

Urban revitalisation in the creative economy and the development of the creative society

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Abstract. *The current society is undergoing great changes and has been strongly shaken by major events throughout the past decade, revealing a new subsociety, the creative society, as well as new forms of urban expression such as revitalisation, gentrification and dislocation. All of these are interconnected by the growth in the creative-cultural phenomenon. Cultural-creative activities are growing bigger in most of the developed economies of the world, generating both positive obvious effects and adverse effects that challenge to some extent the growth and development potential that has been largely promoted by various economists advocating the creative cultural economy. The aim of the paper is to highlight the main benefits of the creative society development as well as its inherent menaces.*

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REL Classification: 17E, 17H.

At international level, in the current economic context, there is a stronger and stronger connection between culture *largo sensu* and prosperity, between creativity and development, between cultural activities and urban regeneration, but there is, subsidiarily, social and demographic implications of the creative cultural economy, which become more and more obvious. After all, during the past years we have been the witnesses of the advent of a new class, the creative class, but also of events that have long-term huge impact, such as the Internet bubble, the 9/11 attacks and the economic crisis that started in 2008 (Florida, 2002) and which, in many regions across the world, are still manifesting and getting more serious.

Despite the economic and political events that took place and shattered at an unprecedented pace the whole society during this period, the forces of the creative class grew continually stronger so that right now one can speak of the existence of a new social class called the creative society (Florida, 2012). It is the existence of such important political and social events that should have pulled down any other bubbles in the social and economic landscape. However, the creative class stood this test and grew stronger, thus building the foundations of the creative society in the true of the word.

According to Allen Scott (Scott, 2000), “[C]ities have always played a privileged role as centers of cultural and economic activity. From their earliest origins, cities have exhibited a conspicuous capacity both to generate culture in the form of art, ideas, styles and attitudes, and to induce high levels of economic innovation and growth, though not always or necessarily simultaneously. As we enter the twenty-first century, a very marked convergence between the spheres of cultural and economic development seems to be occurring. This is also one of the distinguishing characteristics of contemporary urbanisation processes in general.”

Places in general (and cities in particular) are closely or even symbiotically connected to what we generally call culture. Culture has the tendency to distinguish itself by the place in which it is generated, which makes cities or regions distinguish themselves among the others by the activities that generate symbolic products and services.

In Europe, economists talk a lot more about the closer relation between the urban and rural spaces, while in the past, urban and rural areas were seen in permanent competition. In this context, authorities’ plans include the preservations of green areas around urban areas and preventing the phenomenon that merges small urban areas into bigger ones (Wheway, 2011). Thus, Hadjimichalis (2003) points to the fact that the new urban middle classes consume and use both urban and rural space, living, on the one hand, in towns and owning, on the other hand, a second dwelling in rural areas or living in rural areas and working in urban areas.

The cultural or symbolic economy influences the contemporary urban landscape. Its new structure is due to the mostly indirect interaction, facilitated by modern communication means, while physical geographical borders as well as organisational borders become more fluid pervious flexible due to the said communication means.

The creative cultural sector has undergone a change of vision from non-profit fields of activity, which were frequently subsidised or financed by the local or central budget to a strong focus on profitability, marketability and market share. Such an evolution reflects the adaptability of creative cultural fields to the urban space, which is in a continuous changing process itself, in an attempt to survive and produce value added; great companies financed by the state budget tend to be replaced by small-sized competitive firms having well-determined profitability objectives that can be backed and belong to social networks. Eventually, culture is not the appanage of the executive power, but the fruit of imagination, creativity, spirituality and individual effort as an exponent of a society, at a certain time moment (Stern, Seifert, 2007). Around such networks cultural clusters are born, about which Evans (2004) claims to have three arguments: economic, social and cultural.

Economic rationale	Social rationale	Cultural rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - industrial regions - management of work space - production chains (like media, television) - production networks - technological transfer (like Silicon Valley) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - neighbourhood revitalisation - urban villages - community arts - urban regeneration - collective identity - artistic and social inclusion - social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - artistic regions - artistic studios and galleries - new media - ethnic arts - local cultural strategies - art schools and artistic education - cultural agents - creative capital

Source: Evans 2004. Cultural industry quarters: From pre-industrial to post-industrial production. In David Bell and Mark Jayne, eds., *City of quarters: Urban villages in the contemporary city*. Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Figure 1. *Rationale for cultural clusters*

According to Grams and Warr (2003) artistic activities develop urban areas in three directions:

