Smart Creative Cities and Urban Regeneration Policy: Culture, Innovation, and Economy at Nexus. Learning from Lyon Metropolis

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Abstract In 1995, the English planner Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini published "The Creative City", focusing on three intertwined topics: the cultural, social, and economic impact that arises from creativity in cities; the need to promote integrated urban planning levering on knowledge from other disciplines; and the active inclusion in urban planning processes of ordinary, often marginalized people. A few years later, Landry issues "The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovation", a book in which he challenges and further develops his ideas by proposing them as a "toolbox for urban renaissance." At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the American economist Richard Florida delivers what is considered a milestone on the subject of the creative city: "The Rise of the Creative Class", in which he emphasizes the characteristics of people performing creative activities in cities, as well as the conditions that cities must offer in order for the "creative class" to be attracted and settle in them. The Smart Creative City is a more recent concept. It grew out of economic science, especially the so-called Experience Economy. Regarding specifically the economic development of cities, creativity, art, and culture represent strategic assets in the urban regeneration process, and the socioeconomic feature of smart creative cities can be considered the most evident and critical one. This study thus springs from the recognition of the relevance of smart creative cities, and of an integrated and visionary planning approach to urban regeneration—itself creative. This analysis has been conducted focusing on selected experiences developed by Lyon metropolis, aiming at understanding whether and how the municipality is levering on creativity, art and culture within its urban regeneration programmes. This objective is addressed through a mixed-qualitative methodology that investigates the political discourse and adopts a descriptive case study approach to analyse policy processes, drivers, and obstacles that are fostering or limiting that vision in the local context of Lyon. The research responds to the questions posed, showing both the transformative capacity and the trade-offs of explicitly integrating cultural and artistic projects and events, as urban "innovative" regeneration devices, within the "common" planning and design practice of the municipality of Lyon.

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1 Introduction

In 2010, the European Economic and Social Committee expressed the opinion on "The need to apply an integrated approach to urban regeneration" (EESC 2010), highlighting the inefficiency of ordinary planning measures in modern cities. Since then, the political debate about urban regeneration significantly increased in Europe and became embedded in the framework of the urban dimension of the EU Cohesion Policy. A large part of post-industrial cities realized, at that point, that the necessary momentum for economic revitalization had arrived, and started substantiating a significant number of implementation projects, at different scales.

The past two decades have been dominated by a considerable international debate around the creative city. Some researchers (Landry et al. 1996; Helbrecht 1998; Florida 2003, 2005; Hospers 2003; Scott 2006; Ponzini and Rossi 2010; Grodach 2017; Montalto et al. 2019) pointed to understanding creativity as an asset that can be levered and exploited to regenerate post-industrial sites and other degraded urban areas. Creative and cultural industries (CCIs)—normally developed out of marginalized areas, or on the urban fringe where convenient financial conditions and abandoned post-industrial buildings are available—can provide suitable situations for the establishment of work studios, art spaces, and start-ups (Bayliss 2004; Jensen 2007; Andreucci 2019). Moreover, re-inventing cities as places of *consumption* of attractive cultural events, such as arts festivals, exhibitions and other flagship projects, are also believed to magnetize investments, inhabitants, and labor opportunities (Bianchini 1993; Jensen 2007; World Economic Forum 2016).

In parallel, other authors (Zukin 1995; García 2004; Evans 2009; Gunay and Dokmeci 2012; Markusen 2014; Murdoch et al. 2016; Florida 2017) have been questioning or critically evaluating culture-led and creativity-based urban development strategies which, they say, tend to cater to the tastes of economically privileged and well-connected business people, leading to *cultural commodification*, high-cost projects, gentrification, and social exclusion based on ethnicity, wealth, and gender.

