and cultural organizations. If an annual programme produces only short-term exposure, its impact is likely to remain limited; if it leads to cross-sectoral collaboration, cultural networks, venue governance, and sustained policy arrangements, it is more likely to contribute to an institutionalized cultural legacy. These distinctions inform the analytical framework applied to the Macao case below.

2.3. Analytical Framework

Building on the literature reviewed above, this study does not treat the Culture City of East Asia as a single cultural event. Instead, it situates the initiative within the broader contexts of culture-led urban development and cultural governance. Given that the available evidence consists mainly of secondary statistics, policy documents, and related surveys, the study distinguishes among three analytical levels according to the degree of proximity between policy intervention and urban development outcomes: direct policy outputs, concurrent urban outcomes, and long-term cultural legacy. Rather, it distinguishes among three analytical levels according to the degree of proximity between policy intervention and urban development outcomes: direct policy outputs, concurrent urban outcomes, and long-term cultural legacy.

The first level comprises direct policy outputs. These refer to activities or measures that can be identified through policy documents or event-related records and that have a relatively explicit connection with the Culture City of East Asia programme. They include city branding initiatives, inter-city cultural exchanges in East Asia, community cultural activities, cultural heritage governance, and cultural facility planning. Evidence at this level is used to identify what actions were actually undertaken and what immediate and observable outputs were produced.

The second level consists of concurrent urban outcomes, referring to changes observed in Macao during the 2025 event year in areas such as tourism, the economy, cultural industries, and residents' cultural participation. Indicators include visitor volume, accommodation, non-gaming expenditure, GDP, service exports, cultural industry development, and cultural participation. Although these changes are related to the broader policy objectives of the Culture City of East Asia, they were also influenced by tourism policies, post-pandemic recovery, large-scale events, and Macao's existing industrial structure.

The third level concerns long-term cultural legacy and governance conditions. This level examines whether the programme may contribute over time to city branding governance, the development of a cultural industry ecosystem, resident participation, inter-city collaboration, public cultural facility governance, and institutionalized evaluation mechanisms. Because 2025 was the event year itself, such long-term effects had not yet fully emerged at the time of analysis. They are therefore not treated as established findings, but as analytical dimensions for assessing whether the Culture City of East Asia can evolve from an annual event into a platform for long-term urban cultural governance.

On the basis of these three analytical levels, the study further organizes its observations into five substantive dimensions: city branding and international exchange, tourism and economic development, cultural industries, resident and community cultural participation, and public cultural development and governance. Their analytical relationships are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Analytical Framework

Analytical Level	Main Areas of Observation	Approach to Interpretation
(1) Direct policy outputs	Thematic activities, inter-city exchanges, international promotion, community cultural programmes, intangible cultural heritage governance, and cultural facility planning	Treated as policy actions or outputs that can be directly identified during the event year
(2) Concurrent urban outcomes	Visitor arrivals, accommodation, non-gaming expenditure, GDP, service exports, cultural industries, and residents' cultural participation	Described as changes occurring during the event year, without direct causal attribution
(3) Long-term cultural legacy	City branding governance, cultural industry ecosystem, resident co-creation, inter-city networks, venue governance, and evaluation mechanisms	Treated as areas for observing post-event institutionalization and the development of cultural governance

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design and Data Sources

This study employs secondary data analysis and policy document analysis, using the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao as a case to examine policy outputs generated during the event year and concurrent changes in tourism, the economy, cultural participation, city branding, and public cultural development in Macao. Secondary data analysis requires careful consideration of the provenance of existing data, their original purposes of collection, their relevance to the research questions, and their limitations (Johnston, 2014). Policy document analysis, meanwhile, involves the systematic examination of policy, administrative, and institutional documents to identify policy objectives, substantive content, and implementation contexts (Bowen, 2009).

The analysis draws primarily on official publications of the Macao Special Administrative Region Government, including statistics, policy documents, survey reports, and press releases issued by the Statistics and Census Service, Macao Government Tourism Office, Cultural Affairs Bureau, Financial Services Bureau, and Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau. These sources provide information on visitor volume, accommodation, non-gaming expenditure, gross domestic product, service exports, cultural industries, gaming-related revenue, residents' cultural participation, and cultural facility planning. Peer-reviewed studies and traceable media reports are also used to supplement the policy context, information on demand for live performances among younger residents, and selected cultural activities.

Priority is given to original official sources. Where the same information is available in both government statistics and news reports, official data are generally treated as the primary source. Media reports are used only to supplement information on specific activities, social surveys, or policy events and are not treated as the sole basis for assessing broader trends. For example, residents' cultural participation is examined primarily through surveys conducted by the Statistics and Census Service, while information on live-performance participation among younger and middle-aged residents is supplemented by privately conducted surveys reported in the local media. Such evidence is not generalized to the Macao population as a whole.

