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## Creative city: A new challenge of strategic urban planning?

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## **Creative city: A new challenge of strategic urban planning?**

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### **Abstract**

‘Sustainable’ city, ‘entrepreneurial’ city, ‘smart’ city, ‘normal’ city are some of the most popular characterisations given to cities by urban planners in their attempt to configure the necessary development features of contemporary urban space. The aim of these characteristics is the combination of the factors that a ‘successful’ city should have: good conditions for residents providing them with job opportunities and leisure activities, promotion of culture, and response to current challenges of the global competitive market in the context of sustainability and environmental protection.

Creative city seems to accomplish these prerequisites. Creative city refers to a new theory (method?) of strategic planning for urban space and examines the way people act, plan and think creatively. It also highlights the importance of human potential, since at the heart of the creative city are ‘creative people’ encouraged to connect their vision with local urban policies.

The aim of the paper is to investigate the way and the extent that the creative city could be considered as a contemporary instrument of strategic urban planning.

**Key-words:** creative city, creativity, strategic urban planning

### **1. Introduction**

In recent years, concepts such as ‘creative city’ and ‘creativity’ gain the attention of academics even political actors, while they also enjoy publicity over more traditional issues. Richard Florida (2002· 2004· 2005· 2008) and Charles Landry (1995· 2000/2008· 2006) are

the most important authors and their work seems to affect significantly the scientific debate and the political actions since the 1990's. There is a crucial amount of public bodies and organizations, at national but also at regional / local level (usually, in a cooperation framework with cultural or urban private actors) that makes use of these concepts, giving them some perspective. Creativity and creative city are further implemented from supranational institutions, such as the European Commission, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (Costa et al, 2007: 122-3).

Creative city constitutes an early idea that is being studied extensively, while creativity though was determined before as a process referring only to individual actions at the art and later at the entrepreneurial sector, today is considered as an integral element of urban planning. Creative city's approach contributes significantly to the strategic development, redefines the role of the human resource and considers it as the starting point of the process but also the audience of its impacts. Citizens are important factors not only at the planning phase but most importantly during the urban life evolution. The levels and degree of participation in areas of urban expression will determine both the degree of fulfillment of citizens' expectations and the progress and outcome of urban creativity.

The aim of the paper is to find some mechanisms that play an important role in the conversion of cities into cities that would be characterized as successful and would be hospitable to its inhabitants, charming to visitors, attractive for the enterprise, and profitable for the economy, friendly to the cultural and physical environment and intertwined with the culture and the modern forms of expression and activation.

## **2. Urban Space Problems and Contemporary Planning Approaches**

Current social and economic conditions, mostly referring to global economic crisis, underline the importance of mechanisms dealing with these phenomena. Cities are the main recipients of the problems. They are also reformed by social, economic and cultural changes. If considering the most important factors that reformed cities during 1970's and after these are; the deindustrialization, the economic crisis which would affect the development process of even non-industrial areas, the sustainable development which requires technological, economic, structural, physical, political and social balance, the (commercial) competition between Asia (India, China etc.) and East (Europe). These phenomena call on cities to think

newly about their development; to redefine their role and position at local, regional and supranational level; to manage balance between extroversion and local authenticity.

Citizens have to deal with these problems. Mostly referring to urban potential, it includes so the resources, markets and accessibility as the human desires, motivations, fantasy and creativity. The improvement of urban life conditions will come through innovative development processes (Landry, 2000/2008: 20-71).

There is great need for the transformation of urban life expressed and concerned by all; young, elderly, unemployed, artists and academics, SMEs and multinational companies, policy makers and political actors, individuals and organizations, etc. The need for improved standard of living in urban space is so urgent as ever; young people with qualifications and willingness to offer but without opportunities to create, low wages and little social and cultural activation, older people with low level of living, poor or asynchronous academic methods and no means of artistic and cultural expression of ideas, poor business and inefficient connectivity between people and political activity.

These problems form today's urban environment and the need for transformation is apparent. However, planning continues to focus on land use and less on the social dynamics of cities. This is the belief that it is easier to plan according to a control framework rather than following a development approach. Planning is almost ineffectively connected with economic, social, environmental and cultural issues (Landry, 2000/2008: 47).

Creative cities are the innovative way to support the transition from 'stationary' to 'evolution'. More, creative cities draw attention both to technology, infrastructure, productive sectors, as well as to culture, arts and education. This objective is made up of implementation strategies for the transformation of cities into Creative Cities.

