

Rethinking small places - Urban and Cultural Creativity beyond the Metropolis: Examples from Sweden, USA and Bosnia Herzegovina

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Over the past twenty years, the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, have increasingly made culture and the broader *creative economy* the business of cities and the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge (Zukin, 1995). During the 1990s, in particular, notions such as the network society, the experience economy, creative cities and globalisation were used to define new modes of production and consumption within the ‘new economy’ (Kelly, 1998) and emphasis was put on the interplay between the economy and culture, as well as on creating crossovers between media and technologies (Amin and Thrift, 2004). The result for urban policies was that, rather than selling just goods or services, even small cities began to mobilise tourism, the retail trade, architecture, event management, and the entertainment and heritage industries, as well as the media and the wider Creative Industries, in order to produce and sell ‘experiences’ (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

This is true today of large cities but even more so for ‘second tier’ cities¹ such as those presented in this chapter. Essentially, the more outside competition these cities confront, the smoother must their operations be in order to harness their internal resources or their ‘creative capital’. In this scenario, a dynamic and creative-led urban policy becomes part of the image of a city and acts as a catalyst for its symbolic economy (Verwijnen, 1999). Thus, tourism, culture and the Creative Industries – the fastest-growing industries in Europe – play an important role in the urban image-creation processes, providing a major rationale for the aesthetisation of city landscapes and the creation of new urban identities. This understanding of the complex and often contradictory nature of urban space is explored in Henri Lefebvre’s notion of ‘the production of space’:

“Space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations” (1991: 286).

To this he also adds that every society in history has shaped a distinctive social space that meets its intertwined requirements for economic production and social reproduction. This social notion of space – applied to the current concerns of ‘second tier’ cities – will form the basis for the analysis of the three case studies presented in this chapter. In particular, we will argue that while new narratives of regeneration, urban culture and heritage have been employed in the conversion of these places into post industrial, knowledge-oriented creative hubs, the process of implementing this regeneration has not been unproblematic. As more ‘second tier’ cities compete (using similar mechanisms), in (re)producing and promoting themselves to attract a globally mobile middle class and other forms of flexible capital, their ability to create uniqueness diminishes, the economic benefits turn out to be short-lived and the ‘creativity potential’ is depleted.

In *The City and the Grassroots*, Manuel Castells has noted that the problem with this new ‘tendential’ urban meaning is that it creates the spatial and cultural separation of people from their product and from their history (1983: 314). The implication here is that these policies can have an effect not just on the urban form but also on governance and, ultimately, on social justice.

¹ For a definition of Second Tier Cities see: Ann Markusen, Yong-Sook Lee, and Sean DiGiovanna (eds.) *Second Tier Cities: Rapid Growth Beyond the Metropolis*. Minnesota University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Introducing the Case Studies

This chapter draws together case studies from three contrasting regions – Southern Sweden, Idaho USA, and Bosnia Herzegovina – to explore the divergent approaches to urban development policies and the broader ‘creative economy approach’ that smaller, ‘second tier’ cities adopt according to different levels of political and economic stability, cultural integration, and metropolitan aspiration. The three case study cities – Malmö, Boise and Tuzla – are each going through a process of re-thinking their position in the urban hierarchy through a focus on creativity, new forms of governance and partnership – each with varying levels of success. These responses are provided, variously, against a context of political upheaval, cultural inferiority, low levels of economic capital, bureaucracy, and relative prosperity. The contrasts between the case studies are marked, yet the ambition to steer each of these cities towards international competitiveness and local harmony – based upon innovative approaches to cultural planning and regeneration – reveals what these very different ‘smaller cities’ have in common.

Malmö is Sweden’s third largest city and the commercial centre of Southern Sweden. It is a progressive and forward-thinking city, with an increasingly qualified workforce, where high-tech and knowledge-intensive activities are replacing the old, traditional industrial structure. The expansion of Malmö University College, the opening of the Öresund fixed link between Malmö and Copenhagen, in neighbouring Denmark, and the regeneration of the Western Harbour symbolise how the city is aggressively repositioning itself as a player in the global urban competition game. An additional ingredient in this process of identity building is the (still ongoing) implementation of a number of housing and regeneration projects in the area of the Western Harbour. However, as the Malmö section will show, this process of identity rebuilding – from an industrial centre to a sophisticated, high-tech, new-economy driven hub – poses a number of challenges which even a relatively successful city such as Malmö cannot ignore.

Boise, Idaho, is by many measures a most unlikely place for urban creativity and the strategic pursuit of a creative agenda – it is relatively small, remote and, for many people even in the U.S., little known; it is prosperous and increasingly so; and it is located in a region not recognised for its creativity and the progressiveness this implies. And yet Boise is developing into a small urban creative city on the move. Unlike many cities, Boise is facing no serious economic crisis that pushes it towards embracing a creative-led agenda. Unemployment is typically below 4%, housing starts and price increases are among the fastest growing in the U.S., and the city and state continue to rank high in top business, recreation, and retirement reports. However, key people in business, arts, government, and education are increasingly realizing the importance of creativity as a crucial part of maintaining the city’s quality of life while also preserving a strong economic base. This is in some part linked to the city’s long tradition of entrepreneurship: the city’s key companies (many of which have been on the Fortune 500 list of the country’s largest) stemmed from the pioneering efforts of a few hard charging individuals. Thus, the notion of moving forward, trying new ideas, and accepting failure, has a precedent.

