SMALL CITIES: DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH CREATIVITY

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Abstract – With growing urban competition, smaller cities in particular face challenges in 'putting themselves on the map'. Richards and Duif (2019) suggest that smaller places can succeed if they collaborate rather than compete, enabling them to 'borrow size' to stimulate development. By collaborating, small cities also have opportunities to 'create size' through joint actions. This chapter focusses on the role of events in generating creative development powered by the 'Middleground' of the creative city, and highlights the effects of networking across regional and international borders. A review of traditional creative industries, creative class and creative city approaches leads to an integrative creative development model based on the work of Sacco et al. (2014) and the placemaking perspective of Richards (2020). This model analyses the different layers of the creative city proposed by Cohendet et al. (2010), integrating different forms of creative capital and accounting for the dynamic links between actors and institutions. These ideas are applied to cases from the Netherlands and Luxemburg, with a particular focus on cross-border collaboration stimulated through the European Capital of Culture programme.

Keywords: creative development; small cities; collaboration; place branding; European capital of culture.

1. Introduction

Creative place thinking has been around for some time – usually linked to the creative industries as drivers of urban economic growth, but also incorporating ideas about creative mobilities and creative clusters (Collis *et al.* 2013). Globalisation has created pressure for places to creatively develop their available resources in an effort to remain productive and attractive to internal and external stakeholders. This has also stimulated cities and regions to think about innovation and creativity as means to create distinction and put themselves on the map. In many cases, cities have resorted to place marketing and place branding as tools to distinguish themselves, which as Ivan Torok (2009) has explained is problematic. Very often city brands lack substance and embedding in the local context, and come to look very much the same. The irony is that policy makers in search of good ideas for new development paths

DOI Code: 10.1285/i27241688n2p21

often end up copying one another through 'policy tourism' (Gonzalez 2011), adding to the serial reproduction of culture.

Small cities have a particular disadvantage in terms of place branding, since they tend to have very similar physical and cultural resources. Europe is full of well-preserved historic towns, with attractive inner-city areas. Tourists often consume these places in similar ways, visiting a church or a castle, taking some photos of an unspoilt cityscape and drinking a coffee at a quaint café before returning to their cars.

There are many small cities..(and).. they are not particularly *interesting* because:

- they lack urbanity
- traditionalism (or backwardness);
- pervasive economic decline
- loss of historic central functions vis a vis bigger cities;
- brain drain, or loss of younger populations;
- ineffective and reflexive modes of governance;
- political obscurantism and regression.

(Grossmann, Mallach 2021, pp. 169-170)

This is problematic, because small cities are becoming increasingly embroiled in place competition. For example, in the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) programme, the average population size of cities hosting the programme has fallen dramatically in recent years (Figure 1).

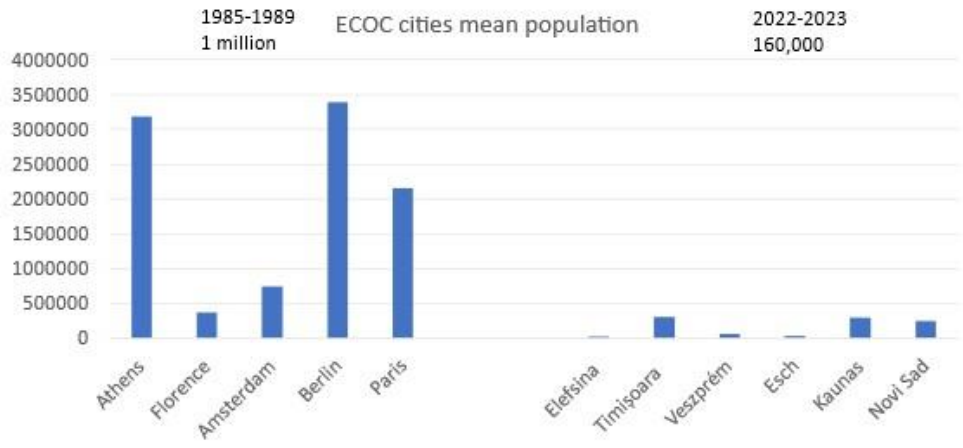

Figure 1
Population sizes of ECOC host cities 1985-1989 and 2022-2023
(source: compilation of national population statistics).

The shrinking size of ECOC cities means:

1) The main priority is for cities to put themselves on the map.

2) Links to the surrounding region become even more important.

3) The development of new cultural facilities provides an engine for cultural development (Richards 2021).

In order to be different and distinctive, small cities need creative approaches. How can they re-invent and re-define themselves in ways that make them more attractive? This chapter considers some of the paths to creative development taken by cities, and how these work in the context of small cities. We then move on to the question of collaboration, looking specifically at the use of events as a tool for bringing cities together, focusing on regional and cross-border collaboration in the European Union. This develops a model of the creative city that considers the elements of creative development and the dynamic roles of actors and institutions in this process.

2. Creativity in urban development

2.1. The rise of urban creativity

Creativity has become a widely deployed tool for urban development around the globe, and has been deployed in cities of varying sizes. Creativity in urban development has tended to be conceptualised as a branding tool, as an economic class or as an economic sector. The concepts of the creative city, the creative class and the creative industries are therefore the main approaches to creativity in cities (Boom 2017). Although these ideas are closely linked, because they depend on the application of creativity to economic processes, they are conceptually distinct. The creative city concept developed originally by Bianchini and Landry (1995), starts from the premise that everybody is creative, and therefore whole cities can be creative as well. By promoting creativity through the arts and grass-roots creativity, cities can improve the quality of life of citizens, grow the creative industries and improve their positioning.

