

Creative Places as a Strategy for the Development of Cities

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Creative Place is an emerging multi-dimensional concept in the field of public space studies and placemaking, which rediscovers and re-invents its uniqueness and distinctiveness. Creative Places are not an aim in themselves, but they are means of improving the city spaces and making them more genuine, attractive, livable and vibrant, whereas the central issues are not limited to place making processes. Rather, it involves the strategies that need to be developed to ensure the (re)establishment of the “creative milieu”, according to Landry (2000), i.e. a physical setting, where ideas flow and contribute towards economic success. In addition, to reinforce and celebrate the identity or the culture of the places in which they happen, and have the impact on a city’s social prosperity. The concept envisions, conceptualizes and works with many dimensions of the public space, such as the cultural, formal and performance dimensions with an emphasis on a long-term creation of people-drive community development. This emerging concept of place emphasizes an imaginative, non-generic, original, meaningful and innovative space. Emphasizing the role of people as the crucial resource of cities, the diversity of their activities, vibrant street life, cultural festivals, as well as interactive pedestrian-friendly public spaces among others, are some attributes of the emerging creative place concept. The concept is centered on the creation of conditions or atmosphere rather than detailed planning programs. This paper attempts to clearly define what is meant by a creative place? What are the benefits for a place to be creative? Why do some places seem more creative than others? More important, what is the relationship between the city development and creative places? How do cities create, shape, use, manage and market creative places, and how can those places in return shape the city image, and influence its future development? The paper will introduce concepts of creative places as mean to develop cities in a variety of strategies. It argues that cities, which successfully harness creative places as an integral part of a broader development strategy, will achieve generating wider cultural, social and economic benefits.

Keywords: Creative Place, City development, Strategies, Experience-space

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, there has been an increasing willingness to develop new strategies to cope with the rapid challenges of urban development in the era of the globalization and the increasing competitiveness between cities, in order to raise their position, create or confirm their identity and to enhance their economy. Gradually, many cities have made large efforts to achieve a distinct reputation as successful and distinctive world class cities and to increase their attractiveness as places to live, work, visit or to do business. Therefore, various strategies were addressed and extensively followed by those cities with different interpretations and in various forms, such as urban branding strategies including branding city location, heritage, soft and hard infrastructure, urban regeneration programs, events, lifestyle, among other strategies and potentials.

Over the past decades, many cities were seen and designed adopting a variety of planning paradigms. See Table 01. For example, Sitte and his fellows endorsed cities as “Work of Art” during the beginning of the past century. He focused on the efficacy of planning in an aesthetically conscious manner, making a study of the spatial structures of cities’ squares, monuments, and confronts the living beauty and creativity of the most ancient ones. Jane Jacobs and others saw it as “Cultural Communities”. Jacobs observed some of the major key qualities of vibrant cities— mixed uses, frequent streets, varied buildings, and concentration – consigns cities to failure. In the nineties of the past decade, many scholars, such as Florida (2002) and Landry (2000) have

promoted the notion of the *Creative City*. Florida confirmed that the world is shifting into a Creative Age, i.e. an age in which creativity is the engine of national, regional and urban economic growth (Landry, 2000).

(Re)Making a public space to be “Creative” is a significant approach for developing cities spaces within a wider development process. Furthermore, the landscape of some contemporary cities has witnessed new ways to respond to more unique form and matchless image. In this context, it is argued that *Creative Public Place* can build a highly successful city image and identity that places a high value on new ways of both *seeing* and *doing* things, in which experience-scape is being created and manifested. This requires a set of assumptions on which to develop policies, strategies and plans.