To stay on track, cities must be at future creative and innovative in all aspects of everyday life: ideological, cultural, technological and organizational. Therefore, focus must be given on every development aspect. The key to urban sustainability will be the success of balance between cultural and technological creativity, defining sustainability as the idea of abolishing the hierarchy between environmental, economic, social and cultural issues. Creativity and innovation should be viewed as an integrated process covering all aspects of urban life; economic, political, cultural, environmental and social innovation. Only then the city will be able to address the problems of global change and will be able to remain effective (Landry, 2000/2008: 137-8).

The emphasis on new 'soft' forms of creativity and innovation is necessary, enhancing the role of cities as receptive places. Solving problems such as segregation and understanding of cultural diversity is perhaps the most critical points. Societies would inevitably be multicultural, which may be taken either as negative or positive, which is very easy to say but hard to realize (Landry, 2000/2008: 137-8).

The new 'generation' of creative and innovative cities focuses on creating high quality of life benefits. Their purpose is to link economic investment with sustainability and social assistance accompanied by grandiose financial programs in order to guide urban development. The high quality of life is used as a competitive tool that enhances economic and social dynamics (Landry, 2000/2008: 137-8).

The key factors of the economy in modern times are talent, innovation and creativity, which though do not refer to the global economy. On the contrary, they are concentrated in specific locations. Significant innovations in communications and transportation allow economic activity to spread around the world. In today's creative economy, growth is caused by talented and creative individuals operating in teams, whose Florida (2008) calls the 'clustering force' and because of this group, cities have become engines of economic development, and continue to grow. Despite all the debate about globalization and the 'flat world', the place is very important for the global economy as never before. They are developed showing greater diversity in their economic status and labor markets, as well as the quality of life they provide, and the type of people who live in them. These societies are characterized by high mobility, allowing us to say a lot about the places we live (Florida, 2008: 9).

### **3. Main Attributes of the Creative City**

'Creative city' describes a new method of strategic urban planning and examines how people think, plan and act creatively in the city. It, also, analyzes how we can make our cities more vital inspiring people, cultivating the imagination and bringing their talents (Landry, 2000/2008).

The importance of 'creative city' is the association of urban culture, media, leisure activities, sports and education in the urban area and the answer to addressing the economic and social crisis lies through creative practices, expressed in urban renewal programmes and experiences arising from the heterogeneity, diversification and interaction that have been traditionally offered by the city (Amin and Graham, 1997: 415-8).

Since the focus is on human potential, there is a definition given to the citizens of the creative city: 'creative class' (Florida, 2002/2004/2005) who includes all citizens with high educational level, various interests and culture. These people, through professional and other activities, offers much to the city shaping ideologies, enhancing the cultural image, producing technological and other innovations. Usually, these people are artists, scientists, academics, businessmen and hold high ranking and well-paid positions. The element that differentiates them is that their motivation to stay in the creative city is not high wages, but the quality of life, modernism, and other factors that make the place more attractive than others.

All members of the creative class share a common creative ethos that values creativity, individuality, diversity and meritocracy. For them, any question of creativity, technological, cultural or economic, is inextricably linked with the rest. Indeed, the 'creative class' is characterized by the spirit of autonomy and flexibility in the process of creativity, expression of individuality and openness to the different (Florida, 2002: 8-9).

Thinking creatively is a 'key skill' that can support individuals and groups in resolving issues related to change or management (Higgins and Morgan, 2000: 117). It is clear that the creative city prerequisites change of priorities. The next step to be done includes three important issues: *First*, development of a form of social capital where actors would seek to engage in more extended object. *Second*, deep understanding of the creative process at all levels and involving all stakeholders. *Third*, more inspiring activities for implementing creative city; planning, building / housing, traffic management, signaling, information and cultural expression etc. (Landry, 2000/2008: 87).

There are three conditions leading to finding creative solutions: i. Pressures from the external environment create problems and require solutions, ii. A problem should be considered as a problem. iii. Existing solutions to a problem are considered ineffective (Jürgen, 1995). The development of a creative environment relates with the particular characteristics of areas, for example, the quality of urban environment, cultural resources, the demographics, social characteristics, etc. (Kourtesis, 2008: 265). The approach of the city as creative should not be equated with the 'charming' or 'trendy' city (Amin and Graham, 1997: 411` Chatterton, 2000: 393). However, the creative is a 'normal' city reflected in all aspects of everyday life: the markets, transportation, etc. (Chatterton, 2000: 393).