> A Creative City came to be known as a model for cities that were able to mobilize a set of people and set the right conditions to bring about a more innovative and holistic approach to urban planning (van Boom 2017, p. 359).

Florida's (2002) creative class concept is based on a narrower idea of certain groups of people being creative. The creative class comprises people in occupations such as IT, design and architecture, who arguably account for

around a third of the total workforce in developed economies. This approach has been criticised as being elitist, suggesting that people outside these groups are somehow not creative. However, studies have indicated that the economic argument made by Florida, that jobs increasingly follow people, may have a kern of truth (Rutten, Gelissen 2008).

The creative industries concept is the most widespread of the three models, perhaps because it is more easily recognisable for policymakers. As van Boom (2017, p. 359) notes: "the creative industries were hailed as those sectors that would be the driving forces behind a new, post-industrial, symbolic economy." The adoption of a creative industries policy by the Department of National Heritage in the UK in the late 1990s is widely seen as the starting point for such policies. Although the stimulation of creativity in the UK dates to specific programmes of the Greater London Council in the 1980s, which also spawned the creative cities concept, the creative industries model was different because it was specifically designed to avoid association with 'culture'. The choice of the term 'creative industries 'over 'cultural industries' was a deliberate political attempt to disassociate these industries from the subsidized arts discourse, and relate them to the spheres of digitalization, innovation and 'the knowledge economy' (van Boom 2017). The creative industries concepts fitted well with the political climate in the UK, where the promotion of private enterprise fitted the idea that the creative industries were entrepreneurial in contrast to the subsidized arts and cultural sectors.

The creative industries approach often involved policies designed to stimulate and support localized cultural production and consumption (Pratt 2008), such as cultural-creative clusters (Mommaas 2004) and/or industrial districts (Santagata *et al.* 2007). The creative industries approach therefore tended to develop links between creativity and specific areas of the city – signalling the start of a spatial turn in thinking about creative development. The emphasis on place continued with the idea of 'urban success', which according to Florida (2002), is brought about by the existence of creative human capital (*talent*) in place.

These three different approaches to creativity in development are differentiated in terms of the focus of creativity and the desired outcomes. The creative city approach sees everybody as creative, but produces a lack of focus for policymakers. The creative industries tend to emphasise supply side policies, but they are relatively easy to understand for policymakers. The creative class represents a 'new' approach in which jobs follow creative people, not the other way round. But it centres on a specific group of people and specific hot spots in the city.

Each of these models tends to frame the city as a static backdrop for creativity. People are attracted to the 'buzz' of the city, they interact in the city centre to generate information spillovers, stimulating new ideas and

innovation. The analyses of these issues are also derived from a single disciplinary standpoint – most often in terms of economics. There has been increasing attention for soft factors of location, and a move towards economic geography. Florida's (2002) main contribution was to turn to traditional discourse about firm location on its head – jobs no longer attract people, but (creative) people attract jobs. Although this argument has been severely criticised for conceptualising those in creative occupations as a class, and for a rather loose classification of creative jobs, the general idea that the presence of the creative class is linked to high levels of economic growth seems to stand up to empirical testing (Rutten, Gelissen, 2008). Unfortunately, Florida's basically circular argument that creative people attract other creative people does not provide any mechanism for creative development processes.

Identifying these weaknesses with these previous models of creative development, Sacco and Blessi (2007) argued for a more integrated approach to the study of creative regions, based on a combination of models. By combining different approaches they attempted to overcome characteristic failings of culture-led development: instrumentalism, over-engineering and parochialism (Sacco *et al.* 2014). Sacco and Blessi (2007) argue that providing opportunity is about more than attracting jobs or coffee bars. The emphasis needs to be on capacity building as well as simply providing work. They developed a model combining economic clustering (basic growth factors, as outlined by Porter 1980) with increased attractiveness (as in the creative class approach of Florida 2002) and capacity building (following Sen 1999).

Sacco and Blessi's model is useful for identifying the endogenous and exogenous resources that can be used to creatively develop places and stimulate the creative industries. These resources fall into five main areas: Quality, Development, Attraction, Sociality and Networking (Richards, Duif 2019) further refine these into three main areas:

1) people, talent and socialities;

2) networks that link people and resources together; and

3) processes of resource accumulation and use: governance, investment, capacity building, and attraction.

Sacco and Blessi's (2007) work provides a good picture of the *What*, but we need more to understand the process of successful placemaking – the *How*. As Scott (2010) remarked: "there can be no mechanical initiation of creative energy at any given place simply by bringing together different elements …. in the expectation that the requisite synergies will then spontaneously spring forth" (Scott 2010, p. 127). The important thing is to understand how specific places can trigger the transformation of available resources into creative development outcomes.

Richards (2020) proposes a model that builds on the analysis of Sacco and Blessi. The model makes it clear that there is a strong relationship between creativity and place. The resources of a place form the raw materials that can be given meaning for the different actors in the creative system. The creative industries play an important role in this meaning generating process, and in turn can derive meaning from being located in a particular place.

