

Book review

The Cultural Sector and Sustainable Economic Development: Innovation and the Creative Economy in European Cities

by *Biljana Mickov (Ed.)*,
Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire
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The book “Cultural sector and sustainable economic development” was written by Professor Biljana Mickov from the University of Reims – Sorbonne based on her PhD Thesis. This book offers a theoretical and practical analysis of the current approach to culture and innovation. It focuses on the relationships between culture, innovation and the economy by highlighting the impact of the cultural sector on city attractiveness and on the sustainable development of urban tourism in Europe.

This book presents the structure of a PhD thesis and includes, in its introduction, the study, the hypotheses, as well as the methodology of choice, its objectives, research questions and background. The following sections are dedicated to important dimensions related to innovation, culture, development and sustainability within the city context. Case studies from several European cities are used to describe the way culture and the creative economy are redesigning urban development in the Old Continent. It maps the European perspective, highlights the successes and challenges faced by the European cities portrayed and provides guidance on the practices that will have greater impact on urban development in other geographic contexts. The book is of great value to four different types of audiences:

students and instructors; cultural professionals; private and public entities interested in developing and managing urban and cultural development; and researchers working in the field.

The author starts with an interesting overview and reflection on *Cities Today* and on the centrality of culture, technology and innovation in the urban development taking place in modern society. *Agenda 21 for Culture* is portrayed as an important tool and guide for the development of city networks to be used in the pursuit of more sustainable development of culture in urban environments.

Then, and in line with the collaborative dimension of cities, the author considers three main dimensions: *Culture, Innovation and Development*. By presenting different development models based on a sustainability model, the author advocates that governments should include the different actors involved, such as local government, public and private cultural entities and agents and residents, among others, right from the outset. Networking and horizontal cultural management are proposed as cornerstones for innovation and for the production of new cultural spaces in cities. This way, the democratic participation of all the parties involved in the development of culture will be reinforced and will be able to contribute to a more creative and open city. In these circumstances, the relationship between technology, culture and art is discussed in the context of innovation and of the role it plays in the cultural development of cities.

The Environment and Sustainable Development is the last section in the

introductory part of the book. The ambiguous, and sometimes paradoxical, relationships between culture, innovation and environment are discussed through a reflection on how culture and cities influence climate change and how this, in turn, will affect cities and people.

Part I of the book is dedicated to *Local Government and Innovation*. Cultural policies are discussed and revisited in light of the innovation concept, and then an analysis of several different elements that might contribute to innovation in European cities and territories is carried out. The role of the creative industries is highlighted as they are regarded, not only as key instruments for the cultural development of cities, but also as crucial elements for the economy and for social sustainability in urban environments. The *New European Agenda for Culture* supports the fact that cohesive and inclusive societies and a more attractive and fairer Europe are enhanced when culture is perceived not only as a common heritage, but also as a support for a more sustainable economy where tourism plays a central role. In fact, culture provides new business opportunities and bolsters job creation. Technological innovations are revisited to analyze the present and the future of industries and the creative economy in a smart context.

Part II, *Culture and the Creative Economy*, presents a collection of case studies conducted on European cities as the field of study for culture, innovation and urban development. After having laid down a framework of the European culture and of its main pillars, the author introduces a case study methodology based on a mixed-method approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. The cities under study were divided into three groups:

1. Cities whose IT or creative industries show a high level of development in terms of

innovation: Stockholm, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin, Turku, London and Eindhoven (Northern Europe).

2. Cities well developed in terms of social and technological innovation and creative industries: Rome, Bologna, Barcelona, Brussels, Reims, Grenoble, Marseille, Mannheim and Dortmund (Western Europe).
3. Cities with lower and different levels of social innovation and creative industries: Ljubljana, Zagreb, Bratislava, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Skopje, Gabrovo, Krakow, Kiev, Moscow, Eindhoven and Budapest (Central and Eastern Europe).

The main goal is to clarify the relationships between culture and innovation based on the use of new technology, the importance of creative industries and institutional research. The European cities presented are analyzed taking into account the effectiveness of their local policies for the development of culture and creative industries, and focus is placed on social innovation, project innovation, cross-innovation and environmental sustainability.

The final section of the book, Part III *Analysis of Case Studies in Europe*, presents the main conclusions of this study and offers an analysis of the contemporary cultural ecosystem, proving that culture plays a pivotal role in urban sustainable development. The case studies show that there are strong relationships between culture, social development, the economy and environmental sustainability, that should be managed and balanced.

In conclusion, this book is an important tool to understand the connections between culture, innovation, the economy and urban sustainable development. By presenting the case studies of several European cities, this book gives us an interesting portrait of the urban and cultural levels of development in the Old Continent. In such a turbulent era, marked by a

global pandemic and by uncertainty regarding peace and diplomatic relations, the book “Cultural sector and sustainable economic development: Innovation and the creative economy in European Cities” is an important contribution to decision makers and managers that should consider culture as an important contributor to achieve progress, sustainability and stability for citizens and the development of cities.

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About the author

Claudia Seabra is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Tourism of the University of Coimbra where she coordinates the PhD in Tourism,

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