Period	Paradigms	Proponents	Places, Plans and Exemplars
1900s-1910s	City as work of art	Sitte, Burnham, Howard	<i>Models of , city beautiful movement, Garden City</i>
1910s-1 950s	Civic design	Bartholomew, Abercrombie, ACGB (<i>Plans for on Arts Centre</i>)	<i>Civic cultural centers, neighborhood facilities (parks and playing fields), city functional and post-war master plans</i>
1 960s-1970s	Cultures of communities	Jane Jacobs, ACGB <i>Housing the Arts</i> , Jennie Lee	<i>Community arts facilities, conservation/heritage movement, community development, arts & sports (centre) planning</i>
1970s	Flagship facilities	Moses, Lane (UK) - <i>Every Town should have One</i>	<i>Lincoln and JFK centers, Sydney Opera House, Quincy Market Boston, Arts Centers movement</i>
1980s-1 990s	Development and regeneration	Zukin (USA), Progressive cities/mayors -, Baltimore, Glasgow: <i>Culture of Cities</i> ,	<i>Culture and regeneration; cultural industries strategies and quarters (CQs), festival marketplaces, of Culture</i>
1990s-2000	Creative Cities	Bernard Tschumi ; Landry, Bianchini; Florida, Scott (USA); Mercer (Australia)	<i>Capitals of Culture, Cultural Resources Planning, Local Economic development, Creative Quarters</i>
2001 to date	Sustainable Communities	CABE <i>Design Quality Compact city: High Density;</i>	<i>Culture and Quality of Life, Livability, Place-Shaping, Living Places</i>

Table 01: Contemporary Paradigm of Public City Spaces (Source: Adapted from Freestone and Gibson, 2006)

2. CREATIVE PLACE

“Creativity” is a term that holds various meanings. Most likely, it is linked with originality and innovation. According to Oxford Dictionaries, Creativity is “the use of imagination or original ideas to create something”. It also deals with a variety of attributes formed by people divers’ perceptions. Mihaly (2014) asserts that “Creativity is based on the interaction between a person’s thoughts and a socio-cultural context”. It is argued that creative places are twofold. It deal with the physical spaces as the *containers* of activities that are taking place in them, as well as their *contents*, where the activities and uses are occurred, i.e. People-drive community developments. In this context, places are considered creative when they make use of/or create environments to fit creative needs, as manifestation of culture and knowledge for creative thinking and living. Furthermore, creative places communicate certain urban and visual characteristics, such as being authentic and innovative in terms of design, and/or flexible and transformative in terms of functionality and use, among other attributes. Florida (2003) confirms that “Creative places in the city are just like living beings: they are born, grow, decay and can rise again. Hence, streets may be considered the vital organs of the creative city”.

3. ATTRIBUTES OF CREATIVE PLACES

Attributes of creative places are turning public space into an innovative, livable, flexible and interactive space. Diagram (1) shows a proposed set of attributes that shape and creative places. Often, creative places consider some of those attributes in their planning and design processes, in which the other attributes could be produced through the use of the place.