Scott (2010) comments on the way in which meaning develops around particular places: "the individuals who compose each community typically internalize elements of their daily environment and reflect these back in more or less socially conditioned creative efforts" (Scott 2010, p. 119) This provides the embedded aspect of creativity in place. But "to be socially meaningful," Scott argues, "the products of creative work must eventually be recognizable as such by others" (Scott 2010, p. 119). So places of creative production also need to be linked to global networks that can provide the necessary external recognition. The local and global networks of the creative industries link both individual creatives through face-to-face encounters (local buzz) as well as links to the wider social milieu (Montouri 2011) that supports creative and innovative processes. Therefore, according to Scott (2010, p. 121)

> It follows immediately that geography is implicated in these matters, for all social relationships are necessarily characterized by extension in space. Indeed, on further examination, the geographic dimension turns out to be extraordinarily potent as a medium of variation in creative energies.

Therefore there is a need "to pay very special attention to the cultural resonances of place" ….. and the "localized reputation and authenticity effects" of place (Scott 2010, p. 122). Creativity, embedded in place, therefore has important geographical and historical dimensions usually overlooked in analyses of the creative industries or the creative city. Over time, particular places become associated with specific forms of creativity and communities of practice, such as cinema in Los Angeles or design and fashion in Milan. These places are linked by networks of creative people, ideas and resources, that travel between the different hubs and nodes of the network. In fact, the definition of the creative industries developed by Potts, Cunningham, Hartley and Ormerod (2008) sees them as a 'social network market' in which value is created through social contacts and the exchange of information. Particular 'hubs' in the network become places that people have to travel through in order to gather knowledge and the associated prestige of 'being there' (Richards, Colombo 2017). A "Turn to the spatiality of creativity" can be noted (Meusburger 2009) because "Place matters, because a stimulating environment and a talented individual must come together and interact before a creative process can occur" (Meusburger 2009 p. 98).

The creative industries therefore rely heavily on a system of buzz and pipelines that generate knowledge overspill, global recognition and local embedding. Scott (2010) refers to the localized synergies generated within clusters of creatives in cities, supporting a spatially organized system of interacting phenomena, which Scott calls the 'urban creative field'. One of the problems of the spatial view of the city taken by Scott is that he tends to focus on particular clusters, both in the sense of creative industrial agglomerations and the sedimented feel of authenticity that accrues to these places as concentrations of urban life.

These places are also largely linked to the centres of large cities, which arguably concentrate opportunities for face-to-face contacts with other creatives, and therefore knowledge spillovers. Scott also argues that this occurs most often "among individuals in the upper echelons of the managerial and creative hierarchy" (Scott 2010 p. 122). This reveals a relatively stratified model of the creative industries and the creative city, which provides an echo of Florida's creative class.

2.2 A dynamic model of creative city development

To develop a more open model of the creative city and to understand more about the role of the creative industries, we can look to Cohendet, Grandadam and Simon's (2010) model of the creative city, which recognises three layers of Upperground, Middleground and Underground. The Upperground harbours the elite cultural institutions, including museums, linked to the global 'space of flows'. The Underground represents the dense fabric of small cultural enterprises that generate cultural products and experiences which support the local buzz in the 'space of places'. The Middleground links the Uppergound with the Underground, most importantly through events and programmes that bring the small players in the Underground to the attention of the gatekeepers of the Upperground. While the traditional cultural institutions tend to dominate the Upperground, the creative industries are particularly important in the Middleground. If we look at cities like Barcelona, for example, creative industries mapping underlines the key linking role of cultural and creative events and creative spaces in the city (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022).

Looking at the relationship between the city and the creative industries in this way, we move beyond Allen Scott's (2010, p. 121) early characterisation of the "city as canvas". Far more than providing a context or location for creative activity, cities also act systematically to support creativity by bringing together a complex range of actors and institutions. By considering the different layers of this creative ecosystem, we can give more depth and dynamism to the creative city concept, and the mechanisms of creative development become more embedded and visible (Figure 2).

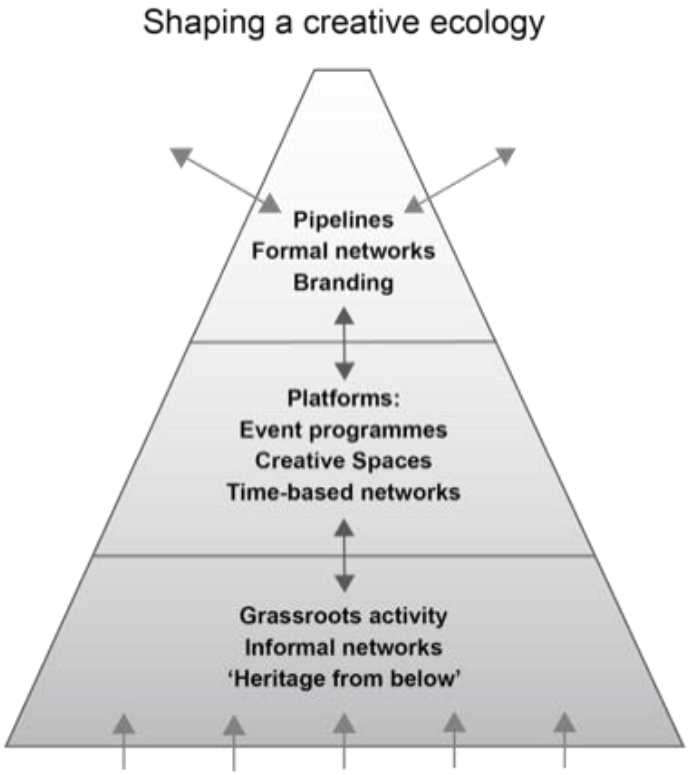

Figure 2
A creative ecology model of the creative city.

