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Can medium-sized cities become Creative Cities? Discussing the cases of three Central and Western European cities¹

Introduction

This paper aims to explore the concept of Creative City from the points of view of three medium-sized cities in Central and Western Europe: Birmingham (UK), Leipzig (Germany) and Poznań (Poland). The concept of Creative City has risen in popularity in the last 15 years but its meanings and its policy application display important variations. In an attempt to clarify conceptual issues and policy approaches around the term of Creative City, Scott (2006) states that policy makers should focus on specific key variables when attempting to build viable Creative Cities: the presence of inter-firm networks of producers combined with a flexible local labour market. Infrastructural facilities and social capital are also crucial in this process. Even though these variables may be mostly found in large-scale metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles etc., Scott (2006, p. 9) argues that “*there are also many small and specialised creative agglomerations all over the world*” due to the process of increased differentiation. In addition, Hall (2004) argues that building a truly Creative City is possible but is a long-term process, and historical favourable preconditions are important.

¹ This paper uses the work that the authors were doing as part of ACRE (Accommodating Creative Knowledge – Competitiveness of European Metropolitan Regions within the Enlarged Union), FP6 project led by the University of Amsterdam (<http://acre.socsci.uva.nl/>). The research was also supported financially by the Polish National Science Centre on the basis of decision no. DEC-2011/03/D/HS4/01662.

In a recent paper, Waitt and Gibson (2009) explore the impact of city size, geographical position and cultural legacy in the success of creativity-led regeneration in a small city of Australia, Wollongong (280,000 inhabitants), located close to Sydney. They highlight the difficulty of reconciling the global political creative discourse with local manufacturing and political legacy and the importance of adequate choices in terms of policy initiatives (i.e. support of production or consumption of creative products and services). One of the issues in their case study was the ambiguous impact on the local dynamic of creative production and consumption of the proximity of a large metropolitan area such as Sydney.

Few papers have been published on the experience of medium-sized creative cities in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in a comparative way. Nonetheless, some authors (O'Connor 2005, Primorac 2006) have alluded to the difficulties that Central and Eastern European countries may face in developing creative and knowledge industries using Western European concepts and methodologies. Building on Scott (2006) and emerging literature such as Waitt and Gibson (2009), this paper addresses this gap by answering the following research questions:

1. What are the possibilities for medium-sized cities to become creative cities? To what extent, can they compete with the diversity of large creative cities such as London, Paris or Berlin?
2. To what extent does history play a role in this process? Do different paths toward the Creative City exist in Western versus Central and Eastern Europe?

To answer these questions, this paper compares the socio-economic and policy making situations as well as the dynamic conditions of three medium-sized cities toward the Creative City in Western and Central Europe: Birmingham, Leipzig and Poznań. These three cities were chosen on the basis of both their differences and similarities. Even though the United Kingdom, Germany and Poland are currently based on capitalist economic and democratic political systems, their pathways to this current state have differed due to the impact of the socialist period in the latter and this has impacted the development of their cities. While in different political settings, our three case studies have experienced important economic changes and restructuring in the last 20 years. They all play an important role in their national economy and have been attempting to compete in the knowledge and creative sectors. Our analysis focuses on the years 2000s as this period constitutes for the three cities a turning point in the way they have promoted the latter, notably in their adoption of the increasingly fashionable Creative City discourse. The next section presents the definitions of key concepts such as Creative City, medium-sized cities and creative industries and discusses the dimensions that are used to assess the Creative City. Based on this conceptual framework, we then propose a model of development of the Creative City. This model groups the key dimensions exposed in the previous section under two spheres, the "real" (socio-economic) sphere and the "policy" sphere, and highlights their interdependencies. The third section briefly summarises our methodology while section four presents our three case studies according to this model. Section five summarises and compares the state and pathways of our cit-

ies toward the Creative City during 2000s while section six concludes by relating our findings to our initial research questions.

Definitions and Key Dimensions of the Creative City

The idea of Creative City

The concept of Creative City can be dated back to the mid-1980s (Hansen et al. 2001, Smith, Warfield 2008). Its increasing usage in the last 15 years is mostly due to influential works from Hall (2000, 2004) and Landry (2000) and corresponds to a growing focus on the importance of creative industries as engine of economic growth at supranational policy levels in Europe (Wiesand, Söndermann, 2005, KEA, 2006, 2009, CEU, 2007) and worldwide (UNCTAD 2004, UNESCO 2006, UNDP/UNCTAD 2008) in the 2000s. This trend, which started in 1994 in Australia with the launch of the report *Creative Nation*² and discussed in more details later on by Cunningham (2002), was followed by its introduction in the UK (DCMS 1998) and in North America (Florida 2002) and has now reached the whole of Europe (Švob-Đokić 2005, Primorac 2006, Cooke, Lazzarotti 2008) and other parts of the world (Yusuf, Nabeshima 2005, Sagnia Burama 2005, Hartley, Keane 2006, RCMC 2007). As a consequence, the concept of Creative City has been increasingly used in the literature as a symbol for successful local economic development (Hall 2000, Hospers 2003, Duxbury 2004, Florida 2005, Leslie 2005, Tay 2005, Scott 2006, Švob-Đokić 2007, Yun 2008, Kong, O'Connor 2009). In addition to the knowledge economy, cities, regions and countries have, as a result, put an emphasis on their creative economy in the last 10 years.

The concept of Creative City, however, may cover various policy approaches. Smith and Warfield (2008) distinguish, for example, a culture-centric approach from a more econo-centric approach implying different values and types of policies. The culture-centric approach focuses on the Creative City as a *'place of diverse and inclusive arts and culture'* where the central values are around arts, culture, and community well-being, access and inclusion (Smith, Warfield 2008). The means to foster this are through some form of creative governance that is *'imaginative, transparent, and democratic governance as well as inspiring, imaginative, inclusive, attractive and adaptable cityscapes'* (Smith, Warfield 2008, p. 289). The econo-centric approach focuses on the Creative City as a *'place of economic innovation, creative talent, and creative industries'* (ibid.) where the central values are around urban economic sustainability and well-being through creative initiatives and industries. The means to foster this are through direct support for creative ventures in order to develop *'a strong and diverse local arts and culture expressions as well as strong creative work force, industry, networks and connections and competitiveness.'* (ibid.) While we could say that both approaches may nurture each other, the econo-centric approach has been spreading in the current political discourse. This has been re-

² <http://www.nla.gov.au/creative.nation/creative.html>

inforced by the use of cluster theory to foster local and regional economic development as creative industries tend to cluster in cities (see Musterd et al. 2007 for more discussion about this). The switch from creative clusters to Creative City can then be made easily as authors and policy makers wonder which cities are creative in terms of displaying the adequate location factors or urban policy initiatives to attract or foster these creative industries (Leslie 2005, Wu 2005, Adams et al. 2007, Cooke, Lazzarotti 2008). Consequently, cities that are considered creative are those that score highly on indicators such as the presence of creative occupations and/or industries (employment, firms), their economic production (gross value-added, exports), etc. and/or which have a specific policy focused on these initiatives (Kooijman, Romein 2007).

However, some authors question this automatic equation between having creative industries and being a Creative City. For example, in a seminal paper, Hall (2000) highlighted the lack of understanding of the reasons why creative individuals locate in particular locations. In his paper, he asked whether “*a city can have creative industries for very long without being creative.*” According to him, the determinant element is the existence of a local creative milieu³ (concept developed initially by Törnqvist (1983)).