#### 4. Strategies for the Creative City

So far, the idea of an economy based entirely on creative skills and services have become popular ensuring the economic growth and places' comparative advantages. Ideas about creativity have influenced the strategy following by many cities, more or less gifted with creative abilities, indenting to manage the economy and the arts and the quality factors which seem to enhance the attraction of talents and innovation (Atkinson and Easthope, 2009: 64).

*The challenges facing European cities* are the following:

- In a competitive market, cities should offer attractive investment opportunities, should look carefully to what they can do or what can be done through their comparative advantages. Furthermore, a prerequisite for sustainable urban development is the ability of cities to be organized in a way that makes best use of their abilities.
- New sub-markets should be identified to achieve the development of new activities, generate income, encourage investment, create jobs and increase the financial capacity of cities. The economic activities are characterized by externalities, which strengthens the installation of further activities.
- In addition, cities should seek a balance between economic growth and quality of life and environment, as this appears to be an important factor in strengthening the (economic) welfare.
- While space tends to be limited, cities must find a balance between economic development and spatial organization. The consequences of the rapid development of international networks are seemed to affect the organization of urban space increasingly.
- Finally, cities should seek a balance between economic and social development. An attractive social environment is a prerequisite for the success of regeneration programs and ensures sustainable growth over time (Van Den Berg et al., 1999: 115).

The idea of the creative city is for many the new perception of urban development par excellence, while some talk about a 'Creative Cities Movement' which advocates the idea that there is a shift from urban planning to a new approach: the construction of the creative city. The creative city does not provide rigorous answers and solutions. However, attempts to create a 'think tank' from which people can generate innovative approaches. It should be understood that creativity is not solely the prerogative of the artist or that innovation does not only refer to technological developments, but there is also social and political creativity and innovation (Landry, 2000/2008).

Planning and architecture should recognize the limits of their ability to guide the city and receive knowledge from complex self-guided systems that already exist in the field of urban planning. Also, attention should be turned to services (Verwijnen, 1999: 28). There is also need for 'soft changes' (Landry, 2000/2008) and there should be a shift from the post-industrial society to the knowledge society and the creative industries (Hall, 1999).

The organizational capacity and open governance processes are probably the initial conditions for a creative city. Within a city at any level, from individuals to institutions and organizations, it is necessary to apply an appropriate strategy to grow and absorb innovative ideas. This means that the elements of creativity should be included in decision making on economic, social, cultural and environmental levels (Landry, 2000/2008: 117).

To achieve change requires creativity in thinking, perspective, ambitions and aspirations. The critical requirement is a thorough understanding of the new competitive planning tools, such as the ability of cities to develop networks, enhancing the historical and cultural background and the quality of governance arrangements, planning approaches and understanding of how knowledge and environmental awareness of citizens and actors should be used. This change will significantly affect the organizational culture, which should necessarily be supported by entrepreneurship. The issue is that cities should seek to become 'creative cities in the world' rather than 'the most creative cities in the world'. The first approach gives the concept of supply to the global community and accountability (Landry, 2000/2008).

The programs applied can be categorized into three main strategies:

- *The strategy of 'locomotive'*. The city tries to achieve the organization of a great event such as the 'Cultural Capital of Europe' (e.g. Glasgow in 1990) or attracting a huge reputation for producing music (e.g. 'Starlight Express' in the case of Bochum), a major exhibition of business (e.g. 'CeBit' in the case of Hannover). This 'festivalization', however, has been criticized. The result of this strategy using festivals and other large events as a flag to promote economic investment and job creation has two sides: it is sometimes positive and sometimes negative.
- *The strategy of external diversification*. The city follows the model for urban development by attracting enterprises. The most notable examples are the cities that competed in the assertion of a subsidiary company of IBM and other major computer companies. This strategy of the '70s failed because new industry can no longer be considered to cause economic growth for more than a predetermined period of time.



- *The strategy of internal diversification.* The city brings its comparative advantage and tries to expand and to promote. This seems to be the most promising strategy to overcome economic stagnation and bring the era of urban regeneration (Jürgen, 1995: 455).