Having developed a three-dimensional context for creative development, we also have to address the question of how creative development processes are initiated. This is one of the main issues dealt with in the book *Small Cities with Big Dreams* (Richards, Duif 2019), which analyses how smaller places can compete effectively in the global economy. This in turn builds on earlier work on the creative city and the creative industries, as well as contributions from scholars such as Sacco and Blessi (2007), Bærenholdt (2017), Harrison and Tatar (2008) and Montuori (2011).

Using a triangular model of placemaking, Richards (2020) develops an analysis of creative placemaking as a dynamic relationship between three elements: resources, meaning and creativity. He conceptualises place resources in terms of a series of tangible and intangible elements, following Sacco and Blessi (2007), which also include endogenous and exogenous resources. Resources are not just what you have or own, but what you can claim in some way. The element of creativity might seem at first to refer to the creative class or the creative industries, but here it refers to the application of creativity in content creation and governance. This is also where important capacity building implications can be found, pointing to the need to nurture endogenous

creativity as well as attract creatives from outside. The trigger for growth is provided by giving meaning to resources through creative process, which relies on the three elements of meaning identified by Harrison and Tatar (2008).

They argue that meaning making involves connecting particular loci, events and people. Events are particularly important, because they provide temporal triggers for development processes and the sense of urgency needed to synchronise policy agendas. In many cities and regions, therefore, event programmes have provided an important catalyst for development, as the European Capital of Culture programme has demonstrated in many cities (Richards, Palmer 2010). The opening of major cultural and creative institutions can also constitute important events in the life of the city, as the opening of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao in 1997 illustrates (Richards 2010). Urban development processes can provide the creative spaces that are vital for supporting cultural and creative events (Richards, Wilson 2006).

The creative industries also tend to play an important role in these processes, because they can harness the value of tangible and intangible resources to create meaning, bringing people together at particular times in specific places to stimulate exchange and interaction. This combination of events and spaces underpins the middle ground of the creative city, which links the creativity of the Underground to the institutions of the Upperground.

In this way, qualities of place have also become a major input to the creative industries. Just as cities support the creative industries through their people, places and institutions, so the creative industries in turn support the city, generating symbolic capital and confirming authenticity. The idea of the creative city as brand is enshrined in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities). Member cities develop their music scenes, their audio-visual industries and tangible and intangible heritage, constructing themselves as festival cities, attracting film induced tourism, and media attention. For example, the city of Montreal has a wide-ranging cultural policy that includes supporting a number of key creative industries, including circus arts, film and television production and design. These industries are seen as forming part of a creative ecology that strengthens the image of the city and in particular underlines its unique role as the largest French-speaking city in North America (Richards, Marques 2018). There is also increasing evidence of creative events being used as an engine for placemaking (de Brito, Richards 2017). The UNESCO creative cities programme is also being used to support a broad range of place-based creative programmes related to design, literature, music and gastronomy. This adds to a general trend to brand cities as ‘music cities’ or ‘festival cities’ (Ballico, Watson 2020; Gold, Gold 2021), and a general process of ‘curation’ of places (Richards 2024).

An important debate in the midst of this rising tide of creative development is whether development benefits can extend beyond the creative

class or the Middleground of the creative city. In Toronto, for example, the growth of the creative class has been positioned as a stimulus for inner city development. One of the measures used for the success of these creative clusters is the rise in property prices, which are much higher than in other areas of the city. However, this can also be read as a sign of gentrification, which is linked to negative externalities such as the displacement of the previous residential population, increasing prices and falling diversity. As Hracs (2007, p. 35) remarks:

> While the creation of a 'bohemian wonderland' and tourist village benefits real estate developers, popular artists, owners of the trendy boutiques and the area's tax base, there have been negative ramifications for the neighbourhood's disadvantaged groups.

One of the challenges in analysing the effects of creative development is the lack of longitudinal data. At best, correlations are made between the numbers of people in the creative class or the creative industries and economic growth. But this provides a limited picture of the effects of creative development, usually over a relatively short period of time. To address this problem, this chapter examines a longitudinal case study of creative industries-based placemaking development.

3. Creative placemaking in Den Bosch

The city of 's-Hertogenbosch (or Den Bosch for short) in the Netherlands has over the past 15 years developed a series of programmes designed to improve the quality of life and stimulate the growth of the cultural and creative industries. The centrepiece of this development was the Bosch 500 programme, based on the life and works of the famous painter Hieronymus Bosch. The programme celebrated the 500th anniversary of Bosch's death in 2016, bringing Bosch's work to life through contemporary creativity in the fields of art, film, music, games, design and events (Marques, Richards 2014).

Richards (2020) argues that the Bosch 500 programme represents a good example of a placemaking initiative based on creativity. The key challenge of the programme was that the city did not possess any of Bosch's paintings. These are spread over museums in different countries around the world. The city therefore needed to develop a strategy to obtain a significant number of Bosch's 25 surviving paintings to be able to stage a major exhibition of his work in 2016. The solution was very creative – the city funded a Bosch Research and Restoration Project, which would use the latest techniques to examine Bosch's works and increase the body of knowledge related to his art.