The interest in better understanding the controversial effects of CCIs on urban revitalization, briefly documented above, has led to the research objectives of this study, aiming: (i) to explore if and how cities are integrating creativity, art and culture within urban regeneration policies; (ii) to analyze the main factors supporting this integration, specifically referring to the socioeconomic context; (iii) to evaluate the transformative capacity and the trade-offs of explicitly integrating cultural and artistic projects and events, as urban "regeneration devices," within the "common" planning and design practice; and (iv) to assess how evidence speaks to the shared understanding of the relationship between CCIs and urban regeneration in the European context.

In order to achieve these objectives, the research has adopted a mixed-qualitative methodology. In the first phase, the key concepts of CCIs and integrated urban regeneration programmes, as well as their interplay, have been explored through a literature review. In the second phase, the work focused on Lyon metropolis, critically analyzing selected urban regeneration experiences of the French city, levering on creativity, culture, and art.

The chapter is consequently structured as follows: Sect. 2 explains the applied methodology; Sect. 3 presents the conceptual framework, in which the theoretical and practical interrelations between urban regeneration and creativity are highlighted; Sect. 4 introduces and develops the Lyon metropolis case study, summarizing and discussing selected urban regeneration experiences; Sect. 5 presents concluding remarks taking into account the limits of the conducted research.

2 Method

Both the multiple intertwined relations between creative strategies, spatial and financial policies, and the emblematic structural transformations of the economy that derive from urban regeneration plans can be explored, first conceptually and then empirically, through a qualitative multidimensional case study design (Yin 1984; Stake 2005; Creswell 2007; Baxter and Jack 2008).

Lyon metropolis was specifically selected to undertake this part of the work as its urban regeneration dynamics allow to investigate the phenomenon under study in relation with its diversified urban context, levering on different sources of evidence.

The development of the Lyon "descriptive" case study (Yin 1984) was based on a storyline analysis, as it "identifies assumptions and logics underlying the choice of particular policy directions over others" (Maccallum et al. 2019: 44), building on an inductive work based on a political discourse critique. The gaps of information identified in the public evidence were filled through semi-open interviews to public servants and local experts; while attending conferences further supplemented the local research.

3 Creative Industries, Clusters, and Cities in the Context of Urban Regeneration

We refer to creative cities as conurbations characterized by a high rate of individual, institutional and pervasive creativity, and to those cities that are able to use this resource as a tool for urban competition (Hospers 2003). In this framework, particularly interesting is the concept that promotes the combination of creative industries and culture (Cooke and Lazzeretti 2007; European Commission 2010; Grodach

2017), aimed at increasing the attractiveness of cities in terms of living, working, visiting and spending leisure time.

In 1995, the planner, Charles Landry and the expert in policy and cultural planning, Franco Bianchini, published "The Creative City", focusing on three intertwined topics while investigating the concept of the Creative City:

- the cultural, social, and economic impact that arises from creativity in cities;
- the need to promote integrated urban planning levering on knowledge from other disciplines (economy, sociology, ecology, psychology, etc.); and
- the active inclusion in the urban planning processes of ordinary, often marginalized persons or groups, such as minorities or migrants.

A few years later (2000), Landry publishes "The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovators", a book in which he challenges and further develops his ideas by proposing seven concepts, plus a series of techniques to help creative thinking and planning, as a toolbox for urban *renaissance*, where "the goal is to find interpretative 'keys' that improve our understanding of urban dynamics, and enable us to act on them." (Landry 2000: 165).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the American economist Richard Florida delivers what are also considered milestones on the subject of the creative city: "The Rise of the Creative Class" (2003), and "The Flight of the Creative Class" (2005) in which—relying on facts and figures—he emphasizes, on the one hand, the characteristics of people developing creative activities in cities, and on the other hand the environmental conditions that cities must offer in order for the *creative class* to be attracted and wishing to settle in them.

Richard Florida's books and the publication of John Howkins "The Creative Economy" (2001) gave a dramatic lift to the new planning paradigm, advocated by Landry. Florida's writings were particularly significant, as they connected three areas: a creative class – a novel idea –, the creative economy, and what conditions in cities attract the creative class (IPoP 2011).