Medium-sized Cities

Many scholars have focussed their attention on the benefits of urban agglomeration – in particular that of industrial clustering – in order to understand economic development (Krugman 1998, Porter 1998). Since Marshall (1890/1920), the idea is that large metropolitan areas benefit from important agglomeration economies (economic diversity) and economies of scale (presence of a variety of actors for some economic sectors) that foster their economic performance. Questions can be raised then in regard to the extent to which smaller urban areas can base their economy on the creative industries to compete in the global economy since these industries tend to cluster in large metropolitan areas to benefit from strong agglomeration economies and economies of scale.

There exists a variety of ways to classify cities as metropolitan areas or not. Many definitions are based on demographic size. For example, the group *Metropolis* considers metropolitan areas as cities with more than 1 million inhabitants⁴. On the other hand, Giffinger et al. (2006) call “medium-sized” cities, cities with less than 500,000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, these definitions can vary by country and some authors differentiate large from small cities by looking at other attributes such as the build environment, the sense of place, etc. (Bell, Jayne 2006) or their functionality in terms of labour market and economy and their

³ A creative milieu has: “*four key features: information transmitted among people; knowledge, consisting in the storage of this information in real or artificial memories; competence in certain relevant activities, defined in terms of the demands of an external environment, which can be instrument-specific or region-specific; and finally creativity, the creation of something new out of all these three activities, which could be regarded as a kind of synergy.*” (Hall 2000, p. 644).

⁴ See: <http://www.metropolis.org/metropolis/en/node/83>.

influence nationally or internationally (ESPON 2006, 2013). We will follow this latter trend by taking into account the roles and positions of our cities in regard to their infrastructures and economic performances in their national contexts and in Europe.

If we exclude cities (or metropolitan areas) with more than 1 million inhabitants, various so-called small or “medium-sized” cities came to the fore in the European context. Around 93% of European citizens lived in cities with more than 100,000 and less than 1 million inhabitants in 2000 (Giffinger et al. 2006). While Poznań and Leipzig can be placed in the middle of this ‘medium-sized’ cities demographic scale, Birmingham is at the upper limit (see Table 1). In terms of functionality and influence in national and European contexts, the ESPON atlas considers our three cities as national/transnational functional areas with Poznań being also classified as weak Metropolitan European Growth Area (ESPON 2006).

Table 1 presents key indicators related to the hierarchy and national positions of our case studies. Birmingham is the second city in the UK both economically and demographically. The city is also the regional centre of the West Midlands, an important node of the national transport network and benefits from an international airport. Leipzig is structurally in a rather similar position and can be considered a second rank city in Germany both economically and demographically. It serves as a regional centre for central Germany and for the state of Saxony in East Germany and is an important transportation hub for the region. Poznań belongs to the group of second rank cities (after Warsaw) which constitute the upper hierarchy of the polycentric structure of the urban system in Poland. The city plays an important role in its national economy, both as a business city and as a transportation hub. In conclusion, our three cities can be considered as second-rank cities in the national and European contexts and they tend to compete in the shadow of their capitals (London, Berlin and Warsaw).

Table 1. Hierarchy and positions of our three cities nationally and in Europe

	Population (2012)	Jobs	Position in national scale	Position in European scale	Presence of an international airport
Birmingham	1,085,400	397,600 (2012)	2 nd rank city in UK Regional centre of the West Midlands	Transnational/national functional area	Yes
Leipzig	520,838	215,886 (2011)	2 nd rank city in Ger- many. Regional centre of Central Germany	Transnational/national functional area	Yes
Poznań	550,742	234,960 (2011)	2 nd rank city in Po- land. Regional centre of Western Poland (along with Wrocław)	Transnational/national functional area + Weak Metropolitan European Growth Area	Yes
Sources	National statistics	Nation- al statist- ics	National spatial plan- ning system	ESPON (2006)	

From Creative Industries to Creative City

The concept of creative industries is associated with the interface between economics, culture and technology (UNDP/UNCTAD 2008) or as Hartley (2005, p. 5) summarizes: “*The idea of the creative industries seeks to describe the conceptual and practical convergence of the creative arts (individual talent) with cultural industries (mass scale), in the context of new media technologies (ICT’s) within a new knowledge economy for the use of newly interactive citizen-consumers*”. The emergence of the term seems linked to a willingness to reconcile the distinction that was made between mass, popular or commercial entertainment and the high, elitist and often public funded fine arts in the 1930’s with the introduction of the term cultural industries (Hartley 2005, Galloway, Dunlop 2007, O’Connor 2007). This shift has been widely criticised on the basis that it grossly ignores some of the fundamental issues around the facts that some cultural goods present public goods characteristics (Garnham 2005). Nevertheless, the concept of creative industries suffers from the same definitional issues that the cultural industries concept and has been associated with concepts such as intellectual property and copyright, symbolic goods, etc. (Hartley 2005, Galloway, Dunlop 2007, O’Connor 2007, UNDP/UNCTAD 2008).

One of the recognized definitions for these industries is the one developed by the UK Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) in its report “*Creative industries. Mapping Document*” in 1998. In this document, the DCMS (1998) defined these industries as “*those that are based on individual creativity, skill and talent. They also have the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing and exploiting intellectual property. The creative industries include: Advertising, Architecture, Arts and antique markets, Computer and video games, Crafts, Design, Designer Fashion, Film and video, Music, Performing arts, Publishing, Software, Television and Radio.*” While the definition is seen as not describing the complex structure of the sector and its dynamic and operation (O’Connor 2007), it is now recognised worldwide as one of the standard definitions for the creative industries (Wiesand, Söndermann 2005, CEU 2007, UNDP/UNCTAD 2008).

Even though there is still some debate about the conceptual definitions of the creative industries, many initiatives have been put in place to account for the importance of these industries in local economies and to support them. Initial attempts were made to link regeneration and urban intervention to the creative economy. Then, the focus shifted to new investments in cultural facilities and in developing support programmes aimed at creative industries, influenced by the cluster approach from Porter (1998). Many initiatives encompass a culture-centric approach as defined by Smith and Warfield (2008) but the economic focus is still strong. By extension some of these cities have labelled themselves as “Creative City” in policy documents, for example Vancouver⁵ and Toronto⁶ in Canada and Singapore (Yun 2008).

⁵ <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/culture-plan-2008-2018.aspx> (retrieved on the 4th of December 2013).

⁶ <http://www.web.net/~imagineatoronto/home.htm> (retrieved on the 2nd of December 2013).

Wider Characteristics of the Creative City

While the presence of creative industries is an important factor to be a Creative City, some authors have tried to relate the concept to the presence of wider local characteristics. For example, Lambooy (2006) presents a perspective for analysing and understanding creative cities according to four properties: attractiveness, productivity, connectivity, and adaptiveness. Attractiveness can be defined from the perspective of producers or consumers. For the former it means, for instance, availability of workers with specified qualifications, availability of the desired location for activity, and the architectural attractiveness of office buildings and housing. For the latter, in turn, it can be pleasant surroundings, good amenities, and a labour market offering high wages. Attractive cities then are those with a history, a specific climate, an interesting architecture, with restaurants, theatres, and events. A crucial role in creating such a climate is played by local culture, whether in the form of customs and traditions or organisation and cultural events, as well as in the form of a system producing cultural goods (Scott 1997). The second characteristic, productivity, often associated with agglomeration benefits, means that firms are more efficient and creative in the use of their resources, whether people or knowledge. Agglomeration benefits and those deriving from the location in a particular city often result from the quality and cost of obtaining those resources in that particular area. The third characteristic, connectivity, means that transport (air, rail and road) connections are available and organised efficiently. Together with the information communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, they open up extensive possibilities for residents and businesses, especially as far as rapid movement and market expansion are concerned. Finally, the fourth characteristic, adaptiveness, means that urban entities are able to adapt to changes in their social and economic milieus. The ability to take advantage of the new opportunities created by those changes is an exercise of creativity. Adaptiveness also implies openness to novelty and innovation.