- offer access to resources (by attracting clients-consumers of cultural products and services – be them local or foreign from that region; by using urban facilities and abandoned/underused spaces; by creating new relations; by supplying new resources that can be used residents too; by educational value added offered to the young community members; by enhancing qualifications

and access to various equipment; by enhancing the access of the young population to the development of technical and entrepreneurial skills)

- help solve problems (by formulating local problems and offering the opportunity of having an intercultural dialogue; by increasing the safety and opportunities to build new skills; by using creative capacity of inhabitants for the purpose of solving problems; by increasing cooperation and collaboration; by getting young people involved in civic actions);
- contribute to the development of social networks (by developing leadership and decision-making skills and abilities; by building cultural identities for people coming from other places and settling in the urban area; by supporting the democratic process; by developing peaceful relations; by surpassing cultural boundaries in dialogue and communication; by increasing the level of civilisation of that region; by creating a spirit of belongingness to that place; by creating new opportunities for the citizens in general; by building bridges among social classes).

Despite the obvious benefits of cultural and creative economic development, this can impact the society in a negative manner, and such manners evolve under the form of two processes: gentrification and dislocation.

Coined by Ruth Glass (1964) in the year 1964, the concept of gentrification denotes the penetration of the middle class in towns or neighbourhoods that had been previously been inhabited by lower social classes. This concept highlights strong class inequalities and injustice and is often associated to the concept of displacement. In this context, it is highlighted a new type of gentrification, hereinafter referred to as urban revitalisation in order to avoid the negative connotations mentioned by Marx and Engels. Urban revitalisation involves more than a simple migration of the population to certain urban areas to some other urban areas.

The penetration in the urban area and the development of the creative class have deep implications from a social, economic and cultural point of view, by the advent of IT hubs, artistic centres, tourism programmes etc. (Edwards et al., 2007), including in urban areas that were previously deprived of the influences of new technologies and culture.

Stern and Seifert (2007) add up a new inconvenient to cultural revitalisation, that of increased economic inequality. This is actually the concept of “the winner takes it all”, according to which people with best developed abilities and skills get the highest market share or the highest proportion of income in a certain field of activity. Although this situation may look like a natural outcome of competition taking place that field of creative cultural activity, the fact that the number of jobs increased significantly in this area seems to turn the market into a lottery with one

or few winners, generating strong inequalities in a continually growing and expanding community.

The same aspect was remarked by Richard Florida (2005), who considers that this is a dangerous dynamics for the societies developing it. Although Richard Florida has been the promoter and supporter of the creative industries in order to stimulate economic growth, social disparities determine us to reconsider all of the above, especially when negative effects start to occur more and more obviously.

Urban vitality has been studied in Romania as well. In 2010, a report was published in this respect, by the Centre for Research and Consultancy for Culture, entitled “Cultural Vitality of Cities in Romania 2010” (Centre for Research and Consultancy for Culture, 2010b). The aim of the study was to analyse the cultural potential at local level in the main big cities in Romania (46 county capital cities with a population of over 50,000 inhabitants) and it used data offered by the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Finance, Trade Register etc.

Using a set of six categories measured for several cities in Romania (infrastructure of the cultural sector, specialised human resources, and budget expenditures for culture, cultural activities-participation; creative economy and non-profit sector), a ranking was established, in which the capital city Bucharest was not included and within which an urban vitality index was computed for each city. The index was computed as a weighted value using the number of inhabitants. The said raking is described below:

Table 1. *Urban vitality index for the best performing cities in Romania*

City	Urban vitality index
1. Cluj-Napoca	1.09
2. Sibiu	0.88
3. Sfântu Gheorghe	0.86
4. Timișoara	0.84
5. Alba Iulia	0.57
6. Iași	0.56
7. Bistrița	0.52
8. Târgoviște	0.47
9. Miercurea-Ciuc	0.44
10. Târgu Mureș	0.36
11. Constanța	0.34
12. Oradea	0.33
13. Craiova	0.27
14. Piatra Neamț	0.25
15. Brașov	0.17

Source: Centre for Research and Consultancy for Culture, Cultural Vitality of Cities in Romania 2010, 2010, Bucharest.

The concern for cultural activities in urban areas in Romania is proven by the various empirical studies whose main purpose is to estimate the dimensions of

creative-cultural production activities, but also those of cultural consumption. Thus, in the year 2010, the Cultural Consumption Barometer 2010 was drafted (Cultural Vitality of Cities in Romania 2010, 2010a). The chapters of this study were: domestic consumption, public consumption, changes in the cultural consumption between 2005-2010, consumption preferences and profiles of non-consumers of activities related to high culture (first part) and cultural practices of the population in Romania, analysis of dynamics, tastes and acquisition of written culture (mainly books) in the second part of the study.

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