The city offered to research and restore the paintings held by other museums for free. Of course, there was a catch: the museums had to agree to the works being featured in the Bosch retrospective in 2016. This tactic was very successful: eventually 17 of the 25 surviving paintings were secured from museums in 10 countries around the world. The scale of the Bosch exhibition in 2016, combined with the nostalgia of the painting returning to the place they were made 500 years ago, generated an amazing amount of attention. Coverage in national and international media was estimated to be worth €50 million. Over 421,000 visits were made to the exhibition – in a museum that previously attracted less than 200,000 a year.

The Visions of a Genius exhibition was among the top 10 old masters shows in 2016 (Richards, Duif 2019). It put the small city of Den Bosch (pop. 150,000) on the global map. The EU Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor showed that Den Bosch had outperformed all other Dutch cities (including the capital Amsterdam) in terms of 'cultural vibrancy' in 2016. The Bosch programme included a wide range of events and activities that went far beyond the work of Bosch himself, and included other cities and regions and other artforms and sectors of the creative industries. This served several purposes: image improvement, building collaboration, developing social cohesion and stimulating tourism development.

Visitor experience on Tripadvisor (2016)

> Visited the Noordbrants Museum to see the Hieronymus Bosch Exhibition celebrating his 500th anniversary. This is a delightful little museum, probably worth visiting at anytime. But the main attraction for this visit was the outstanding Bosch exhibition. For his 500th anniversary, the museum has managed to get together most of the known Bosch paintings and a lot of his drawings. Unfortunately, there were two major works from the Prado missing, but these were assessed as being too fragile to transport. The paintings were well explained by the audiotour and the exhibition guide - assuming that anyone can fully explain all of Bosch's symbology! I am unlikely to see such a comprehensive exhibition of Bosch's work in my lifetime.

One of the important drivers of the Bosch 500 programme was the creative industries. There were many events related to creative talent, video games, gastronomy, music, TV and cinema, design and architecture. This diversity was reflected in the logo of the programme, developed by Dutch design studio Kluif. Based on the only surviving image of Bosch's face, the logo was produced in several versions that reflected the different creative industries present in the programme.

3.1 Creative events

The Middleground of the creative city uses events and creative spaces to link the Upperground and the Underground together. The Bosch 500 programme used a series of creative events to provide a platform for creative actors and institutions to generate knowledge spillovers and engage different publics. The Bosch Young Talent Show (BYTS) was a ten-day, international art event for young, promising art students. Recently graduated artists from the Bosch cities Network (’s-Hertogenbosch, Berlin, Bruges, Brussels, Frankfurt, Ghent, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New Haven, New York, Paris, Rotterdam, Venice, Vienna & Washington) displayed their work in ’s-Hertogenbosch. The 40 artists were asked to make a cutting-edge selection of their latest work to produce a view of the contemporary art scene.

A social networked view of creativity was developed through the ‘Bosch Parade’ event, which invited local residents and cultural and sporting groups to devise Bosch artworks to traverse the river encircling the city centre. These phantasmagorical floating contraptions enchanted residents and tourists alike, and the event later became a regular part of the city’s calendar. The Bosch Parade brought voluntary, sporting and cultural organizations together in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, increasing social cohesion as well as generating attention for these groups. This in turn led to a boost in participation in voluntary work in the city.

The Bosch Dinner was a cooking competition that pitted the different neighbourhoods of the city against one another. This contest, based loosely on the Palio horseraces between city districts in Siena, was held on the market square in the city centre. It proved to be a low-threshold event for local residents, who turned up to cheer on their neighbourhood and to enjoy the food together after the contest.

Another creative update of the Bosch legacy was developed through the Bosch Art Game (2014). The winning entry was a visual novel inspired by the works of Bosch by the Italian game designers We Are Müesli. In the city itself, the Garden of Earthly Delights game on the Bosch app allowed children and adults to hunt Bosch’s creations in the city centre. Many of the figures from Bosch’s most famous painting appeared in three-dimensional form in the city, partly making up for the fact that Bosch’s most famous painting was missing from the Visions of a Genius exhibition. The same painting was updated by 15 international artists using a variety of media including artificial intelligence, sound art, digital animation, painting, sculpture and installation, resulting in a diverse range of eye-catching artworks.

In terms of merchandising the programme organisers also developed strong links with the creative sector. They formed a partnership with the design

company FatBoy to produce a range of contemporary objects related to Bosch and his work. They commissioned ceramics, which were used in a promotion developed with local restaurants. Peter Greenaway was invited to make a film, in which "Bosch prophesies the events of 1492, the start of the modern world."

> In 1491 Joris van Halewijn, pander [*sic*] to the Burgundian nobility, hiding his visual identity, commissions the Dutch painter Bosch to paint a triptych of the Temptations of St Anthony. Bosch's assistant Clem, and Bosch's wife Aleyt warn him of the danger of the commission, but Bosch, fearless, curious, and well paid, starts to paint... Here there is a mixture of historical figures - Bosch, his wife Aleyt, Joris van Halewijn, Ferdinand I of Aragon, Isabella of Castile, Mad Joan and Christopher Columbus, with a series of fictional figures taken from the paintings. The characters roll and intermix together, to create a triptych of their own. (ImDB).

Although the Grenaway film never materialised, the director did appear in the documentary "The Curious World of Hieronymus Bosch", a documentary based around the Visions of a Genius exhibition.

