

Regional Perspectives: Using culture and creativity to transform places

The formation of cultural and creative districts is one way in which policy makers can promote cultural and creative sectors (CCS) at the local level. These districts often arise organically, through the clustering of cultural and creative businesses, workers and artists around a particular street or area within a city. However, cultural and creative districts can also be promoted by policy makers, through targeted planning strategies and support measures including, for example, renovating disused buildings, creating preferential business rates for CCS businesses, and launching creative hubs. Supporting the development of cultural and creative districts requires thorough consultation and engagement with local communities and the integration of different policy areas.

Presented below are five short case study examples of creative districts in OECD countries.

Matadero Madrid Centre for Cultural Creation (Madrid, Spain)

The Matadero Madrid Centre for Contemporary Creation is located in the city's former slaughterhouse and cattle market, in the Southern area of Arganzuela near the Manzanares river. The area functioned as the industrial slaughterhouse of Madrid from 1924 to 1996, when the buildings began to be re-purposed for cultural and creative activities. As a notable example, in the mid-1990s, the old cattle stable was transformed into the headquarters of the National Ballet of Spain and the National Dance Company.

In 2005, the Municipality approved a special plan of intervention to further adapt the use of the slaughterhouse, with an aim to increase the cultural use of the facility by 75%. A total of EUR 95 million was invested in the overall regeneration project, including the Slaughterhouse and surrounding area, with EUR 12.5 million of funding coming from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The new premises were opened in 2007 as an open space for the participation of all to create, reflect, learn and enjoy.

Founded in 2006, Matadero Madrid is managed and funded by Madrid City Council's Department of Culture and Sport. The centre aims to support cultural projects that promote employment, promote Madrid as a cultural destination, and offer support to artists, CCS businesses and entrepreneurs. Its various spaces host an extensive programme of exhibitions, plays, festivals, concerts, films and audio-visual projects, conferences, talks, workshops, educational programmes, and artistic residencies. The involvement of the city's major actors and institutions, such as universities, businesses and local groups has been a key source of success for the centre, which operates on a model of collaboration and partnership.

Alongside permanent and temporary exhibitions, Matadero Madrid hosts a number of festivals including the Matadero L.E.V. Festival of Visual Electronics; the RAYO Festival of Expanded Visual Arts; the Madrid International Documentary Film Festival; the International Contemporary Animation Festival of Madrid; and the Matadero Madrid International Literature Festival. The centre also houses Medialab, a community laboratory that acts as a meeting place for the production of open cultural projects, and the Mutant Institute

of Environmental Narratives (IMNA), a laboratory for creation and research that addresses the climate crisis through art, fiction and other strategies for citizen mobilisation.

The Jewellery Quarter (Birmingham, UK)

The Jewellery Quarter is an area of central Birmingham, the United Kingdom (UK) that represents around 1.07 square kilometres. It is currently one of the largest clusters of companies devoted, directly or indirectly, to jewellery production and trade in the UK.

For most of its history, the Jewellery Quarter was a closed community. There were no jewellery shops until the late 1970s when the economic recession prompted some of the manufacturers to open their doors to retail customers. Soon, other retailers moved into the area and in the 1980s, old buildings started to be restored rather than pulled down.

The area started to develop in the late 1970s, when the economic recession forced some of the manufacturers to include retail in their activities. They were soon joined by other businesses moving to Quarter which in turn supported the conservation of old buildings rather than their demolition.

The area has become a hub for artistic creation and CCS businesses. Seven hundred jewellers and retailers are based in the Jewellery Quarter. Over 150 independent specialist retailers and craftspeople specialising in other creative activities rather than jewellery such as gastronomy or graphic design are located there as well.

Established in 2011, the Jewellery Quarter Development Trust (JQDT) delivers several projects that enhance the environment for businesses, visitors and residents. In addition to running the Jewellery Quarter Business Improvement District, the Trust secures outside investment for the area and continues to protect its heritage through the National Lottery Heritage Fund schemes. Since 2012, the Trust has secured over £5 million worth of investment for the Jewellery Quarter.

The Jewellery Quarter Business Improvement District (JQBID) was established in 2012 by the JQDT as part of its long-term plan to improve the business environment of the Quarter and to make it an attractive location for people to visit and businesses to invest. The JQBID is funded by a local levy, set at 2% of rateable value, which is payable by all non-domestic properties within the BID area and is collected by Birmingham City Council.

Quartier des spectacles (Montreal, Canada)

The Quartier des spectacles, located around the site of a former red light district in Montreal, has a rich cultural history. In the late 1800s, the Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice and the Collège Sainte-Marie moved into the neighbourhood, soon followed by the first cultural establishment in the neighbourhood in 1885, The Gesù theatre. During the 1910s, a long line of theatres and cinemas opened or moved to the area, including the Monument-National, the Gayety Theatre, the Théâtre Saint-Denis and the Imperial Cinema, one of the first “super palaces” to be built in Montreal.

During the first part of the 20th century, the area became home to several cabarets, contributing to the reputation and popularity of Montreal as a place of recreation and leisure. However, the rise in popularity was accompanied by the growth of organised crime, prostitution and illegal gaming houses, leading to the area becoming known as a red-light district.

During the 1960s, the area underwent significant modernisation, with the construction of Place des Arts, the metro system, and the establishment of Hydro-Québec’s headquarters. Later, the building of commercial site, Complexe Desjardins and the campus of the Université du Québec à Montréal, also provided economic dynamism to the area. During the 1980s and 1990s, the network of cultural venues

expanded adding the Montreal Jazz Festival, the Musée d'art contemporain, the Société des arts technologiques and Club Soda while the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde underwent a complete renovation.