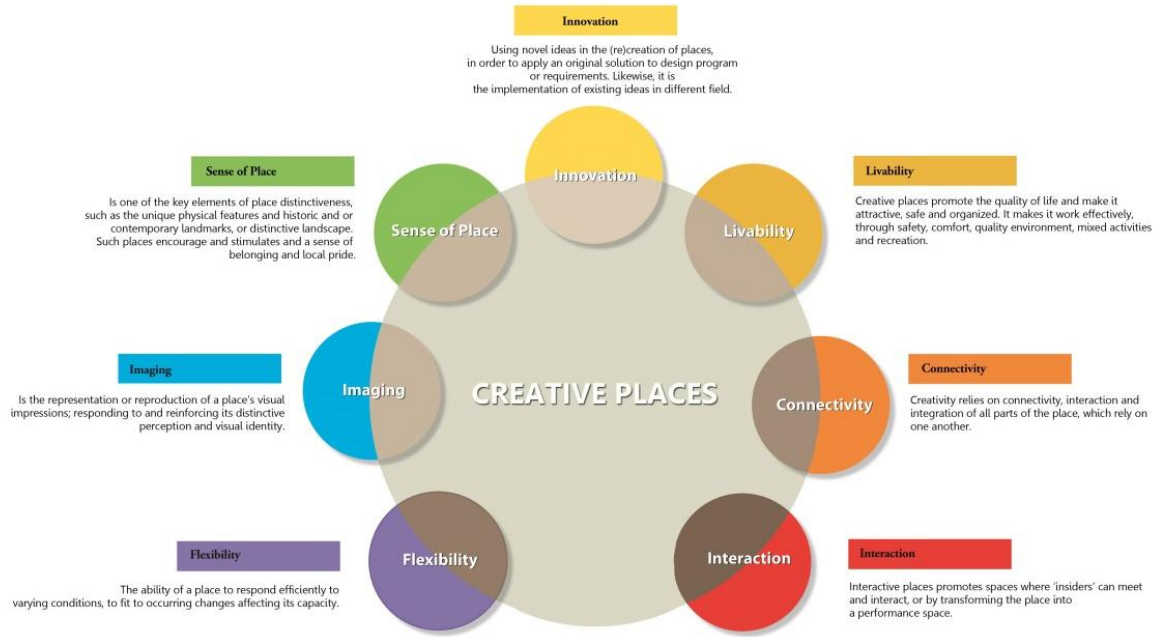


Diagram 01: Attributes of Creative Places

3.1. INNOVATION

Creating a creative place, usually involves the use of novel ideas, in order to apply an original solution to design program or certain requirements. Likewise, it is also about the experimentation of existing ideas in new setting. For example, the design of some places turns them into unusual venues, which may add unexpected design aspect that fosters creative functions and attracts people to use them, in which what so called "Experience-space". A stimulating example of creative innovative places is the City Lounge or "Stadtlounge" (figures 1, 2 and 3), a plaza located in in St.Gallen City, Switzerland. The project features a public living space room through a red carpet that flows all around the buildings. The red surface is covering everything in its path, creating a red landscape in the center of the city. It creates places to relax, to interact, to park and much more. During day time, the scene has a very vivid effect coming from the design and color of the place, while during night; the whole place turns into a dramatic scene through the dimmed artistic light effect.



City Lounge, St. Gallen, Switherland Fig. 01 (left): The project features a public living space room through a red carpet that flows all around the buildings. Fig. 02 (Up right): Creative solutions of public amenities. Fig. 03: (down left): People enjoying the creative set of the City Lounge.

3.2. LIVABILITY

Creative places promote a high standard of quality of life to make them attractive, safe and organized. They make places work effectively, through safety, comfort, quality environment, mixed activities and recreation. The Metropol Parasol (figure 4), a gigantic structure that revitalized the Plaza de la Encarnación in Seville City, Spain is an example of creative livable place. This place used to be as a parking lot for many decades, and is seen as a dead spot between more popular tourist destinations in the city. The place has been converted into a hub of creative activities and an extraordinary livable place in the heart of the city. To achieve this challenge, the Parasol contains a variety of functions, such as living market, shops, and a podium for live concerts and events. On the roof top of the huge structure covering the Parasol, there is a viewing gallery with a walk way, which turned the roof into a city terrace. The new design of the plaza has changed the whole place into one of the main destinations of the city, where people can do a lot of activities.



Fig. 04: People gathering during an event in The Metropol Parasol, Seville, Spain.

3.3. CONNECTIVITY

Creativity relies on connectivity, interaction and integration of all parts of the place in an integrated and consistent spatial system. For example, planning and connecting event programs that take place at the same time of other events, whether they are running in parallel or not. It might be linked together to create a strong sense of collective series that any single scattered event program would find difficult to achieve. An example of creative connective place is “Zona Tortona”, a typical industrial district located in Milan, Italy. During the annual Milano Design Week, the district turns into a hub to promote connected and overlapped creative activities. See (Figure 5). In 2015, Zona Tortona housed and celebrated 180 events and over 115.000 visitors in the area. It proves an essential focus of the international design scene and a key destination of Milan.



