CultureCase

What makes for a cultural and creative city

This research was conducted by **Valentina Montalto** and **three others** at the **European Commission**

Summary

This paper describes the work that went in to creating the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (a project of the European Commission designed to identify the indicators that reveal the key components of a cultural or creative city). The process revealed that, as the engines of growth and centres of population (and hence jobs) in modern developed economies, capital cities tended to excel on measures of ‘creative economy’. Medium sized non-capital cities such as Barcelona, Florence or Ghent tended to score highly on ‘cultural vibrancy’ thanks to their museums, theatres or other cultural assets. In fact, the data revealed that ‘many medium-sized cities appear to have, on average, more cultural capital assets per inhabitant than larger cities’. Smaller cities with high quality universities (such as Bologna) or a concentration of computer science graduates (such as Leuven or Eindhoven) tended to score highly for ‘enabling environment’.

The monitor pulls together 29 indicators for 168 cities in 30 European countries

The researchers concede that concepts like ‘culture’ and ‘vibrancy’ can be hard to pin down and measure. Nonetheless, they did their best to find a mixture of measures and ended up including ‘informal and community (arts) centres, in addition to major cultural landmarks’. The work also took account of indicators of diversity, openness and trust, recognising that ‘a flourishing creative economy [relies] on a socially and culturally inclusive environment’.

There is no standard formula for enhancing the cultural or creative capacity of cities

Smaller cities which are well networked can mimic the benefits that come from being a large city (which include economies of scale, global visibility, and the benefits of aggregating industries and organisations together). Another strategy for success is to develop distinct niches (such as food or fashion) that will attract and develop a concentration of people in those industries.

Keywords

cities **creativity** **place** **Culture** **european union**

Title	Culture Counts: An empirical approach to measure the cultural and creative vitality of European cities
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Publication date	2019
Source	Cities, Vol. 89, pp. 167-185
Link	**https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275118303640**
Open Access Link	**https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275118303640**
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