Three years ago, in "The New Urban Crisis" (2017), Florida considered the shortcomings—such as, artist-led gentrification, and short-term duration of creative industries—of the last two decades of the type of urban renewal he has advocated. Flourishing cities—many of which developed along the lines of his theory—have become victims of their own success, as widespread inequality has risen alongside success and innovation, reaching its peaks, sadly, in the most open-minded and creative cities (Sussman 2017; Liang and Wang 2020), such as London, New York, and Los Angeles.

The Smart Creative City is also a twentieth-century concept. It grew out of economic sciences, especially the so-called Experience Economy (Pine and Gilmore 1998). For the past twenty-five years, the concept has been studied by a growing number of authors and researchers from different disciplines, so as to count nowadays on a diversified literature (Jensen 1996; Foley et al. 2012; Lehmann 2019). Under this paradigm, experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Although the concept of the experience economy was initially focused on business, it rapidly crossed

into tourism, architecture, nursing, urban planning, and other fields (Lonsway 2009; Liang and Wang 2020). For the economic development of cities, creative industries represent a strategic sector in the urban regeneration process, and the socioeconomic feature of smart creative cities can be considered the most evident, as well as the most critical one. Different spatial arrangements occur with the contribution of the creative and cultural sectors, as real driving forces of innovative urban development strategies (WEF 2016).

Creative quarters and clusters seem to be the key urban systems, i.e., powerful organizations aimed at advancing the creative economy.

Michael Porter argued—already thirty years ago—that competitive success tends to concentrate in particular industries and groups of interconnected industries (Porter 2009). Landry (2008), building on that, emphasized the role of clustering of talents, skills and support-infrastructure—central for the creative economy and the innovative *milieu.* The encompassing paradigm for urban development thus changed, from an urban manufacturing or infrastructure-based approach, to creative and innovative city-making. This is the art of making cities for people, including the connections between places and people, program and urban form, nature and the built environment, as well as the design and construction processes toward successful settlements (IPoP 2011).

The urgent need for urban regeneration occurs as an outcome of wider socioeconomic dynamics, like conversion into the post-industrial era of the Anthropocene, which results in empty cities and deserted post-industrial sites. An abandoned area *colonized* by a creative group soon becomes attractive for others, thus activating local revitalisation and wider regeneration (Scheffler 2016).

Urban policies are trying to stimulate the renovation of degraded areas into creative hubs in very different ways. One common way in European cities is through the implementation of so-called flagship projects (van Aalst and Boogaarts 2002), where innovative clusters make a connection between old and new, between large and small scale and between functions in, and close by, the new complex, attracting both locals and visitors alike. Examples include, to cite just a few, Dublin with the Temple Bar (1991), the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao (1994), the *Cultureplan* 2005–2008 of Rotterdam, and the Docks and old harbour requalification project in Marseille (2017). All of them are examples of integrated and visionary strategies, levering on culture, creative skills, and local identity, while delivering outstanding quality in architecture and urban design, with the rest of the actions under the public sphere just supposed to follow.

4 Lyon Creative City

In France, creativity has increasingly gained momentum within urban policies in deprived neighbourhoods, as a cultural-correlate of sustainability, notably within the "Politique de la Ville" (PdV) launched by the State already in the late 1970s, aiming at reducing territorial inequalities.

Ever since then, several challenging generations of the PdV have been set up addressing the specific domain of housing and urban economy, as well as more general issues in health, law and order, security and urban services and, lately, civic art. Over time, the cultural issue has been embedded as such in the fight against discrimination launched by the local agencies (*Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances,* that complements the *Agence nationale de rénovation urbaine*) by enhancing socioeconomic and professional integration, and supporting both cultural and artistic practices, as well as widespread access to cultural infrastructure (Palazzo 2013). Culture has become a major issue targeted by policy-makers, entering the PdV Agenda in a threefold approach:

- Access to cultural facilities;
- Organisation of cultural events and festivals;
- Support for artistic and cultural activities.

