

When creativity conquers the city-the case study of Alba Iulia

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Abstract

Cities find themselves in a continuous inter-urban competition. In order to win or to distinguish from other cities they require a strong strategy. Competitions between cities tend to be based less on natural resources, location, history, reputation and more on the ability to develop attractive images, symbols, significations and to project these in a productive way. Nowadays, the urban renewal process can itself become a spectacle. In order to make a city more attractive, the question is not only how to shape physically a city or to change its image, but also how to improve people's lived experience and to increase the quality of life. We cannot judge the problem of the contemporary city only by its environmental dimension, we have to take into consideration how people mix and connect and how they feel the changes that are taking place within the city. The applied strategies to improve the quality of life should have an immediate impact on daily life and citizens should be part of the city's life and the changes that are taking place. Creative and cultural clusters can become a new source of development and cultural identity. Architects, urban planners, young designers, painters, musicians, artists, can be gathered and can work together under a single strategy. How can be creativity used as a tool in the process of a city's regeneration especially, in the particular economical, cultural and political context of a city from Romania? Like many cities, the city of Alba Iulia has been the subject of many innovative projects, but does this mean the city is creative as a whole by using creativity as a revitalization tool?

Rezumat

Orașele se află într-o continuă competiție interurbană. Pentru a ieși învingătoare sau pentru a se afirma, ele au nevoie de o strategie puternică și complexă. Competițiile dintre orașe tind să fie bazate mai puțin pe resursele naturale, locație, istorie, reputație, și se axează pe abilitatea de a dezvolta o imagine atractivă, simboluri, semnificații, proiectate și transpuse într-un mod productiv. În zilele noastre, procesul de regenerare urbană poate deveni el însuși un spectacol. Problema ce se pune este nu numai cum poate fi modificat fizic un oraș sau imaginea acestuia, ci cum se poate îmbunătăți experiența de a trăi în oraș și cum se poate crește calitatea vieții. Problema orașului contemporan nu poate fi judecată doar prin prisma dimensiunilor mediului, ceea ce trebuie luat în considerare este modul în care oamenii interacționează, comunică, felul în care reacționează la schimbările ce au loc în oraș. Strategiile aplicate pentru îmbunătățirea calității vieții ar trebui să aibă un impact imediat asupra vieții cetățenilor, și aceștia ar trebui să participe cât mai activ cu putință la viața orașului și la schimbările ce au loc. Clusterelor creative și culturale pot deveni nouă sursă de dezvoltare și identitate culturală. Arhitecți, urbaniști, tineri designeri, muzicieni, artiști, pot fi reuniți și pot lucra împreună coordonați de aceeași strategie. Cum poate fi folosită

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creativitatea , ca și o unealtă în procesul de regenerare a orașului, în contextul economic, cultural și politic al României? Asemeni multor altor orașe din țară, Alba Iulia a fost subiectul multor proiecte inovatoare bazate pe promovarea și folosirea factorului cultural, dar înseamna asta că orașul este creativ ca întreg sau doar folosește creativitatea ca și o unealtă a revitalizării?

Keywords: creativity, city, revitalization, clusters, culture

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate the concept of the creative city, the factors that condition creativity in cities, and how they stimulate sustainable urban innovation. When can we catalogue a city as being creative?

Creative cities are working on how to improve the interaction between buildings regeneration, economic development and social renewal in order to achieve a more comprehensive development of the city. "In recent decades, the role of culture has become a major and often driving factor for the process of urban regeneration. The focus on culture as a factor in regional transformation has been particularly extensive in response not only to competitiveness among cities but also to sustainability requirements in the cultural sector . Culture in its broadest sense assumes a decisive role in constructing a system of interventions, where employment, tourism, social and sustainable development becomes the product of the integration of places, people, economies and traditions ".[1]

Apparently the Romanian cities are facing similar problems as the Western European cities: decay of inner urban space and deterioration in the social, economic, political and physical substance of the city. In spite of the apparent similarity in the forms of manifestation of these phenomena, their substance is different. Growth potential and creating working places of cultural and creative industries is partially unexploited. In Romania, despite the great development potential of creative industries, we can not identify important projects and ways to use it. Goods and services generated by the creative industries are rather viewed from the perspective of cultural potential and recreation of the consumers and less as a contribution to a circular economy based on creativity, talent and entrepreneurial spirit. In the region where the city of Alba Iulia-the case study of this paper-creative industries represent a very favorable field for the profile entrepreneurial development. This type of industries can lead to development of the small and medium businesses, field based on competitiveness and inventiveness. [2]

