

When creativity is the solution: how to transform Makkah into a creative city

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore ways in which the theoretical concept of the creative city can be usefully and practically employed in the development of the urban services and global identity of Makkah, Saudi Arabia. The researcher will introduce the previous studies on creative cities and draw the most prominent active theories to find out the best model to suit Makkah as a pilgrimage city, despite it being located in the Middle East where no research on creative cities has been conducted. The aim is to design a model for Makkah inspired by the experiences of successful creative cities, which will be a key solution to the problems that the city faces – problems largely caused by the growing number of pilgrims every year from all around the world. The study will be summarised into four sections as listed below, based on the following questions: What are the key fundamentals that can be distinguished to decide whether a city is successfully presented as a creative city? What are the strategies used and how are they implemented in case studies of creative cities around the world?

Keywords: creative city, city imaging, second tier city, Makkah.

1 Introduction

Since 1988 (Camilleri [1]), major cities have shown a growing interest in creating an ideal atmosphere for innovation and creativity, which has given rise to the concept of creative cities that are born primarily from mixing cultural and economic policy at the level of strategic planning (O'Connor [2]). Urban planning attempts to formulate new characteristics that combine the factors that a successful city should have, which include: good conditions for the residents by providing them with job opportunities and leisure facilities, promoting of culture, and response to the recent challenges of the global competitive market in the



context of sustainability and environmental protection (Vlachopoulou and Deffner [3]).

In addition, it is arguable that the lifeblood of cities has always been creativity (Landry and Bianchini [4]). For instance, cities face massive challenges such as economic, infrastructural, social and environmental problems (Suciu [5]) and creativity in these cities will allow creative people to find solutions to the problems that cities face all the time (Costa *et al.* [6]). Creative cities make an effort to offer motivation, diversity and prosperity to their citizens (Kornbluh [7]).

In his report ‘Cultural Industries and the Creative City Fever in Germany’, Klaus Kunzmann [8] identifies seven reasons why creative cities have become favourable in (German) post-industrial society. Also in his report ‘Creative Cities: What Are They For, How Do They Work, and How Do We Build Them?’, Meric Gertler [9] illustrates the benefits of the development of creative cities in Canada.

Table 1: The theories of development of creative cities in Germany and Canada (source: [8, 9]).

Kunzmann, 2011	Gertler, 2004
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The positive and open concept of creativity.2. The widely communicated message.3. Structural change, the search for new economic potentials, the discovery of the creative economy.4. The return of culture to the political agenda, driven by growing urban competition, the justification and success of cultural flagships and events, and the re-design of the physical urban fabric.5. Demographic change, re-urbanization, urban renaissance and the emerging cosmopolitan knowledge society.6. The appeal of the creative city concept to urban marketing and tourism managers, and to media searching for success stories.7. The opportunity to bridge urban policies, and the revival of strategic planning in urban development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. They play an ever more important role in enhancing the dynamism, resilience, and overall competitiveness of the economy.2. They have the potential to enhance quality of life and opportunity for a broad cross-section of Canadians.



2 The case of Makkah

Makkah has the character and image of a religious city and is a second tier city for tourism. Hodos defines second tier cities as constituting a type characterized by distinct patterns of global integration. He notes that they contain, “Globally active firms in non-financial industries; a common migration pattern; a tradition of innovation in political ideologies and professional/expert cultures; a common historical trajectory due largely to transportation projects that integrate the city more deeply into global flows; and the growth over time of a second-city identity” (Hodos [10]). The urbanization of Makkah not only competes with second tier cities but also strongly competes with global cities in terms of its economy and quality of construction. The government of Saudi Arabia continually spends around \$11 billion on developing and expanding the Holy Places (Kalesar [11]). Makkah has the capacity to cater for approximately three million Muslims from around the world, who will travel to the holy city to perform Hajj or Umrah. This annual arrival of pilgrims, all of whom require accommodation throughout their stay, has turned the real estate in Makkah into some of the most valuable in the world. The Middle East Economic Digest (MEED) published that the cost in Makkah has seen “land prices range from SR 100,000 (\$27,000) a square meter to SR 300,000 (\$80,000) a square metre. Over the next five years, analysts estimate that land prices in Makkah and Medina will double. Foreign pilgrims can pay as much as SR 200,000 (\$53,000) for a room covering the last 10 days of Ramadan (these figures refer to Saudi Rials, the Saudi Arabian currency). However, most pilgrims follow the spirit of Hajj by sleeping several to a room and on a low budget” (Irish [12]). Pilgrims come together in Makkah as part of religious tourism, speaking hundreds of different languages in a country they have probably never visited before. This often leads to confusion, especially as pilgrims are required to move from one location to another, due to the sheer volume of people. This research will try to take advantage of the positive and open concept of creativity as applied to Makkah, and also, the appeal of the creative city concept to develop strategy planning.

