

*CREATIVE CULTURAL CLUSTER: CONCEPT FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF OLD CITY CORE*

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Culture and Sustainable Development

With the need of competing in a global city race, many countries are trying to come up with new theories in the domain of economic development. The focus is on harnessing the intangible capital i.e. tacit knowledge and skills, identify the clusters to have overall economic development. Not just in terms of economy, but in terms of social development, this approach has proven to be effective globally especially at the times of global recession. In the pursuit of sustainable growth and development of the country which is inclusive and equitable in nature at the base layers of the societies, the cultural aspect was promoted. This gave a rise to cluster planning and economic clusters. Literature over Economic Clusters suggests that different types of clusters incline to situate over different parts of the city (Zhenshan Yang, 2015). Spillover effect of clusters and industries can be seen on peri-urban areas of London. These clusters are scattered over the city and outside the city limits. For example, knowledge based clusters are formed adjacent to Universities, research centers, etc. Agro processing clusters emerge around agricultural lands away from city. The relation is shown as cluster being a link to spatial policy and economic policy. Delineation of such clusters needs dedicated analysis of landuse, transport networks, connectivity, economy and demography.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reported that in May 2013 the world trade of creative goods and services totaled record of USD 624 billion in 2011 which was twice to the trade in 2002 (UN, 2013). Before that, the term ‘Creative Economy’ was already introduced by John Hawkins in 2001 stating 15 industries that contribute to economy through

their expansion from ‘art’ to ‘science and technology’. Term ‘Creative City’ given by Charles Landry in his book by the same name emphasizes upon innovation and urban development. According to this book urban areas lie at center of innovation (Landry, *The Creative City*, 2008). ‘Cultural and creative industries’ mean the industries producing goods and services through technology intensive and or craft intensive cultural activities. As per UNESCO’s framework for cultural statistics, there are different domains in which culturally productive and influenced industries are classified under transvers or common domains called ‘Intangible Heritage’, ‘Education and Training’, ‘Archiving and Preserving’ and ‘Equipment and Supporting Material’ (UNESCO, 2009). On a broader level they are classified into ‘Cultural Domain’ and ‘Related Domain’. Classification of domains is done for collection of comparative data for cultural statistics. The economic dimension explores the expenditure on culture and cultural activity, employment generation and revenue generation, etc. whereas social dimension explores participation rate and identity building through culture. Yet there were challenges in collecting the datasets for culture, such as structural challenges of data limited to market driven economic functions only and the operational challenges such as comparability and reliability of small samples collected locally. Most importantly, linking of the data via common indicators for quantification purposes was most crucial challenge. The 2013 UNDP report answers to the challenges mentioned in 2009 FCS through one of its chapters for effective and successful data set generation (UNDP, 2013). It gives questionnaire as per study approach; ways of classification of the data (creative workforce, cultural businesses, cultural institutions, heritage buildings and sites and intangible heritage such as festivals), capacity building means and approaches through various institutions. This is a first step in generating a reliable data bank for analysis which can have economic, social, environmental outcomes from cultural lens. Thus making it a common thread in sustainability cycle as the report in its way forward states culture is ‘driver and enabler’ of economic, social and environmental development (United Nations/UNDP/UNESCO, 2013).

‘Sustainability’ is seen as a goal whereas development is a process. To make the process sustainable, i.e. without compromising the needs of future, kind of investment done in the process of development needs a driver. Since 2003, the discussions for inculcating culture in policy making for sustainable development have been taking place on various international platforms. These discussions resulted in acknowledging dynamic role of culture. Evidence based cases studied in various places suggest broadly the role of culture in three ways. First is culture ‘in’ sustainable development process as a separate free standing fourth pillar. Second, it was seen as a mediator and connector between economy, environment and society ‘for’ sustainable development. The third role is gradual manifestation of culture ‘as’ sustainable development, an ideal situation of deep rootedness of sustainability as way of living (Dessein,

et al., Culture in, for and as Sustainable Development. Conclusions from the COST Action IS1007 Investigating Cultural Sustainability, 2015).