2. Creativity and the creative city

Existing creative cities revolve around the design, promotion and activation of urban areas established due to their particular local characteristics. Until the end of the 1990s, the European academic concept of 'creative city' corresponded to the regenerative potential presented in the European Capital of Culture vision-culture and is seen as "an engine to support a city's image and economic development." [1] The focus was on the improvement of the city (with potential economic returns) through creative interventions and cultural activities. The general purpose is to create "creative clusters"- these are areas that become creative as a result of economic and structural innovations, related to the realization of innovator projects achieved with the help of local development strategies based on the economies of excellence, culture and territorial quality. Two main types of clusters are being defined within the creative city. The first ones are the cultural clusters, created around activities such as fine arts, music, cinema, architecture and design, and whose start-up is encouraged and planned by local administration. The second ones are the clusters

of events, whose development originates in the organization of great events or different kinds of recreational and cultural manifestations. [1]

The major quality of creative cities is that they are able to generate economies of innovation, culture, research and artistic production, and hence strengthen their own identity. This capability is a question not only of boosting existing culture-based economies but also producing new economies. The objective is to nourish creativity within the city, and produce a creative class from inside rather than attract one from outside. The whole city, or a part of it may correspond to the creative milieu because it contains the characteristics necessary for generating a flow of creative ideas and innovations. " It is possible to define the milieu as a local system, where its players can operate in open contexts and are capable of global experiences, and where, in turn, spatial interactions create new ideas, products and services, and thus contribute to the regeneration of the city. In the creative milieu, clusters and districts capable of strengthening the cultural urban structure can be developed." [1]. Interesting places attract interesting people. The city needs to attract and retain the creative class and to take advantage of their knowledge. Creativity and knowledge of people from the creative class contribute and help the city to do better than others.

The future of cities relies on their ability to innovate and inspire creative and to distinguish themselves among other cities. They start from ideas that need new spaces, spaces derived from the existing ones, using city's own resources.

3. Urban regeneration through creativity

Successful cities seem to have some things in common-visionary individuals, creative organizations and a political culture sharing clarity of purpose. They seem to follow a determined, not a deterministic path.

Successful urban regeneration projects are those implying a strong involvement with the pre-existing community and local identity. Culturally based urban regeneration processes should not aim for the widest choice of cultural opportunities for the creative class. Instead they should rediscover a sense of place, history and belonging. [3] The local community can have a long term interaction with the development but it may not have high-spending capacity. Visitors, with their short-term use of the city, may generate greater economic returns. By attracting a large number of visitors and offering them the possibility to stay and to spend, the city receives an important amount of money that can contribute to the local economy.

The need is to take into consideration a variety of agents across different levels of interactions. There is a tendency to adopt a short-term perspective and to underestimate the need for balance between the attraction of "foreign" talent and the development of local skills. The attention towards local assets and dynamics becomes the key to unlocking global markets.

A long-term vision can be adopted alongside short-term policies as the system interacts at different levels. Culture and creativity are very important in urban regeneration but the fact is they don't have an immediate profit purpose but rather a medium long term one. Because of this, long term visions are the most important.

When developing indexes for culture, it is not the simple presence of the asset that must be counted, but how many citizens, and tourists use it, the types of programs that are developed and how artists and other organizations are involved in it. It is these intangible elements that provide a more realistic measure of the cultural infrastructure and how it can possibly impact on a city at large. [3] The human factor is crucial, because the level of culture of citizens is the root of the whole creative class and cultural movement within the city. The higher the percentage of educated people, the easier social changes can take place. We can consider as being part of the educated class-the

creative class, the students and the professional, the young ones being the most relevant in this context. The creative class has a great impact on the economics of a city and determines its future. This is the reason why the creative class should be permanently involved in the process of creating urban policies and to be used as a nonconventional tool to support the new ideas. Creativity can be based on knowledge, citizens can learn how to think, revitalize, reactivate and use the public space.