3.2. Data Scope and Analytical Procedures

The study primarily covers the period from 2023 to 2025, with reference to the pre-pandemic baseline year of 2019 where necessary. This temporal scope allows the analysis to identify industrial and tourism conditions prior to the event year and helps avoid treating post-pandemic recovery as a direct policy effect of the 2025 programme. Data collection and analysis were completed in March 2026; accordingly, some full-year statistics for 2025 were drawn from official releases published in early 2026.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, policy documents and event-related materials directly associated with the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao were collected to identify the programme theme, inter-city exchanges, international promotion, community cultural activities, intangible cultural heritage governance, and public cultural facility planning. Second, major indicators of urban development in Macao between 2023 and 2025 were compiled, including visitor volume and composition, hotel occupancy, non-gaming expenditure, gross domestic product, service exports, cultural industry statistics, and residents' cultural participation. Where data were available, descriptive comparisons were also made with 2024 or the pre-pandemic baseline year of 2019. Third, the collected evidence was classified into three analytical levels—direct policy outputs, concurrent urban outcomes, and long-term cultural legacy and governance conditions—and examined for consistency in terms of timing, substantive content, and policy objectives.

The study relies primarily on descriptive comparison and content analysis and does not undertake statistical causal inference. For quantitative data, the analysis focuses on annual or period-to-period changes, including absolute numbers, proportions, growth rates, and structural differences. Policy documents and event-related materials are examined to identify policy objectives, implementation content, policy instruments, and observable outputs. Survey data collected prior to the event year, such as 2024 data on visitor demand or residents' perceptions of carrying capacity, are used only as policy background or comparative baselines and are not treated as evidence of policy effectiveness in 2025.

3.3. Criteria for Distinguishing Policy Outputs from Concurrent Urban Trends

To reduce potential problems of data relevance and policy attribution in secondary data analysis, this study classifies evidence according to the degree of directness between the observed evidence and the policy intervention (Johnston, 2014), while also drawing on Capital of Culture research that distinguishes short-term outputs from longer-term effects (Cox & García, 2013; Liu, 2019).

The first level consists of direct policy outputs. The criterion for inclusion is that the relevant action can be directly verified through Culture City of East Asia policy documents, official event materials, or government announcements, and that its timing clearly corresponds to the event year. Examples include thematic pavilions, inter-city cultural exchanges in East Asia, the “Culture in the Community” programme, related cultural promotion activities, and selected cultural facility plans. Such evidence can indicate what the government or relevant institutions actually did, but it does not in itself demonstrate that long-term social or economic effects have been achieved.

The second level concerns concurrent urban trends. These refer to changes observed in Macao during 2025 in areas such as tourism, the economy, cultural industries, and residents' cultural participation. Examples include increases in visitor arrivals, hotel occupancy, total non-gaming expenditure, GDP, and service exports, as well as changes in patterns of cultural participation. Although several of these indicators changed during 2025, some were simultaneously influenced by large-scale events, tourism facilitation measures, post-pandemic recovery, and the city's existing industrial structure. Accordingly, this study describes them only as trends that occurred concurrently with the event year.

The third level comprises long-term cultural legacy and governance conditions. These include whether changes in city branding are sustained, whether a cultural industry ecosystem develops, whether residents move beyond event attendance toward co-creation, whether inter-city cultural networks are maintained, and whether new cultural facilities establish stable operating and performance management systems. Because such effects generally require observation beyond the event year, and because long-term follow-up data are not yet available, they are not treated as established policy outcomes in this study. Instead, they are used as dimensions for subsequent evaluation and discussion. This approach is consistent with Capital of Culture research emphasizing the importance of post-event monitoring and cultural legacy planning (Cox & García, 2013; Liu, 2019).

Following these criteria, the strength of the claims made in this study is matched to the level of evidence.

Actions verifiable in policy documents are reported as policy outputs; aggregate statistical changes are described as trends, without causal attribution; and long-term effects that cannot yet be observed are treated as possibilities requiring further verification. This distinction prevents policy implementation, concurrent change, and long-term effects from being conflated, and is consistent with the study's decision not to estimate net policy effects.