Some 'key factors' are identified that decision makers should ensure during any effort to form creative cities:

- *Production networks.* Web links to entrepreneurship and production characterized by free flow of information is particularly important for innovative processes in creative cities.
- *Local labor markets.* When groups of related companies form clusters within a specific geographical area, then local labor markets are developed around them. That is the case in the new economy where so many disciplines are involved in labor-intensive forms of production. Moreover, the nature of business requires a variety of knowledge and skills of their employees. This in turn reveals that there is great diversity among social workers.
- *Field of Creativity.* Creative cities in the modern world are organized around production systems characterized by networking and flexible labor markets. These structures provide an adequate framework for communication and exchange, and for frequent experimentation by firms for the examination of the progress of industrial processes and product improvement. The fluidity of the economies of these cities means that businesses and their employees come into contact with each other in such a way that helps to unlock various innovative measures (Scott, 2006: 5-8).

*Planning and implementation of the idea of the creative city comprises of four phases:*

- A comprehensive strategic planning of five steps
- The implementation of a package of analytical tools
- A series of indicators to measure how creative a city or a program can be
- A range of techniques that will assist in creative thinking and planning (Landry, 2000/2008: 166-72).

During the planning process, analytical tools, indicators and techniques are used accordingly. The approach of the creative city is a set of strategic actions that take place within a specific reason and purpose. *Planning can be effective and maximize its benefits only when specific conditions are met, such as:*

- No more planning based on the decisions of a single person
- Full awareness that creative thinking is a serious process of planning
- Taking into account other issues that at first appears to be unrelated to the issue addressed
- The potential resources assessed for the planning can be much more than normally prescribed, and may include physical and intangible resources, such as benefits related to the surroundings and the location, availability of research centers, entrepreneurship, but also a sense of confidence of the people, images, or the perception that residents and visitors have for the city, the dynamics that may arise from the past and the city's history, traditions and values, or the imagination of local communities (Landry, 2000/2008: 166-72).

The creative city sets different priorities. It takes into account many different directions of creativity and innovation and examines the various aspects of each program. It can be for a particular idea that may identify and describe an issue with a new way, by integrating in planning a new set of dilemmas and increasing the effectiveness of proposed solutions. It may be a new product or service, may be based on technology, techniques and procedures applied, yet may involve the management and implementation. It may mean that a program run entirely different, involving a new relationship between human resources and even external decision makers, but a new way in decision making. The innovation lies in how a problem can be redefined or reinvents new recipients. The creative city can relate to different relationships between city agencies, institutions and citizens and innovation may be referred to the effects that a program can have (Landry, 2000/2008: 166-72).

Creative city is also different because it highlights the importance of pilot programs and new types of indicators, while presenting new ideas, effecting in people's thoughts. The strategy of the creative city is different because it is holistic and gives value to the links. The most important element of the city is its citizens and strategies such as land use and real estate play no longer great role. The skills of individuals and their creativity will guide urban development. The process involves five elements: planning, definition of indicators, measurement, evaluation and response. Each of the phases includes analytical tools. The phases are defined as follows: *planning, assessment of indicators' dynamic, measurement, reporting and dissemination of results* (Landry, 2000/2008: 166-72).

The effects of creativity and creative applications in the economy can be understood through the 3 *T*'s of economic development: *talent*, *tolerance* and *technology* that are necessary for enhancing the economic development of a place, if existing simultaneously. If a place shows tolerance for diversity then will attract people with diverse talents, skills and ideas who can develop many different forms of cooperation. This concentration of creative capital leads to further evolutions in innovation, technology and the flow of knowledge and expertise (Florida, 2002: 149).

In order to structure a creative society, we should not apply common strategies any more. The city can not rely on indicators relating to the financial environment and the attracting business policy only. It is very important a social climate to be created rather than a business climate, because creative people are called to invest in ways that reflect their life styles they choose to have (Florida, 2002: 283).

## **5. Conclusions**

The city plays always significant role. Despite rapid technological developments, telecommunications and transport systems, planning proposals for decentralization, suburbanization, emphasis on regionalism, etc. introduced and analyzed by urban planners, the city remains at the centre of global interest, increasing its population, develops networks, relationships and dependencies with other structures. Globalization is a phenomenon of recent decades resulting from the developments in all areas. This phenomenon begins from the city and its results refer also to the city. So, it is particularly interesting to study how the city reacts, how to respond successfully and plan for the future.