Attracting the creative class can be seen as one of the possible strategies for the development of the creative city. Understanding the instability of the system requires a long-term view that integrates attraction with support for "local" talent-specifically through social inclusion and participation. [2] We should consider the creative and cultural factor as grounded in the urban context, rather than an additive to urban discourses on economic growth. Urban planners should involve the citizens step by step in the process of urban regeneration, in order to receive an immediate feedback -an essential element for a successful regeneration. The sense of local pride becomes the key to successful regeneration

4. Creativity conquers the city-the case study of Alba Iulia

Starting from such premises, this paper aims to investigate how was the concept of the creative city implement to the city of Alba Iulia, what factors condition creativity in the city, and how can creativity be used as a stimulus for a sustainable urban regeneration.

The context of the city of Alba Iulia represents a challenging case study for research into the development of local creative and cultural economies. The growing attention towards this sector is part of a long term regeneration commitment and regeneration strategies that are taking place in the city.

Alba Iulia is a medium-sized Romanian city of 61,000 inhabitants in the heart of the historical region of Transylvania. One of the country's oldest settlements, Alba Iulia was an important centre in Roman times. In 1541 it became the capital of Transylvania, and in 1918 the province announced its unification with Romania. This rich history has left Alba Iulia with a fine heritage, particularly the 18th-century-Alba Carolina Citadel. [4] The citadel has strongly characterized the urban aspect of the city and its citizens and is the most representative Vauban bastion fortification in Romania and the largest from the Central and South Eastern Europe. It was built between 1715 and 1738 according to the plans of the military architect Giovanni Morando Visconti. With walls 12 kilometers long, the citadel is constituted of a central fort and 7 bastions with Baroque gates, unique in Europe. Inside the citadel the visitor can benefit of an authentic lesson of history from the Central and Eastern Architecture, passing from Roman to all the medieval and modern architectural styles.[5]

The life of the city, its morphology, history, and way of living was always influenced by the citadel-the largest and most representative element. Like many cities from Romania, in the last 20 years, the city was confronting a time of decline, loss of citizens, economic problems , all this having repercussions to the quality of life and the image of the city. The solution to all this problems came through a series of programs that were supposed to save the citadel and to give back her formal glory. The city's focus on cultural investment began with the complex project of the citadel's restoration, attracting large public investment to the city. Restoring the citadel was the starting point of the urban regeneration which has transformed the whole city, contributing to the cultural renaissance of Alba Iulia.

Alba Carolina Citadel was recently rehabilitated with national and EU funds, becoming a modern tourist attraction, where visitors can breathe the air of history. In the past few years, the rehabilitation works of the Vauban Alba Carolina Citadel for which more than 60 million Euros

have been invested and the efforts carried out by Alba Iulia Municipality (City Hall) for enhancing the tourism potential and for increasing the visibility of the local heritage have been rewarded at national and international level with various awards and distinguished appreciations. The city is appreciated in Romania for several of its achievements: Since 2014, Alba Iulia Municipality has been the first in Romania and in Central and South-Eastern Europe to sign a contract with the World Bank, not with the purpose of obtaining a loan, but of getting technical assistance to assess the local policies, strategies, plans and projects in order to facilitate the access to the different public and private funding opportunities; Alba Iulia Municipality became in 2013 the first city in Romania to receive a rating of financial risks from Moody's, an international credit rating agency; In December 2014, Alba Carolina Fortress was awarded the First Prize of the European Structural Funding Gala, at the "welcoming guests" section; In 2014, Alba Iulia Municipality was awarded the title "A city renewal" within the Best Cities Awards Gala 2014 by Forbes Romania for its accomplishments in the physical regeneration of the city, mainly financed through EU structural funds and in 2012, was awarded the prestigious title of European Destination of Excellence (EDEN) conferred by the European Commission through the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism for the rehabilitation and conservation works inside the citadel. Following this important recognition, the destination benefits from a permanent place on the European Commission website; In March 2013, Alba Iulia Municipality was awarded the Jury's Special Mention Award from EUROPA NOSTRA Organization which is the largest European Association focused on Tourism Conservation, and so far. [5]

With this urban transformation of the citadel and thus of the city, significant changes occurred, both culturally and politically. The aim of all restoration and regeneration programs that occurred, was to transform the citadel into the real center of the city, giving back its glorious formerly image, in accordance with its identity and international competitiveness. This enabled the creation of large publicly funded cultural infrastructure, together with other developments supported by different organizations.