Creative Production versus Consumption

Yet another important aspect of research on urban creativity is the determination of a city's economic base. The question that arises is whether local development is based on a system of production or consumption. So far it has been the prevailing opinion that the chief driver of urban growth is production. Cities as production centres generate wealth precisely because they produce specified products on a large scale. In recent decades, however, one can note a turn in opinion towards consumption with the success or failure of cities being increasingly dependent upon the possibilities of using and consuming goods and services rather than the possibilities of their manufacturing activities (Glaeser et al. 2001) – this is particularly relevant in the case of cultural and creative goods and services. According to Lambooy (2006), the differentiation between producing and consuming cities is an overt simplification. Consumption generates demand, which affects the production and import of goods and services. In turn, the production

and supply created determine the level of consumption opportunities and boost exports. Thus, those two elements, production and consumption, are closely connected, and neither of them alone can be a key driver of the economic success of cities. These wider notions mean that policies specifically targeted toward supporting creative ventures may only be one way to foster creative cities and that they potentially should be complemented by supporting creative consumption.

The Role of History

Another important element to understand when looking at Creative City is how their history influences their current economic situation and dynamic as Hall (2004) pointed out. Researching local and regional trajectories and path dependency is becoming a broad conceptual framework in social sciences, but its definition and application often remains rather vague (Deeg 2001, Fuchs 2005, Hausner 1995, Tissot, Merger 2001). In the broadest sense, the concept refers to a notion that ‘history matters’. While the importance of history can hardly be overstated when explaining the present and exploring the future, path dependency should have a more concrete meaning if it is to be useful in the analysis of urban and regional dynamics. Pierson (2000) and Mahoney (2000) offer narrower and more precise definitions that can form a starting point for research. Pierson (2000, p. 252) proposes the idea of increasing returns: “... *the probability of further steps along the same path increases with each move down that path*”. Mahoney (2000, p. 507) states that “*path dependence characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties*”. Economists and economic geographers have studied path dependency in the creation and reproduction of economic branches and networks of interrelations at certain locations, often in the shape of specific clusters (Boschma, Kloosterman 2005).

Policy Initiatives and Context

While a city can benefit from a strong economic base in the creative industries supported by wider characteristics such as attractiveness, productivity, connectivity, and adaptiveness produced or reinforced by its history, the way the city is governed and the extent to which local policies support the Creative City agenda should be taken into account when evaluating its success or lack of success. It is also important to note, however, that some cities may benefit from strong policy interventions supporting the creative industries as well as wider characteristics associated with the Creative City without any significant or sufficient creative economic base and history to make it happen.

There exist a wide range of economic development policies used to foster creative industries and more widely the Creative City agenda at the local, regional and national levels (Braun, Lavanga 2007, Evans 2009). Evans (2009, p. 1005) notes that each city tends to chose “a ‘pick and mix’ selection of cultural and creative industries.” Surveying cities and nations worldwide, Evans (2009)

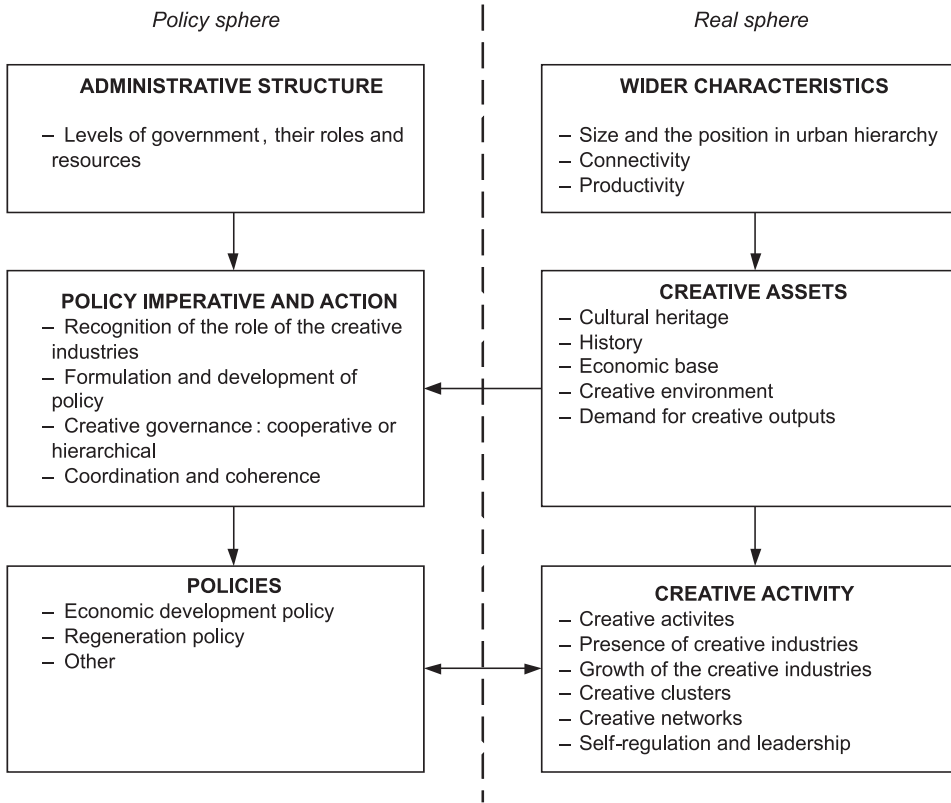
concludes that the dominant policy and strategy rationale towards the Creative City agenda is related to economic development and employment. Other foci usually complement this policy rationale such as infrastructure, regeneration, education and training, tourism/events and city branding. Types of local, regional and national policy interventions encompass creative clusters or sectoral initiatives, property schemes, business support services, grants and loans, fiscal/tax schemes, development of physical infrastructures and soft infrastructures such as support to ICT (i.e. broadband), innovation and R&D (i.e. design, digital content), education and training (i.e. entrepreneurship), protection of intellectual property rights and the support of networks and marketing strategies (Braun, Lavanga 2007, UNDP/UNCTAD 2008, Evans 2009).

In summary, when analysing the degree to which our case studies can be considered as Creative Cities, the following dimensions need to be taken into account: their functional size and wider local characteristics (attractiveness, productivity, connectivity, and adaptiveness), their focus on creative production and/or consumption, their historical pathways and their institutional and policy context and initiatives. Nonetheless, in Poznań and Leipzig, we can expect that historical trends and policy and institutional contexts may have been strongly influenced by radical socio-economic ruptures as a consequence of “state socialism”. In particular, in Central and Eastern countries, the notion of commercialisation of cultural products is still new and in contradiction with the former “state socialism” ethos (Lange 2005a, b, O’Connor 2005, Primorac 2006). In many cases, the concept of creative industries may only be reaching the policy sphere currently.

Towards a Model of Development of the Creative City?

