

CREATIVE POLICIES IN BARCELONA

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Creative policies, creativity and industry

Creative policies are those that favour the creative industries and competitive edge of cities.

Creative people and their activities are key to the cultural stability and enrichment of a country... and of a city.

Development today is increasingly linked to the ability to create and spread products, to the research of and experimentation with new languages, and to the spirit of innovation. Creativity means finding new languages, new ideas and new values. Creativity is essential for the cultural industry, for companies, for education, for community development, for cities and for countries.

In Barcelona creative industries have been one of the city's key features, with a long history of innovation and creativity. It is safe to say that today Barcelona is culturally strong and dense, thanks largely to the fact that it has placed culture at the centre of urban development through cultural policies that are committed to values, innovation, creativity and co-existence.

A creative policy is one that fosters a context of freedom (which generates opportunity), that generates density (increasing the density of cultural capital is the best way to guarantee the success of public policies, which basic aim is to offer more opportunities for everyone), and that develops sense (values), in other words, culture's ability to foster community development and social cohesion: cultural diversity, involvement and the construction of identity.

In Barcelona we have worked to bring together these three elements in order to build the city's cultural policy.

Creative public initiatives in Barcelona

Barcelona's public initiative is aimed at broadening cultural capital.

With 7.8% of the municipal budget allocated to culture and an expenditure of €94 per inhabitant, what we have in fact is a culture budget for a capital (Barcelona houses a number of cultural facilities and creative industries, such as publishing, audiovisuals, design, fashion, while making a great contribution to added cultural value), as well as for local communities (the density of culture in neighbourhoods and districts is vital to a cultural and social capital).

It is thanks to the joint efforts of the community and the Town Council that the most ambitious urban transformation and service improvement programme has come to life. This is because here in Barcelona we have construed the city as a product of cultural production.

Some of the most noteworthy projects include:

22@, consisting of 200 hectares of industrial land in Poblenou that were converted into an innovative productive district for new-generation activities within the scope of education, creativity and innovation.

The Barcelona Plató Film Commission, a promoting body for Barcelona as a city for film production, which is being expanded throughout Catalonia to promote the entire region as a setting for international and regional filming (creation of the Barcelona-Catalonia Film Commission, in accordance with the Catalan Government).

Museums as generators of international capital eminence: a basic network of museums of capital calibre (MNAC, MACBA, Museu Picasso, Fundació Miró, Fundació Tàpies)

New-generation cultural facilities: These include the Borne Cultural Centre (8,000m² of space recovering the historic memory of the city) and the Cultural Centre for Design (new facilities measuring 20,000 m² that will become a platform for the promotion of design developed in Barcelona and Catalonia)

Theme years: These include Gaudí Year (2002), to contribute to the revaluation of heritage and collective memory itself; the Year of Design (2003), to promote design, one of Barcelona's most powerful creative industries; the Year of the Book and Reading (2005), to support the publishing industry and foster the habit of reading; the Year of Science (2007), an instrument to endorse the integration of the scientific culture in the city's overall cultural construction.

A commitment to self-expression, creativity and innovation, implemented, among others, through the Mercat de les Flors municipal theatre, which was converted into a Centre for Movement Arts as a space for specialised dance creation and co-production; Barcelona's Grec Festival, a festival of creation with a firm commitment to creative people; the BAM Urban Music Festival; programmes that are closer to the district civic centres, a decentralised cultural supply that offers everyone the opportunity to come into contact with new artistic expressions, with a schedule of events in five series: contemporary art, theatre, dance, children's shows, and music.

Risk Capital Funds for cultural projects: This is an innovative tool within the public administrations that will give priority to cultural sectors that are considered to be strategic for the upcoming years: the audiovisual or multimedia sector, publishing, the performing arts sector, and that of the plastic arts.

The Fundació Barcelona Cultura: This foundation was conceived with the aim of creating closer connections between the business world and the social dimension of culture.

Creative policy challenges

In most of the cultural areas, the city has been an innovative leader, becoming notably present internationally.

Nevertheless, despite the great impetus of the city's cultural scene over the past two decades, there are still some areas in need of greater efforts. These include:

Improving the viability of viewing culture as a quinary sector with great potential;

Intensifying cooperative strategies between public and private initiatives and more specifically in the field defined by the creative industries, the university (research) and public initiative;

Creating a wider acceptance for the new creative industries (design, architecture, advertising, multimedia, fashion...);

Fostering initiatives (creativity, talent, innovation), promoting laboratories for innovation and creativity;

Designing better strategies to strengthen the production and distribution of the creative industries for international markets;

Improving the overall public notion of the importance of culture;

Improving the integration of new inhabitants into a shared civic culture;

Increasing the index of culture consumption, in other words, bridging the gaps between cultural creation and its social impact.

Conclusion

In a word, like many creative cities, in Barcelona we are working to apply public policies that directly involve people, institutions, companies, public projects and educational centres as key proponents; that generate innovative initiatives, ideas, services and products with added value; that shape an environment that facilitates new creativity; that foster the creative industries that are key to strengthening the city's competitive edge; that foster a business culture that is open to risk and innovation, and public institutions that promote change.

It is this reinforcement that will give us more creative and competitive cities and networks.

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