3.2 Creative places

The Hieronymus Bosch programme also helped to strengthen the development of new creative spaces in the city. These included the the VerkadeFabriek (a former sweet factory) and the Tramkade (site of a former tram depot and cattle feed factory). The municipality, now the owner of the complex, has given the site over to creative enterprises for 10 years to stimulate placemaking processes. The site provides restaurants, bars entertainment, co-working spaces, a social design enterprise and unusual accommodation options, including sleeping in a crane cabin. The feasibility of developing an immersive experience in the Tramkade is currently being examined by a group of creative entrepreneurs. They will work in collaboration with the Noordbrabants Museum to develop accessible experiences based on the work of painters such as Van Gogh and Bosch. This will make use of the knowledge and content developed through the Bosch Research and Conservation Project, as well as the Van Gogh animated film *Loving Vincent*. In this animation, every frame of the film was hand painted in oil by 124 artists, who created more than 65,000 paintings to recount the life and mysterious death of the painter. Seventy of the pictures painted for the film featured in an exhibition at the Noordbrabants Museum in 2017. The St. Joost School of Art & Design has also found a home in the former sorting office of Dutch Post, and Avans has plans to develop this further into a creative nursery.

Bosch himself has provided the inspiration for the development of his residence on the marketplace in Den Bosch. In this house visitors can "climb

the same stairs used by Hieronymus Bosch" 500 years ago. The house, which opened to the public in 2022, provides an overview of the life of Bosch and his time through interactive displays, archaeological finds from the restoration and contemporary art inspired by Bosch.

3.3 Building a legacy

Most research on the creative industries focuses on particular sectors, spaces or moments in time. It is therefore difficult to establish the longer-term effects of creative development programmes on cities. In the case of Den Bosch a longitudinal body of evidence was collected during the development process, although data collection by the event organisers, as in many other cases, stopped once the programme ended. However, by piecing together different data sources a picture of the post-programme legacy can be constructed.

Richards (2020) identifies key elements of the Bosch500 legacy, including different types of public value generated by the programme, in terms of intrinsic, extrinsic and institutional value (Table 1).

Intrinsic value	Bosch positioned as a figurehead for the city
	Increased quality of life and cultural vibrancy
Extrinsic value	Substantial growth in tourism, also post-2016
	Long-term growth in business activity
Institutional value	Greater confidence for the museums and business networks
	Increased (inter)national contacts
	Increased store of Bosch content
	Shifting value agenda in events from instrumental towards intrinsic and institutional value.
	Longer term legacy for the creative industries.
	New networks, often based on creative contacts

Table 1
Table 1: Creative legacies of the Bosch500 Programme.

For example, the statistics department of the city of Den Bosch provided a raft of indicators to show that the city benefitted in many ways from the Bosch500 programme. These included a substantial growth in tourism and event visits, increased business activity and a reduction in empty premises, and plans for 400-450 new hotel rooms, or a 60% increase on previous capacity (Richards 2020). This significant legacy for the Bosch 500 programme goes far beyond the immediate economic and tourism impacts of 2016. A major example of this is the developing programme of the Noordbrabants Museum, which was home

to the Visions of a Genius exhibition. The increased institutional capacity generated by this event raised the status of the museum in the eyes of policymakers, sponsors and the public. This enabled the museum to develop its work with Bosch into links with Van Gogh and other artists. The success of the Bosch500 programme helped the museum to attract more sponsorship, which also facilitated the purchase of paintings by Van Gogh and stimulated the donation of a significant collection of modern art. This has in turn raised the profile of the museum and the city.

There was some local resistance to the development of the Bosch500 programme, which came mainly from actors in the cultural sector, who feared that investment in Bosch would negatively impact the funding of established institutions. The Bosch500 organisation therefore had to develop activities that responded to these concerns, including discussion sessions to which cultural and civic actors were invited. This helped to counter the perception that the programme was being imposed from without, and led to increased local support and participation (Richards, Duif 2019).

The legacy of the Bosch500 programme therefore includes the growth of creative industries and associated economic gain, as well as strengthening of the social fabric of the city and increasing the quality of life, making Den Bosch a more attractive location to live in or to locate or invest in. This has helped to support the repositioning of the city as the 'Cultural Capital of the South' of the Netherlands. The creative industries also received a boost as a result of growing economic and cultural activity, although there was a feeling that the city failed to capitalise fully on the momentum created by the Bosch programme. A further setback to creative growth came in 2020 with the arrival of Covid-19. The closure of cultural institutions, the cancellation of events and travel restrictions all conspired to put creative growth on hold, just as in other cities.

In the post-Covid period, the city has shown a high degree of resilience, which may at least partly relate to the impulse provided by Bosch 500. For example, the proportion of empty business premises in the city was below the national average in 2016 and has continued to fall in spite of the pandemic. The number of hotel and restaurant businesses grew from 480 in 2015 to 680 in 2022, a rise of 42%. The city saw a strong growth in visitor numbers after the Bosch 500 programme, from 2.8 million to 6.8 million in 2019. There was a sharp fall during the pandemic, but there were more than 5.1 million visitors in 2022, 82% above 2016 levels. The number of hotel overnights rose to 267,000 in 2022, exceeding pre-pandemic levels, and a third more than the pre-Bosch 500 level in 2015 (Gemeente's-Hertogenbosch 2024).

One of the important keys to the success of Den Bosch was developing a collaborative rather than a competitive strategy. The city worked together with other cities in the Brabant region to develop a larger and more far-reaching

programme. The city developed a series of local, regional and international networks to support collaborative working in areas such as knowledge development, cultural heritage and civic collaboration. These networks arguably proved essential to the success of the Bosch 500 programme, because they enabled the city to lever resources, knowledge and expertise that otherwise would not have been available. Den Bosch did this at a variety of scales, including local, regional and international networks. In the following section, we consider the specific issue of developing collaboration between neighbouring cities and countries.