The creative city is a relatively new framework for planning, which comes in response to other planning proposals and applications, such as the 'entrepreneurial' or 'sustainable' city and highlights the essential difference, indicating that the focus of attention and planning is the 'person', his/her visions, ambitions, talents and skills. The 'creative city' takes into account all aspects of urban development, without ignoring or marginalizing the importance of all factors to achieve a high quality of life: social, economic, political, environmental and cultural factors.

The city is in a constant struggle to cope with its problems, to improve or eliminate them. Contemporary considerations for the success of the city require it to be characterized by openness, tolerance and diversity, promoting culture, to respect diversity and to eliminate the

hierarchy between the economic, social or environmental development. We must understand that creativity and innovation will play a very important role in the future.

The theory of the creative city underlines that the 'person' should be at the core of planning. Sometimes it is referred as 'human potential' and sometimes as 'citizen'. It is therefore concluded that the creative city comes from the need to recover the cities creativity. Certainly, cities are places of intense interaction, differences, disagreements, contradictions, and therefore creativity. The current requirement is cities to stand successfully to new conditions of (economic) challenges. The social and cultural asset is mostly what brings the creative city and encourages diversity, its openness and multiculturalism. It connects people with their cultural background and history and mobilizes them to engage in contemporary artistic processes. This is not a direct urban tool, but rather a sociological issue. However, it can have ramifications in urban planning and visible results in the organization of urban life.

The creative city pass power from the authorities, administrations and institutions in social capital and citizens who must participate actively during planning process, implement more imaginative ideas in construction, design, transportation, communications, art expression, etc. Creativity is an integral part of the creative city redefined in urban planning. Creativity is the new way of addressing several issues; new way of dealing with the problems, what changes could be made, what options to be offered. Creativity goes into a deeper level. The crucial point here is that while previously it started by the government or organized gatherings (authorities, agencies or major private initiatives), creativity in creative city theory starts now from individuals or small groups of people, developed from personal motives, ambitions and sensitivity, and highlights the importance of volunteerism and community service.

The creative city shifts the focus away from the traditional planning tools (land use and real estate, building processes, design, etc.) to more extensive ideas for planning associated with the vision of residents in long-term referring to the environment of their city, the standard of living, activities, culture. It includes 'soft' actions and promotes the action of individuals or groups who are not urban planners or designers, but can guide planning through their ideas and actions in other areas.

The creative city focuses on knowledge, in whatever way this can be obtained, encourages individual and collective actions, visions of individuals, institutions and organizations and engages all in governance processes. Governance includes open, diverse, formal or informal processes, sometimes institutional or not, promoting individual expression, highlighting the

vision of everyone from the individual actor to the principles, institutions and organizations. Moreover, the creative city decides which are the new elements of society's organization and highlights the importance of shaping strategies.

Strategies for creative cities can join actions to attract investment from the external environment or organizing international events, etc. However, what can guarantee the success of the strategy is to support the inherent advantages of the city, which is characterized by uniqueness, and hence innovation and proven effective in most cases. The creativity of individuals can be expressed through participation in the planning, the cultivation of safety in the city even the fact that citizens like their living environment, as it has to do with the structural elements, services and infrastructure as with the connection to cultural activities, leisure etc.

The strategic planning of the creative city supports that its application may be more effective when done on a small spatial scale. Then if effective, the initial idea may lead to similar ideas in other areas or at another period of time. Undoubtedly, it might be noted that the strategy includes methods and technical procedures that are already widely used and applied the last decades in many cases around the world, based on contemporary approaches of urban development.

The essential contribution of the 'creative city' is to develop participation in planning, encouraging the expression that could (even should) start from the individuals and become instrument in the hands of decision makers, leaders and politicians. The creative city extends the concept of sustainability and aims at economic, social, environmental and cultural balance. It encourages creativity that can be started from the lowest level in the hierarchy of urban organization, studies, analyzes and promotes the internal forces of the city, but also receives information from the external environment. It considers diversity as necessary element for the development and tries to find new and innovative solutions to the problems of the urban environment. It values even small innovative and creative actions and supports that the dissemination of the results will start from them. Finally, it requires the opinion, consensus and participation of all in planning, integrating them into the procedures. This is 'governance', and requires the contribution of persons dedicated to the subject, but also is influenced by the thoughts and ideas of the citizens. The creative city is a new framework for planning, promoting the implementation of soft procedures at all aspects of every day urban life, using existing processes, techniques, experiences and tools (indicators, models etc.)

motivates an alternative perspective, sharpens the critical approach of citizens for various themes and can provide a strategic plan for successful application.

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