4. Research Findings and Analysis

4.1. Direct Policy Outputs of the Culture City of East Asia

4.1.1. City Branding and East Asian Cultural Exchange

In 2025, Macao adopted “East-West Encounter, Asia in Harmony” as the central theme of its Culture City of East Asia programme and carried out cultural exchanges with the other designated cities of the same year, including Huzhou in China, Kamakura in Japan, and Anseong in South Korea. These activities served not only as platforms for cultural exchange but also as extensions of Macao's existing city branding. Macao already possessed several established branding assets, including the Historic Centre of Macao as a World Heritage Site, its designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, and its positioning as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure. The Culture City of East Asia added a further narrative platform centred on cultural exchange within East Asia (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025a; Macao Government Tourism Office, 2025).

In terms of policy implementation, Macao incorporated the “Culture City of East Asia–Macao, China” into its external city marketing through international travel fairs and thematic pavilions in 2025. These promotional activities highlighted Macao's historical and cultural characteristics as a meeting point between Eastern and Western cultures and used tourism promotion platforms to enhance international exposure of the programme. At the same time, exchanges with Huzhou, Kamakura, and Anseong gave the initiative a policy significance that extended beyond locally hosted cultural events to encompass inter-city cooperation and regional cultural exchange (Macao SAR Government, 2025b; Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025a).

Thematic pavilions, international promotion, and inter-city exchanges can all be directly verified from the available evidence and primarily reflect policy implementation and increased urban visibility. However, the absence of pre- and post-event data on brand awareness, visitor perceptions, and resident identification makes it difficult to determine whether Macao's city image underwent substantive change. These activities are therefore better understood as policy inputs and direct outputs of city branding rather than as evidence of an established transformation in the city's brand.

4.1.2. Community Culture and Intangible Cultural Heritage Governance

With regard to residents' cultural participation and community cultural promotion, the 2025 “Culture in the Community” programme represented one of the more visible policy initiatives. Under the theme “More Culture, More Happiness,” the programme brought activities related to World Heritage, Portuguese cultural elements, music, and children's arts into residential communities such as Iao Hon, Seac Pai Van, and Fai Chi Kei. Two rounds of the programme were held in February and May 2025, each comprising 16 activities and attracting approximately 16,000 residents (Macao SAR Government, 2025a, 2025c).

By extending cultural resources from established tourism and cultural districts into residential areas, the programme more directly addressed cultural access and local cultural services and can therefore be regarded as a community-oriented policy output of the event year. However, the available evidence remains largely limited to the number of activities and participants. It does not provide sufficient information on participant composition, repeat participation, resident satisfaction, or the extent of community co-creation, nor does it establish whether the programme led to sustained forms of community cultural participation.

In the area of intangible cultural heritage governance, Macao added 12 items to its official inventory in 2025, bringing the total number of listed items to 24. The newly added items had undergone public consultation, with support rates exceeding 90% for local land deity beliefs, dragon dance, and lion dance, while all remaining items received majority support. The expansion of the inventory reflects the continued advancement of intangible cultural heritage preservation and institutionalized management during the event year and constitutes an identifiable output of cultural governance (Macao Daily Times, 2025; Macao News, 2025a).

The addition of items to the intangible cultural heritage inventory primarily represents institutional recognition and preservation. It does not in itself demonstrate an increase in residents' local identity or the effectiveness of cultural transmission. Such effects require further observation of support for bearers and practitioners, cultural education, community participation, and subsequent revitalization and use. Accordingly, this study treats the expansion of the inventory as a direct policy output of cultural governance, while local identity and cultural transmission are regarded as dimensions requiring longer-term follow-up.

4.1.3. Planning for Public Cultural Facilities

In 2025, Macao also launched a public consultation on the "Macao International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone," which included plans for three major cultural facilities: the Macao National Museum Cultural Hall, the Macao International Performing Arts Centre, and the International Museum of Contemporary Art (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025b; Macao News, 2025b). The proposal encompasses different forms of cultural infrastructure, including museum, performing arts, and contemporary art facilities, and can be regarded as a significant policy investment in the expansion of public cultural space and the cultural service system during the event year.

If completed and supported by stable operations, these facilities may expand Macao's capacity for large-scale performances, museum exhibitions, and international cultural exchange, while also providing platforms for cultural talent development and public cultural services. During the period covered by this study, however, the projects remained at the planning stage. They therefore cannot be treated as completed infrastructure, nor can cultural, economic, or social benefits be inferred from them. At this stage, they are more appropriately classified as long-term public cultural investment and planning outputs.

Overall, the policy outputs that can be directly identified during the event year were concentrated in city branding and international exchange, community cultural promotion, intangible cultural heritage governance, and public cultural facility planning. Whether these policy inputs will subsequently contribute to stronger brand identification, deeper cultural participation, or enhanced governance capacity remains to be assessed through longer-term evidence.