As a study site, Lyon, located in the region of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, and the second area of economic activity and distribution of wealth in France, has been selected as an emblematic case offering useful insights. Classified as the second French city by population, the agglomeration of Lyon today has all the attributes of a metropolis, i.e., an urban complex of great importance, which performs functions of governance, organization, and impetus in the political, economic, cultural, and innovation fields, all in a region that integrates it with the rest of the world. The Lyon metropolis, established since January 1, 2015, as an administrative entity, even represents the first metropolis generated in France by law (MAPTAM *Modernisation de l'Action Publique Territoriale et d'Affirmation des Métropoles*), before Paris and Aix-Marseille (Mollé 2019).

Lyon Métropole (formerly *Greater Lyon*) encompasses 59 municipalities and 1,262,000 inhabitants in an area of around 500 km^2 featuring a longstanding sense of strong inter-municipality responsible for the *Politique de l'Habitat* and the economic development.

Three are the reasons why Lyon Creative City (Fig. 1) is an excellent study case: It is the first among French creative cities (before Saint-Etienne, for Design;

Fig. 1 Lyon, France Image credits: UNESCO

Angoulême, for Literature; and Metz, for Music); the city levers on the brand *ONLY-LYON* to be exploited and broadcasted; and the creative development of the city is now 15 years old, and all the story-telling plan has already proved successful.

Lyon, a pioneering city in the field, has also put in place a true Smart City strategy to combine economic dynamism and sustainable development. The major urban projects carried by the city, i.e., Lyon Confluence, Lyon Part-Dieu, Lyon Gerland, Villeurbanne Carré de Soie, have become life-size areas of experimentation for imagining and developing new ways of living and working in the city (E&Y 2019). The urban projects Lyon Gerland and Lyon Confluence, described below, are particularly emblematic of the city's strong focus on innovation and entrepreneurship.

4.1 Lyon Gerland

In Lyon, Gerland (20,000 inhabitants, 700 ha) deserves specific attention. Located in the outskirts of the city center, the district has been marked by an imposing industrial history. Still characterized by big voids within post-industrial estates, Gerland is hosting 150 new social housing units/per year, a category which is expected to reach 25% of total housing by 2020.

In Gerland, urban regeneration has been carried out since the late 1990s by the agency, *Mission* Gerland, delivering a number of improvements addressing the public transport network, challenging re-development operations, high-quality infrastructure and green spaces, and aiming to create a culturally rich living environment, benefitting also from the presence of leading universities and private research centers, such as the *Grandes Ecoles*, and the *Biopôle* (Fig. 2).

It must be highlighted that at the turn of the century, in Gerland, main concerns were still raised by the share of inhabitants getting no benefits from the overall re-development, notably in the *Cités Sociales* estate, dating back to the 1930s. The district was suffering from massive concentration of social dwellings (over 50%) and increasing discrimination and precariousness, not to mention health problems, isolation and ageing, poor associative dynamism among inhabitants and tenants, low presence of local facilities and social infrastructure.

The *Contrat Urbain de Cohésion Sociale* (2007–2010; 2012–2014; 2015–2020), agreed by the *Mission* Gerland and the Greater Lyon since 2007, determined the turning point, envisaging the opportunity for disadvantaged people to conveniently move elsewhere, and conversely attracting middle class households for a more balanced *mixité sociale.*

Under the scheme of the *Contrat Urbain de Cohésion Sociale*, the district has been supported with investments in buildings' energy efficiency and new developments, while its open space has been thoroughly re-designed, with people increasingly reclaiming more qualitative open spaces and art works in an attempt to change the urban perspective.

