

# A CREATIVE CITY IS A LIVEABLE CITY

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**Abstract.** A city is a creative place by definition. But creative people do not all live in cities (in Romania only 56,4% of total population lives in cities). In the city, creative people can express themselves more visible and can communicate their ideas with speed and efficiency.

So, the city has one crucial resource: people. Human intelligence, desires, motivations, imagination and creativity are replacing location, natural resources and market access as key factors for urban development and spatial integration.

The future of the city economy lays within the development of a more creative city. We cannot construct enough sustainable villages to meet people aspirations for a better life. Instead we must make cities desirable places to live and to be in, partly by re-creating the sense of place and belonging, continuity, safety and predictability and partly by ensuring the usage of distinct urban development tools, like buzz, interaction, trade, unexpected performance and much more.

Every city can be more creative that it currently is and the task for the city wanting to be creative is to identify, nurture, harness, promote, attract, and sustain talent and to mobilize ideas, resources and organizations.

As cities became large and complex enough to present problems of urban management, so they became laboratories that developed the solutions – technological, conceptual and social – to the problems of growth [1].

In general, creative cities are successful cities. They succeed culturally, economically, socially and environmentally. They are good places to live: they attract. They are liveable.

**Keywords:** Creativity, sustainability, sense of place, interaction, ideas, attraction.

## 1. THE RISE OF THE CREATIVE CITY

Most of us sense that where we live could be a better place. Many of us know places that show how cities can be made more human and more productive. Yet cities balance on an edge – decision-makers can repeat past policies in a climate of slow decline, or they can seek to reinvent their city as a vibrant hub of creativity, development potential and improving quality of life, in general [1].

The key mechanism at work here is the city itself. Dense and interactive connectors, cities are economic and social organizing machines. Cities bring people and ideas together, providing the platform for them to combine and recombine in myriad ways, spurring both artistic and cultural creativity and technological innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

Undoubtable, for the most cities in the world, old approaches do not work. We cannot solve 21<sup>st</sup> century problems with 19<sup>th</sup> century mind sets: The dynamics of the city itself and the world urban system as a global network have changed too dramatically.

Most creative city strategies are nowadays cultural strategies. However, many cities have developed ambitious strategies to create destinations for business and recreation.

To become a creative city, it is essential not only to have information but also the ability to use them properly. Long-run exogenous and endogenous development factors determines competitive advantage and sustainable growth, as well as using the right incentives to attract the right talents [2].

For a creative city, the creation of new wealth by putting these resources to good use can facilitate a better understanding of a society's development needs on which a clear vision, priorities and strategies can then be developed to involve the widest possible participation in creative pursuits.

The target for the city is to merge culture with urban creativity, a process that is defined as college-educated young professionals in core fields like science and engineering, art and design, entertainment, computing, and the media, whose defining characteristics include a preference for lifestyle, distinctive purchasing patterns and mobility. The city itself has to be attractive, not only to business, but also to the workforce.

Urban creativity requires a proper framework to drive the city forward and to offer a good quality of life. This requires a focus on soft creativity, which is the ability of cities to foster their cultural environment.

Yet the urban utopia already exists in the dispersed experiences from cities around the world. There are so many innovative ways of creating employment, applying technologies for the proper urban spatial development and unleashing the skills of the young or the elderly [3].

Innovation and creativity are essential for sustainable growth and economic development of the city.

A number of conditions enable creativity, innovation and encourage economic growth at the local level: strong standards and effective enforcement of intellectual property protection; strong competition; investment in stable economic, legal and social environment; a strong and sustainable fundamental research and development infrastructure; policies and mechanisms to promote the science innovation interface; ethics; a strong emphasis on lifelong learning education at all levels and for all its types (formal, non-formal, informal) [4].

There is also a lot of inspiring architecture, that speaks of city's local identity and there are clever energy-saving devices or public transport means, which are a joy to use them. There are retail environments that merge entertainment and learning, or

public spaces that encourage urban buzz and celebration that capture the unusual, the uplifting and creative display of people [4].

Within the creative city concept, the role of art and culture, among other amenities, is to enhance what Richard Florida describes as "quality of place" [5]. Art and culture contribute to the general atmosphere of a city or a district, its street life, diversity, and other aspects. This, all together, helps build what Richard Florida refers to as "a world class people climate" [6], which then enables cities to label themselves as creative places and position themselves within the global competition for human resources.

Regarding urban cultural resources for embedding creativity in the city, the historical, industrial and artistic heritage represents assets, including architecture, urban landscapes or landmarks, such as bridges like San Francisco's Golden Gate or the Eiffel Tower. There can be traditions of learning in science, the humanities or the arts, such as in Bologna, whose rich learning environment has made it one of the most vibrant places in Europe. The same is true both in Cambridge, UK and Cambridge (Harvard), USA. Urban cultural resources involve local traditions such as public life, festivals, rituals or stories, as well as hobbies [7].

