



Dynamics of creative industries in a post-communist society. The development of creative sector in Romanian cities



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to offer an insight into the Romanian post-socialist urban environment, with a particular emphasis on the creative sector. How did the creative industries emerge in the Romanian cities during the post-socialist period and what were the premises for their development? How can we explain the differences between the Romanian cities in the development of the creative industries? What are the main difficulties that prevent a more dynamic growth of creative industries in a post-communist society? What are the most successful creative industries and creative cities in Romania? We shall explain the creative potential in relation to the level of the urbanization of the region, to the process of deindustrialisation, to the changes in the labour market and to decentralisation of the cultural activities. The results of our analysis show that the development of the creative sector in the Romanian cities is linked to the industrialisation and deindustrialisation process during the socialist and post-socialist periods. Though data show a positive trend of the contribution of the creative industries to the Romanian economy, there are impediments in their development due to a weak market of creative goods and because of the dysfunctions in the production and distribution system.

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1. Introduction

The interest for measuring and mapping creativity and cultural vitality is not new and many authors from different scientific disciplines (from psychology to sociology, from urban studies to geography) were interested in finding new ways to define and measure the creativity and cultural potential of the cities. One of the first authors who raised the interest for creativity and its measurement was Richard Florida in his work *The Rise of the Creative Class*. He considered that creativity is the new engine of growth and there is a change from the old economy to a new economy, based on creativity, technology and creative people. Florida's approach has been criticised and is still debatable.

Another author who was interested in the relation between creativity and economic development was Andersson, who considered that "knowledge handlers" are very important in the post-industrial economy (Andersson & Mellander, 2011). If Florida's main accent was on diversity and tolerance as important factors to influence the creativity potential of a city, Andersson demonstrated how the industrial development and income growth in a region are positively influenced by a combination of universities and other

research institutions, which grow synergistically with telecommunications and good accessibility to fast transport systems, such as air and road transport.

These authors have developed creativity analysis models and identified indicators that can explain the relation between creativity and development – nationally, regionally or locally. However, these analysis models have been identified based on post-modern western societies' features and they are successfully applicable within these societies. Many critics brought arguments against this type of ranking, from the viewpoint of the inequalities created and reinforced, of the urban development strategies generated by his methodology and of the narrow vision used in building the creativity index. Ranking cities by creativity indices has highlighted the differences between big and small cities and the competitive disadvantages between them, imposed and reinforced by the creative capital (Lewis & Donald, 2009).

From this point of view, the paper aims at presenting a critical approach of the creativity analysis models that do not take into account the local specificity and the past and present structural characteristics, when applied to post-socialist societies. Furthermore, the paper proposes an analysis of the various characteristics that may become explicative variables for a methodology of creativity analysis adapted to the sociopolitical and economic context that the ex-communist countries have been through in the past 25

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years. In order to understand the dynamics of the creative industries and the manner that creativity influences the development of a community or nation, it is important to outline a history of the creative industries concept within the ex-communist space.

Although there were important steps made in defining and measuring creativity, there are still many disagreements on how to define creativity and innovation, depending on the economic, social, political and cultural context. Firstly, there are different opinions in the academic environment as regards the use of the appropriate concept to define the “new economy”: “post-industrial society”, “creative economy”, “knowledge-based economy”, or “network society”. Secondly, there are different definitions and methodologies for the analysis of the creative industries. The purpose of this paper is not to compare the pros and cons for one term or another. Still, it is worth mentioning the difficulty of comparing and choosing the appropriate term and approach from the viewpoint of the Central and East European context. Although the official version of the term used in the European Union's documents is “cultural and creative sectors”, in this paper we shall use the term “creative industries”.

There are different models drawn-up for the purpose of defining and measuring the trends of the creative industries. These models start from the prerequisite that creativity is hard to define and acknowledge that this concept is dynamic and may have different meanings in different cultural spaces and periods. However, there is a consensus regarding the influence of creativity on development, and the major challenge is to identify how and to what extent this influence works. The development of the creative industries raised the researchers' interest in analysing their commercial value and contribution to the national economy. It is worth mentioning the WIPO Guide on Surveying the Economic Contribution of the Copyright-based Industries 2003. In Romania, in 2008, the Centre for Cultural Research in partnership with the Romanian Copyright Office and the Institute of National Economy and with the technical assistance of the World Intellectual Property Organisation published the report *The Contribution of Copyright-based Industries to the Romanian Economy*, the first research on this topic in our country.