3 The concept of the creative cities

Several previous studies that tackled the issue of the creative city tried to draw the character of the creative city. The pioneer of the creative city idea was the urbanist Jane Jacobs in her 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (see also: Coletta [13]; Bradford [14]; Sasaki [15]; Brown [16]; Flew [17]). Jacobs explained how cities attract talented people from various backgrounds by such concepts as ‘open systems’, which motivate their creativity (Acs and Megyesi [18]). Jacobs also recommended that, to stimulate innovation and build new urban expertise, a diversity of activities should be facilitated (Markusen and Schrock [19]).

Nevertheless, the term “creative city” was coined by Charles Landry [4, 20, 21] (see also, for example, [13, 15, 22–27]). However, there has been considerable debate about the concept of a creative city (see, for example, [4, 6,



14, 20, 22–27]. Indeed, the conceptual aspect of a creative city is not easy to identify and it is equally difficult to cover all the various applications and practices that are subjacent to it.

The expression of the concept of a creative city seems to be elusive (Coletta [13]) because it reflects a set of distinct ideologies with specific applications of creativity in urban physical and economic development (Simeti [28]). However, the concept becomes much clearer when its components are examined individually. It consists of three major contributors:

- The concepts of which have been clarified in Landry's works – Planning the Creative City, which was discussed in *The Creative City: a Toolkit for Urban Innovators* by Charles Landry (2000).
- Growing the creative economy (or industries), examined in *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money From Ideas* by John Howkins (2001).
- Attracting and retaining the Creative Class, which is examined in *The Rise of the Creative Class* by Richard Florida (2002).

The researcher finds that Landry's theory of the creative city is useful and suitable for Makkah as a religious city. Landry inspires me with his full method of planning and idea of a range of characteristics that is significant to positive development strategies, including an approach based both on planned order, and the urban vitality arising from unplanned, slightly chaotic development. Also, Landry's theory is important in terms of the ability to find new solutions for quotidian problems and involve everyone in developing the city.

4 Experiences of successful creative cities around the world

The researcher has highlighted several different “creative city” frameworks that currently inform new visions and creativities. Cities worldwide face significant competition to be attractive for business, talent and tourists. For my studies it is a challenge to select the best framework and practise from over 60 cities that name themselves “creative city” (UNCTAD [30]). I have found out that UNESCO's Creative cities network is a worthy way to select the appropriate examples of successful creative cities that can be a model I follow for my case study. Notably, the aim of this network is to offer a global platform for cities around the world to share their practices and generate new opportunities for themselves and others (Cohendet *et al.* [31]).

However, what is creative and what is not? Is the right example a template that any city could practice? Indeed, in his article, Andy Pratt argues what is deemed as creative is so context specific that what may be creative in one place or time may not be creative in another context. The creative city is clearly not a ‘solve-all’ for every urban problem. This needs to be stated clearly. However, there are many instrumental uses to which creative city policies can be put; and critically, there are a number of intrinsic uses as well (Pratt [32]).



Table 2: Summary of the creative city theories for the three major contributors: Landry, Florida and Howkins (source: [20, 23, 26, 29]).

View	Landry	Florida	Howkins
What is the creative city	Creative cities are those ones able to find new solutions for quotidian problems.	The power of the people (creative people) and the power of the place (creative economy).	The creative and cultural economy includes: advertising, architecture, arts, craft, design, fashion, film, music, performing arts (theatre, opera, dance, ballet), publishing, research and development, software, toys and games, Television / Radio, video games.
Who makes the creative city	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political and public framework 2. Distinctiveness, diversity, vitality and expression 3. Openness, trust, tolerance and accessibility 4. Entrepreneurship, exploration and innovation 5. Strategic leadership, agility and vision 6. Talent and learning landscape 7. Communication, connectivity and networking 8. The place and place-making 9. Liveability and well-being 10. Professionalism and effectiveness 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The creative class share of the workforce 2. Innovation, measured as patents per capita. 3. High-tech industry, using the Milken Institute's widely accepted Tech Pole Index. 4. Diversity, measured by the Gay index, a reasonable proxy for an area's openness to different people and ideas 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creative people 2. The job of a thinker 3. The creative entrepreneur 4. The post-employment job 5. The just-in-time person 6. The temporary company 7. The network office and the business cluster 8. Teamwork 9. Finance 10. Deals and hits
How to become a creative city	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation and planning 2. Assessment of potential obstacles 3. Measuring success and failure 4. Execution 5. Communicating, disseminating and reflecting 	<p>Attracting and Retaining the Creative Class.</p> <p>3Ts: Talent, Technology and Tolerance</p>	

In theory they are many examples of a creative city but, in practise few of them can be presented as creative in terms of success not just in art; also some cities are already creative yet there are no references about their experience.