In **Bosnia Herzegovina**, smaller cities are struggling to ‘break into’ international networks and to undertake calculated risks that advance their status and profile. Key strategic considerations often centre around re-building civic identity and intercultural pride from the ‘bottom-up’, with memories from the 1990s war too painful and divisive to allow more progressive international focus to take hold. For some, building an international role and profile is seen as a relative luxury; yet for many it is increasingly recognised as a necessary move if cities are to shed their internal parochialism and its dangerous consequences and climb inter-regional and international urban hierarchies. Vital is the contribution of relatively young leaders and intermediaries, less implicated in the war, more open to the cultural and creative opportunities of inter-city connectivity, and critically aware of the positive impact this ‘openness’ will bring to the political process and community. This section will introduce the ways the northern Bosnian city of **Tuzla** is basing its future harmony and success on a broad approach to ‘cultural democracy’, where every project, service or intervention is positioned as part of a wider cultural plan to raise the profile of the city to the ‘outside world’ while connecting

locally to the aspirations of a local population which is for the most part keen to move on from the torment of recent history.

Part One – Learning to be Creative through Regeneration: The Case of Malmö **Lia Ghilardi, Director, Noema Research and Planning, London, UK**

With a population of 270,000 inhabitants, Malmö is Sweden's third largest city and the commercial centre of southern Sweden. It is a cosmopolitan and multicultural city where high-tech and knowledge-intensive activities are slowly replacing the old, traditional industrial structure that since the 1960s had given it its 'working class' character. In particular, the integration of the Öresund region brought about by the link with Copenhagen, plus other major infrastructural investments, are putting the city on the map along with the most advanced European 'second tier' centres such as Rotterdam, or Lille.

The expansion of Malmö University College (with a student population of 21,000) and the development of the Western Harbour area, with housing and innovative workspaces such as the incubator MINC, has brought to the city an atmosphere of youthful creative energy. Cafés, open spaces, galleries and shopping areas are dotted all around the city and the overall feel is that of a compact, lively place. What was once a brash, blue-collar city, is now in the process of becoming an acknowledged centre for information technology and biotechnology. This transition, however, does not appear to have been an easy one to achieve for a city that still carries on its shoulders the burden of recent industrial failures. The 1990s recession hit Malmö harder than any other city in Sweden, with 27,000 jobs disappearing during a period of three years in the mid-1990s. As a port and business city, with roots going back to the Middle Ages, Malmö seems to have a peculiar 'genetic code' that makes it prone to constant swings between periods of growth and prosperity and decades of relative decline.

From an urban sociology perspective, one could argue that this is a cycle often observed in medium-size European port cities, and here the names of Hamburg, Bilbao, Rotterdam, Bristol and Glasgow come to mind. These are all cities that had a great history of commercial and urban development, and then hit the rocks of recession in the 1970s. But, since then, they have all been able, to a certain degree, to reinvent themselves. This successful 'remaking' of smaller cities is often underpinned by a focus on the resilience, creativity and cultural mix of these urban centres. In the case of Glasgow, it was its internationalism as well as its urban and cultural heterogeneity that made it possible for the city to successfully begin – in the early 1990s – to reverse the cycle of decline which seemed, until then, intractable.

Similarly, early commercial development brought cultural variety to the city of Rotterdam, so much so that it was precisely this successful cosmopolitan mix of skills and potential that in the early 1980s saved the city from the decline of the shipbuilding industry and encouraged the planners and policy-makers to design a new regeneration plan (*The Binnenstadspan*). This, in turn, was the first step towards the successful creation of a new identity for the city. This notion of urban and social mix, along with the importance for cities of having a creative milieu, are increasingly seen by urban commentators as central in the making of successful and competitive cities. In particular, the argument put forward by economic development experts such as Allen Scott (1998), Jeremy Rifkin (2000) and, more recently, Richard Florida (2002), is that today's economy is fundamentally a 'creative' economy.

In his study of what makes cities and regions grow and prosper, Florida observes that, rather than being exclusively driven by companies, economic growth is occurring in places that are tolerant, diverse and open to creativity, mainly because these are the places where creative people of all types want to live. Scientists, engineers, architects, designers or artists are all part of a new creative global class that cities need to nurture in order to be able to compete internationally (Florida, 2002). So, by extension, Florida's message is that development policies need to be aware of the benefits of creating an environment in which tolerance of different lifestyles and a good quality of life for everybody living in a particular place go hand in hand.