To help us build a more structured understanding and comparison of how a city can become a Creative City, we combine the dimensions discussed in the previous section into two spheres of analysis: what we call the real and the policy spheres. This distinction relates to the real and the regulatory spheres originally developed by Kornai (1971) in his theory of economic systems. Our model of development of the Creative City is presented in Fig. 1 on the next page.

For Kornai (1971), the real sphere mainly consists of production, consumption and exchanges, whereas the regulatory sphere (here considered as the policy sphere) is characterised by information processing, decision making and planning. With regard to the Creative City, the sphere of policy includes steering processes such as governance, decision making and policy initiatives while the real sphere includes the production of creative goods and services, their consumption and trade. Since Kornai, the notion of governance has been more prominent than government, especially at the local and regional level, and implies the need for more coordination of actions between policy and non-policy actors. For this reason the regulatory sphere is considered in our paper as the policy sphere, which is reflected in our model below.



Model of development of the Creative City
 Source: own elaboration

On one hand, **the policy sphere** is characterised by the recognition or not of the importance of creative industries as a policy imperative to support local, regional or national economic development. This policy imperative is developed through the formulation of strategies, the elaboration of specific policies, and the development of a form of governance to develop and implement creative intensive oriented initiatives. At first, the policy action can lack in coherence and be based on individual projects rather than coordinated programmes. This may be followed by the development of a more comprehensive strategy with related policy instruments and/or a multi-level coordination of the governance of these instruments. The role of the policy sphere in the development of creative industries has been recognised in many studies. For instance, Hospers (2003), discussing the concept of Creative City, concludes that local governments can increase the emergence of urban creativity by providing some underlying preconditions. Analyzing the example of Copenhagen, Bayliss (2007) argues that the arrival of the notion of creativity in the urban agenda has abruptly altered the local policy context, because *“both culture and creativity have become central to attempt to stimu-*

late the cultural and creative industries and to promote the city at an international level, attracting investment and (...) the Creative Class" (p. 890).

On the other hand, the long-term development of the Creative City can only be based on local assets on which the development of creative activities can be built. These assets consist of the cultural and economic strengths of the city, its cultural heritage, past development and history, along with its current knowledge base and the wider characteristics mentioned previously such as the city's attractiveness, productivity, connectivity, and adaptiveness. Strong local assets and other favourable conditions are determinants in the growth of the creative industries and their contribution to local prosperity. These local assets and the related creative industries compose **the real sphere**. Both empirical work on creative industries (e.g. Scott 1999, Howkins 2002, Ratzenböck et al. 2004, Wiesand, Söndermann 2005) as well as theoretical contributions such as Caves (2000) or Throsby (2001) support the importance of the real sphere in the development of the Creative City.

The real and the policy spheres are usually interdependent. This interdependency is either characterised by a 'bottom-up' or a 'top-down' approach. In the 'top-down' approach, the recognition of the importance of creative industries can come from higher levels of government, other cities and/or the local government. This internal or external policy imperative fosters the use of local existing assets to build or strengthen the creative sector. In the 'bottom-up' approach the growth of creative activities or the demand for creative output comes from the industries and/or the local population. In this dynamic, creative industries might even develop spontaneously. The policy action will tend to appear later – often an institutional reaction to address possible problems faced by the creative industries at specific stages of development.

Methodology

The analysis of our three case studies is based on a comparison of their profile in terms of our model of development of the Creative City presented in the previous section. To do so, we use secondary data such as academic and policy documents and local and regional statistics which have been triangulated with primary data such as qualitative interviews with creative managers and policy makers collected through the FP6 project ACRE, Accommodating Creative Knowledge Metropolitan Areas in the European Enlarged Union⁷. This ensures a common methodology in gathering secondary data and in the interview process. For example, the ACRE project uses the DCMS definition of the creative industries, presented in section 1 of this paper, to evaluate the quantitative importance of the creative industries in each city. In addition, the data collection for each city was carried out with the objectives of shedding light on their role in their regional and national economies, on their historical development, on their current local economic

⁷ <http://acre.socsci.uva.nl/>

structure and on the strengths of their local creative economies as well as their institutional contexts and related policy initiatives and their effectiveness.

Birmingham, Leipzig and Poznań as Creative Cities

This section presents Birmingham (UK), Leipzig (Germany) and Poznań (Poland) position regarding the real and policy spheres of our model of development of the Creative City.

Birmingham

In Birmingham, the elements of the policy sphere were preponderant in the attempt to develop the city as a Creative City in the 2000s. Nevertheless, the policy action was sometimes dispersed and lacked coordination between local, regional and national levels. In addition, the policy action did not always match the real creative potential of the city and its industrial past.

Real sphere

Birmingham, with around one million inhabitants, is the second city in England and is located at the heart of England in the West Midlands region. The City was neither a major town nor a religious centre in pre-industrial times and became an important production and trade centre of economic activities linked to metal manufacturing during the industrial revolution (Brown et al. 2007). Its central location and important canal as well as rail networks influenced this at the time.

Birmingham and the West Midlands were severely affected by deindustrialisation in the 1970s and 1980s. In order to cope with this economic challenge, an ambitious strategy of economic regeneration transformed the industrial base of the city towards retail, services and finances in the 1990s. By 2001, a majority of Birmingham residents were employed in these sectors, more specifically in retail, health, education and banking. Despite these changes, Birmingham continued to be characterized by an over-reliance on low growth sectors, with strong representation in particular manufacturing sub-sectors, such as the automotive sector and in basic metal products (*ibid.*) during the 2000s period. The negative impact of the 2008–2009's recession on these sectors means that the city is now more dependent on the service sector.

Benefiting from its industrial past, the City remains an important European centre for jewellery production and retail – concentrated in its so-called Jewellery quarter. In addition, the city centre redevelopment in the 1990's was based on a culture-led regeneration strategy with the construction of large music venues coupled with residential and business developments. Eastside and the Custard factory, the focus of the city's largest current regeneration programme, have developed as a centre for multi-media activities, graphic design, visual arts and music production and performance (*ibid.*).

There were around 20,000 jobs in the creative industries in Birmingham in 2010. This represented 4 per cent of the local employment. The most important creative sectors in terms of jobs were architecture, advertising and software. However, overall Birmingham is stronger in knowledge sectors such as financial intermediation and insurance activities; labour recruitment; higher education and telecommunications or activities related to tourism like sporting activities; and library, archives, museums and other cultural activities.

Birmingham has always been a city of immigration and today, the city is young and ethnically diverse. The city remains well connected in terms of transportation networks and is growing economically. However, the city is still facing important challenges in terms of social deprivation inherited from its economic restructuring. This is partly due to a persistent lag in terms of educational achievements and a mismatch between local skills and the requirements of the knowledge economy. Finally, while Birmingham's proximity to London (1h30 by train) can be an asset, it is also a challenge in terms of retaining creative workers or developing the creative industries locally due to the importance of London as a global creative centre and the related presence of the headquarters of national public organisations supporting the creative industries in the capital (*ibid.*).

Policy sphere

The 2000s period was marked by an important impulse to support the development of Birmingham as a Creative City both through local, regional and national initiatives. At the national level, the UK government put a lot of emphasis on the creative economy from 1997 to 2010. The creation of regional development agencies by the newly elected Labour government during that period, brought this national economic agenda forward at the regional level. Consequently, when looking at the policy framework established around culture and the creative economy and economic development during 2000s, it is important to consider at least two different scales: the regional framework – specifically around the regional economic development strategy implemented by the Regional Development Agency (RDA) “Advantage West Midlands” – and the city framework – around the activities of Birmingham City Council⁸.

