

## **Creative Cities-Case of Tirana**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Creative cities is a new trend in urban studies and it comes from Richard Florida, who was the first to introduce the term in USs and then it got wide spread all over the world.

Mainly it is seeking to inspire people to think, plan and act creatively in their city and to get an ideas factory going to turn urban innovation into reality. Its aim was to make readers feel “I can do that too”, and to spread confidence that creative and innovation solutions to urban problems are feasible, however bad they may seem at first sight.

Based on that philosophy we are looking to find and to have confidence that it may happen with Tirana. Our paper is focused in what policy makers and other stakeholders can do to make capital city of Albania a creative center.

**KEYWORDS:** creative city, urban studies, innovation, geography

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Creativity is ‘in’; it is not just ‘hot’, but also ‘cool’. Creative cities, the creative industries, creative districts, and creative individuals jostle for the attention of policy-makers, the media and the ‘creative class’ in general. People seem increasingly keen to develop their creative potential, by enhancing their productive or consumption skills, by following courses or experiencing creativity on holiday. Creativity is arguably not just an end in itself, but also a means to develop distinction, economic spin-off and authenticity (Zukin, 2010).

Not surprisingly, tourism has also been caught up in this creative maelstrom. In recent studies of urban economies, tourism is often listed as one of the creative industries, and ‘creative tourism’ has been taken up by many destinations around the globe. Creative tourism has been posed as an extension of cultural tourism—at once an adjunct and an antidote to mass forms of cultural tourism and the serial reproduction of culture (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

This review article attempts to analyze and explain the developing relationship between tourism and creativity, specifically considering the implications of the ‘creative turn’ in tourism and examining the ways in which relationship has been approached in tourism studies and more general social science literature. It deals with the drivers of creativity in tourism both in terms of production and consumption,

evolving intervention strategies, the development of creative practices in tourism and the rise of creative tourism as a distinct field of tourism development.

## **2 WHAT IS CREATIVITY?**

One of the major problems with creativity is definition. Klausen (2010) notes that “the standard definition of creativity is problematic and maybe in an even worse state than is generally acknowledged by creativity researchers themselves” (p. 347) and Scott (2010, pp. 155–116) remarks “in view of its current vogue, the term calls urgently for substantive clarification.” The lack of a single widely-accepted definition of creativity is arguably due to the wide range of views on function of creativity (Robinson, 2008). Taylor (1988) reviews the multitude of definitions of creativity in the literature, and groups the general scientific approaches into four main areas, which correspond to the ‘4Ps’ of creativity (Rhodes, 1961):

- The creative person
- The creative process
- The creative product
- The creative environment (‘creative press’)

The practice of tourism currently involves all four of these approaches, for example in the use of the creative environment through visits to creative clusters, the use of creative products as tourism attractions (e.g. travel related to famous authors in Albania house of well know Ismail Kadare, painters, etc.), the utilization of the creative process in designing creative activities for tourists (e.g. workshops and master classes) and the involvement of creative people through the activities of the ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2002).

Creativity was historically associated with the creative person, although Amabile (1996) suggested that in recent decades creativity research has increasingly tended to highlight the creative product. The contemporary emphasis seems to have shifted again, both towards the social context and the broader environment of creativity. Scott (2010) argues that socially embedded creativity implies much more than the activities of gifted individuals or members of the “creative class“. Socially embedded interpretations of creativity have also been obvious in tourism, where an initial lack of attention for creative activities or policies has been replaced by a growing number of studies that underline the interwoven nature of culture, creativity and tourism (e.g. Frey, 2009).

Broadening notions of creativity reflect a general ‘creative turn’ in society, which can also be identified in many different social and academic fields, including literature, urban development, cultural policy, economy, aesthetics, academic writing, theater, architecture and education. Richards and Wilson (2007) argue that the ‘creative turn’ in the social sciences developed out of the earlier ‘cultural turn’ as broadening notions of ‘culture’ began to undermine the explanatory power of the term, and as ‘culture’ itself waned in terms of its ability to generate distinction for social groups, economic classes and places. This development follows the general de-differentiation of culture and economy and different spheres of life (Jelinčić, 2009). These processes have also led to tourism and creativity becoming increasingly integrated on a number of levels. As Andersson and Thomsen (2008) argue, “the new integration of culture and business and hence the experience economy are central elements expressing the ‘creative’ turn where culture becomes an instrument for growth and development”. Tourism is in turn one of the major carriers of economic growth in the field of culture and creativity.