In the Swedish panorama of old industrial cities attempting to recover new functions, Malmö seems to have done better than other cities. From its 13th century origins, rooted in the herring trade, to the splendours of its Danish period and the great developments of the 19th century characterised by the expansion of the textile industry and the shipyards, Malmö is a city open to external influences, proud of its achievements and not afraid of taking risks.

Now that its once thriving docks are being redeveloped into both University Island, and the new housing and business district of the Western Harbour, Malmö is learning to develop new ways of dealing with planning and governance. This new approach is the result of a process of '*learning by doing*' which has its roots in recent attempts by the city to implement large regeneration projects using the tools of masterplanning and welfare policies – typical of an old utopian Swedish tradition – despite the 'discovery' that these tools don't work anymore in an environment in which cultural diversity, fragmentation of interests and new forms of democratic representation dominate.



Housing development in the Western Harbour

Learning To Be Creative

“The big issue for Malmö is recreating its identity. The image of an old industrial city belongs to the past; we now have to come up with a major project for the future, something indicative of a shared vision”.

With these words, back in 1999, the City Director Ilmar Reepalu articulated Malmö's aspiration to join Copenhagen in the new Öresund region while at the same time sending out a message that the city needed to be bold in its thinking about the future. The response of the city came in the shape of the Draft Comprehensive Plan published less than a year after Reepalu's speech. The Plan singled out for implementation a number of, mainly infrastructural projects – such as the expansion of the University and the transformation of the Western Harbour – which in the minds of the planners were to have tangible benefits on the whole of the city's economy. However, these projects ran into difficulty as soon as they started, due to a number of social and economic reasons, the most important of which was the underestimation by planners and policy-makers alike of the social changes the city was undergoing at the time.

The late 1990s was a period of great upheaval for the city and while refugees from Kosovo and other European war zones were increasingly choosing to settle in the city – putting a strain on Sweden's legendary liberal ideals of social and housing policy – unemployment (particularly in the public sector) was rising as the spatial segregation between the new middle classes and the old inhabitants increased. The launch of the regeneration of the Western Harbour (spearheaded by the 2001 Housing Expo Bo01) came right in the middle of these changes and, with mounting controversy in the press about the ability of regeneration to deliver benefits for the whole of the community and not just for the new middle classes, it looked as if, for a time, the success of the plan was in danger.

The root of the problem was later identified in the lack of support given by the local community to this big regeneration plan. In particular, the language adopted in the marketing literature for the

Western Harbour² prompted community leaders to criticise those in charge of the delivery of the plan for bypassing the basic principles of democratic accountability. This reaction can only be understood by looking at the past forty years of Malmö's history, whereby since the 1960s (a time of great urban expansion for both the inner city and the suburbs), economic growth and urban expansion were achieved through carefully nurtured relations between the political establishment (mainly the Social Democratic Party), the public sector, the banks, and the construction industry. Thus, while in the past such transformations were the result of a shared, top-down, carefully planned long term vision, today they seem to happen more as an urgent, 'ad hoc', response to perceived outside threats.

For any 'second tier' city to go from an essentially industrial economy to a 'creativity and knowledge-driven' mode of production and consumption, all in little more than a decade, would be a challenge, but for Malmö the stakes are even higher. There are two reasons for this. The first, as mentioned earlier, is the 'historic baggage' of welfare and democratic accountability to which the city is still tied, and the second is the rapidly changing social, economic and cultural environment in which policy makers were and are trying to operate.

With more than a quarter of the population having foreign roots, Malmö is the most multiethnic city in Sweden. Here, diversity also extends to a highly visible variety of lifestyles, political and ethical allegiances, consumption patterns, and sexual orientations. This richly diverse environment requires constant renegotiations of trust along with redefinitions of legitimacy by local government. This is the task that local politicians and policy-makers alike are learning to perform and the testing ground is the completion by 2010 of the cultural and housing redevelopment of the Western Harbour. The redevelopment will involve turning 160 hectares of harbour front brownfield land into a fully developed new, ecologically sustainable, 'neighbourhood' of 10,000 inhabitants. Malmö's 'City of Tomorrow'³ is made up of the old Swedish ingredients of meticulous planning and a quality of housing and urban design of such standard that the 'new neighbourhood' has already been heralded as a prototype for the new European urbanism.

So far, the city appears to have turned what could have been a 'high risk' development into a successful tool to attract interest and investment from Sweden and outside, but what is interesting here is to look at the management and governance components of this success. In particular, it is worth noting a precondition, which is that, over the past ten years, Malmö City council has increasingly assumed responsibility for urban and economic growth. This 'decentralisation' of responsibility was implemented through the establishment in 1996 of a 'Districts' Reform'. The Reform involved the division of Malmö into ten city districts with their own councils and administrations. The result was a much leaner government with the ability to respond quickly and flexibly to local needs. This new 'culture of flexibility' prepared the ground for the establishment of the public-private partnership that is currently presiding over the development of the Western Harbour. Although the lead organisation is the City of Malmö (backed by the Swedish government), this partnership includes private development companies (a total of thirteen developers), the university, business leaders and residents' associations. The partnership is a flexible mechanism that is allowing the city to considerably shorten the time span between planning and implementation and is a strategic mechanism capable of delivering on issues ranging from the infrastructure for the creative economy to education and training and housing.

