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Urban Competitiveness and Role of Art/Culture in Place Making Discourse on `Creative City Policy` in Fukuoka City

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Biography

Mirsad Mustovic (1977) graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He received his Master degree at the Graduate School of Human-Environment Studies, Department of Architecture and Urban Design at the Kyushu University, Japan. At the moment he is enrolled in PhD course pursuing the investigation of the impact of the culture-led development, Creative City Policy on the built environment in Japan and Asian. In a broader sense he is interested in discourse on formation of "creative spaces" that supposedly have a role to facilitate and support contemporary "creative worker" lifestyle acknowledged in various levels from working environment employed in creative industry sector to the emerging new typologies in public spaces, essentially culture related and intended for fostering of creativity and spontaneity.

Abstract

With the emergence of the 'New Economy' and rapid development of ICT technologies, solid recourses gave way to the ostensible concept of ideas and talent as the most desirable commodity. As a corollary, that caused diminishing of pre-established (trans) national routes and boundaries, and gave birth to the 'rise of cities' notion, unleashing a movement of global capital and talent. Creative city lies at the core of this concept. The mainstream of this conversation essentially has two levels of differentiated discussion; creativity as a driver of growth and regional development, and perceived as something that represents a strong potential source of value creation in 21st century economies. Another distinct level of discussion is seen in the resurgence of interest in creativity in the sense more related to culture/art, and enacted nowadays widely accepted belief that for the City to survive and sustain competitiveness in information era, beside industry and production it needs to nurture living environment as key factor that will attract business. Frequently repeated line of argument have enthroned the idea that creativity will not emerge in anachronistic urban environment but rather in culturally rich environment.

This paper looks at the ways in which the conversation on Creative city relates to these two levels of discussion in regard to ideas of 'Urban Competitiveness' and 'Art/Culture role in Place Making'. In the past decade there has been evident growth of interest related to creative city policy in Asia, while in Japan all ordinance-designated cities departed towards 'creative city'.

Keywords: Creative City, Creative Class, Urban Competitiveness, Cultural Policies

Introduction

In last decade or so the idea of creative city entered on the agenda of scholarly world and mobilized

government officials toward concrete actions since the restructuring of the urban systems gave cities more impetus for opportunistic behavior and individual projects. On the global level for City official's 'soft' location factors and talent attraction have become highest priority and urban agenda a tool used with purpose to exercise economic growth. The most desirable type of industry to be attracted is creative, knowledge-intensive industry and number of cities set in mission to become 'creative'. This paper first, discusses about circumstances under which notion of creative city emerged and relation to evident urban competitiveness among cities, thus contribute to better understanding of the scope and related interdependencies. In the second part after the brief focus on Fukuoka City's respond to Creative City notion, respectively the Art/Culture Promotion Vision envisioned to develop and foster 'soft' location factors, this paper indicates on necessity to localize already existing 'soft' infrastructure in the city and integrate it into place making/branding strategies, that at the present is not the case. Such attempt implies on finding mechanisms to bridge over the differences between competitiveness driven private sector and public sector-led art/culture promotion policies.

Urban Competitiveness and Creative Cities

The emergence of the 'New Economy', made from sectors such as high-technology industry, neo-artisanal manufacturing, business and financial services, cultural-products industries (Scott, 2006), Internet and means of mobility, as well as rapid development of ICT technologies caused a global economic restructuring. Increased capital mobility and flexibility (Harvey, 1991), shift of international geography of production and division of labor (Scott, 1998), and international mobility of highly skilled migrants (Saxenian, 2006), created conditions for new economic disposition where solid recourses gave way to the ostensible concept of ideas and talent as the most desirable commodity, that caused diminishing of established (trans) national routes and boundaries, and gave birth to the post-national economies with 'rise of cities' notion.

In the overwhelmingly present process of defragmentation of power where state no longer controls the innovation process directly, and with the new state role as an initiator, catalyst and facilitator it could be said that the pressures of globalization are perhaps most strongly felt at the local and regional level. It is at these levels where de-industrialization and accompanying processes take effect. In most of the OECD developed countries the intensifying focus on local and regional economy has resulted in the change in form and function of local governance from "service provider to strategic enabler".