4. Cross-border collaboration in the European Capital of Culture

The ECOC programme is supposed to provide a basis for cultural collaboration, even though the bidding process for the title tends to pit cities against one another in a zero-sum game (Richards, Marques 2016). The major area of collaboration tends to involve the ECOC host city and the surrounding region, which often helps to provide the resources necessary to 'create size' for smaller cities. As more small cities have become involved in the ECOC programme, they have also begun to collaborate more with other cities in their region and with those across regional and national borders.

The small country of Luxemburg has now hosted the ECOC three times, thanks to the rotation of the title between European Union member states. Luxemburg City was ECOC in 1995 and 2007, and in 2022, Esch-Alzette, the second largest city in Luxembourg, held the title. If the capital city can be considered small, with a population of 114,000, then Esch is tiny, with only 36,000 inhabitants. This has necessitated collaboration with cities and regions in neighbouring countries.

In the first ECOC in 1995 the problem of size was tackled by Luxemburg through a top-down approach, in which the national government funded events staged in the national institutions, particularly the major museums. The programme was also limited to Luxemburg City itself, with no collaborative projects with other cities in Luxemburg or abroad.

By 2007, however, the political climate and the context of the event had changed, and a much more bottom-up approach was adopted. The ECOC invited proposals for events from local and international cultural actors, and also looked over the border to cities in neighbouring France, Germany and Belgium. There was also a sizable budget (€4 million) devoted to cross-border programmes and 139 trans-border projects were organised during the 2007 ECOC (Luxemburg and Greater Region, 2008). This programme was very successful in engaging the citizens of Luxemburg and the rest of the 'greater region' across France, Germany

and Belgium. In particular, there was a high degree of participation from cross-border workers, 160,000 of whom regularly crossed the border to work in Luxemburg. Surveys showed that 68% of cross-border workers visited at least one ECOC event in 2007. Across the Greater Region as a whole, around 10% of residents attended more cultural events in 2007.

Although the 2007 was a success in terms of generating collaboration and developing new audiences, there were a number of challenges identified. These included the problems of familiarising regional audiences with the new cultural landscape, creating support for cross-border activities in terms of financing, professional guidance, administrative structures and information exchange and resolving intercultural and linguistic problems during meetings (Luxemburg and Greater Region 2008).

When Luxemburg hosted a third ECOC in 2022, it was decided to move the event out of the capital to the small provincial city of Esch-Alzette. Esch was the former centre of the steel industry in Luxemburg, which faced high unemployment and economic decline when the still mills closed in the 1970s. The 2022 ECOC was therefore seen as an important step in the regeneration of the city.

In 2022, Esch worked with 10 municipalities in the South of Luxemburg and 8 French municipalities to develop a regional, collaborative programme. The main aim was to provide a programme embedded in local culture, but with an international scope. The programme included more than 2,400 events, including a number of innovative events focussed on breaking down borders. The exhibition *Frontaliers. Lives in Stereo* examined the history of cross-border and migratory workers in the steel industry and the culture of migration. The exhibition *A Colônia Luxemburguesa* also traced the emigration of Luxemburgers to develop the steel industry in Brazil. The project *Travel Stories* also encouraged people across the different parts of the region to share their stories about the area and the role of the border in their lives :

> Tell us how you experience and get to know the Esch2022 region, what makes it special to you and why you love it! Be it a story from your daily life, a special place for you, an extraordinary encounter, or something that makes the region unique, we are looking forward to your stories. (https://esch2022.lu/en/travel-stories/)

In total, 41 projects were developed in whole or in part in the French part of Esch2022, with 9 projects linked to the French presidency of the EU. The RED project, focussed on developing European exchanges with the French municipalities participating in the ECOC, with high satisfaction rate of event participants (83%) (Esch 2022, 2023).

The transnational nature of the programme was underlined by the use of different languages. There were more than 1,200 events in French, 900 in English,

750 in Luxembourgish and 500 in German. The programme also featured events in Portuguese, Italian and Spanish, reflecting the presence of important minority groups in Luxemburg. The events attracted a total of over 500,000 visitors, mainly from Luxembourg (60%) and France (27%) (Esch 2022, 2023).

Most projects included some element of cross-border or international collaboration. Over 90% included multiple nationalities in the project, over 80% were multilingual, over 70% had international collaboration and there was also a high level of collaboration between the Esch2022 projects themselves (57%). Visitors were also very positive about the programme, with 91% saying they would recommend the event they attended to friends or colleagues, and 83% of visitors said they were satisfied with their experience. The programme was clearly fun as well as educational, with 93% saying they had a "good time". The collaborative message of the programme was also reflected in visitor experiences, with 66% saying they perceived a cross-border dimension in the event they attended. The programme also appeared to meet another important goal in increasing attractiveness, as 59% consider that the Esch2022 region was more attractive than in the past (Esch 2022, 2023).

The image development aspects of Esch 2022 were also significant, with over 8,600 articles published in the press, and 240 journalists attending from more than 60 countries. The media reach of the event was calculated at nearly 400 million people, generating a total Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) of over 21 million euros. This means the Total media value was almost equal to the 22.5 million euros budget for the event in 2022 (Esch 2022, 2023).