Examples of the projects recently implemented through the partnership include the creation of MINC, an incubator for high-tech start-ups, now expanding into a key support mechanism for local design companies, and the creation of University Island (the new university campus which specialises in new media and communication). These two projects were achieved in parallel with the creation of 500 ecologically sustainable residential units, which are currently rented or sold to occupants working in creative jobs in the Western Harbour. Though implementation has turned out to be quite a steep learning curve for the city, this level of regeneration and risk-taking in a 'small town' such as Malmö is still unprecedented in Sweden and especially as far as 'governance' is

² See Bo01 City of Tomorrow Brochure, 1999.

³ See City of Tomorrow Brochure, 1999.

concerned. Here too Malmö is experimenting with new mechanisms aimed at ensuring democratic participation and a higher degree of transparency in the decision-making process in relation to large regeneration programmes.

One such mechanism is the City Planning Forum set up two years ago. The Forum is a permanent place for the planning department to hold exhibitions, meetings and seminars on the subject of Malmö's urban developments (especially those in the Western Harbour). This is a strategic tool put in place not only for the dissemination of information to the general public, but also as a way of inducing a collaborative approach to the design and planning of the areas in need of transformation..⁴

In conclusion, the key lesson from this example is that 'little to lose', upstart, ex industrial cities such as Malmö are performing a 'trailblazer' role in Sweden by challenging traditional, top down approaches to urban and cultural development. In this case, a mix of risk-taking, flexible management, cross-disciplinary work and democratic participation, combine to establish a broader understanding of the city's cultural resources that put Malmö on the map of cities to visit, invest and live in. Finally, Malmö's quintessentially 'adaptive' quality has opened the way to experiments in governance which other cities in Sweden and elsewhere may wish to follow.

Part 2: The Pioneer Model: Moving toward the Creative Economy, Nancy .K. Napier, Professor, International Business, Boise State University, Idaho USA

Boise, Idaho, is a most unlikely place for a creative-led approach to urban development – it is relatively small, remote, little-known and growing very quickly. Indeed, by comparison, Malmö is a more 'obvious' location for creative-orientated growth: it is closer to the metropolitan core of the continent, it is more diverse, and it has a long history of industrial development. And yet, for several reasons, Boise is developing into a small urban creative city on the move, with several characteristics similar to Malmö. For example, Richard Florida's (2000) rankings have shown Boise, Idaho, to be one of the top U.S. cities attractive to creative people, and Malmö is an increasingly promising proposition for aspiring creative people in Sweden. With such confirmation of an already strong position, Boise's decision-makers and urban strategists recognize that a valuable intellectual market will be available only if the city grows its economic strength and remains attractive to live in: creativity is thus an investment in future competitiveness and prosperity. This Section explores how Boise is investing in its future by adapting approaches that contributed to its very existence: it was once a pioneer city on the edge of the American West, a place where only the most adventurous settled and invested. Today, new pioneers are seeking to establish a creative city for the future.

Conditions Defining Boise, Idaho USA

Boise and Idaho are known for odd reasons or not known at all. Potatoes, racists, and "where's that?" are the most common image challenges. It is remote - Boise is the state's (only significant) population centre, with nearly 400,000 in a 50 x 30 mile valley. It has been known for being "the potato state" (e.g., as the major supplier of McDonald's French fried potatoes), as (former) Neo-Nazi haven, until 2000 when the Aryan Nations lost a major legal battle and left the area, and for having "no image," since people confuse it with states having similar sounding names (e.g., Iowa, Ohio). The negative (or lack of) images of Idaho and Boise are fast being replaced by one of high quality of life, good business environment, and attractive retirement option. In the last few years, Boise has received much positive attention in a variety of press outlets as a place to do business, retire, or enjoy recreation. For example, it has attracted a collection of large firms (e.g., Micron Technology) and start-ups, and the state's largest university (more than 18,000 students).

⁴ For an analysis of the City Planning Forum's role in the regeneration of the Western Harbour, see case study: Building a Collaborative Design Approach for the Development of the Western Harbour, in the dissertation by Maria Lundgren, Malmö University, Department of Media and Communication, 2004.



Boise, Idaho



Hell's Canyon



Micron Technology

However, remoteness continues to scare off potential employees and employers (“why would I move to the end of the world?”) and makes some aspects of business life (international travel) slightly more challenging. The CEO of one of the city’s top software firms – small, but with clients worldwide – recently commented that as his firm grows, it becomes harder to recruit. Without a large cluster of software firms in the city, high tech experts are reluctant to move from areas like the Silicon Valley, where their career options are broader. However, remoteness in Idaho does have its positive sides. Because of the lack of amenities, original settlers – and modern day pioneers as well – have created a full spectrum of cultural, economic, and social fabric in the city. In addition, having major corporations based in the city means that many managers have come from more cosmopolitan settings, and hence expect access to cultural and related activities. The city has its own philharmonic, ballet, modern dance, and opera companies; it has two professional theater groups -- a nationally recognized summer Shakespeare Festival and highly regarded contemporary theater. While the city lacks the range of options of a metropolis like Seattle or San Francisco, it has cheap and accessible parking, relatively low event ticket prices, and high quality performances.