In such circumstances, a new opportunities brought by "new economy" have led to the progressive urban competitiveness among cities where cities, or rather, city-regions emerge as quite independent players, taking part in web of entrepreneurial, managerial and promotional activities trying to acquire particular position in global network by specializing in particular sector of creative, knowledge-intensive industry, and start attracting talent from world/region.

In the work of Musterd and Murie the essential conditions for competitive cities are summarized in 'hard' conditions, cluster theory, personal networks and 'soft' conditions (Musterd and Murie, 2010). Particularly the latter one have gained in importance as the focus of urban economies moved from manufacturing to knowledge and creative industries, so did the theory of location progressively shift its focus from "quality of economic environment" to the "quality of place" (Atkinson, 2010).

There is widely accepted belief that for the City to survive and sustain competitiveness in information era, beside industry and production it needs to nurture living environment as key factor that will attract business. Frequently repeated line of argument have enthroned the idea that creativity will not emerge in anachronistic urban environment but rather in culturally rich environment.

The determinants such as quality of urban environment, environmental endowment and urban attractiveness feature extensively as criteria of ranking cities according to their serviceability as business and investment locations (Mercer Human Resource Consulting, Economist Intelligence Unit, World Bank).

Cities compete for clustering and investment in the sector of knowledge intensive activities, for ever more talented work-force and tourists (OECD, 2008). The sensitivity of these primary target groups to the, so called, "soft factors" yielded the creative city discourse that, in turn, introduced qualities of place directly into agenda of economic urban strategies.

The mainstream of this conversation essentially has two levels of differentiated discussion; creativity as a driver of growth and regional development, something that represents a strong potential source of value creation in 21st century economies and usage of culture or creativity to "achieve specific non-cultural end" (Pratt, 2008). Another distinct level of discussion is seen in the resurgence of interest in creativity in sense more related to culture and art's role in society and urban revitalization with less aggressive economic imperative, more focused on sustainability and local community fostering (Costa, 2008).

A common and simplified image of 'Creative City' is identified with a place inhabited by the creative workers or creative class, where new economy sector flourishes, and/or a city able to "adjust itself permanently to changing conditions in the global economy, involved in recurrent cycles of innovation and regeneration"

(Mommas, 2004). In addition, Scott points out to the existence of idiosyncratic equilibrium between the 'production system and the urban cultural environment' as inherent to the creative city concept (Scott 2006). American urban economist Richard Florida offers a substantially concrete and prescriptive, but unequivocally elitist, account on creativity of urban environment as a lure of sorts for the so called "creative class" - people employed in creative knowledge-intensive industries that can help boost city's economic success (Florida, 2002). Among the various attempts to capture the essence of 'Creative City' the one offered by O'Connor and Kong seems appropriate referring to an approach to policy and planning that recognizes the urban context and infrastructure within which creative industry innovation and growth take place (O'Connor and Kong, 2009).

Obviously, the ways in which discourse on creative city encompasses the concept of place and its general importance notably transcends the classical approach of cultural preservationism. The emergence of new economy have led to opinions that past development and city structure becomes irrelevant factor in shaping the economy of contemporary city. However, a number of recent studies deal with 'development pathways' indicating that historical factors are important to explain different trajectories (Bochma and Martin, 2007) related to the development of creative knowledge industry.