Located on *Rue Georges-Gouy* in the 7th *arrondissement*, at the heart of Gerland, the *Espace* Diego Rivera is anchored in a working-class area of Lyon, renowned for

Fig. 2 Emlyon Business School, Lyon Gerland, Image credits: PCA-STREAM Philippe Chiambaretta Architecte

its large concentration of housing for foreign workers. Three *trompe l'oeil*, on two buildings at the entrance to the street, represent Mexico throughout its history with the pre-Columbian civilizations Aztec and Maya, the Spanish military conquest with Cortès, the enslavement of the local populations, the political social upheavals and land reform, with windows paying tribute to the work of Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, one of the fathers of wall art. Created by the cooperative *Cité Création*, and inaugurated on December 4, 2007, this 450 m^2 fresco (Fig. 3) was intended by the Diego Rivera Foundation and his daughter Guadalupe, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the artist's death.

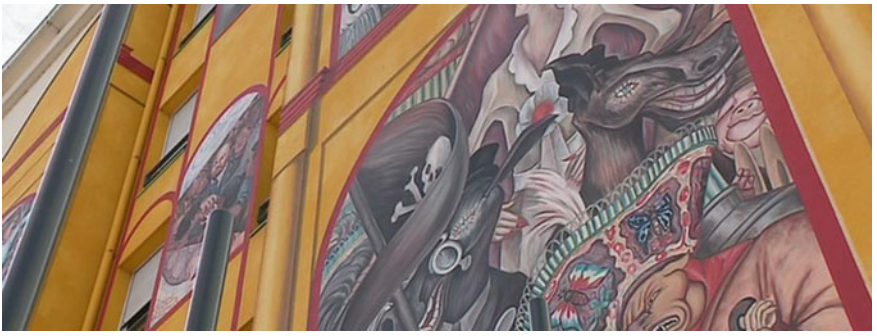

Fig. 3 Fresco by Diego Rivera. Image credits: France 3/Culturebox

At the time, the project was well received by the population, although some saw it as an apology for slavery. But, since then, the wall carrying the fresco has become an ideal hiding place for offenders. "What the residents were complaining about was mainly drug trafficking" declares Myriam Picot, mayor of the 7th *arrondissement*. As a result, since 2017, ten years after the inauguration of the *Espace* Diego Rivera in the working-class district of Lyon, only two walls remain painted out of the three. The heart of the structure has been destroyed. For the project supporters, the arguments advanced by the mayor do not justify its destruction, and a petition has been launched calling for the rehabilitation of the artwork.

4.2 Completing the Confluence to Redefine Lyon's Image

Lyon's race toward the future is personified in this reborn industrial district near the southern tip of Presqu'île, where the rivers Rhône and Saône converge. The land was reclaimed from the water between 1770 and 1850, and for a long time the area was used for industrial and logistics activities that made it less attractive: a postal sorting centre, wholesale structures, a natural gas plant, and prisons. The departure of those activities gradually created post-industrial brownfields and a land reserve at the heart of the urban area, a controversial landscape of exceptional quality at the confluence of the two rivers, featuring 5 km of riverbanks.

The decision taken in 1998 to transform the Confluence's 150 hectares of industrial brownfields was based not only on the desire to recover a prime location close to the city centre, but also to transform the area into a showcase of an ambitious city of the future (Genevois 2005), that is:

- A smart, sustainable city;
- A walkable city conducive to new forms of mobility;
- A city with bold architectural statements;
- A city for everyone, fostering social diversity.

Planned in two phases—Phase 1—2003/2018 and Phase 2—2010/2025—Lyon Confluence is one of the most ambitious city-center projects in Europe. The urban project characterizing 50 hectares of transformable land will be completed by 2025, with expected 1 million m^2 of newly built volumes (E&Y 2019). Lyon Confluence is already a smart district, with a level of architectural requirements and building processes unequalled in France. It is also Lyon's creative heart, whose key stakeholders in the creative economy include Lyon's French Tech. The district hosts 860 companies, i.e., large groups and many SMEs and start-ups from diverse sectors: communication and media, digital technologies, building and construction, energy and environment. Lyon's largest museum, *Musée des Confluences*, and Lyon's second largest shopping mall are also present in the quarter (E&Y 2019). A former factory dating from 1857, the newly renovated Halle Girard represents the last vestige of the industrial past of the Confluence. Today, the *halle* is strategically located in the new masterplan, as designed by Herzog and De Meuron and Michel Desvigne Paysagistes,