4.2. Concurrent Urban Development Trends During the Event Year

4.2.1. Tourism and Non-Gaming Expenditure

Macao's tourism market recovered markedly in 2025. Total visitor arrivals reached 40,069,360, representing a 14.7% increase from 2024 and surpassing the pre-pandemic peak recorded in 2019. Among these visitors, 23,524,943 were same-day visitors, an increase of 24.6% year on year, while overnight visitors totaled 16,544,417, up 3.1%. Visitors from mainland China continued to account for the largest share, at approximately 72.4%, while arrivals from Taiwan and international markets increased by 19.4% and 13.7%, respectively (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2026a).

The growth rate of same-day visitors was considerably higher than that of overnight visitors, indicating that the expansion in visitor volume in 2025 was driven primarily by short-haul and same-day travel. Although the composition of visitor origins became somewhat more diversified than in the previous year, the mainland Chinese market remained dominant. This pattern was broadly consistent with Macao's policy direction of promoting

international cultural exchange and diversifying its tourism market.

Accommodation and expenditure indicators showed a similar pattern. In 2025, the average hotel room occupancy rate reached 89.4%, an increase of 3.1 percentage points from the previous year. Total non-gaming expenditure by visitors amounted to MOP 80.12 billion, up 6.3% from 2024, with expenditure by same-day visitors increasing by 28.9%. By contrast, per capita non-gaming expenditure declined by 7.3% to MOP 2,000 (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2026c).

Because visitor arrivals increased more rapidly than total non-gaming expenditure, while much of the additional growth came from same-day visitors, the 2025 tourism market was characterized by an increase in overall volume accompanied by a decline in expenditure per visitor. The available statistics are sufficient to demonstrate an expansion in visitor flows, but they do not establish whether cultural tourism, length of stay, or higher-value consumption increased at the same time.

A 2024 visitor survey used by the Macao Government Tourism Office showed that visitor motivations had begun to shift from shopping toward sightseeing and entertainment, and that there was also some interest in performances and cultural and creative products, particularly among younger visitors (Macao Government Tourism Office, 2025). Because this survey was conducted before the 2025 event year, however, it can only be used as background evidence on changing tourism demand and not as a post-event outcome of the Culture City of East Asia.

4.2.2. Economic Structure and Cultural Industry Development

Macao's revised gross domestic product in 2025 amounted to MOP 418.04 billion, representing real growth of 4.7% compared with 2024. The overall size of the economy recovered to 89.6% of its 2019 level. In the fourth quarter, GDP increased by 7.6% year on year, while service exports grew by 5.0% over the full year. Official statistics attributed fourth-quarter economic performance to the combined effects of large-scale events and measures designed to attract visitors (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2026b).

At the same time, the gaming sector remained highly significant. Gross gaming revenue reached MOP 247.4 billion in 2025, and gaming-related fiscal revenue continued to account for a substantial share of government revenue, indicating that Macao's economic structure remained heavily dependent on gaming (Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2026; Financial Services Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025). The Macao SAR Government (2023) introduced the "1+4" strategy for appropriate economic diversification, identifying integrated tourism and leisure, traditional Chinese medicine and health industries, modern finance, high technology, and convention, exhibition, commercial, cultural, and sports industries as key development areas. Although this strategy incorporates cultural, sports, and other non-gaming sectors into Macao's diversification agenda, the overall economic structure in 2025 suggests that cultural and related industries were not yet in a position to displace the dominant role of gaming in the short term (Macao SAR Government, 2023).

For the cultural industries, the most recent complete statistics available at the time of the study were for 2023. At the end of that year, Macao had 2,866 cultural industry establishments employing 13,976 people, with total service receipts amounting to MOP 8.72 billion (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2024). These figures indicate that Macao already had a measurable cultural industry base before the 2025 event year. Because the data predate the Culture City of East Asia programme, however, they cannot be used to determine any incremental effects of the event on cultural industry revenue, employment, or market expansion.

Overall, the 2025 economic data point to a structural pattern in which economic recovery and growth in service exports coexisted with continued dependence on gaming.

4.2.3. Residents' Cultural Participation

Residents' cultural participation is an important indicator for assessing the social dimension of cultural city policies. According to the Survey on Participation in Cultural Activities in the second quarter of 2025, the cultural participation rate among Macao residents aged 16 and above was 53.9%, a slight decrease of 0.1 percentage points from the previous year. At the same time, 28.4% of residents participated in three or more types of cultural activities, an increase of 1.8 percentage points. In addition, 70,900 residents reported having attended music or dance performances, and 78.4% of this group had attended concerts held in Macao (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2025).