Culture in Alba Iulia has become a modern and dynamic one, showing a high level of inventivity and creativity. Even without substantial resources or specialized institution, the city adapted through flexibility and wish to change. Even if the creative field is less developed, the existing infrastructure can sustain a coherent cultural evolution, offering multiple possibilities to bring the creative and cultural industries to the city's heart- Alba Carolina Citadel. The city needs spaces where young and dynamic citizens, artists, designers, architects and not only, can express themselves, and the Citadel has all these spaces. Creativity puts into circulation ideas, values, initiatives and products, being a bridge between art and culture, research and innovation, an economic tool for development and business. [2]

In recent times, Alba Iulia has had limited economic opportunities, and has depended on tourism. Traditional industries such as porcelain, textiles and metal-working, as well as food processing are not enough developed to sustain entirely the local economy. The local authority is trying to attract new businesses to the outskirts of the city. The university and its foreign students are a key asset in this endeavour. According to the World Bank and Moody's credit rating agency, Alba Iulia Municipality is a city with a strong institutional capacity for planning urban development and attracting finance for urban projects.[4]

The municipality develops a constant endeavour to enhance the city's touristic potential and to take advantage of all the benefits brought by a large number of visitors. In addition to the aforementioned rehabilitation, several events and leisure activities are meant to emphasize the potential of the city's historic and tourism heritage such as the daily "Changing the Guard" ceremony of the Citadel or the "Treasure of the Citadel" competition. It also has a year-long calendar of events, including music and theaters, a Museum Night, etc. With past years as a

reference, these events usual gather a global audience of more than 5,000 people. In parallel, the municipality's objective is to attract new economic activities. Available facilities at the peripheries of the city starts to be promoted, which recently has made possible an agreement between the municipality and a foreign company. In this perspective, the city's "1 Decembrie 1918" University is a key city asset and it includes a community of foreign students.[6] The city of Alba Iulia can use tourism and the amenities that the tourism industry is based on to attract new residents. The creative class can be attracted through the quality of place and life. The quality of the city and the concentration of talented individuals in certain areas of the city can have a positive general effect.

In Alba Iulia, creative industries haven't been used enough until now, but we can identify local initiatives that have shown a great creative potential that the city has throughout the diversity of cultural activities that can take place and the quality of human resources that contribute to the cultural life of the city. Culture is perpetuated by those who create and consume it and the city, through its public spaces, becomes an environment that supports various ways of cultural interaction. From the multiples activities that take place in the city, we can identify some that seem to be creative: glass painting workshops for the traditional art-XIX th century- organized in the Muzeul National al Unirii; workshop for beating roman coins; the National Center for Restoration of ancient books-which is one of the most important from the entire country in terms of human resources, the experience of the restaurateurs; reenactment activities that take place every Friday afternoon . [2] All this activities are the expression of the role of culture in the life of the city.

A very important way of promoting the city and making it visible among other cities, is the city branding. Regarding this subject, Alba Iulia is both a modest newcomer and a recognized pioneer at national level. The Municipality launched in 2010 its first logo and related guide, as part of its strategy for tourism promotion. At the moment, the city of Alba Iulia is enjoying the most successful project of City Branding nationally recognized -"The other capital" by creating the municipality logo and its official registration. The Alba Iulia city brand is rated as the most inspired in Romania by the national media. Since then, the municipality has carried out a range of initiatives aimed at promoting cultural tourism and wants to develop the cultural potential of the city. In 2012 the European Commission gave Alba Iulia the title of European Destination of Excellence, for its conservation and renovation of historical and cultural sites.[4] Due to the massive investments in renovating the citadel, by far the crucial role in the city's development is to attract tourists: therefore 1/2 of all actions focused on tourism. And the result of all this actions is considerable. The economic development of Alba Iulia provides the premise of tourism development in the city, through the increase of the tourists number, and through the increase of volume of investments.[5] The number of visitors has grown, the city is more animated, places in the city are used at their full potential.