as an interface between the development of the dense city and a large natural area which will join the southern tip of the site. Once a landscape of empty warehouses and urban blight, the newly styled Confluence, with its contemporary architecture and innovative re-design, truly embodies the city of the future. Upon completion, 16,000 inhabitants, 25,000 employees, and an office stock of 500,000 m^2 are expected to characterize and animate the Confluence area (E&Y 2019).

5 Concluding Remarks

The overall objective of the conducted study has been to grasp the essential nature and complexity of smart creative urban transformations, under the more general urban regeneration policy and conceptual frameworks, learning from Lyon.

The literature review informed that the interaction between culture and urban economy, and the influence of creativity on conventional economic activities have resulted, internationally, in significant as well as controversial expressions.

Creativity, art, and culture have, within the Smart City and Community concept, a much broader power than they are usually attributed (Matovic et al. 2018), and the illustration of successful, as well as controversial experiences and practices implemented in Lyon stimulated a profound reflection on: the different dimensions of urban creativity; the effectiveness of cultural and artistic projects and events as urban regeneration devices; and the role of national and supranational stakeholders in supporting culture, art, and economy at nexus.

The development of CCIs in Lyon has a long history intertwined with urban regeneration, i.e., the development of CCIs has been widely used as a tool in urban planning and economic development strategies, and especially in some district is closely related to industrial revamping and new urbanization. CCIs have adapted to a variety of spatial configurations in Lyon, while contributing to the transformation of the social dimension of its urban economy in many ways. Local governance characteristics include top-down approach, close relation with ongoing urbanization—especially in Gerland—, and relatively weak ties with local communities. Claims for the distributive effects of creative regeneration strategies (social, economic, and environmental) generally lack evidence of impacts and benefits. Like many other cities in Europe, gentrification and displacement are also characterizing CCIs development in Lyon (Evans 2005). Sometimes, intents of control from the local government have exacerbated social issues, generating vandalism, and lack of consent.

Social issues related to urban landscape democracy in Lyon mirror existing trade-offs between different goals of urban regeneration policy that can be generalized as follows: to seek city branding, market interest, and entrepreneurialism through creativity-based placemaking strategies, on the one hand; and to support top-down governance legitimacy and mobilize consensus, on the other.

The main purpose of this study has also been to point out research gaps and stimulate future reflections on the potentialities of CCIs for urban regeneration at a European level. Not seeking to focus on benchmarking the economic effectiveness

underlying the production of urban creativity, the study instead aimed to convey the importance of exploring and better understanding synergies and trade-offs of the urban creativity phenomenon, and of pointing out, through future research, more inclusive practices for its management, promotion, and regulation, learning from cities which have championed this approach. When planning urban regeneration, informal networks and synergies should be the central focus of decision-makers. Examples of good practice in this regard are rare and therefore deserve greater attention and nurturing.

Creative clusters and common spaces of production should be instrumental as groundwork for cultural and social bonding, which are based on collective rules, conventions, knowledge, and diversified forms of sociocultural identification (Evans 2004). Social ties are crucial for organic upspring and effective functioning of creative clusters. The process becomes self-organized and functions as a grassroots initiative, launched and driven by the citizens (Scott 2010). When the bottom-up initiative is encouraged and sustained by strategic and visionary urban policies, it can be considered an effective device towards urban regeneration (Ley and Dobson 2008; IPoP 2011; Scheffler 2016). Without social dimensions, cohesion, governance, and vision specifically addressed, clusters are in fact nothing more than a plain concentration of economic activity in a particular area.

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