Today, Boise sits at the state’s political, (newly developing) educational and business center. It hosts the state capital, state agencies, branch offices of several federal agencies, and even headquarters of selected federal agencies, such as the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates all forest fire efforts for the country as a whole. Boise State University leads the state in growth of students, with lead programs in engineering, business, and public affairs. Finally, as introduced above, the business center of the state is undoubtedly in Boise. Many firms, like Micron Technology, have their headquarters in Boise, or major divisions, such as Hewlett-Packard. The actual number of spin offs from the larger technology firms is unknown but estimated to be about 300. Such conditions lead to questions of why and how such a small urban community should move towards a more robust, creativity-based economy. The ‘why’ is born out of a lack of complacency and a realization that for the city to grow beyond its small city status it requires a broader range of creative assets and approaches; the ‘how’ is through an emerging model that differs from any other non-East coast US city and has more common with cities in Europe: the Pioneer Model.

The Pioneer Model of Small Urban Development

Compared to the U.S., cities in Europe have led the wave of interest in and development of Creative Industries and creative communities. Only in the last few years have pockets of creative-led urban strategies in the mid- and western- US begun to emerge. Much of the initial deliberate efforts have come in the eastern part of the U.S., especially in New England, the south-east (e.g., Georgia and Florida), and south (e.g., Memphis, Tennessee and Louisiana). In the UK/ Europe and eastern U.S., efforts appear to be primarily driven or led by key champions, often government or political officials. For example, the Department of Culture, Media and Sports in the U.K. spearheaded early work on Creative Industries; and the mayors of cities in the U.K. (e.g., Huddersfield) and Europe (e.g., Freiburg, Germany), helped lead work to distinguish their cities. Likewise, governors of Maine, Vermont, and the Louisiana, have made the creative economy and Creative Industries a key focus for economic development. On the other hand, a top-down, champion driven model, common in Europe and the eastern part of the U.S., may not always be appropriate or desirable, especially in the western part of the U.S. The “pioneer” metaphor helps to illustrate an alternative model of how creative economies and Creative Industries may evolve, at least in one part of the ‘Wild West’.

The notion of pioneers is fundamental to American culture and identity. It suggests migration of a group of nameless adventurers, who see themselves as highly independent, and set out (mostly) together on a journey to a generally unknown destination (and they shape it as they go), where they use external guides (like experts on Creative Industries). Boise’s pioneers are just beginning the trek. Despite no clearly identified pathway, signs already exist to suggest some of the outcomes for Boise, especially ways to blend different disciplines to support high-tech, the arts, and educational endeavours. For example, an informal group has formed (TekKlatsch) that brings together people from business, government, and education to share information and ideas about how to build the high technology industries within the region. In particular, there is growing interest in creating a Media Center that would house high tech, arts, educational, and meeting spots for people from all range of disciplines. In addition, state level effort has begun to find ways to bring film industry production to the state as well as ways to support the budding local indigenous independent film industry: the acclaimed 2004 film *Napolean Dynamite* a case in point.

The Pioneer Model is at an early stage of development, yet it is already clear that there are at least four reasons why the model may be appropriate for a remote, small urban community like Boise, Idaho. First, a lack of clear “leaders” or champion(s) *can* be an advantage because it allows creative community development to emerge organically, permitting unexpected pathways and options to arise. Second, with no clear champions on the horizon in the city, a group of nearly invisible or quiet “guides and translators” are appearing. These people are quietly guiding groups to move in similar directions and help “translate” knowledge from outside sources for usefulness to the Boise community. They have formed no coordinated group, have no official name, but rather quietly “nudge” in their respective areas. A third reason for the pioneer model’s success is the notion of being able to “find new veins,” in this case creativity - a renewable and distributed resource. Finally, the model seems to work because the pioneers are willing to create pockets of change or “forts” as the community develops. The quiet guides are creating formal and informal discussion groups, websites with access to information and experts, and advocacy teams to work toward building certain industries.

Boise, Idaho, a remote city in what many (still) consider to be the frontier of the U.S., may offer a model for how smaller creative cities develop over time. The mix of location, people, and history have blended to yield a more pioneering (bottom-up) potential model. To succeed, several factors are critical. First, eventually the community will need a champion(s) to offer cohesive vision. In addition, the model allows opportunities for many trails or directions. Yet, eventually the community must decide whether it can (or should) sustain all of the “good ideas” or “Creative Industries” or whether to focus on a few. At present, emerging areas range from bio-sciences to film to media centers to high tech to agribusiness and beyond. Will the state, the community, or organizations want to support all (in time, money, and other resources)? Such questions and longer term monitoring may reveal the pioneer model as an emerging alternative approach to creative community development and the revisioning of cities at the margins.