The overall cultural participation rate in 2025 therefore remained broadly stable, while the increase in the proportion of residents participating in three or more types of cultural activities points more clearly to greater diversity of participation than to an expansion in the total participating population.

A separate non-official survey of 789 residents aged 18 to 44 found that approximately half had not attended any live performances during the previous year, while some respondents had travelled to Hong Kong or mainland China to attend performances (Macao News, 2025c). This survey provides supplementary information on performing arts consumption among younger and middle-aged residents. However, because its sample scope, sampling method, and representativeness differ from those of the official survey, it should not be used to infer a widespread outflow of cultural consumption among Macao residents as a whole.

Taken together, cultural participation among Macao residents in 2025 was characterized by a broadly stable overall participation rate and some increase in the diversity of participation. The "Culture in the Community" programme also expanded the spatial reach of cultural services. However, there is currently no evidence directly linking programme participants to changes in cultural participation among the resident population as a whole.

5. Discussion

5.1. Attribution Boundaries Between Policy Outputs and Urban Outcomes

The policy outputs identified in Section 4.1 and the urban trends described in Section 4.2 carry different weight as evidence. The former can be verified directly through policy documents and event records; the latter were shaped jointly by tourism recovery, large-scale events, the existing industrial structure, and other policy measures. That the two occurred in the same year does not make the latter an effect of the Culture City of East Asia.

This is a familiar problem in cultural policy evaluation. Evans (2005) notes that culture-led urban development typically unfolds alongside multiple policy interventions, which makes it difficult to trace a single causal link between cultural investment and economic, tourism, or social outcomes. Heavy reliance on aggregate indicators such as visitor numbers or economic growth tends to credit cultural interventions with changes produced by many factors. Research on the European Capital of Culture similarly finds that short-term changes are easy to observe, whereas identifying long-term effects requires baseline data, comparative designs, and sustained follow-up (Cox & García, 2013).

The Macao data illustrate why this caution matters. Visitor arrivals rose by 14.7% in 2025, but the growth came mainly from same-day visitors, and per capita non-gaming expenditure fell by 7.3%. Had the programme substantially strengthened cultural tourism, longer stays or higher spending per visitor might have been expected. The aggregate figures do not show this pattern, although they cannot rule out effects on particular visitor segments.

The connection to the programme also varies among the direct policy outputs themselves. Thematic pavilions and inter-city exchanges were explicitly tied to the event year, whereas the expansion of the intangible cultural heritage inventory and the planning of major cultural facilities continued directions already present in

Macao's cultural and urban policy. The Culture City of East Asia is therefore better understood as a platform that brought existing initiatives together and concentrated resources around them than as the source of all cultural policy undertaken in 2025. The relevant distinction is between policies implemented during the event year and policies implemented because of it.

5.2. From City Branding to Cultural Governance

City branding represents one of the more clearly identifiable policy dimensions of the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao. Macao already held several established positions, including the Historic Centre of Macao as a World Heritage Site, its designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, and its status as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure. The Culture City of East Asia added a narrative centred on East Asian exchange and cultural integration and was incorporated into Macao's existing city marketing system through thematic pavilions and international promotion (Macao SAR Government, 2025b; Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025a).

The coexistence of multiple city brands, however, does not necessarily amount to brand integration. Long-term change in city image requires relatively stable cultural associations among residents, visitors, and external audiences rather than media exposure confined to the event period. García's (2005) longitudinal study of Glasgow 1990, the European City of Culture, showed that city image and local identity may constitute more enduring cultural legacies, but such changes can only be identified through long-term data and observation across different audience groups. In the case of Macao, pre- and post-event evidence on city image, resident identification, and visitors' cultural associations is currently lacking. At this stage, it is therefore possible to confirm an expansion of urban narratives and brand communication, but not a substantive transformation in brand perceptions.

The sustainability of city branding depends less on the accumulation of designations than on whether different brands and cultural resources can be connected through governance. If World Heritage, the Creative City of Gastronomy, the Culture City of East Asia, performing arts activities, community culture, and public cultural facilities operate separately, multiple brands may remain merely juxtaposed. By contrast, if cross-departmental coordination can align cultural content, tourism promotion, industrial development, community participation, and public cultural services around a more coherent cultural positioning for the city, the Culture City of East Asia may develop beyond a marketing label into a broader platform for cultural governance.

5.3. The Role of Culture and Structural Constraints in Economic Diversification

Macao's policy of promoting appropriate economic diversification provides an important context for understanding the economic role of the Culture City of East Asia. Cultural activities, performing arts, cultural tourism, and cultural and creative industries can broaden the range of non-gaming consumption and create linkages among cultural products, performances, food and beverage services, accommodation, and other service sectors. However, the gaming industry continues to occupy an important position in Macao's economic and public finance structures, while complete cultural industry statistics do not yet cover the 2025 event year.