In 2001, several representatives from the cultural sector designed a vision for the future of Montreal based on positioning culture as a key development tool. The creation of the Quartier des spectacles aimed at using culture as the central piece of the development of the neighbourhood and the city of Montreal. The Montreal city government targeted the presence of major festivals to exhibit the existing cultural facilities. It was a form of intervention based on the existing path dependency of the area, improving the necessary infrastructures to accommodate the development of new events, shows and exhibitions.

The Quartier des spectacles Partnership was founded one year later, with 20 stakeholder members, responsible for activities in the neighbourhood public spaces, with the support of the City of Montreal and provincial and federal governments, all committed to the infrastructure development of the Place des Arts sector. New public spaces have been created (the Place des Festivals, Parterre, Promenade des Artistes) and many private and public real estate projects have been built, including several with a cultural focus, notably the 2-22 and the Maison symphonique de Montréal. The Partnership was then given the responsibility by the city to promote the destination, manage its public spaces and bring them to life. The Quartier hosts over 40 events each year alone contributing to enhancing the outdoor cultural offer of the city.

The Bronx creative district (Bogotá, Colombia)

The Bronx Creative District, located in Bogotá, aims to contribute to transforming the district into an inclusive, creative, caring and sustainable city. The idea for the Bronx Creative District was driven by the municipal administration in 2016, when the City Hall launched an urban renovation initiative in the area. The area where it is located was previously the largest drug distribution point in Bogotá and the development of the project aimed to transform this seriously deteriorated area into a cluster of economic and social development. Three neighbourhoods in the centre of Bogotá were direct beneficiaries of the project, Candelaria, Santa Fe and Mártires, which represent around 200 000 inhabitants.

The Bronx Creative District aims to be a space to develop productive initiatives, in an environment conducive to the birth of new consumption dynamics together with a cultural atmosphere of inclusion through support for entrepreneurs and companies in the creative and cultural industries.

The local Municipality initiated a public-private partnership to develop the creative district, in an effort observed across the country to attract private funding to complement municipal support for creative districts across Colombia. Currently, heritage protection actions are taking place in the area as well as the process of involving the existing community. The alliance between the Gilberto Alzate Avendaño Foundation and the Urban Renovation Company (ERU), both part of the district administration, is a major contributor to this project along with Bogota City Hall's department for sports, culture, recreation and habitat, among others and under the auspices of the Neighbourhood Redevelopment Plan (2020-2024).

The strategic objectives of the project are as follows:

- Generate opportunities for the productive reactivation and sustainability of the processes associated with the creative and cultural economy of the city, specifically the centre.
- Contribute to the recovery and revitalisation of the tangible and intangible heritage of its surroundings.
- Support the cultural and creative ecosystem of the city, through entrepreneurship, innovation and collaborative work.
- Promote social inclusion, strengthen the social fabric and coexistence, and generate opportunities for vulnerable communities.

22@Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain)

Located in the former industrial area of Poblenou, in the Northern East part of the city of Barcelona, the 22@ district has undergone significant regeneration over the past few decades. During much of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the area housed a large number of factories and industrial units, primarily in the textiles industry, earning the region the nickname “the Catalan Manchester” (in reference to the UK city of Manchester which was also a powerhouse of textiles production during this period). During the 1960s however, the textile industry in the district began to decline, prompting progressive decay and abandonment.

In 1992, the city of Barcelona housed the Olympic Games, bringing a renewed interest in regenerating former industrial areas, and creating stronger linkages between the district and the city’s business centre. Following this, discussions began about the future of the neighbourhood based on two main proposals, becoming a residential area or, alternatively, an economic (service-oriented) district. After public debate, the amended Metropolitan Master Plan for the refurbishment of the industrial area of Poblenou - the 22@ Plan - was adopted in July 2000.

The comprehensive 22@ redevelopment plan had a horizon of ten years and was based on three different focuses: urban, economic and social. The project aimed for the neighbourhood to become a compact city, with both residential and economic functions.

Cultural and creative industries, in particular the media sector, were targeted as axes of development following a Triple Helix combination of industries, institutions and universities. Large media companies such as Mediapro and Lavinia set up in the area, alongside SMEs. In addition, several arts factories such as Hangar o la Escocesa, were also located in the area, providing residences for artists, developing workshops and exhibitions and participating in all sorts of cultural projects.

The area was rethought in 2015, throughout a participatory process, where the involvement of the different stakeholders was considered, and the municipality became one additional partner in a large consortium. The key priorities were established and agreed among partners with respect to the future expansion of certain parts of the district still underdeveloped. A formal agreement was signed in 2018 with the involvement of all the related actors in the district. Cultural and creative sectors formed an important component of this plan, with one street in particular, Pere IV Street, designed to become a “creative mile”. The new plan saw a mix of interventions and existing and new entrepreneurial and small and medium creative organisations contributing to forging a creative and cultural atmosphere, moving forward the more “economic” orientation of the past.

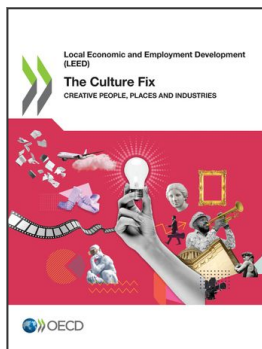
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