From 1998 to 2010, the RDA supported the development of three clusters including some creative industries: the information and communication technology (ICT) cluster, the screen, image and sound cluster and the interior and lifestyle cluster (including craft). One critic of this regional cluster approach has been that it did not recognise the entire creative industries as a cluster diluting the marketing of the region as an overall creative place. Nevertheless, this approach reinforced specific local and regional specialisations.

One of the challenges, however, was to reconcile the regional and the local strategies as the City of Birmingham adopted a wider approach by targeting the growth of creative industries as a whole in Birmingham's planning and economic

⁸ The election of the Conservative and Liberal coalition government in the UK in 2010 has changed the policy landscape both in terms of local and regional governance and policies.

strategies. The local vision was to foster the growth of these industries and to develop some parts of the city as prestigious and internationally renowned creative quarters (*ibid.*).

Reinforcing networking between creative businesses and/or higher education and/or research institutions was also at the heart of local and regional policy support. This was the case of the *Creative Hub* located at the Custard Factory in Birmingham which supported the networking and clustering of over 300 businesses. This was the same for *West Midlands ICT Cluster* which regroups universities, research centres, national skill organisations, etc. and private actors across the region.

At the local level, there were also plenty of organisations working together to foster the cultural and creative industries; nevertheless they tended to focus on the entire sector contrary to the regional initiatives. Two examples were the *Birmingham Cultural Partnership* and the *Creative Birmingham Partnership Board* which regrouped key local and regional public and private actors of the sector in order to develop the cultural and creative industries and to raise the profile of Birmingham as a cultural destination. While this partnership working was encouraged by the national government at the time, this way of working met a long historical tradition in Birmingham (*ibid.*).

These local and regional public initiatives were echoed by bottom-up ones from the industries. This was the case of the *Creative Republic* which regrouped people working in the creative and cultural industries and whose aims were the representation, lobbying, networking and commissioning of research for the sector. Another example was the *Producer Forum*, which regrouped producers with a track record in screen based media and film in the West Midlands and which offered networking events and training for the professionals in the industry.

All these local and regional initiatives aiming to support networking between private actors and between private and public institutions created some positive synergies in some sectors and less in others during the 2000s period as expressed by creative managers in interviews. Most creative people in Birmingham and the West Midlands tend to know each other. This phenomenon is reinforced by the relative small to medium size of the sector. Nevertheless, collaboration is very much dependent on the characteristics of each sector, for example the presence of influential national actors such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the screen, media and sound sector (Brown et al. 2008). In this sense, national policies by decentralising some creative public organisations can have an important impact on local and regional dynamics.

Other wider challenges for Birmingham include the negative image of creative work done in cities outside London (Brown et al. 2008). Counteracting this trend necessitates an active general branding strategy. However, after 10 years of supporting the creative industries, it was still difficult for Birmingham to establish itself as a Creative City in 2010. This was made obvious by the disbandment of the City Council's unit, which had been in charge of these industries in 2009. In addition, Birmingham has always been oriented toward business and manufac-

turing/production. Consequently, some policy makers still felt that investing in the creative industries was something 'risky' and intangible (Brown et al. 2007).

Leipzig

As a city in a substantial transition phase from 1990 onwards, Leipzig has orchestrated future oriented clusters such as (among others) biotechnology, media and logistics. In the shade of huge efforts to overcome this social, political and economic ruptures, many new creative niches have emerged and finally established a diverse landscape of creative branches, such as in art, design, electronic music and other, aiming at raising the attractiveness of the city as a regional centre in central and East Germany.

Real sphere

Leipzig is situated in the Free State of Saxony in Eastern Germany. It is the largest city in Saxony, closely followed by the state capital, Dresden. The city of Leipzig itself has a population of 520,838 (31 Dec 2012) (Stadt-Leipzig, 2013).

As a former major commercial, trade fair and cultural platform in the heart of Europe, but also as a heavily industrialized city in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), the city-region has faced ongoing substantial multi-layered transformation processes since 1990. The transition to a market economy brought about by German reunification in 1990 quickly led to the widespread collapse of traditional local economic structures. The city has had to develop new, future-oriented knowledge-based economies as well as service industries and had to adapt to the needs of the existing regional workforce. Huge investments into transportation infrastructure such as roads, railways and a new runway at Leipzig-Halle Airport have led to the further integration of the city region into the national and European economic areas.

Leipzig's economic strategy focused on both traditional and new sectors. The main economic activities are trade shows and exhibitions (mainly organised by the Leipzig Fair), automotive production, retail and distribution, logistics, healthcare and medical engineering, biotech and life sciences, energy and environmental technology, and media and communication. Overall, the city of Leipzig demonstrated a very positive performance in the field of creative industries. There were around 44,000 jobs in these industries in 2012 (approx. 20 % of local jobs), a growth of 5 per cent compared with 1999. In particular, Leipzig was very well-known for its media and press activities, arts and books' retail. In contrast to the recent arrival of the automotive industry, the strengths in these creative industries were inherited from the past. In addition, the media sector has become increasingly important in the local economy in the past 20 years. In 1992, the MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, the regional broadcasting corporation serving the states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia) opened its headquarters in Leipzig. Shortly afterwards, a media development agency entitled *Medienstadt Leipzig GmbH* was set up to support the growth of media-related activities. The media industry was embedded in a broad institutionalised knowl-

edge and educational landscape, including the university, the polytechnic college, several extra-university research centres and various art, music and technical schools. Policies and state-subsidised transfer facilities and incubator schemes in combination with ultra-modern technical, mobility infrastructure made Leipzig a competitive location for this industry. In addition, attractive urban qualities, open-minded social milieus, an active civil society and many cultural facilities in various fields stimulate local economic competitiveness. While growing economically, the city has faced some issues in terms of social inclusion such as high rates of long-term unemployment and social imbalances between new elites and less qualified marginalized groups, especially the city's youth. The brain drain of young and relatively well qualified women, especially in the 1990s, must be seen as a reaction to rare job opportunities on the regional labour market.

To conclude: Leipzig is an attractive place for young companies who are aiming at establishing themselves and who have a rather niche based chain of products to offer. The absence of international players and the proximity to the capital, Berlin, as well as the presence of stronger labour markets in cities such as Munich, Frankfurt and Hamburg inhibit Leipzig's wider economic growth. The challenge for the city is to stop the relocation of companies to more prospering regions, mainly in West Germany.

Policy sphere

Overall, various levels of government have supported the Leipzig economy in 2000s. For example, the federal and state governments invested heavily in the knowledge sectors (mainly in mobility, Research and Development (R&D), high-tech infrastructure, as well as in communication technologies). Nevertheless, the impact on research outcomes (number of patents, research funding etc.) did not yet fully justify this financial investment. The focus on creative industries in general was very recent – these industries were only identified as a strategic priority by the local government in 2008. While, as explained, the media sector was embedded in a wider cluster and is very strong in Leipzig, integrative public-private partnership strategies between educational institutions, R&D facilities, cultural production and a coherent urban and economic policy have yet to be developed. Officially, the local government selected five economic clusters based on their performance since 2000 (and previously) (see Stadt-Leipzig, 2006). These clusters were: media- and creative industries (since 2008), life sciences, biotechnology and medical technology, energy and environmental technologies, and vehicle and components industry, enabling technologies and business services, especially logistics.