Part Three: Revisioning the Scarred City: Cultural Democracy, Leadership and the Young Voice of Tuzla – Tom Fleming, Director, Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, London UK.

Tuzla in north-east Bosnia Herzegovina provides an example of how a relatively small, undistinguished city in a marginal and stricken part of the world, can invigorate change that is innovative, empowering and distinctive. Through undertaking a 'cultural democracy' approach to city planning, Tuzla has managed to transform its decaying industrial heritage into a new economy asset; it has translated a negative identity based on this industrial heritage into a progressive forward-looking sense of place; and it has used the shock and pain of war to galvanise citizens into building cohesively for the future good of the city. Tuzla remains relatively poor, isolated and negatively received/portrayed; but the city has set in motion a process of change that is gradually transforming the physical and psychological landscape to configure a new city that is youthful, bold, international, innovative and increasingly intercultural. This process of change is led by a genuinely visionary mayor and supported by a population that has shown ambition, tolerance and huge appetite for a better and more connected city. Vital has been the increased engagement and commitment of the city's younger citizens.

There's no avoiding salt

Tuzla is Bosnia Herzegovina's fourth largest city, with a population of 165,000⁵. It is one of Europe's oldest continuously populated settlements and can attribute its growth to coal and salt extraction⁶, which has established the city as a centre for heavy industry, with a strong presence of complementary chemical and energy production. It is this industrial city image that dominates notions of Tuzla, plus the tragic events of recent history, when in 1995, 72 young people were massacred by a Serb mortar attack. It is very much a scarred city: physically and psychologically scarred by industry and war⁷. For example, there is no escaping salt: the name Tuzla is derived from the history of salt extraction⁸, the city has a 'Salt Square', and until recently the old salt mines were subsiding, sinking parts of the city by more than 10 metres, scarring the landscape and city identity, leading to regular salt-water flooding and prompting a range of disincentives to invest in or think positively about the city.

However, there is more to Tuzla than salt and war. For example, the city has a strong cultural heritage. It is the birthplace of perhaps Bosnia's greatest artist, Ismet Mujezinovic and home to one of its foremost living writers, Semezdin Mehmedinovic. It has Bosnia & Herzegovina's oldest theatre. It is also a university city, with a relatively young population for a country losing a high proportion of young people through international migration. It is the energy, resourcefulness and vision of Tuzla's young people that provides the focus for change in Tuzla: their capacity to reinterpret the past – the salt, the war – to create new identities and opportunities is crucial to the future prosperity, competitiveness and, quite possibly, peace.

⁵ Tuzla is the seat of the Tuzla Canton, which is a canton of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as of Tuzla Municipality, which is one of the 13 municipalities that together constitute the Tuzla Canton. Administratively, Tuzla is divided into 39 mjesne zajednice (local districts).

⁶ For example, in 950 AD, the Byzantine historian and Cezar Constantine Porfirogenet mentions the existence of Tuzla's salt water springs and settlements surrounding them.

⁷ During and after the war over a million people left the country, around 25% of the total population, including a large proportion of the professional classes - the intellectual and knowledge infrastructure of the country has been decimated. Over 300,000 people were killed - the majority Bosnians. 40% of the population remains displaced - creating immense problems of community building (see Landry 2002).

⁸ It is derived from the Turkish word TUZ meaning salt.

Unlike a range of other small cities in marginal, often fraught locations, Tuzla is grappling with change as a positive challenge. Vital to constructing new positive opportunities, ideas, identities and infrastructure are three key themes:

- Building cultural democracy: engaging, listening, willingly accountable.
- Maximising the value of a past that won't go away: from salt and war come positive ways forward
- Developing new markets and a new voice: youth, ideas and the Creative Industries

Together these themes contribute to a nascent toolkit for Tuzla that has attributes transferable to other small, struggling, even marginal cities. Indeed, Tuzla teaches us that a city can never be totally reinvented, for the past cannot be destroyed; it shows us that a genuine engagement with local people can lead to both innovation and stronger, more creative communities; and it warns us that without allowing younger and diverse voices to take a lead, the city will cease to be a city.

Building Cultural Democracy

In few other countries in Europe is cultural policy and engagement more important than in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Issues of culture and identity are both the cause and the solution to its problems. Landry (2003) explains that they are the cause, because cultural arguments were used to divide the country and to turn the different groups against each other in an 'orgy of destruction'; and they are the solution because culture might be able to bring people back together again through initiating cultural programmes and activity that increase mutual understanding. In Tuzla, a re-engagement with culture has been at the forefront of public policy rationale, with almost every policy action and its causative challenge or question understood in terms of its cultural impact or meaning: 'what will this do *for* Tuzla?'; 'how can we build a more open Tuzla?'; 'what are our disadvantages and how can we turn them into advantages?'. Crucial here has been the role of the Mayor and his office, asking difficult questions and seeking culture-based solutions. Mayor Imamovic represents a new type of politician in Bosnia Herzegovina. In a country previously crippled by corruption, bureaucracy and ethnic-based fragmentation, Mayor Imamovic has built a persuasive vision for Tuzla based on the phrase: "No one is as smart as everyone together". Whilst sounding a little idealistic – especially in a recent war zone – there is genuine substance to this phrase, a substance developed through a practical engagement with local residents.