This also suggests that the role of culture in economic diversification requires careful positioning. Cultural policy can certainly expand the range of non-gaming activities, but a single annual event is unlikely to generate a cultural industry of sufficient scale to alter the city's industrial structure. Research on culture-led urban development has long cautioned that treating cultural activities primarily as instruments of economic regeneration may place excessive emphasis on short-term effects on investment, tourism, and consumption while overlooking the human resources, organizations, value chains, and institutional conditions required for cultural production itself (Evans, 2005). In other words, a Capital of Culture can create opportunities for market exposure, collaboration, and demand, but whether these opportunities translate into industrial development depends on whether cultural production capacity continues to accumulate after the event has ended.

Under Macao's existing conditions, culture is more likely to play a complementary and connective role in

economic diversification than to serve as a short-term substitute for the gaming industry. Cultural content, for example, can be integrated with tourism, food and beverage services, conventions and exhibitions, performing arts, and cultural and creative products, thereby diversifying tourism offerings and expanding opportunities for non-gaming consumption. However, without local creative talent, production capacity, intellectual property development, market channels, and stable consumer demand, an increase in the number of cultural activities alone may not be sufficient to generate a complete cultural industry ecosystem. The economic significance of the Culture City of East Asia should therefore not be assessed solely through GDP or visitor expenditure during the event year. More direct industry indicators, including revenue, employment, entrepreneurship, investment, box-office performance, and local procurement, should also be tracked over time.

5.4. Cultural Access, Resident Participation, and Community Co-Creation

Residents' cultural participation is an important indicator of the social dimension of cultural city policies. In 2025, Macao's overall cultural participation rate remained broadly stable, while the proportion of residents participating in multiple types of cultural activities increased. At the same time, the "Culture in the Community" programme extended cultural activities into residential areas such as Iao Hon, Seac Pai Van, and Fai Chi Kei, thereby expanding the spatial reach of cultural services (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2025; Macao SAR Government, 2025a, 2025c).

For the purposes of this study, "bringing activities into the community," "residents attending cultural activities," and "residents participating in cultural governance" are treated as distinct levels. The first primarily concerns cultural access, that is, reducing spatial or other barriers that may limit residents' opportunities to engage with cultural activities. Actual attendance represents a further level of cultural participation. By contrast, residents' involvement in agenda setting, content planning, cultural production, or the management of local cultural resources is more closely associated with community co-creation and cultural governance. If the effectiveness of community programmes is assessed only in terms of the number of events and participants, such measures can indicate the reach of policy provision but cannot establish whether residents' roles in cultural activities have changed.

At present, the clearest outcome of the "Culture in the Community" programme is the extension of cultural resources from core cultural districts into residential areas. Whether this has developed into community co-creation remains uncertain because evidence is lacking on participant characteristics, repeat participation, resident satisfaction, continued engagement, and involvement in programme planning.

The absence of a substantial increase in the overall participation rate, alongside an increase in participation across multiple types of activities, also suggests that cultural policy evaluation should consider not only how many people participate but also the frequency, diversity, and depth of participation. If community cultural programmes can develop further into forms of resident co-planning, youth cultural creation, community organization involvement, and locally grounded cultural action, their social significance may extend beyond cultural consumption toward cultural participation and cultural production.

5.5. From the Event Year to Long-Term Cultural Legacy

The value of a Capital of Culture ultimately depends not only on how many activities are organized during the event year, but also on what remains after the event concludes. Research on the European Capital of Culture indicates that the extent to which short-term event outcomes are transformed into long-term effects depends closely on whether the programme is embedded in the city's long-term cultural development strategy and whether post-event governance and legacy planning are established (Cox & García, 2013; Liu, 2019). García's (2005) longitudinal study of Glasgow likewise shows that cultural legacy encompasses not only physical and economic outcomes but also less readily quantifiable effects such as city image, local identity, and cultural narratives, all of which require long-term follow-up to identify.

Several conditions that may contribute to a longer-term legacy are already visible. Inter-city exchanges in East Asia could develop into sustained networks among artists, cultural institutions, and cities; if continued, the “Culture in the Community” programme could provide a more stable basis for community cultural services; and the International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone and related cultural facilities may influence the future provision of public cultural services and the performing arts ecosystem. At present, however, these initiatives remain at an early stage of policy implementation or institutional development and cannot yet be regarded as established cultural legacies.