Leipzig's cultural scenes are composed of numerous forms of self-association. Apart from formally organised and politically induced crises-solving policies, local informal networks are considered essential in order to promote creative industries. Although the formal labour market can be considered weak, inaccessible or unattractive, many cultural activists have launched their start-up business in the midst of a substantial structural crisis. This has been possible thanks to the informal networks which have provided an important support in the absence

of venture capital or formal and “known” support structures and in the face of minimal financial income (Bismarck, Koch 2005, Steets 2005, 2008). Building on existing cultural capital (such as painting, photography, design etc.), which had survived the GDR times, the local cultural scene has regained importance not only for the heterogeneity of cultural life and cultural consumption it provides, but also as a professional opportunity. Consequently, architectural offices (such as L 21, KARO, URBIKOM etc.), artist collectives (such as NIKO 31), gallery agglomerations (in the former Spinnerei in Plagwitz in East Leipzig), a leading cultural centre called naTO in Südvorstadt as well as a prospering media and film sector have emerged in the mid-1990s (Bismarck, Koch 2005). The local structural crisis generated by the unification has thus led to creative actions by different agents, later supported by related institutions, e.g. the Academy for Visual Arts repositioned its professional curriculum as well as its urban engagement as a major institution to react to the local economic and urban transformations (Bismarck, Koch 2005).

Governance practices can be characterised by modes of communication and discourses between the public, civic and private spheres. In the case of Leipzig, three phases can be distinguished from 2005 to 2010. The first phase (2005–2006) is characterized by an attempt by the council of cultural affairs to launch a debate on the current status of culture as a field of distinct amenities. The city presented a so-called “Kulturentwicklungsplan” (plan for the development of culture) to the city audience. The traditional understanding of official and “high” culture in this document led to a widespread outcry from creative and independent market participants, because they were only mentioned as a subject of potential financial shortage. At the time, the city council was not able to consider creative industries as a new strategic segment of its economy. The second phase started in 2007. The publication of empirical evidence showing the creative industries as a new segment of the Leipzig’s economy paved the way for a broader and less “traditional” sector discussion not only within the public authorities but also within official and market representatives. A major cornerstone was the publication of an article in the city magazine “Kreuzer” asking if Leipzig could become a Creative City. Finally, the third phase, which started in 2008, can be characterized by a fear from leading public opinion as well as market representatives that the discourse on the creative industries and Creative City policies will not lead to any substantial improvement of creative and entrepreneurial practices in the City.

Poznań

Institutional change driven by the systemic transformation since 1989 and the entry into the European Union in 2004 have accelerated the development of the creative industries in Poznań. During the last decades the main policy concern focused on minimising the structural gap inherited from the socialism period. Therefore the growth of Poznań as a Creative City has been mostly based on its creative potential and historical past (real sphere) and has recently induced some policy action to support it (policy sphere).

Real sphere

Poznań is one of the oldest, largest and fastest-growing cities in Poland, located in the West-Central part of the country, halfway between Warsaw and Berlin, which makes it an important node of transport. With its 550,000 inhabitants (2013), Poznań is the fifth largest city in Poland (after Warsaw, Łódź, Cracow, and Wrocław).

Poznań is considered as one of the Polish business cities and trade capitals as well as largest industrial centres in terms of employment and technological industrial progress. As a result of the loss of communist markets, the old industries have collapsed or reduced their output due to the low level of technology and competitiveness of their products. Firms that are adapting to global changes now play a key role in the economy, usually thanks to foreign investors (Parysek, Mierzejewska 2006). The city is characterised by the quality of its human capital, a low unemployment rate and a high level of entrepreneurship – this profile seems to be favourable to make it a Creative City. Nevertheless, Poznań's economic base has grown more on the knowledge side (industries related to ICT) than on the creative side in 2000s. This may be explained both by the history of the city as a trade centre and the difficulty for economic actors to consider the economic side of cultural activities. Even though, culture was a salient feature of the society at the time of the socialism state, it was very rarely seen as an economic good.

According to the latest data available, there were 25,340 people working in the creative industries and 53,080 working in the knowledge industries in 2005 in Poznań. The city specialises in ICT-oriented firms as well as institutions of higher education (Stryjakiewicz et al. 2007). Among the creative industries important in the city, in terms of employment, were: publishing, advertising and architecture. Nevertheless, the role of cultural industries (including media) has been mediocre. The nearby city of Swarzedz is however very well known for its furniture handicraft.

The development of creative and knowledge sectors in Poznań accelerated steeply after Poland opened its borders in 1989. Joining the European Union in 2004 gave rise to a host of programmes and initiatives which, with the EU financial backing, became the driving force of change in Poland (as was the case with, e.g., the urban renewal programme) which also favors the development of these industries. Today, the development of the knowledge and creative economy rests on several pillars. One of the most essential is the network of higher education institutions and their activities in the field of knowledge creation and dissemination especially around ICT. Nevertheless, co-operation between science and the economy is still considered unsatisfactory. This is largely due to institutional limitations or more precisely to an insufficient legal and organisational framework.

Poznań is composed of a population with good standard of living compared with the national average. This includes relatively high wages and good housing conditions. In addition, the ethnic structure is highly homogeneous; the number of foreigners is small as in the majority of Polish cities (Kotus 2006). This relative homogeneity of the population in terms of income and ethnicity can contribute to

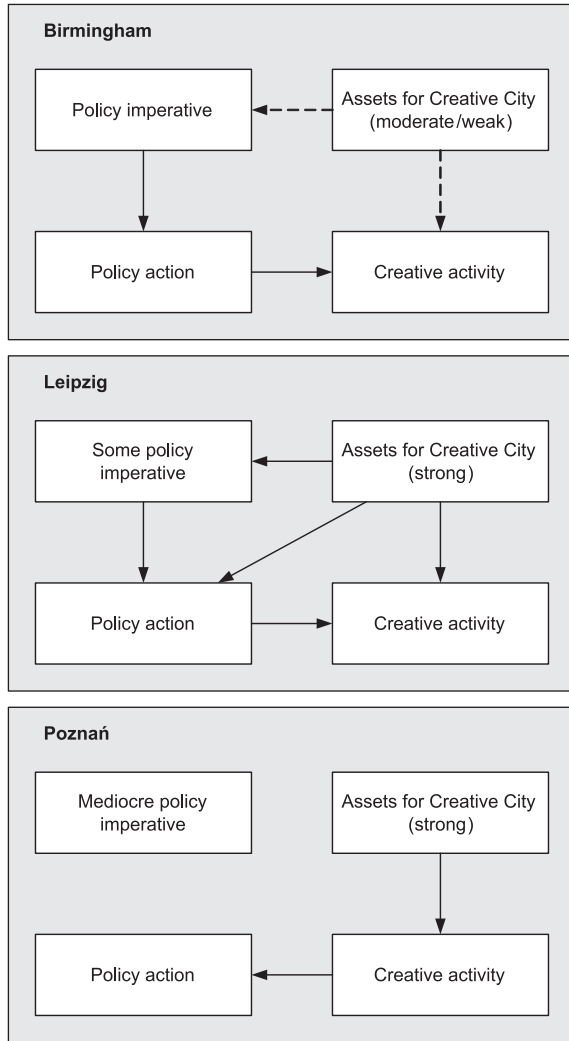
build the city as a Creative City by supporting a relatively homogenous demand for creative goods. This could be positive in the first stages of the development of the Creative City – the supply of creative goods, by newly established producers could be made easier by a less diversified demand.