For future urban development, in Culture 21 Agenda, UCLG and NUA discussed inculcating and identifying culture and cultural practices to imbibe in development process. Five aimed commitment document to adopt culture in sustainable development was published by the UCLG for different municipal and local governments across the world (UCLG, 2015). The aims are broadly focused on highlighting the interdependent relation between ‘citizen, culture and sustainable development’; providing framework of ‘commitments and actions’ which is ‘measurable and achievable’; compliment and make culture 21 agenda 2004 more effective; harness the role of local governments and cities for policy development and implementation ‘with people, for people’; contribute to the ‘role of the culture’ UN’s post 2015 SDGs agenda.

Based on these aims, following are the nine commitments for the local governments enlisted in the document to tap into cultural resource for local development.

1. First commitment speaks about full recognition of cultural rights as an expression of freedom to express, participate and celebrate the culture.
2. Second one speaks about ‘Heritage, Diversity and Creativity’ as the foundations of cultural life, the local policies must address to the expressive form of culture as well as daily life culture, finding the best in both and innovate.
3. Third one addresses promotion of active participation of the people through various awareness and educational policies that builds up a cultural capacity.
4. Fourth one addresses environmental responsibilities through the purview of culture.
5. Fifth commitment addresses to the economic sustainability through the purview of culture.
6. Sixth commitment addresses to the social aspects of equity and inclusion (or lack of it) through the purview of culture
7. Seventh one focuses on policy preparations by local governments tackling urban planning and public space issues as a cultural response.
8. Eighth one addresses need to inculcate information, technology and knowledge with culture for its upgrade in order to bring out positive changes.
9. ‘By the people, for the people’ sharing of responsibilities and actions in the domain of governance as a collaborative effort of governing culture is the ninth commitment.

Concept: Old City Core as ‘Creative Cultural Cluster’

The 10th session of the World Urban Forum held in 2020 had a concept of connecting innovation and culture to address cities of opportunities (WUF, 2020). While urbanization is a global concern, it for a fact requires innovative solutions which can often be found locally. There is no universal formula for all urbanization related issues; thus, culture has been placed as the topic of debates by new urban agenda and 2030 sustainable development agenda. In its broad sense, culture plays an important role in shaping and growth of cities. Both a city and culture have a dynamic nature and there is a link between both of them which helps them constantly adapt to each other’s changes. Culture is more rooted into its people, giving them a sense of ownership and belonging (DUXBURY, HOSAGRAHAR, & PASCUAL, 2019). If that link is lost it results into loss of identity. With cities becoming more and more heterogeneous, cultural diversity provides inclusiveness, participation and tolerance thus becomes a social asset (UNHABITAT, 2017) especially in case of old city cores. Traces of culture prevail in various forms such as buildings, customs and traditions, people and their lifestyle etc. This is an important part of complex urban network and it also has social, economic and political implications thus it shall be studied as a synthesis of all.

The increasing heterogeneity of urban areas leads diverse cultures to coexist. Especially the spaces in these old cores of urban areas stand at the cross roads of cultural diversity. As per Culture 21 Agenda discussed before, it becomes the responsibility of the local governments to explore options to inculcate culture in new spatial and economic policies for local development. ICOMOS and UNESCO formulated charter specially addressing intangible cultural heritage conservation in 2011 (UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre, 2011). Intangible heritage is dominant at the old core of many Indian historic cities even today. Cities like Varanasi, Jaipur, Pune, Madurai and Amritsar are few of the many such examples which have identity due to its heritage and multiple economic activity chains thrive upon it even today. Many are already recognized in UNESCO’s creative cities network for the same reason. These areas can be identified and delineated as the ‘Creative Cultural Cluster’ of the cities in development plans of the cities. It is encouraged to study landuse, economy, social development and environment from the perspective of the heritage in terms of the potentials to resolve the challenges of the present and bring in innovation for future development.

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Academia Letters, June 2021

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Citation: Kanitkar, A. (2021). CREATIVE CULTURAL CLUSTER: CONCEPT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF OLD CITY CORE. *Academia Letters*, Article 1317.

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