The role of the Middleground was particularly significant in the Esch2022 programme, with 61% of the programme being organised by non-profit organisations. Almost three quarters of participating organisations said that their projects included cross-border or international collaboration. This collaboration also included a large proportion of non-cultural partners, showing that the networks extended beyond the immediate scope of the programme itself. The most frequently mentioned legacy of the Esch2022 projects was "Partnerships / collaboration / network / cooperation / contacts", underlining the importance of collaboration going beyond the ECOC year itself. This indicates that it is increasingly important to collaborate, in order to gather skills, knowledge and contacts needed to stage a large cultural programme within the limited resources of the small city.

Richards and Duif (2019) identify a number of critical success factors in relation to the ECOC, some of which are particularly relevant for smaller cities and cross-border working. In particular, bringing stakeholders together through Political Will, Vision and Consistency and Building Relationships and Forging Collaboration are relevant for the ECOC cross-border context. For small cities, it is also important to Use the Underdog Position of the city in a creative way.

The fact that a small city with limited resources can stage impressive and attractive events is already a newsworthy event.

This needs a holistic approach – viewing creativity not as a class, or an industry, but as an ecology that links every part of the city together: a creative ecology of place.

5. Towards a creative ecology of place

Our analysis indicates that the atomisation of creative policies into creative industries or creative class or creative cluster approaches tends to minimise the synergies that can be developed between the creative industries and place. By adopting a broader, creative ecology approach, we can generate a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between creativity and place.

There is a need for a new 'creative ecology of place', which links the creative process and the creative industries more closely to the different aspects of place that support them. These links should not be limited to economic considerations of class or specific jobs, but should be accompanied by considerations of how creativity is embedded in place, through resources, meanings and creative strategies.

The creative cities model of Cohendet et al. (2010) goes some way towards addressing this problem, showing how different elements of the creative system fit together in cities. However, this model can also be strengthened by adding a spatial perspective, linking the city to the networks that feed it with external resources, and which help to position it in the creative field (Figure 3). One element that can usefully be added to the creative cities model is the concept of 'buzz and pipelines' (Bathelt *et al.* 2004). The creative industries are not just involved in production, but they also form the core of networks that link places and people (Potts *et al.* 2008), which are fed by the buzz created by the co-presence of 'cool' people in trendy places.

The coming together to create buzz is a key aspect of events, which then link the different levels of the creative city to stimulate consumption and production. This combination of the 'Creative localism' in the buzz and the 'Creative cosmopolitanism' that can be gained by developing networks to channel people, ideas and resources, allows even small places to be competitive. As Cerisola and Panzera (2022) have demonstrated using data from the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor, the combination of Creative localism and Creative cosmopolitanism is most effective in stimulating creative growth. Creative cosmopolitanism can help to extend the pipelines linked to the Upperground of the creative city, while creative localism can help to forge connections that can sustain the local buzz essential for powering the Underground, and therefore the rest of the creative city ecology.

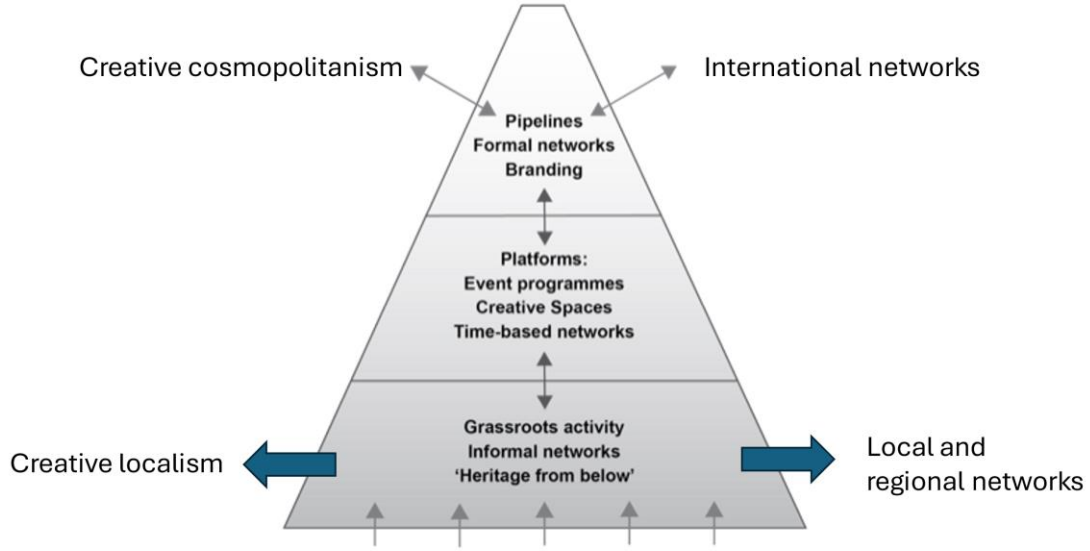

Figure 3
Expanding the creative city through networking.

When combined with the catalytic and agenda synchronising effects of events, this analysis helps us to understand why certain places are more successful than others in the development of creativity. Many cities have developed creative city, creative industries or creative class programmes, but not all of these are successful. Being a successful creative city involves collecting resources, imbuing them with meaning and linking them to creative networks through institutions that can frame the city in effective ways.

This is not something that happens accidentally. The experience of Den Bosch emphasises the need for place leadership, which provides a vision to galvanise the different actors in the city, encourage the formation of external links and internal bonds. Similar initiatives have long been evident in other cities, such as Montreal and Barcelona, for example. But the Den Bosch case also shows that small cities can be successful creative cities as well

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