The challenges of the development of the Poznań's creative sector were connected with its development path. Study on creative firms' managers revealed that the post-socialist economic changes have led to the formation of two groups of managers (Stryjakiewicz et al. 2008). One embraces people who took advantage of their contacts established while they had worked in the public sector to open their own businesses in the early 1990s. The other group includes entrepreneurs of a younger generation who finished their education after the systemic change. Often gathering experience in foreign corporations, they went on to launch firms of their own based on the new standards of doing business. In addition, their formal and informal links with other businesses have been of crucial importance for their positioning in the market. The scale of those links determines not only the standing of a firm, but also of the city where it is based. Many firms are not fully mature yet, and they still have not got well-developed networks. Even though the establishment of creative firms in Poznań has been quite successful after 1989, they still have to go through a process of maturation.

Since the creative firms in Poznań are mostly small, private and independent, personal factors were of great importance in their development (Stryjakiewicz et al. 2008). They usually did not expect any public support, but stressed its significant role in the creation of favourable conditions for socio-economic growth, which was a challenge for the whole national economy. They perceived domestic rather than international competition as the most important challenge. Among Polish cities, Wrocław seems to be Poznań's strongest rival in the future development of the creative knowledge sector.

Policy sphere

At the beginning of the new chapter of the Polish history in 1990s, Poland was an almost complete 'desert' from the point of view of innovation or business networks, including those based on new information and communication technologies (ICTs). In particular, the relationships between industry, R&D centres, and science were very weak. There was no condition facilitating the development of knowledge and creative industries (Stryjakiewicz 2002). The primary efforts of the central, regional and local governments were focused on dealing with the recession caused by the initial shock of the transition period. At the time any increase in the industrial output was considered a success. Consequently, state and local government policies relied mainly on short-term strategies in order to deal with the most immediate economic challenges. As the economic transition progressed, these main problems were solved and an increasing attention was paid to more qualitative aspects of development. Terms like 'clusters', 'urban knowledge systems', or 'inter-firm knowledge networks' started entering the Polish economic discourse. However, local and regional initiatives have been mainly spontaneous.



Performance of Birmingham, Leipzig and Poznań in regard to the model of development towards a Creative City in the 2000s
 Source: own elaboration

According to Strykiewicz (2002, p. 303), in the absence of a long-term national strategy of promotion and support for knowledge and creative industries, two local economic development paths seem to be available: an exogenous path, connected with the activities of transnational corporations (TNC) and EU institutions, and an endogenous ('grass-roots') path, spontaneously utilising local human capital. In the context of the unsatisfactory role of TNCs and foreign direct investment (FDI) in creating innovation networks and promoting the new economy, the development of local grass-roots ventures in this field is of special importance. The best example of such local networks can be found in the city

of Swarzędz near Poznań with its artistic furniture crafts (Stryjakiewicz, 2005). Nevertheless those structures have been mainly developed without the support of any policy so far.

Since 1990, the main strategic and planning documents developed by the Poznań local government authorities in pursuing their growth strategies have been mainly general in focus. This is mainly explained by the necessity of building the market economy basically from scratch, which has forced the city to tackle wider local issues like infrastructure. Today, there is no spatially and functionally cohesive policy whose objective would be the building of a creative sector in the city and its surroundings. On the contrary, city policies are focusing on the development of science and technologies. In the Study of the Conditions and Directions of the Spatial Development of Poznań City (2008), it was assumed that the city is to perform the function of the chief administrative and service centre for western Poland as well as the centre of the Poznań metropolitan region. Special emphasis was put on its development as an academic and scientific-technological centre. Nevertheless, historically, Poznań played a role of cultural centre in terms of music and theatre. The city has been slowly building on this past, notably in terms of its tourism and regeneration strategy.

Performance of Birmingham, Leipzig and Poznań as Creative Cities

This section compares the performance of our three case studies in regard to our model of development toward a Creative City (Fig. 2) during the 2000s period and reflects on the impact of size on their evolution and development or not toward being a Creative City.

The real sphere

Since the 1990s, Birmingham, Leipzig and Poznań have each undergone a shift toward the service economy as well as regeneration processes changing their urban fabric. For various reasons, all three cities are in a process of “catching up” with the creative and knowledge economy. In this process, they have “re-activated” their historical potentials in order to foster changes in their economic policies. For example, trade, business and culture have been brought forward as key characteristics of their local economic development. With the development of creative industries under the Labour government in the UK, Birmingham has tried to develop its image as a Creative City since 1998 whereas the creative agenda has only recently reached Leipzig and Poznań. It is important to note that Leipzig and Poznań have also had to overcome important challenges inherited from their socialism period, for example the passage to a market economy (privatisation and modernisation) and the development of their infrastructure.

Today, each city occupies a middle position in its national economy. Birmingham is the second city in England. Poznań is the 5th city in Poland in terms of population but a 2nd-tier city economically speaking. Finally, Leipzig, while ranked below 10 in terms of population compared with other cities in Germany, is the largest city of the State of Saxony and a regional centre in central Germany. Birmingham's economy has a strong service focus, especially around finances, law, retail, and education as well as business tourism. Automotive still plays an important role in the economy, even if declining. Leipzig's service sector has grown significantly in the last 10 years. Today the city's economy is strong in Law and R&D (life sciences, biotechnology, medical and environmental technologies). The city has recently promoted itself as an automotive city with the attraction of a Porsche plant. Poznań has attracted the investment of many foreign companies and the local economy is strong in education and R&D, and information and communication technology (ICT). Both Birmingham and Leipzig are struggling with unemployment and socio-polarisation issues while Poznań is considered a wealthy city.

When looking specifically at knowledge versus creative industries, it is important to note that while Poznań and Birmingham are recognised as having strong knowledge industries (such as ICT and R&D or finances and professional services), Leipzig scores highly on creative industries with the presence of its media cluster. The pace of creative economy growth has been quite different in the three cities. The development of creative industries has been quicker in Poznań and Leipzig, however those changes are mostly quantitative (growth of the sector). On the contrary, the development of creative industries has been slower in Birmingham. The three cities have significant cultural assets but exploit them with various degrees of success. For example, cultural institutions have played an important role in regeneration processes in Birmingham. This is less the case in Poznań (the city does not use its cultural assets at their full potential) whereas the reconstructed fin-de-siècle inner-city in Leipzig serves as a central argument for tourism. Finally, each of the three cities has developed over the years some form of clustering in particular cultural or creative industries. For example, Birmingham is renowned for its Jewellery quarter, whereas in Leipzig, the new media quarter is a strong component of the local and regional economy and Poznań benefits from a regional craft cluster around traditional furniture industry and more recently design.

The policy sphere

The three cities operate in different institutional and governance arrangements. Since the 19th century, Birmingham has been an exemplar of strong, party based, local government, actively modernising the City Centre and delivering services. Until the end of the 1990s, the City was the main responsible for local development. The change in the regional governance implemented in the UK in the 2000s led to a multiplication of actors and strategies trying to foster economic development and creative and knowledge industries at the local and regional

levels. This abundance of actors and strategies created some issues in terms of integration and coordination. From 1950 to 1990, Leipzig and Poznań have been under the strong influence of socialism planning policies. Since then both cities have undergone some significant governance changes. Leipzig is now part of the German federal system. Local and regional policy makers have opted for a soft governance model characterised by various alliances between policy makers and planners as well as joint local and regional initiatives. As for Birmingham, Poznań is characterised by an over abundance of local and regional actors and strategies with a lack of integration and comprehensive overview.