Resources like language, food and cooking, leisure activities, clothing and subcultures or intellectual traditions that exist everywhere are often neglected, but can be used to express the special nature of a location. Creativity is the method of exploiting these resources and helping them to grow. Cultural resources reflect where a place is, why it is like it is and where it's potential might lead it [1].

## **2. THE DYNAMICS OF URBAN CREATIVITY**

### **2.1 From Urban Engineering to Creative City**

General transition for the cities and their economies are reflected in how cities develop and how urban planning is conceived.

The city of the future needs to be thought differently from how we considered cities in the past. A city that encourages people to work with their imagination goes well beyond the urban planning paradigm that is used today in city-making process. The form and priorities of city-making process to develop a city's assets are different under the era of labour-intensive mass production-based industrialization from those of high-technology and knowledge-based focused economy [8].

Rather than focusing only on developing new hard infrastructures such as roads, housing development on former industrial sites or undistinguished office buildings (that will remain empty for a period of time), new city planning requires also to consider building soft infrastructure. Soft infrastructure includes paying attention to how people can meet, exchange ideas and networking. It shifts focus and encourages physical development and place-making by using urban design that foster communication between people. These places have high levels of amenity and quality.

Human talent, skills and creativity are replacing location, natural resources, undifferentiated pools of labour and market access as the central urban resources. The inventiveness and innovations of those who live in, work in and run the cities determine their future success.

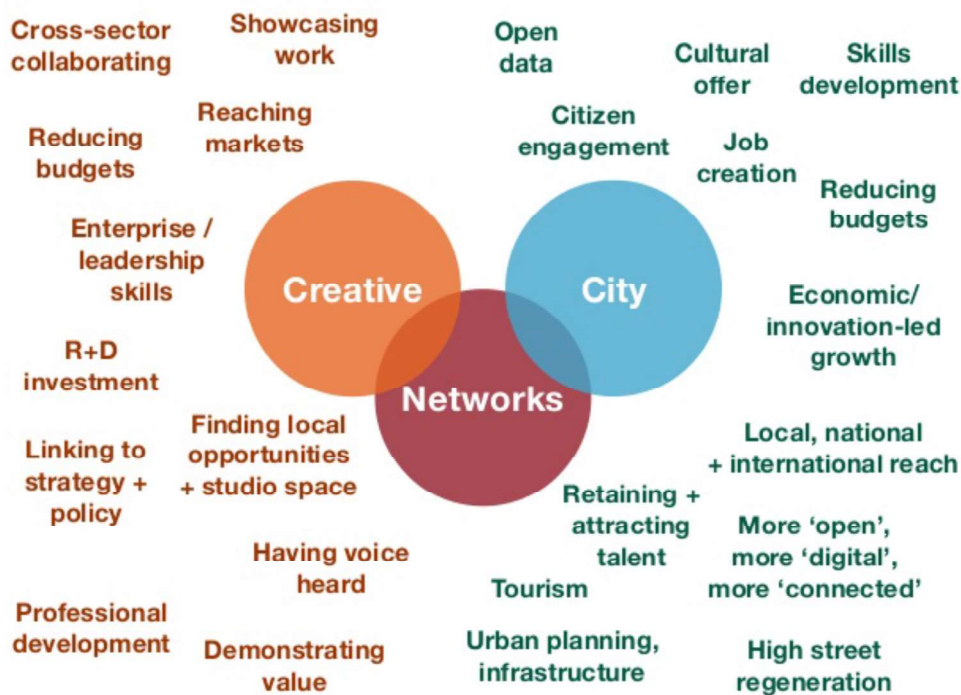


Figure 1: **Creative City Networks: Their Role Supporting Creative Talent in Scotland Creative City Networks #CreativeCities14**

Source: Gillian Easson (2014), **Creative Dundee**.

It promotes 'third spaces', which are neither home nor work, where people can be together. This 'third space' could be a coffee shop or other kind of gathering place. These are likely to be a combination of quiet places and more stimulating ones within a setting where there is greenery and great attention to aesthetics. It is also technologically advanced with public wireless zones where people can work and communicate as they move around.

This planning approach will focus on how to create better places with pleasant atmosphere. City planners should be aware of the negative psychological effect of ugly abandoned buildings and how this reduces people's capacity to work well. They will acknowledge the importance of cultural driven projects are and they will balance globally oriented intervention with locally authentic. They will encourage the artistic imagination in how the city is put together [9].

## 2.2 The Need for Creativity at a City-wide Level

To move from the more traditional city to a more imaginative one requires changes in mind set, in creating the conditions for people to become agents of change rather than being passive recipients or victim of change.

The built environment (the stage, the setting, the container) is crucial for establish such a background for city development. It provides the physical preconditions and a platform upon which the activities and atmosphere of a city can grow. A creative

background is a place that contains the necessary requirements in terms of 'hard' or 'soft' infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions. This background can be a building, a street or an area or, ultimately, the whole city.

