

Creative Regeneration on the Case of the Specific Area in Ljubljana

Introduction

Creative districts are seen as a key urban policy tool for both, support for creative economy on the one hand as well as for urban regeneration on the other. The process through which a creative district emerges is a self-organized bottom-up process, driven by local residents. Pioneers of urban regeneration are often migrants, artists and other fringe social groups, which typically take advantage of cheap real-estate in run-down areas. Such an area then becomes attractive also for other representatives of the so-called creative class, accelerating the process of regeneration.

Selection of a specific area

Based on the results of the study »Potentials of Creative Urban Regeneration« the present study »Creative Regeneration on the Case of the Specific Area in Ljubljana« focuses on the opportunities for creative regeneration in a specific area within Ljubljana Urban Region. Initially, five potential areas were identified, all of them in Ljubljana, due to the fact that creative industries are not well developed in other towns of the region. On the basis of a simple SWOT analysis and two in-depth discussions with local policy-makers one area in Šiška was selected as a primary case, and another one in the area of Šmartinska was added as a possible secondary case.

The area in Šiška was selected due to the possibility of quick and cheap measures, through which the Kino Šiška cultural center and its immediate surroundings can be linked to the area in Stara Šiška, where the concentration of smaller and more dispersed creative actors was identified. Some buildings are owned by the municipality, giving the area an additional advantage, as active policy with regard to real estate can be more easily implemented. As opposed to Šiška, the area of Šmartinska partnership was seen as having big potential for thorough, but gradual and long-term creative regeneration.

Vision

Development of the vision for Šiška was based on the bottom-up approach, through which a common understanding of problems and solutions in the area is formed. A key outcome of such an approach is not a product, but a continuous communication among stakeholders. For such an approach the following steps have to be carried out: identification of stakeholders, setting up cooperation among key stakeholders, stimulating the process of cooperation, monitoring of this process and facilitating common understanding of problems and solutions. Among the more tangible products of the cooperation so far are the name »KIKŠ, Kulturna in kreativna Šiška«, and logo of the community.

Spatial analysis

An important part of the present study represents also the analysis of the potentials for the development of the creative economy in the area. This includes the analysis of the spatial distribution of available spaces and a simple market analysis. The quantitative findings were complemented with views of local actors, acquired through qualitative semi-structured interviews.

On the basis of mapping the spatial distribution of available spaces and following the theory of the 24/7 lifestyle of creative individuals, without a clear distinction between working and living spaces as well as between working and leisure, we can point out to a few hotspots, suitable for further development of the creative economy in Šiška. These include first Stara Šiška in the southern part of the analyzed area. In this area available apartments are mixed with commercial space, both at relatively accessible prices, allowing for a continuous mixing of working and leisure activities. Another hotspot area is around Trg Prekomorskih brigad with Kino Šiška cultural center and a number of creative and cultural enterprises, located in the city owned premises. Not far is Na Jami area, where many flats are available. The third potential hotspot area is in the north of the area, around the

Slovenijaavto building, where a concentration of available spaces, allowing for the organization of the 24/7 lifestyle, is identified, although it lacks many other characteristics of a creative district.

In the interviews, complementing the spatial analysis, temporary use of underused or vacant buildings was the most commonly mentioned possible measure for dealing with degradation. This becomes even more important in times of economic crisis, in which most real-estate development projects have stalled.

A simple market analysis shows that the most expensive commercial spaces are in the category of 101 to 200 m² with a monthly price of 11,72 €/m², while the cheapest are in the category above 1001 m² with a monthly price of 6,28 €/m². City owned commercial spaces in Šiška are mostly below 100 m² with an average rent of 10,77 €/m².

Analysis of programmes and plans

In Ljubljana and Slovenia creative industries are not defined as a separate development field, integrated into the development strategies at the city or national level. Instead they are included »indirectly« through other fields, resulting in the fact that their role and importance in the spatial development plans and production policy is not properly addressed. Based on the analysis of the spatial development plans we can nevertheless consider a number of indirect push/pull factors, which either stimulate or hinder the development of the creative industries.

Despite a number of indirect factors, noted in the planning documents, influencing the development of places, suitable for creative industries, in the context of Ljubljana and Slovenia we cannot talk about any longer-term systemic measures, that would guide the development in this field. These deficiencies in programmes and plans in relation to creative industries potentially hinder the development of the city and undoubtedly influence the quality of life in the city.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings from the spatial analysis, interviews and the analysis of programmes and plans a set of recommendations at the transnational and local level was proposed. Some key recommendations for the transnational level are listed below:

1. Institutional cooperation at the cross-section of urban development and creative industries needs to be strengthened at all levels.
2. The role of integrated urban development plans for the development of creative industries needs to be elaborated and specific planning measures need to be defined, both at the strategic level as well as in implementation.
3. The role of specific branches of creative industries in relation to urban development needs to be understood and properly addressed.
4. All relevant stakeholders need to be included early on in the formulation and implementation of measures supporting creative industries.
5. Social capital at the district level needs to be strengthened.
6. Enough urban places that can function as meeting places between different creative communities in order to stimulate interaction between the creatives should be provided.
7. It is important to ensure public support for measures, aimed at strengthening creative industries.
8. Effects of gentrification need to be anticipated in advance.
9. Temporary use of underused and vacant buildings needs to be encouraged.

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