In addition, to making my selective cities that much richer in diverse views, I have chosen second tier cities (STCs) from Canada, Japan, the UK, Spain and Australia; this is because my case study Makkah is an STC, and can be categorized as such. Ann Markusen, Yong-Sook Lee and Sean DiGiovanna, defined STCs as, spatially distinct areas of economic activity where a specialized set of trade oriented industries takes root and flourishes, establishing employment and population growth trajectories that are the envy of many other places (Markusen *et al.* [33]).

The distinctiveness and specialization are the key attributes of these cities. As non-global cities, they lack the homogenization and standardization of Paris, Berlin, London and Sydney. The differences are part of their definitions, their richness, diversity and culture – something that is seen less and less of today. The major challenge is searching for the sources of the cities as they are written and published by the city council such as websites and reports. Indeed, that will affect the neutrality of describing cities and looking for the success of their job. Not only that but also, they use these materials for marketing the city. I have chosen to present each city by the standard points including the city overview, the theory of creative city, the use, the aims and vision and the challenges.

5 The creative city model

From the previous examples of models of creative city practices, we can find out that there are common elements contributing to the conversion of those cities into creative cities. Landry says “Successful cities seemed to have some things in common – visionary individuals, creative organization and a political cultural sharing a clarity of purpose” Landry [21]. Furthermore, some model cities fighting for their identities compete with other cities in the country or in the region. Vancouver tries to put itself in the top position in Canadian cities as a British Columbian city; Glasgow also attempts to win the competition as Scotland’s city against the rest of the UK cities and Barcelona as the capital of Catalonia. Consequently, business, tourism, solving problems and sustainability motivated those cities to be creative cities.

I have designed a model for creative city ‘CREATIVE’, which includes Concept, Recourses, Events, Attractive, Theory, Involved, Vision and Eagerness. These elements were inspired from the five creative cities I studied. Almost all the following elements could produce a creative city at any place. My model of a creative city, however, is not limited to just western culture but can apply to any culture. I have aimed to make the model open, clear and easy to use. Moreover, Table 3 shows how I have linked each element with the lettering of the word ‘CREATIVE’.



Table 3: The creative city model elements (source: the author).

Letter	Key elements	Evidence
C	Concept	<p>The creative city must have a concept that motivates the City Council and citizens, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative industry: Yokohama aims to be the centre for video content in Asia and Knowledge city '22@Barcelona' • Cultural: Glasgow and Vancouver.
R	Resources	<p>Creative cities use their resources to create their image such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and Heritage: Glasgow • Location: Vancouver, Yokohama, Barcelona and Sydney.
E	Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport: 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games. • Cultural: Glasgow the European Capital of Culture and 2002 Barcelona the Year of Gaudi. • Conference: Barcelona, Smart City Expo World Congress 2013 and PACIFICO Yokohama.
A	Attractiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism industry: Vancouver, Yokohama, Glasgow, Barcelona Creative Tourism agenda and Sydney. • Landmark architecture: Sydney (Opera House) and Barcelona (the Church of La Sagrada Família)
T	Theory	<p>Most cities correspond implicitly with the pioneers of creative city theory like Landry and Florida. However, the example cities did not stand by the idea of creative city theories literally, they responded consistently with their cultural content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vancouver, the Canadian urban policy theorists. • Yokohama, Landry, Sasaki • Glasgow, Landry • Barcelona and Sydney: Landry, Florida
I	Involvement	<p>The creative city authority should plan the city with their people including 3Cs: Citizen, Creative people and Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vancouver, Creative City Task Force • Yokohama, a study group • Barcelona, 500 people with a wide range of agencies • Sydney, Australia's best minds
V	Vision	<p>Using 2S: Solve the problems and Sustainability</p> <p>Vancouver, ten years (2008-2018) cultural plan, Yokohama, 'creative core', Understanding Glasgow', Barcelona, 'Barcelona 2000' and Sydney, Sydney 2030</p>
E	Enthusiasm	<p>From the government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially • Communicational • Supporting

6 Conclusion

In order to transform Makkah into a creative city in theory and practice, the researcher is going to apply this model 'CREATIVE' which has been inspired by five of the most creative cities around the world. The research method will be qualitative interviews with a group of decision-makers in various government institutions and some with the private sector (fifteen interviews) that include:

- National Governor of Makkah.
- City Council of Makkah.
- Academics working in the research centre of Oum Alqura University in Makkah.
- The Commission of the Development Makkah and the Holy Sites.
- General Presidency of Two Holy Mosques.
- Makkah Techno Valley Company.
- Ministry of Pilgrimage.
- Muttawifs (Pilgrim's Guides).
- Binladin Construction Company.

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