The turn towards creativity can therefore be seen not just as a general trend affecting a range of academic disciplines, but also as a broader instrumentalization of culture and creativity. Creativity has

become a strategy to be followed by cities and regions in a search for growth, as well as a strategy from promoting innovation and individual skill development (Ray, 1998). All of these changes can in turn be linked to broader processes of globalization, co-modification, rising competition between cities and regions and the development of the knowledge or network economy (Mommaas, 2009a).

The creative turn has therefore affected tourism in a number of ways. As well as increased creative content being integrated into tourism products, tourism has itself become a creative arena for the development of skills and performance. As Cloke (2006) points out, the creative performative role in tourism can extend too many areas not traditionally seen as creative, such as bungee jumping: “A kind of performatively in which although the actual process is staged, nevertheless the unfolding event is entirely immanent, and resistant to representational signification”. The point is that even something as apparently mechanistic and staged as bungee jumping can become ‘creative’ through the way in which it is experienced and reacted to by the participants. In essence we are seeing the development of tourism as an increasingly creative and lucid environment, within which new practices can be developed which challenge current representations of space.

The rise of creativity as an individual and social phenomenon has been stimulated by processes related to both production and consumption.

Commentators on the rise of the symbolic economy, including Zukin (1995) and Hannigan (1998) have pointed to the leading role of tourism, media and entertainment in symbolic production. “Cultural strategies of redevelopment are complicated representations of change and desire. Their common element is to create a ‘cultural’ space connecting tourism, consumption and style of life” (Zukin, 1995).

### **3 CREATING DISTINCTIVE PLACES**

Creative resources are now regularly employed to generate more distinctive identities, offering regions and cities a symbolic edge in an increasingly crowded marketplace. The emphasis in such strategies has also shifted from tangible to intangible cultural resources because more places lacking a rich built heritage are now competing for tourism business (Richards & Wilson, 2007). Such processes lie behind the attempt of many cities and regions to make them more distinctive. Turok (2009) has argued that cities need to adjust their image more rapidly in global markets and therefore they rely less on changes in their occupational or industrial structure, and more on branding for their distinctiveness.

This is part of a broader shift from comparative to competitive advantage in destination competitiveness, as noted in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report on the *Impact of Culture on Tourism* (2009). This report emphasized that comparative advantage is derived largely from endowed resources, such as cultural heritage, while competitive advantage relies more on resource deployment (in other words, creativity in managing and marketing the destination). The ability of a tourism destination to compete therefore depends on “its ability to transform the basic inherited factors into created assets with a higher symbolic or sign value” and that “organizational capacities allow some regions to make better use of their inherited and created assets to make themselves attractive to tourists” (OECD, 2009).

Creativity is therefore attractive as a policy option for stimulating a range of economic, cultural and social outcomes. It is also attractive because of the argued advantages produced by networking and knowledge spillover which stimulate further creative activity. Public sector intervention in creative development has basically involved three approaches (Campbell, 2011):

- Creative Industries
- Creative Cities
- Creative Class

In broad terms, creative industries strategies aim to stimulate the development of creative production through support for the ‘creative industries’ sector, which is broadly defined to include advertising, architecture, art, crafts, design, fashion, film, music, performing arts, publishing, software, toys and games, TV and radio, and video games (DCMS, 1998). In some cases the definition of creative industries has been broadened to include tourism (Bagwell, 2009, Bonink and Hitters, 2001 and Evans, 2009). Creative city strategies are founded on the idea that creativity can be fostered or steered (Lange, Kalandides, Stober, & Mieg, 2008) not just in the creative industries, but among citizens in general (Sepe, 2010) in order to be ‘creative for the world’ (Landry, 2006).

The ‘creative class’ approach popularized by Richard Florida (2002) is based on the idea that there is a growing number of people engaged in creative occupations who are attracted to places because of their creative ‘atmosphere’. By attracting the creative class, the argument goes; a city can stimulate economic activity and improve their image. However, the creative ‘atmosphere’ of a place is very difficult to define, and may not be very helpful in terms of explaining the location decisions of creative people, or the arrival of tourists. (Richards, 2001).

Creative city strategies also tend to be organized around specific ‘creative clusters’ (Evans, 2009), creative precincts (Hee, Schroepfer, Nanxi, & Ze, 2009) or ethnic enclaves (Shaw, 2007). These creative ‘hot-spots’ are often argued to stimulate the development of the creative industries as well as acting as a magnet for the consumption power of the creative class and tourists.