Fukuoka Creative City/Art Culture Promotion Vision

The population of the greater Fukuoka area is 2.37 million, which is fourth largest populated area after Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya, being the urban, administrative and educational center of Kyushu where the tertiary sector forms the bulk of GDP. The creative and knowledge sector has been growing rapidly since 2000s and today employ up to a third of the working population. Contrary to the recent trend of working and overall population decline in Japan and "shrinking of cities" due to the same phenomena, Fukuoka City is an exception in few points, regarding the expected increase of population, already constant influx of workers from Kyushu and Yamaguchi areas, as well as high-percentage of relatively young population. Its proximity to Asia ensured a long tradition of cultural and economic exchange that nowadays-local authorities allied with private sector use to build the image of Fukuoka City as Japan's Gateway to eastern Asia. However, in various pamphlets issued recently by the City labels like; Knowledge City, Creative City, etc. are often promoted what clearly refers to the widely excepted thinking that 'creativity' inherent to art and culture is main generator of future "new industries and employment opportunities" (Sasaki, 2010). In Japan all of the ordinance-designated cities departed towards creative city based on Landry's and Florida reasoning, while Landry himself has played important role in promoting 'Creative City' concept in Asia, especially in Japan.

After Yokohama City in 2004 began with comprehensive 'Creative City' undertaking, in 2006 Fukuoka City proposed its "Creative Fukuoka 10 year Plan", however due to the inner inconsistency and the lack of 'feel of crisis' (since city was in the midst of growth period) the proposal wasn't adopted in general. Nevertheless, the core part of the proposal "Art and Culture Promotion Vision" as Fukuoka City's respond to 'creative city' was brought into existence with purpose to enable/urge conditions for 'soft' locational factors in the city.

The guidelines of the Art & Culture Promotion Vision focus on; citizens direct participation in art & cultural activities; cultural exchange with Asia; harnessing of human/creative talent; middle-long term effective use of cultural facilities, etc. Implicitly, Art & Culture Promotion Vision is a place-branding attempt through various citizens' activities and promotion of art/culture in the city with basic slogan "Arts for All, Arts for Future". It is suppose to activate citizens and create image of culturally rich environment, with various events as main means to achieve these goals. Fukuoka already boasts with large number of culture related facilities particularly concert and theater halls. The city provides support and sponsors activities that are not viable on commercial basis, activities that are artistic or traditional in essence.

In addition, with the rapid expansion of Chinese and Korean economy and steady rise of number of Chinese and Korean tourists the interest and necessity for new 'tourism economy' that focuses on the cultural and retail amenities with the intensive marketing strategies of these attributes to the audiences outside of the city have become the matter of great concern where place making and branding concepts and narratives are recognized as almost mandatory.

However, what appears to be out of scope of Art & Culture Promotion Vision is an appropriate strategy to localize the potential in neighborhood(s) where such activities already exists, places where 'right ingredients' are already there; where culture, creativity and innovativeness are at play, and rather than promoting only, in appearance, 'dot-like' events, but to take advantage and promote certain parts of the city and upgrade them into cultural/creative districts what in return reflects not only on urban competitiveness but as well on creation of various public-private levels of partnership necessary for accomplishing. Before hypothesis is developed brief overview of formation of city center and its adjacent areas is provided to point out on structural issues related to place making policies in Fukuoka City.

Urban Core and Neighboring Areas

Rapid development of Fukuoka commercial center, Tenjin urban area coincides with beginning of the post-industrial period and switch to service economy in 70s, where during the so called `Tenjin commercial wars` in `75, `90, `95, `04 among the local and Tokyo and Osaka based powerful retailers, shopping spaces progressively agglomerated longitudinally along the main Watanabe Street (Fig. 1). Finance and insurance related activities concentrated in transversal Meiji Street forming a present balance of powers and urban image of the city center with architecture that can be described as to be rather massive than tall, with limitation in height of up to 70 m imposed by the presence of the airport in the city. From the beginning a strong central character of Tenjin and rapid development induced instability in adjacent areas creating the condition of susceptibility to the fast change. A culture organized around consumption, with imperative for modernization as main driving force that maintained its presence and competition among various actors as a natural state of matters influenced on the image and character of neighborhoods. Preservation was matter of individual objects like temples, etc. rather than placing attention on certain areas or streets like in Europe.

In such circumstances, in the urban core surrounding areas, the neighborhoods that used to be lined with the old-wooden houses and had traditional lifestyle, concurrently to the fast progress of city center and need for supporting the ever growing demand of consumer society, different sets of urban activities penetrated and diversified most of these areas dissolving the original character in the process of urban development and gentrification.