Put simply, in 2000 the Mayor introduced a two-year process of in-depth public consultation as the first stage in his *cultural democracy programme*. This was driven by two main agendas: to find out the needs and aspirations of local people; and to ensure that future corresponding actions have a relevance to and ownership for local people as the basis for civic pride. The consultation was and continues to be based upon in-depth engagement with over 40 local communes and voluntary organisations; the creation of a Mayoral Advisory Council of 25 unelected advisors that cut across religious, ethnic and gender boundaries; a six-monthly city-wide survey of public opinion; and an ongoing process of civic engagement, triggering informal debate and targeting themes that progress new ways of thinking about the city and its potential

However, conviction, persuasiveness and a determination to build consensus around genuine reform rather than stasis, are insufficient by themselves to exact change. This is because a city such as Tuzla needs more than collaboration and strength of character if it is to progress as a growing international-focused city. It requires good ideas. This is where the most significant strength of Mayor Imamovic lies: his ability to stimulate ideas from the population and to identify those ideas that will work to transform the city from economic decline and painful memories to an outward-looking city with real reasons for renewed civic pride. This requires an assured approach to the delivery of essential services; the development of a mix of high profile projects that genuinely 'raise the game' of the city; an ongoing and deeply embedded relationship with local people – especially young people; and an outwardness, fostered through nascent relationships with other cities. Tuzla

has now cultivated international links with cities as diverse as Gothenburg and Bologna; Osijek and Ravenna. The city has gained membership of several pan-European and international networks, and thus actions in the city are seen by local people as actions within a network of cities, impelling Tuzla to be more bold and creative than perhaps a provincial approach might incur.

Maximising the value of the past: The Salt Lake

Tuzla, a city famous for salt, remains a city famous for salt. However, today the city is famous for a salt lake rather than a declining industry that was literally and psychologically sinking and undermining the city. Mayor Imamovic, through his consultation processes, identified a series of options for the area of Tuzla most damaged by salt water flooding – an area adjacent to the city centre. In short, the solution agreed was both simple and brilliant: to capture the water through the construction of a salt lake that in turn acts as a resort in the heart of the city. The newly formed Lake Pannonia is a masterstroke of civic planning and cultural democracy: forged through a positive translation of local connections to salt, providing employment for workers who previously mined the salt, introducing a new unique leisure opportunity for people from across the region and beyond, and establishing an iconic feature that affirms the transformation of Tuzla into a progressive and innovating city.



No other city has a salt lake and surrounding beach that provides coastal features despite the great distance from the sea. Over 300,000 people visit the shores of the lake every year, bathing, sunbathing, using the lake as a base from which to visit other attractions such as the Peace Flame Centre: at least 300,000 people are changing their perception of Tuzla. Indeed, an Austrian Bank Director was so impressed by the lake and what it signified that he established the Bank's national headquarters in Tuzla. The Mayor and his growing networks of city visionaries have shown great understanding of the importance of effective branding and positioning with increasing inter-city competition, while realising that it is crucial for high quality, effective and convincing policy and action to underpin that brand. What's more, the city is no longer sinking.

Further initiatives are underway that re-engage with the past to establish a contemporary, outward focused identity for the city. They include the Peace Flame – a collaborative international programme intent on maintaining dialogue and nurturing positive outlooks from the memories of atrocity and hate. This is physically expressed through the Peace Flame Centre, close to the salt

lake, which operates as a type of community and arts centre, undertaking initiatives aimed to bring local people together through creative practice.

In addition, The Mayor has championed a range of cultural and creative initiatives and programmes, including an annual literary festival, and a series of high quality public art and public realm schemes. These have included a streetscape re-fashioned to represent 'symbols of humanity' (such as Nelson Mandela, Shakespeare, and The Beatles). The Mayor often seeks support from cities abroad – requesting that a piece of art be donated or access be made available to the cast. A focus on international connection is coupled with a focus on translating the pain of war into a positive affirmation of humanity with a revitalised, inclusive, tolerant and connected Tuzla the primary aim.

Yet, despite the considerable success of the cultural democracy approach of Mayor Immamovic, it is clear that Tuzla's future prosperity and peace depends on a more sophisticated engagement with an even wider range of voices, and a more focused and nuanced approach to determining opportunities in the 'new economy'. *A prosperous and inclusive society can't be built on cultural gestures and iconic developments only*: for the young people to stay (and they continue to leave in large numbers), feel engaged, and become economically active, will require the development of new home-grown markets for creative products and experiences.