The next stage for Macao is therefore not simply to maintain the scale of activities achieved in 2025, but to institutionalize the resources and relationships generated during the event year. At least four transitions are involved: from annual events to sustained cultural programming; from urban exposure to stable brand identification; from event participation to long-term involvement by residents and cultural organizations; and from the construction of cultural facilities to professional and sustainable venue operation. Inter-city exchanges should likewise be assessed in terms of whether they develop into continued co-productions, artist exchanges, institutional cooperation, and durable networks, rather than remaining limited to reciprocal visits during the event year.

From the perspective of cultural legacy, the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao is better understood as a starting point for policy development rather than an endpoint of policy effectiveness. Its short-term outputs can already be identified, but whether they develop into more enduring forms of urban cultural capacity will depend on post-event institutional continuity, cross-departmental coordination, and long-term performance monitoring. Future evaluation should therefore move beyond event counts and annual statistics to examine sustained changes in governance capacity, cultural networks, resident participation, and the wider cultural ecosystem.

6. Conclusion and Policy Implications

6.1. Main Findings

This study examined the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao through official statistics, policy documents, tourism and cultural surveys, and relevant studies, with a focus on policy outputs generated during the event year and concurrent changes in urban development. The findings indicate that several policy outputs can be directly identified, but a clear boundary must be maintained between these outputs and broader urban development outcomes.

The principal direct policy outputs included city branding initiatives, inter-city cultural exchanges in East Asia, community cultural services, intangible cultural heritage governance, and public cultural facility planning. These initiatives can be verified through policy documents and administrative records and are therefore more appropriately understood as outputs of policy implementation rather than as realized long-term policy effects (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025a, 2025b; Macao SAR Government, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c).

With regard to concurrent urban development, visitor arrivals, hotel occupancy, and total non-gaming expenditure increased in 2025, although growth in visitor numbers was driven primarily by same-day visitors and per capita non-gaming expenditure declined. Gross domestic product and service exports continued to recover, while the gaming sector remained economically significant. Because the most recent complete cultural industry statistics predate the 2025 event year, the available evidence does not yet allow a determination of whether the Culture City of East Asia generated identifiable incremental benefits for the cultural industries (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2024, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c).

Residents’ cultural participation showed a more complex pattern. The overall participation rate remained

broadly stable, while the proportion of residents participating in multiple types of cultural activities increased. The “Culture in the Community” programme also expanded the spatial reach of cultural services. However, the available evidence is insufficient to determine whether residents’ participation has developed into sustained engagement, co-planning, or community co-creation. Cultural access and the development of residents’ capacity for cultural governance should therefore be regarded as distinct levels of policy outcome (Statistics and Census Service of the Macao SAR Government, 2025).

Overall, the 2025 Culture City of East Asia–Macao generated several identifiable direct policy outputs, while tourism, economic, and cultural participation indicators also showed changes that were partly consistent with broader policy objectives. However, because multiple policies, events, and market forces were operating simultaneously, and because the available evidence lacks pre- and post-event measures, comparison cities, and participant-level data, it remains insufficient for estimating the programme’s net effects.

6.2. Policy Implications

The findings suggest that the policy significance of the Culture City of East Asia for Macao should not be assessed solely in terms of event scale, visitor growth, or annual economic indicators. Greater attention should be given to whether the programme can be translated into more sustained forms of cultural governance capacity. This emphasis is consistent with Capital of Culture research highlighting the importance of long-term cultural legacy, post-event governance, and sustained planning (Cox & García, 2013; Liu, 2019).

First, the policy focus in Macao should gradually shift from event delivery to institutional continuity. The 2025 event year generated a diverse range of outcomes in inter-city exchange, community culture, and city branding, but annual events are inherently time-bound. Without stable mechanisms for collaboration, organizational responsibilities, and resource allocation after the event, such outcomes may remain limited to short-term visibility. The exchange relationships established with Huzhou, Kamakura, and Anseong should therefore be developed further into cooperation among cultural institutions, co-productions, artist exchanges, or youth cultural programmes, so that annual exchanges can evolve into more durable inter-city networks.

Second, city branding policy should move beyond the juxtaposition of multiple designations toward more integrated brand governance. Macao simultaneously holds several policy identities, including World Heritage status, the Creative City of Gastronomy designation, the Culture City of East Asia title, and its positioning as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure. These brands can be mutually reinforcing, but without a coherent cultural narrative and cross-departmental coordination, they may continue to operate separately. Future policy could therefore strengthen coordination among departments responsible for culture, tourism, economic development, and urban planning, integrating cultural heritage, performing arts, gastronomy, community culture, and creative industries into a more coherent framework for urban cultural development. Changes in residents’ and visitors’ perceptions of Macao’s cultural image should also be monitored over time.