Figure. 1

Interestingly, this process seems to be played in a way that the “popularity” of the certain district after the sudden onset, in 10-20 years become succeed by adjacent neighborhood, almost like rotating around the urban center. The scenario tends to be repeated; Young and creative entrepreneurs limited by the high rents in Tenjin area would open their shops and start to concentrate in certain neighborhood. Attracted by the popularity, developers and various types of capital flow in and generate rise of the land value in the process of gentrification where these young and `creative` individuals then migrate to neighboring district and restart process. As a consequence, not only the `popularity` significantly decreases, but also since development is carried out without any general planning, the outcome is chaotic and at least unsustainable, with no sign of unification architecturally nor functionally.

This process first, took place in Oiyafuko district that after the peak in 80s and drain out now hosts low quality and suspicious entertainment sector. Here, of particular interest is its successor the Daimyo district. Creative entrepreneurs attracted by the `traditional atmosphere` and cheap rents concentrated in this area and with the peak of that tendency in the end of 90s and beginning of 2000s, Daimyo imposed its role as an alternative mode of work, shopping and life, becoming the `trendiest` area of the city by reflecting a sub-culture of nonconformity while embracing the traditional culture and local identity. In a course of time fashion, design, music, publishing, and other sorts of creative industry concentrated in substantial number in this neighborhood.

The activities that exerts this particular “atmosphere” are to be found in human scale narrow alleys lined with creatively and originally designed shops, rather young population and substantial concentration of artists and cultural producers forming a Daimyo creative milieu (Kira, 2010), a notion that recently received considerable attention worldwide (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002).

It has been already stated that demographic mix of artists, crafts people, media workers, students, middle class professionals in bohemian lifestyle pursuits and writers are powerful catalyst for natural revitalization (Zukin, 1995). It was thought their activities and rather free lifestyle would produce rich social relations and vibrant environment, and on that way enable neighborhoods to stabilize their population and economies.

Nevertheless, with the rise of the popularity of the neighborhood, external capital entered aggressively and competition became severe. Soon afterwards the land value increased causing an outflow of old inhabitants that further on perpetuated an evident loss of attractiveness, vacant stores, increased traffic and parking lots, demolishing of old houses and fading of traditional atmosphere (the reason the neighborhood became popular in the first place). The successors, Imaizumi and Haruyoshi areas are already the subjects of speculations, where this process of `area consumption` is foreseen that will be played in even faster pace.

Conclusion

This paper calls for necessity to re-evaluate the potential and value of the `place`, and relation to branding/cultural polices. At the present, the rules of neo-liberal, market driven

capitalistic system imposes urban competitiveness that is visible on different levels from local, regional to national, where as is the custom to believe, Art/Culture promotion policies not necessarily doesn't have to have passive nor opposing role, but could actively support and enhance overall competitiveness by integrating `soft` locational conditions into broader vision shared among various stakeholders.

In the case of Fukuoka City if the potential of first, Oiyafuko than Daimyo area was recognized in time and included in art/culture promotion policies by zoning, environmental regulations and directives, it could be further encouraged concentration of creative industry sector and cultural producers, where from their spillover the benefit would have city center and beyond. In addition, the proximity between massive/tall buildings in city center and human-scale neighborhoods in adjacent areas with particular mixture of traditional-contemporary "atmosphere" is something that at present not many cities can boast about, and exactly such kind of symbiosis generates an `added value` in the city and create natural environment for nurturing the culture and urban buzz.

Overall, the challenge that arises is, how to reconcile the differences between necessity to sustain competitiveness in the city and at the same time to provide environment subject to promotion of art/culture in more integrated way. The answer should be sought in emerging, various types of private-public partnerships that essentially need to be unified in vision and long-term partnership that takes into account all the requirements necessary to build sustainable communities, creating an alternative to the consumption as the sole function of the city center and acknowledge the ongoing shift from the "consumption of goods" to the "consumption of experiences", thus contribute to the development of post-material society of 21st century with art/culture firmly embedded into the city fabric.

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