As Mommaas (2004) explains, such ‘cultural-creative clusters’ are designed to produce a range of outcomes, including:

- Strengthening the Identity, Attraction Power and Market Position of Places
- Stimulating a More ‘Entrepreneurial’ Approach to the Arts and Culture
- Stimulating Innovation and Creativity
- Finding a New Use for Old Buildings and Derelict Sites
- Stimulating Cultural Diversity and Cultural Democracy

Creative clusters therefore have an important role in building the local creative economy, as well as attracting tourists and adding to the attractiveness of places.

Cities such as London, or Rotterdam or Shanghai, once at the forefront of the old industrial economy are now also at the forefront of the creative economy, at least in part because of their plentiful supply of rehabilitated ‘creative spaces’.

#### **4 CASE OF TIRANA**

Within a period of 20 years, Tirana, capital of Albania, grows in more than four times in population compare with what it was in beginning of 90 and also its space has changes a lot. New neighborhoods, new industries, new infrastructure during 20 years of transition were challenges of city and persons who were and are running it. Now a day’s, Tirana, has in its space not only a state, but also a number of private Universities, which every year are producing a high number of students among them around 7 thousands in ICT, engineering, agriculture, medicine, math etc.

Although that during those years a lot has been spoken for regulation of urban space of Tirana, till 2012 time when through an international competition city for the first time has a new Urban Planning since 1988. In fact, in 2003, a partial Urban Planning was approved, which was regulating only the center of the city and it was not addressing all challenges, which Tirana has actually and what it has to face in future.

Nevila Xhindi, deputy Major of Tirana, insists that the new urban planning has a new approach and is a link between urban development and economic development, which was missing till now. The new strategy is sustainable development and one of its elements is urban planning, which concretely means, extension of boulevard with 1, 8 kilometers, tram project, adjustment of Tirana River, placement of industrial zones and markets.

In its self extension of boulevard is an innovation, ad Xhindi, because it combines public spaces with private ones, providing possibilities for people to move through their innovations. We will have an interaction between people and institutions, social centers, libraries, markets, parks, clubs, theaters etc, creating thus a wonderful space also for bohemian people. Although, that we do not have all details, we know that they are 5 blocs and close to them it will be a multimodal station which will host also tram.

As mentioned above, a lot of young people are studding and working in Tirana, although that Municipality of Tirana does not have a direct policy to attract them into innovation and creative for the city, it does work on stimulating them through credit lines for new businesses open from people under 35 years old. It is not only for people who have innovator ideas, but also for them who want to expand their business and this project is in cooperation with National Bank of Commerce (BKT).

Almost in the same line is the cooperation with ILO (International Labor Organization) on territorial employment pact, which has in its focus young entrepreneurs. Part of municipality initiatives to provide incentives for young people in Tirana, is creation of a permanent stage which will serve for students and young talented persons who do not have financial possibilities to perform in National Theater, National Gallery of Arts, but they can do it free and live in that place provided by local government.

Tirana as touristic place is another project, which will be started by the begging of may 2014 with the aim to create a product called Tirana, as a point of festivals, concerts, meetings, museums. Part of it is also the so called project “weekend in Tirana” and it is not only foreign tourists but also for internal touristic market. The idea behind it is not only to show historic Tirana, with Mosque, castle, Toptani house, basilica, Tabak bridge etc, but also a creative city.

A mini green market stock for Tirana, a project which in cooperation with mobile telephone companies, municipality is developing a new tool which will help all citizens to get on time info regarding prices, quality and other info's regarding all green markets in the city.

Creation of green places is another objectives of Municipality of Tirana in the framework of creativity of the city, part of it is restructuring of Avni Rustemi market, which will be Public Private Initiative, because it will serve to the people, but also to the business operators, hotels, bars, shops etc.

Although is in its initial phase, waste management will be an innovation not only for Albania, but also for the whole Balkan region. In cooperation with International Financial Corporation, Municipality of Tirana is developing a project to have 98 per cent of waste recyclable and putted in ground.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

Creativity is:

- The creative person
- The creative process
- The creative product
- The creative environment ('creative press')

Is responsibility of local policymakers to develop new strategies for their cities and regions to make them more competitive.

Tourism and culture are part of creativity other process has to be developed, such innovation, human resources.

Urban Planning of Tirana as part of creativity:

- Extension of boulevard
- Tram project
- Adjustment of Tirana River
- Interactivity of institutions with people and social centers
- Green Market Stock
- Waste management project
- A permanent stage for young talents

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