Third, the relationship between culture and economic diversification should shift from a short-term consumption orientation toward the accumulation of cultural industry capacity. Growth in visitor arrivals and non-gaming expenditure in 2025 is not sufficient to demonstrate a structural transformation of the cultural industries. In addition to continuing to develop cultural tourism and performing arts activities, future policy should place greater emphasis on the underlying conditions for local cultural production, including talent development, intellectual property, market channels, box-office performance, local procurement, and cultural entrepreneurship. Such measures would allow culture to develop beyond an additional component of tourism consumption and contribute gradually to a more complete cultural industry value chain.

Fourth, cultural policy for residents should move from expanding access toward deepening participation. At present, the “Culture in the Community” programme has improved cultural access, but enhancing its sociocultural value will require mechanisms that enable resident co-planning, youth creation, participation by community organizations, and the interpretation and activation of local cultural resources. In this way, residents may gradually

move from being participants in cultural activities to becoming co-producers of cultural content and local cultural governance.

Fifth, public cultural development should be accompanied by governance mechanisms for operations and performance, rather than focusing solely on physical investment. The major cultural facilities currently under planning have not yet been completed, and their long-term value will depend less on their physical scale than on whether they establish clear functional positioning, programming strategies, professional staffing, public access, and sound financial governance. Indicators such as venue utilization, programme quality, participation patterns, and social impact should therefore be incorporated into subsequent performance evaluation.

Overall, the policy direction should shift from simply “continuing Culture City of East Asia activities” toward institutionalizing the brands, networks, cultural services, and public investments generated during the event year, so that an annual cultural event can become a more stable resource for urban cultural governance.

6.3. Research Limitations and Future Research

This study relies primarily on secondary data analysis and policy document analysis and therefore has several limitations in assessing policy effectiveness. Although secondary data make it possible to conduct cross-year analysis using existing statistical and administrative sources, researchers have no control over the original design of data collection, variable construction, or sample structure. The fit between available data and the research questions must therefore be assessed cautiously (Johnston, 2014).

First, the study lacks comprehensive pre- and post-event data. Although some indicators can be compared between 2024 and 2025, most of the available data were not specifically designed to evaluate the Culture City of East Asia. It is therefore not possible to measure precisely changes in residents’ cultural perceptions, visitors’ city image, levels of event participation, or brand identification before and after the programme. Concepts such as city branding, local identity, and cultural governance are particularly difficult to capture fully through administrative statistics and media sources alone.

Second, the study lacks comparison cities or a counterfactual baseline. Changes in tourism and the economy in Macao during 2025 were simultaneously influenced by post-pandemic recovery, tourism facilitation measures, large-scale performing arts events, and broader economic conditions. As a result, it is not possible to determine whether similar changes would have occurred in the absence of the Culture City of East Asia designation.

Third, the available data lack individual-level or event-participant-level information. The study cannot identify whether visitors actually participated in Culture City of East Asia activities, nor can it compare participants and non-participants in terms of expenditure, perceptions of the city, cultural attitudes, or intentions to revisit. Similarly, surveys of residents’ cultural participation primarily capture aggregate trends and cannot determine whether community cultural programmes had stronger effects on particular groups.

Fourth, some important outcomes remain constrained by the timing of available data. The most recent complete cultural industry statistics predate the 2025 event year, while major public cultural facilities remain at the planning stage. As a result, developments in the cultural industries, venue operations, and long-term cultural legacy cannot yet be verified within the scope of this study.

Future research could address these limitations in three ways. First, longitudinal data covering 2024 to 2026 or a longer period could be developed to track city branding, residents’ cultural participation, visitors’ cultural motivations, cultural industry development, and public cultural facilities, thereby identifying which outcomes persist after the event. Second, comparative analysis could incorporate Huzhou, Kamakura, and Anseong, the other designated cities of the same year, to examine differences in policy objectives, governance models, and cultural legacies. Third, visitor surveys, resident surveys, participant follow-up studies, and stakeholder interviews could be used to investigate more directly how Capital of Culture activities influence city perceptions, cultural

participation, organizational collaboration, and cultural governance.

The year 2025 is therefore better understood as a starting point for evaluating Macao's Culture City of East Asia programme. Continued accumulation of post-event data, together with a clear distinction among short-term policy outputs, medium-term urban outcomes, and long-term cultural legacy, will provide a stronger basis for assessing whether an annual cultural event can be transformed into a lasting component of urban cultural development and governance capacity.

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