Fig. 05 (left): Zona Tortona district celebrating diversity of creative activities and designs. Fig. 06 (right): The map of Zona Tortona during the Design week of Milan.

3.4. INTERACTION

Interactive places promote spaces where ‘insiders’ can meet and interact, transforming this famous central city square into a performance space. By developing a feeling of inclusion and building bonding and bridging social gaps through special initiatives, activities and the design of intercultural gathering spaces. A remarkable example of creative interactive places is “Schouwburgplein” (figure 7), a rehabilitated urban square located in the center of Rotterdam, The Netherlands. The square is designed as an interactive public space, flexible in use, and changing during day and seasons. By raising the surface of the square above the surrounding area, the void was retained and the “city’s stage” created. The square is planned and designed to accommodate a diversity of activities taken place in the same time, which creates a livable environment. See figure 8. To make the square of higher symbolic value, it has four gigantic cranes inspired by and symbolizes Rotterdam as a port city. As an interactive public space, the position of those cranes are changed and controlled by people using the space by inserting coins.

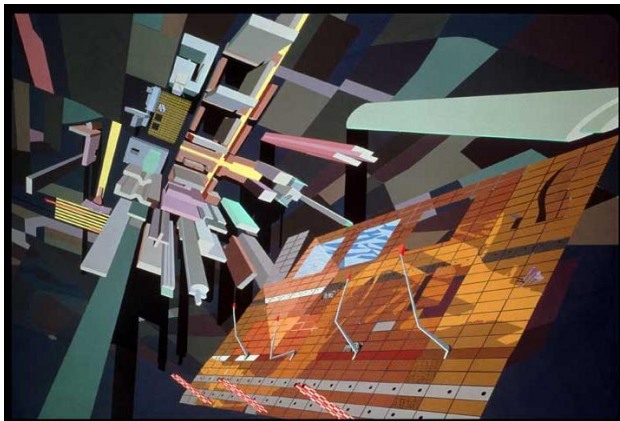


Fig. 07: An artistic view shows the design and the layers of the Square's floor that promote interactive and overlapped activities.



Fig. 08: Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam, an example of a creative interactive place.

3.5. FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility of public places denotes the ability of a place to respond efficiently to varying nature and conditions, of functions, to fit occurring changes affecting its capacity. For example, by concentrating activities in a relatively small space or over a short period of time, or when the same place is used effectively for a variety of functions that happens in sequence. Typically, flexible creative places create a heightened sense of animation and livability by re-organizing pathways, route networks that efficiently link event-place and events together in a flexible way. A good example of creative flexible places is the “Marktplatz” in Stuttgart, Germany, located in the heart of the city. It is a historical major regional marketplace, originated back to the year 1304, where it was surrounding the Town Hall, shopping facilities and cafes. The square is a showcase of a space flexible usage, of a free setting and a multiple use city venue. The square hosts weekly markets, periodical events, sessional festivals, political demonstration, special actions and many more. Figure (9), shows some of the square events, such as the weekly vegetable market (Top right), a sport event, left), the Christmas festival (Middle left) and a musical show (Middle right) and a civic demonstration (Below left)



Fig. 09: The “Marktplatz” in Stuttgart, Germany, is an example of a creative flexible place that allows different activities and events

3.6. IMAGING

Imaging is defined as the representation or reproduction of a place's visual impressions; responding to and reinforcing its distinctive perception and visual identity. In many cases, visitors actually have a more positive image of the places that they visit than residents, who may be more keenly aware of the negative aspects of the place. An example of creative imaged places is "Time Square" (figure 10), with its breathtaking spectacular scene. The square has a long history in New York. In the 19th century the area had become the center of New York's carriage industry. As the growth in the City continued, Times Square quickly became a cultural hub full of theaters, music halls, and upscale hotels. Gigantic urban screens attached to its high-rises in the square are shaping its "Disneyfied" character. Times Square boasts attractions such as Studios, elaborate stores across the street from each other, as well as restaurants and along with a number of multiplex movie theaters. It also has attracted a number of large financial, publishing, and media firms to set up headquarters in the area.



