Urban regeneration through cultural creativity and social inclusion: Rethinking creative city theory through a Japanese case study

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to rethink creative city theory by analyzing urban regeneration processes in Japan through cultural creativity and social inclusion. The impact of Florida's theory has led to the common misperception that cities prosper as people of the creative class, such as artists and gays, gather. However, attracting people of the creative class does not automatically make a creative city. Empirical analyses of Kanazawa City, clarify that the creative city needs a 'culture-based production system', a well-balanced system of cultural production and cultural consumption that takes advantage of accumulated cultural capital. This paper also examines Osaka City, where creative city policies failed to produce adequate results because they did not take root as a comprehensive urban strategy. However, in spite of these failures, a lively and inclusive grassroots movement has emerged around the creative city. This movement brings Osaka towards being a socially-inclusive creative city.

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Introduction

The concept of 'creative cities', both in theory and in practice, is at the heart of this paper. This concept refers to a mobilization of the 'creativity' inherent in art and culture to create new industries and employment opportunities. In addition to addressing the problems of homelessness and the urban environment, it is believed that such an approach can foster comprehensive urban regeneration.

In the academy, this concept first attracted attention through the works of Peter Hall, internationally renowned authority on urban theory, and Charles Landry, an international consultant (Hall, 1998; Landry, 2000). In Japan and elsewhere in Asia, the author has played a leading role in promoting this concept, in both theory and practice, through his research and policy work (Sasaki, 1997, 2001, 2004).

Part of the broader diffusion of the creative cities ideal has come through the launch of UNESCO's "Global Network of Creative Cities" in 2004, and interest has quickly spread beyond the confines of Europe and America, to Asia, and onto developing countries throughout the world. Prior to this, UNESCO declared the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity 2001, for the purpose of restraining standardization of the culture under the current circumstances of globalization. Now, 19 cities around the world, and three cities in Japan—Kanazawa, Kobe and Nagoya—are registered in the global network.

In Asia, and especially in Japan, cities—with their long history of bureaucratically-led developmentalism at the center of urban and regional politics—have suffered as neo-liberal globalization has transformed industries and threatened social welfare systems. Environmental, employment, and housing crises have also become more acute in this era of neo-liberalism. At the same time, the businesses and families that have been central to coping with social crises in the past are no longer functional. In these times of crisis and recession, it seems that the moment for fundamental social reconstruction from the grass roots has arrived.

While promoting global research on urban problems from the perspective of creative cities, we must be careful not to force a Western conception of the creative city ideal on our study of Japanese cities. Instead, we must rethink the concept of creative cities in light of the myriad problems facing those cities, with the hope of creating a new urban society and a new urban theory based on culture, creativity and social inclusion that are appropriate to the Japanese context.

Rethinking creative city theory

The creative cities idea emerged as a new urban model with the European Union's 'European City of Culture' or 'European Capital of Culture' projects. In these cases, the creativity inherent in art and culture were utilized to create new industries and employment opportunities while also tackling environmental problems and homelessness. In short, this was a multifaceted attempt at urban regeneration. And the work of Charles Landry and Masayuki Sasaki

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has put the issues of minorities, homelessness, and social inclusion at the center of their respective visions of the creative city.

In addition, Richard Florida has suggested that US cities should deploy policies to attract the type of people he defines as a 'creative class' and whom he sees as needed to sustain the new creative industries (Florida, 2002). Florida has also advocated his own creativity index, consisting of eight indices in three fields: talent, technology, and tolerance. This index has created a stir among urban theorists and policymakers throughout the world. Among these three categories, Florida has himself stressed tolerance. Especially sensational has been his gay index, in which the regional proportion of gays and lesbians to the entire nation is measured via location quotient (Florida, 2005). His gay index has become a symbol strongly suggestive of the creativity of social groups like the open-minded, avant-garde young artists called Bohemians. Florida contends that this group displays the American counter-cultures, in fundamental opposition to highbrow European society, as in American musicals compared to European operas, and American jazz and rock versus European classical music. The impact of Florida's unconventional theory has led to the common misperception that cities prosper as people of the creative class, such as artists and gays, gather (Zimmerman, 2008; Long, 2009).