### **2.3 Using Urban Assets for Embedding Creativity in the City**

A wise and balanced city-making process is about maximizing city's assets. Urban assets and resources as well, can be:

- Hard, material and tangible, or soft, immaterial and intangible;
- Real and visible, or symbolic and invisible;
- Countable, quantifiable and calculable, or something related to perceptions and images.

As Peter Cook mentioned in 1998 [10] and Arnold Bartetzky in 2009 [11], rethinking (or rearranging) an urban assets list could lead to the analysis of 15 main elements, grouped in four main categories: (1) material assets, (2) activities, (3) attitude and (4) perception.

In the first category, we can find assets like natural setting and location, historical, heritage and built fabric, as well as infrastructures like metro systems (London, Paris or Moscow).

In the second category, we can find assets like urban housekeeping from noise maintenance and waste collection to social care, traditions. In this category are included the presence of industries and services, level of skills and talent, the range of activities, from trade fairs to sporting, artistic and community-based festivals and events.

The third category involves attitudes and attributes, such as levels of tolerance, a 'can do' approach and entrepreneurship, the perception of the city both internally and externally and the presence of culture, creativity and competence.

The last category is related to the presence of strong organizations, good management and efficient delivery of services, a strong working partnership traditions, as well as rethinking the regulations and incentives regime.

The flip side of assets comprises obstacles. Fixing these conditions is often the most creative thing a city can do. Obstacles include dull landscapes, degraded, polluted ex-industrial sites, as well as low-quality and fragmented built fabric, insufficient accessibility, lack of public transportation alternatives, or out-of-date connectivity, insufficient urban maintenance and housekeeping, strong social stress and, not the last, low levels of cultural provisions [12].

Traditional urban indicators analyse location, physical characteristics, infrastructure, human resources, finance and capital, industrial structures and institutional capacity. A modern way to analysing assets is the economic profile, market prospects, tax levels, the regulatory framework, labour climate, quality of places, logistics and sites, community identity and urban image [13].

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Policy-makers have as well to avoid serial reproductions, especially in the case of smaller cities, attracted by the vitality and the economic dynamics of bigger creative cities. It should be stressed, that in some cases the cities profited from rare opportunities, meaning that the used approach cannot be simply copied to another. For example, cases like Bilbao, where a big cultural institution like the Guggenheim foundation was investing, are seldom. Also, not every city or region possess a usable old, empty derelict area that is big enough or an industrial remain which is impressive enough to be the base for approaches like the Phoenix [14].

Thus, the most important key features of the creative city are:

- Not only artists, scientists, workers and craftsmen should involve themselves with the creative work, but also all citizens should evolve (or expand) their creative activity. It is necessary to encourage production of useful and cultural valuable goods and services, and to improve environment of factories and offices;
- Universities, technical schools, research institute, theatre, libraries and cultural institutions which support creative activity of science and art in a city have to function as creative support infrastructure;
- The environmental policy is crucial. It preserves historical heritage and a city's environment and improves amenity. Consequently, citizens enhance their creativity and sensitivity;
- A city must have the well-balanced economic basis which supports sustainable and creative region;
- In terms of public administration, the Creative city is composed of the creative integrated urban policy, unified cultural policy with industrial policy and environmental policy under the democratic management of the public finance.

The creative city is both a call for imaginative action in the development and running of urban life and a clear and detailed toolkit of methods by which our city can be revived and revitalized.

Also, the creative city's effect on urban revitalization is a subject of intense debate worldwide and could be a viable tool to achieve liveability.

Sustainable creative cities will require that local contexts and neighbourhoods, and all local communities, be respected as equal partners of artists and other „creatives“. On one hand, the search for sustainability imposes certain limits to the autonomy of artists and „creatives“, who can no longer be considered as fully irresponsible and individualistic agents allowing their cultural capital to ground processes of gentrification (just as the economy can no longer be allowed indefinite and inconsiderate growth). On the other hand, the search for sustainability also requires an evolutionary openness to the emergence of ways of life, which are both locally sustainable and updated by the global dimension of sustainability [15].

In this respect, creativity is also an imperative for sustainability, and artists and other 'creatives' should be given the necessary opportunities and degree of autonomy to foster creative local developments.

If understood as emergent, creativity is not a process that arises necessarily in designated 'creative' individuals according to their talent, human capital, or cultural capital, but it can also arise in the minds of 'ordinary' members of local communities under certain circumstances. Artists and other 'creatives' should thus be understood as the facilitators, openers, and catalysts of creative processes, rather than their owners, authors, or sole originators. Furthermore, creativity is not the only quality that should be stressed in sustainable creative cities, but it should be complemented by other qualities that contribute to the dialogical value of communities of practice, such as 'craftsmanship', as described by Richard Sennett [16].

As a final remark, for a sustainable creative development approach of the city, it is determinant to integrate the cultural policy in the urban and regional spatial planning practices [17].

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