The experience of creative cities can lead to the promotion of areas from the city which base their competitiveness on local peculiarities related to the value of the city brand. Taking into consideration the fact that the city of Alba Iulia is promoting and contouring the city brand-which is based on the multiple values of the citadel, the whole experience of the creativeness came just in time. As a result of all the renewing programs, innovative economic and structural initiatives implemented the citadel has become a creative cluster. Creating creative clusters, inexhaustible sources of development are created. These clusters are based on the specificity of the city and the citadel and are correlated with the heritage of knowledge and plans and initiatives of innovative projects. [1] The identity of the city and especially of the citadel is a strong one, and was not totally affected by globalization, and it can be used as a mean to save the city through culture.

It is important to identify and to invest in new sources for a smart , durable growth and favorable inclusion, to explore new ways to create and add value but also to cohabit and to enjoy the diversity that characterizes the city. But there are some obstacles for the whole process of becoming a

creative city: the lack of a strategic vision at national level that encourages development of creative industries; shortage of entrepreneurship skills in the field of creative industries among young people who have the potential to develop this sector; low awareness of the benefits of developing an economy based on creative industries; lack of a collaborative culture among the actors who can develop creative industries in the city.[2] Large companies from the region are not yet involved in the city branding process and cultural activities and policies because they don't see the benefits of supporting this kind of actions.[6] Local authorities need to demonstrate the big players that there are a lot of benefits in joining forces: to start with, if all major local companies support the brand, there will be an amplified effect and 'Alba' as an origin will reinforce its strength and reputation. By promoting the city, large companies promote their activities and products, having a positive impact on life in the city.

Despite all the efforts made by the local authorities, there is still insufficient promotion of Alba Iulia Citadel at a local, national and international level, caused by the the lack of a sustainable long term funding mechanism for tourism in the area.

The main needs identified in the city in Alba Iulia concerning the creative industries are: the need to create networks between companies, professionals from the creative sector and the local authorities to stimulate the development of a circular economy in the creative industries; the need to capitalize on existing and unused infrastructure and to create new infrastructure adequate to support unconventional creative industries; the need to encourage local entrepreneurship in the creative field .[2]

5. Small conclusion

The idea of the creative city seems to be an attractive and promising one. Besides the actions of developing the creative sector, local authorities need to attract the creative class in order to make the city more competitive in the global market. They need to create opportunities, to make the city attractive not only as a residence, but also as an artistic creation center. Only in this way, young musicians, artists, designers, actors, architects students and young professionals will remain in the city or will return after graduation. Local authorities have the power and can make the urban environment more attractive to the creative class

The city has used the citadel as an opportunity for urban regeneration as well as social, cultural, touristic and economic revitalization. The redevelopment and restoration of the citadel has become a starting point for implementing complex urban redevelopment strategies which involve not only the citadel but also the whole urban area.

As a result of economic and the realization of innovator projects that were achieved with the help of local development strategies, the city of Alba Iulia is on the road of becoming a successful creative city, capable of generating economies and structures that use the city and its means on their full potential. The main elements all this mentioned programs and strategies have in common is the fact that they are based on the economies of excellence, culture and territorial quality.

The development of a city is based on its resources. While the physical resources are subject to degradation, the creative resources are constantly renewing, are mobile, they can be produced and manifested anywhere. Trough future projects, the municipality needs to begin projects and to attract the right people, to be able to cultivate an atmosphere that nurtures creativity and new ideas.

The city and its surrounding areas should be regulated by a strategy. This strategy should act as a legal instrument to guide the growth, development and enhancement of the city. There must be a system of participation by the stakeholders in the preparation of plans, which enable local citizens

to have greater control of the direction of their community through participation, sustainability and trust – and government acting as advocate and 'enabler', rather than an instrument of command and control. Public meetings, transparent processes of addressing objections, must be institutionalized, through the public participation. The plans and urban designs should be the expressions of the people for whom they are planned and their needs. The processes of planning must therefore be a transparent one and a participatory involving a range of stakeholders. [7] Alba Iulia, as an urban centre, radiates development and accumulates inside itself sources and resources of development from every community, urban or rural one, which surround it.

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