Creative cities and culture-based production systems

Other theorists, however, have noted that attracting people of the creative class does not automatically make a creative city. As UCLA professor Allen Scott maintains, for the development of creative industries that serve as economic engines for a creative city, it is imperative to have a large workforce with specific skills and the necessary industries to support that workforce (Scott, 2006). And if the city's economy does not have a marketing capability that enables it to develop on the world market, sustainable development will prove elusive. University of Minnesota Professor Ann Markusen, like Scott, attaches importance to the role of the cultural and economic sectors of the city in these days of the knowledge/information-based economy. At the same time, she criticizes Florida, saying that his argument lacks a development theory applicable to particular local economies. She contends that although export-oriented economic theories have long been in the mainstream as development theory for local economies, in this era of knowledge/information-based economies, economic development in import-substitution industries is more desirable (Markusen and Schrock, 2006a,b).

Markusen credits Jane Jacobs as the pioneer of this theory, and contends that cities pursuing export-oriented economic development through mass production are liable to have insufficient consumption within the region and limited fields of industries. On the other hand, she advocates an import-substitution model that is centered on cultural industries to enhance consumption in the region, bring about a diversified workforce and more sophisticated human capital to develop new knowledge and information-based industries. Therefore, Markusen insists, it is important to analyze the role that artists play in creative cities on multiple levels—socially, culturally, and economically (Markusen and King, 2003).

Based on her own investigations in Minnesota, Markusen takes notice of the existence of artists' centers where artists periodically get together, practice, give public performances, and communicate openly with older artists and audiences. Then she demonstrates empirically that investing in such centers attracts artists, stimulates cultural consumption in the region, and when combined with medical and healthcare industries, stops the trend of population exodus. Such an approach to urban regeneration, then, helps declining downtown areas to recover and gives rise to a socially-inclusive environment, which can help tackle problems in low-in-

come communities (Markusen, 2006). She points out that it is local arts councils that were established in a spirit of autonomy in numerous communities and States that have served as the leaders of spontaneous regional cultural policies.

Andy Pratt, professor of King's College London, is a specialist on cluster policies for cultural and creative industries, and he notes that family-operated and small-sized businesses are in the absolute majority in such cultural industries. And, in order to survive on world markets, it is imperative for these industries to have a network of horizontal cooperation with each other. He points to three characteristics in comparison with ordinary industrial clusters. The first is the importance of the qualitative content of the networks of the entities constituting the cluster, especially the process of 'tacit knowledge' exchange and its spillover. The second is that, among corporate transactions that are part of the cluster, the importance of non-monetary transactions based on relations of mutual trust increases. Third, for the formation of the creative cluster, it is important to analyze not only its economic and social contributions, but also how such industries fit in the broader cultural context of the city or region (Pratt, 2004, 2008).

In other words, for creative industries, whose 'lifeblood are the creativity, skill, and talent of individuals,' to form a cluster, it is imperative to have a 'milieu' in place where creativity can be nurtured and can flourish. In creative city theory, it is the 'creative milieu' and 'social structure of creativity' and, above all the social, cultural, and geographical context that are truly vital for the effective integration of industrial, urban, and cultural policy. Florida also points out the importance of the 'creative milieu,' but he does not deeply analyze the economic aspect of creative cluster.

Jane Jacobs' analysis of Bologna provides a good illustration of these principles in practice (Jacobs, 1984). Bologna is a city with a flexible network system of small scale production facilities that has repeatedly demonstrated a facility for innovation and improvisation. With these principles in mind, we could define the creative city as 'a city that cultivates new trends in arts and culture and promotes innovative and creative industries through the energetic creative activities of artists, creators and ordinary citizens, contains many diverse "creative milieus" and "innovative milieus," and has a regional, grass-roots capability to find solutions to social exclusion problems such as homeless people' (Sasaki, 2001). For further clarification of the six conditions needed for the realization of a creative city, see Appendix.

Based on empirical analyses of Bologna and Kanazawa, a 'cultural mode of production model' (refer to Fig. 1) is defined as the well-balanced system of cultural production and cultural consumption that takes advantage of accumulated cultural capital to produce products and services high in economic as well as cultural value in a system where consumption stimulates production (Sasaki, 2003, 2007). This definition, however, requires further elaboration in light of the research of Ann Markusen and Andy Pratt.

We can call this method of developing new industries for the development of the city economy through high-quality cultural capital the "cultural mode of production utilizing cultural capital" model.

The "cultural mode of production" at which Kanazawa aims consists of the following.

(1) Produce goods and services with high cultural value added, through the integration of the skills and sensibilities of the artisans with high-tech devices in the production process.
(2) Create a tightly knit, organic industry-related structure of companies developing endogenously in the region, ranging from the cultural-goods industry to the high-tech, software and design industries, in order to