Moreover, by collecting and negotiating around the production and consumption of new cultural forms, young people will be able to explore their identities without recourse to remember the war or even salt as the primary drivers of their identities: new cultural markets will bring a new type of cohesiveness that is spared of the pain and embarrassment of the past. There is a growing realisation – born out through connections with other cities – that for Tuzla to be competitive and progressive, it needs to develop its own new, distinctive cultural products and services, and it would benefit most from undertaking these activities on a commercial and entrepreneurial basis: developing new local Creative Industries markets and connecting these emergent taste communities to a huge potential market across the Bosnian diaspora and beyond.

Ongoing Challenges

Tuzla is far from a fast-growing, well-connected and respected international city. It remains very much a city on the margins of a wider European context: unemployment is high; many people are leaving the city (while many displaced people still arrive); negative self-identity is commonplace; post-war hatred and suspicion remain; and the cultural economy is far weaker than state-developed cultural programmes. In addition, culture remains too overtly politicised (often on ethnic terms); piracy is stifling commercial potential in the music industry; there is a severe lack of legal expertise to coordinate change; and the learning and skills sector is too didactic and narrow, discouraging students to think laterally and creatively. However, Tuzla *is* a model for other cities blighted by war and industrial decline because it is confronting these and many more issues in a direct and far from complacent manner.

John Kao (1996) defines creativity as:

“The entire process by which ideas are generated, developed, and transformed into value. It encompasses what people commonly mean by innovation and entrepreneurship... (I)t connotes both the art of giving birth to new ideas and the discipline of shaping and developing those ideas to the stage of realised value.”

Tuzla has embraced this broad definition of creativity to begin to address a range of city development challenges. Through history, cities have thrived where the management of creativity and innovation are paramount (Hall 1998). In contemporary society, Florida (2002) and Landry (2000) highlight how cities are increasingly operating as providers of cultural currency, as key determinants in generating and attracting creative talent. Tuzla is currently grappling to establish the climate and ecology for the development and release of its creative talent, which in turn will be followed by the attraction and retention of creative talent. It is extending its organisational capacity (such as through networks and fora), engaging deeply to engender participation and ideas generation (a cultural democracy), introducing catalysing projects (such as the salt lake), and

placing its bets firmly on its strongest card (the talent, energy and aspiration of young people working with new content and technology).

According to an UN survey⁹ 62% of young people now want to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina and most want to leave forever. The best and the brightest are finding it easiest to leave. Without a direct commitment to building creative opportunities at a local level while ensuring the city is connected internationally, cities such as Tuzla will continue to lose the creative talent on which their future depends. Leonie Sandercock notes in her groundbreaking book 'Towards Cosmopolis', the focus for decision makers in cities, regions and countries is how they can 'organize hope', 'negotiate fears' and 'mediate memories'. The Youth-focused cultural democracy embraced in Tuzla is helping to arrest trends in youth departures, giving them a powerful, hope-provoking stake in the revisioning of their particular small but very significant city.

In Conclusion: 3 Cities, Common Challenges

This chapter has explored how three very different small cities are engaging with creativity agendas in pursuit of stronger and more distinctive identities, greater connectivity, higher levels of creative entrepreneurship and governance, and thus more competitive economies. Each city is faced by divergent sets of challenges and opportunities. For example, Malmo is moving from an atmosphere of constant crisis, bureaucracy, and top down policy-making to implement more adaptive structures that deal on a project by project basis to reorientate the image of the city, transform its physical landscape and build on its existing and incoming creative population. Boise is responding to a history of pioneering development to focus on the new creative pioneers – networks of forward-thinking individuals unsettled by the 'comfort zone' of a successful economy and increasingly skilled workforce: there is a recognition that for Boise to adapt productively and for it to match in dynamism its increasing size, it needs to raise the stakes and build a strong and distinctive creative economy. Tuzla continues to struggle with a fraught political and economic context and is in a painful transition from conflict and economic decline; yet the city is proactively seeking new ways to adapt old problems into new economy assets, to galvanise and engage a population that lost its way and in many cases moved away, and to move forwards emboldened through a direct embrace with its creative potential.

Though very different, each city has recognised the value of exploring its creative potential as a way to climb urban hierarchies while retaining existing strengths – whether through a direct development approach to the Creative Industries or through a creative approach to governance and place-building. This is not an 'empty gesture' approach to creativity where the creativity of a city is proclaimed as little more than an exercise in civic boosterism. This is a brave and risky engagement with often disenfranchised populations, inflexible and dying businesses, or at times complacent and insular politicians. Each city has recognised that continuing to decline, to stagnate or even – in Boise's case – to sit pretty, is not an option given the ruthlessness of contemporary inter-city competition where investment and people are increasingly mobile and unflinchingly promiscuous until they find and settle in progressive, innovative, inclusive places with a strong mix of commercial and cultural opportunities and strong distinctive identities. The small cities of today that face this critical reality face-on are likely to be the big cities – in approach and reputation, if not size – of tomorrow.

⁹ See Landry 2002.

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