The growing interest in creativity and related industries and sectors within the West-European space in the 2000's has also reached the public agenda of Central and Eastern European countries, either following trans-national studies like WIPO or UNCTAD, or under the influence of organisations like the European Council, UNESCO, IFFACA or the British Council. For instance, according to the European Council's Compendium for Cultural Policies, the concept of cultural industries was first used in Bulgaria in 2001, simultaneously with the European Council's pilot project “*Cultural Diversity and Cultural Enterprise*”, while in Lithuania the concept appeared in 2003 with the conference “*Creative Industries: a European Opportunity*” (2003). Furthermore, in Hungary the concept emerged in 2002, when WIPO's study was carried out, dealing with the contribution of the copyright-based industries to the national economy, while in Latvia the correspondent study was carried out in 2005 – the same year when Slovakia accepted the definition of cultural industries as it appears in the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.

Simultaneously with the occurrence of the concept on the public agenda in the Central and East-European countries, a series of researches on creativity and creative industries were carried out. Most of these studies apply the same creativity-measuring methodology used in the West-European space. In this regard, some of these studies are relevant, i.e. those that include comparisons between European-level countries and cities, such as the studies carried out by WIPO and UNCTAD or Cluster Observatory. Only a few studies carried out in the Central and East-European space used

a methodology adapted to the specificity of the country, e.g. *Managing and Measuring Intangibles as Key Resources for Development Sustainable Competitiveness of the Republic of Serbia*, where a West-Balkan Index was developed. Another relevant study is *Creative industries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, which presents the Baltic approach regarding the development of creative industries. The paper presents the characteristics of each country, regarding both the definition of the creative industries and the related statistical-data collecting methods.

There are various ways of collecting data related to creativity and innovation. The differences in the national policies and legislation regarding creative and cultural industries are reflected in different methodologies and instruments of collecting data. In Romania, for example, the data on the labour market in the creative and cultural industries, with accent on the creative class, are few and sometimes not fully reliable because of the high level of informal economy. Though there are many data on creativity at national level, at local level statistics on this topic are few (especially data about the cities' creativity). There are also different ways of building the creativity index; some were focused on the individual level, and others were focused on social and economic factors in general.

This paper proposes an approach on the creative industries through analysis models adapted to the Central and East-European space, as well as the identification of explicative variables for the dynamics in the pre- and post-socialist period. We consider that the analysis methodology of the creative industries in the ex-communist space should be reconsidered by adding indicators expressing the local specificity where creativity manifests and referring, for instance, to the legal system, corruption, cultural and technological infrastructure, community facilities, financial instruments, urbanisation level, de-industrialisation and decentralisation level. As demonstrating the importance of each indicator could be the objective of a stand-alone study, in this paper we shall focus only on the last three indicators.

Therefore, our study is focused not only on the potential of the cities to attract and retain creative people, but also on their present and past structural features. We shall explain the creative potential in relation to the level of the urbanisation and infrastructure in the region, to the process of industrialisation/deindustrialisation, to the changes in the labour market and to the decentralisation of the cultural activities. Furthermore, we consider that the quantitative data on the creativity-development relation and on the contribution of the creative industries to the national and local economy should be completed with qualitative analyses, which should offer possible explanations for the dynamics of this cultural and economic sector. The first section of this paper aims at mapping the creative industries and identifying the explicative variables, with a view to understanding the differences in performance from the viewpoint of the local vitality.

The second section of the paper is dedicated to presenting the socialist and post-socialist context of Romania's creative industries' occurrence and development, focusing on the analysis of the main actors that created the favourable or unfavourable conditions for creativity, as well as on the analysis of performances and limitations in the development of the creative industries, in the meantime presenting success examples in this field.

1.1. Romanian cities and creativity in the socialist and post-socialist period

As Andersson showed, as creativity flourished in the post-industrial society, there has been a continuity between the most creative cities of the past and the globalised creative cities of the present (Andersson & Mellander, 2011). In Andersson's theory, new

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