Leipzig and Poznań have opted for distinctive policy approaches to shift from a focus on industrial production and economies of scale and scope to a focus on developing infrastructure and communication and fostering and supporting the private sector. In practice, this has led to a mix of hard (building and neighbourhood regeneration) and soft measures (support programs for firms). Interestingly, both Leipzig and Birmingham/West Midlands have also opted for cluster policies; the cluster discourse has recently reached Poznań.

The three cities present different profiles in terms of the recognition of the importance of creative industries. In Birmingham and England, this recognition was characterised by a top-down approach with a strong impulse from the national government. As such, over the 2000s period, creative industries benefited from sectoral plans and strategies and were also part of more comprehensive strategies to develop the city and the region. There was a specific focus on jewellery and crafts, new media and film and video. In Poznań and Leipzig, this recognition follows a more bottom-up approach. For instance, the cultural capital of Poland has traditionally been Cracow. Poznań was (and still is) a business city and creative industries are not considered as an important asset for the city and do not benefit from any specific policy. However, creative industries are present in the city and there is demand for “creative goods” as some inhabitants go even elsewhere to attend cultural events. In Leipzig, creative actors have a strong presence, especially in Media, Art and Music and this has been recognised in the development of a sectoral policy by local and regional policy makers in the last few years.

Existing clusters may benefit from strong informal and formal private and public-private networking in Birmingham and Leipzig. Depending on the sector, there was more competition rather than collaboration between actors in Birmingham. In Poznań, some sectors have also had a strong private networking. However, because of the introduction of the capitalist economic system, today competition is more important and this impedes on collaboration. The regeneration and economic development processes of the last 20 years has led to the creation of some form of “buzz” in the three cities. However, all three cities struggle to become this “number one creative place to be”, partly due to the geo-graphical proximity with their national capitals. Birmingham and Poznań may also be disadvantaged by their image as business city. Finally, although they have succeeded in their economic and regeneration processes, Birmingham and Leipzig are still struggling with unemployment and socio-polarisation.

The role of size

Size and related functionality of our three cities seems to have played a role in their development as Creative City in various ways. Firstly, as important regional and national economic centres, they have experienced important phenomena of economic restructuring but have managed to overcome them thanks to their diversified economies and resources. Secondly, the size of their economy and their geographical roles have constituted attractive factors and ensured the presence of cultural and creative activities. This is reinforced by some collaborative networking activities in some sectors and the possibility to easily develop some forms of niche markets. Simultaneously, size is also an inhibiting factor as our three cities do not seem to have a sufficient critical mass to perform in all creative industries in terms of both production and consumption and tend to specialise in one or at best two creative sub-sectors. This specialisation seems strongly influenced by their historical development and the presence of existing cultural assets. This can also be influenced by national policies in terms of decentralisation of national public creative organisations or distribution of creative funding. Thirdly, their position as second-rank cities in their country can create some difficulties in terms of their image as Creative City. This latter point is strongly influenced by the capacity of local and regional policy makers to foster a Creative City Agenda but also by the importance of national capitals as gatekeepers for international markets.

Conclusion

The paper analysed the path toward the Creative City concept in three medium-sized cities in Central and Western Europe during the 2000s: Birmingham (UK), Leipzig (Germany) and Poznań (Poland). Our research assesses the possibilities for medium-sized cities to become creative cities and to the extent to which they can compete with the diversity of large creative cities such as London, Paris or Berlin. In addition, we have tried to determine the extent to which history plays a role in this process and whether there exist different paths toward the Creative City in Western versus Central and Eastern Europe. Our analysis suggests the following conclusions. The three analysed cities have been attempting at various degrees and speeds to support the creative industries to promote themselves as a Creative City in the 2000s. These attempts were made with different institutional frameworks (policy spheres) and cultural and economic assets (real spheres), which have shaped and influenced their paths. The comparison of their paths highlights similarities in the factors that influence their development as Creative Cities, suggesting that differences between Western versus Central and Eastern Europe might be less pronounced than expected. The main difference seems to be in the speed of change rather than in its quality. This might be explained partly by the fact that although starting with a delay of more than 10 years behind Birmingham, policy initiatives to support the creative industries in

Leipzig and Poznań have tended to build on a similar conceptual basis influenced by the global economic discourse on creative economy and clusters.

Birmingham is an example of a top-down approach with a strong policy imperative formulated by a national recognition of the importance of the creative industries. This has created an arena for the development and implementation of programmes as well as a form of collective action aiming at fostering these industries locally and regionally. The city benefits from a variety of creative activities due to its size but except from its inherited strength in the jewellery industry is struggling to reach a national critical mass in other specific creative sub-sectors. The City also has difficulty to develop its image as a Creative City – London being the creative centre of the UK – and is viewed primarily as a business city. This top-down approach has also its limits if national priorities changed as this has been the case with the change in government in the UK since 2010. Other approaches can be found in Leipzig and Poznań. In Leipzig, the policy imperative has not been as explicit as in Birmingham, but the cultural heritage of the city and the existence of a media cluster – supported by the presence of the regional broadcasting corporation – have given the rationale to formulate a sectoral policy and to introduce some creative governance since 2009. The approach has thus been more a bottom-up one. While Leipzig has been successful in becoming a media centre, there exist some limits to its further development. The heterogeneity of recently emerged creative sub-markets (games industries, art, design, music) are structurally new for the local public administration resulting in a rather slow acceptance of this situation. Furthermore, this increase of complexity cannot be adequately supported by a relatively small number of experienced professional staff in the local administration.

Poznań, a business city, still has difficulty recognising the role of the creative industries in its local economy. Consequently, creative agents operate with very little policy support. Nonetheless, a growing interest and demand for the creative output in the city has led to an increasing awareness of the significance and potential benefits of the creative industries. As further growth of the sector will continue, a stronger impulse for policy action could be generated. The example of such mechanism could be the “Local action plan for creative industries in Poznan and Wielkopolska region”, developed by the local authorities in 2013. Nevertheless, we can expect that the city will face a strong competition from other cities of similar range, such as Wrocław for example.

The analysis of our case studies show that there are opportunities for cities of medium-sized to foster creative industries and to promote themselves as Creative Cities, especially if local and regional policy makers take this agenda forward. This is supported by their existing economic roles regionally and nationally and by their related attractiveness and creative demand. Nevertheless, their chance to develop a diversified creative economy is low. If they have focussed, early on, on one or a few creative sectors (e.g. like Leipzig’s media cluster) and have used local assets instead of “importing” new industries, it can be more difficult for them to diversify their economic policies in a short period of time. It is important to note that imported sectors may struggle to survive over the longer term

as well; their development may be impeded by the duration of existing funding and supporting structures (i.e. labour market, innovation dynamic and local policy and regional policy initiatives) if they do not already have a strong presence locally. This importance of history and local assets advocates for the rejection of a “one-size-fits-all” solution in supporting local development through Creative City policies. Specific local institutional set-ups and socio-spatial embeddedness of creative sectors seems of high relevance in this process.

Finally, the examples of Birmingham and Poznań indicate that cities can take different identities and that a Creative City is not always compatible with a business city. However, it does not mean that a business city cannot benefit from strong cultural and creative activities.

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