Fig. 10: The "Time Square" as an example of a place with a strong image attracting a number of large financial, publishing, and media firms to set up headquarters in the area.

3.7. SENSE OF PLACE

Sense of place is one of the key elements of distinctiveness of places, and their unique physical features and historic and or contemporary landmarks, or unique landscape. Such places encourage and stimulates a sense of belonging and local pride. Examples of places that have a unique sense of place are many, such as the plaza located in front of Centre Pompidou, where people gather to enjoy the scene of the center, the small activities happening there, such as performing art, ethnic shopping, or just relaxed in the spacious space. (Figure 11) "Piazza del Campo" in Sienna, Spain, which have a great sense of place formed by its history and design (figure 12),

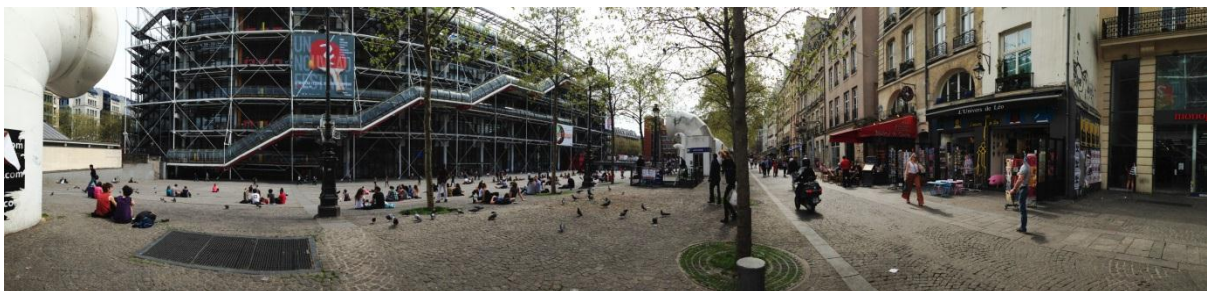


Fig. 12: The plaza of Centre Pompidou, where people usually gather to enjoy the whole set of the place



Fig. 12: “Piazza del Campo”, Sienna, Spain, has a great sense of place formed by its history and design

4. SPATIAL TYPOLOGIES OF CREATIVE PLACES

There are four main types of places/sites may be adapted to be used as examples of Creative Places:

- 4.1 Single Sites: This typology deals with sites as an individual component. Places, such as urban squares, plazas, pedestrian zones, promenades, Corridors, or parks, are the main focus of this typology, where activities are concentrated in one site.
- 4.2 Multiple Sites: This typology includes connected or disconnected sites within a context. Connected activities in disconnected sites, or connected sites with different or disconnected activities can be categorized under this typology.
- 4.3 Creative Hubs: This typology includes campuses or complexes for cultural production activities in a spatially concentrated area or district, such as districts, fashion design districts, preserved historic districts, or a new media campus.
- 4.4 Cultural Incubators: This typology includes complex culture infrastructure in specific location for several related activities, and houses various performance venues for diverse performing arts.

5. MODES OF CREATIVE PLACES

As shown in figure 13, there are three main modes that govern the creativity of places as follows:

1. Creative activities in creative forms
2. Non-creative activities in creative forms
3. Creative activities in non-creative forms

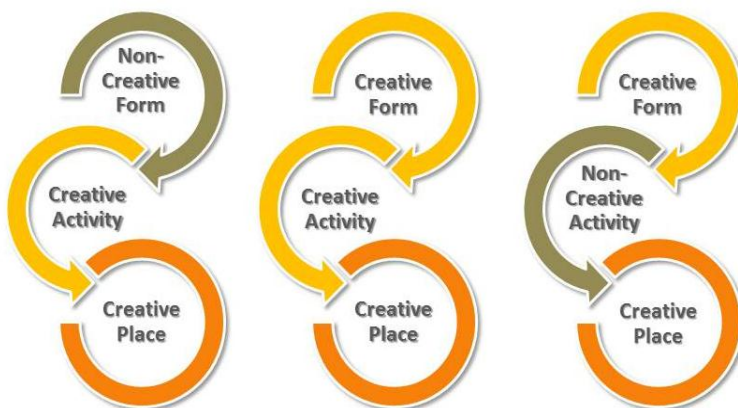


Fig. 13: Modes of Creative Places

6. CREATIVE PLACES Vs. TRADITIONAL PLACES

When creativity shapes a place, it guides its image, structure, as well as activities that take place in it. Often, creative spaces are different than the traditional ones in many aspects. While traditional places are usually having homogeneous, simple and rigid structure, creative places are structured in a complex and integrated, yet flexible way. Often, activities take place in traditional places are mainly functional, in which fulfilling the purpose of the activity is satisfied within an efficient usage of place. In contrary, activities of creative places are mainly aesthetics, targeting added values to place and manifesting its quality. In general, creative places' image is usually artistic, while most of the traditional places are of formulaic image.

Table 02 summarizes the main differences between the characteristics of creative places in comparison to traditional places.

	Traditional Places	Creative Places
Structure	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
	Simplicity	Complexity
	Separation	Integration
	Repetition	Innovation
	Rigid	Flexible
Activity	Functions	Aesthetics
	Growth	Development
	Organization	Culture
	Efficiency of space	Quality of place
	Fulfill purpose	Adding value
Image	Formulaic	Artistic
	Same as the other place	Unique to this place
	Cohesion of similarity	Celebration of Diversity
	Generic and predictable	Original and distinct
	Delivering on expectations	Novelty of experience

Table 02: A comparative analysis between Creative places and Traditional places

7. CREATIVE PLACES AS A STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES

Architecture, urban design, and landscape including open spaces, are governing the city image. As per the policy document Vision on the Creative Economy (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2007b), "Rotterdam focuses on four innovative creative branches: architecture and urban design, design and product innovation, audiovisual production and music".

Recently, there is a growing trend in utilizing urban cultural resources for economic revitalization and in making money out of culture, consumption, spectacle and urban buzz. These qualities are all assumed to be staples of the post-industrial economy (Amin, 2006). Creative places are one of the main tools to attract inward and outward investments. According to (Hall, 2000) Creative cities are considered destinations to attract holiday tourists as well as mobile professional workers and mobile capital.

Nowadays, creativity has an impact on developing cities. According to the interview of Florida that was done in 2003, creativity is the ultimate driving force of economic growth. According to Florida, "The Creative Economy", 'Creative City Awards', 'The Creativity Crisis'... if we may believe today's policy makers and their advisors, we are in the middle of a wholesale socio-economic shift". He also stated that creativity is the ultimate driving force of economic growth. In other words, we look for places and conditions that nurture creativity that is the ability to do new things with existing knowledge.

According to OTB (2009), the idea of economic growth based on creativity became popular among local policy makers in the US and Europe. As creativity is embodied in persons, more than knowledge and innovation, the concept of the creative city emphasizes the role of people as the crucial economic resource of cities today more than previous approaches.

FINAL REMARKS

- The recent experience has proven that public space can be a creative urban element that builds a highly successful city identity that places a high value on new ways of both **seeing** and **doing** things.
- Creative places are promote making use of/or create environments to fit **creative needs** such as manifestation of **culture** and **knowledge**, or conducive to creative thinking and living.
- Developing Creative Spaces can be attributed to:
 - Urban impact: regeneration, quality of life, city image, sense of place. Improve the image of cities or reinforce city identity
 - Social impact: Integration and social coherence.
 - Economic impact: Stimulate new ways of economic development for cities, to attract inward investment

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