

## CULTURAL CLUSTERS AS CATALYSTS FOR URBAN REGENERATION Learning from Berlin examples

Imma Sofi Anindyta, ST.,M.Arch. ; Moh. Sahid Indraswara, ST., MT. ; B. Adji Moertomo, Ir., MSA.

**Abstract**— The creation or nourishment of cultural clusters has been increasingly taken up as an alternative source for urban development. To counter this economic, social, and environmental decline, urban experts and policymakers have propagated cultural policy driven renewal. Just like what happened in Berlin, the recent art and cultural projects have focused less on capital projects, and more focused on the capacity to support community-led regeneration in such of derelict lands. Culture of improvisation sprang up and parlaying its acres of empty, rundown spaces into colorful hubs of creativity where artists and cultural organizations have contributed to the vitality and character of it through the creation of studios, workshop and “cultural clusters”.

**Keywords** : art, architecture, culture, creative industries, urban regeneration

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Urban Decline and the Economic : Rationale for Cultural Policy

Cities throughout Western Europe have, from the late 1970s, undergone a process of urban restructuring. This is due to a variety of factors including: an outmigration of industry and jobs, middle class flight to suburbia, changing work of patterns, the development of out of town shopping centers, and a rise in car ownership/dependency<sup>1</sup>. Some of these changes have been obviously economic. But compounding and reinforcing this dereliction have been the rising attendant social problems of joblessness, delinquency and poverty for those remaining, also have an impact on the local community and economy alike. To counter this economic, social, and environmental decline, urban experts and policymakers have propagated cultural policy driven renewal, through a discourse couched in increasingly economic terms.

Urban experts and policymakers looking for new models which incorporated market forces to breathe back

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Penulis A, Jurusan Arsitektur Fakultas Teknik Universitas Diponegoro Semarang, Jl. Prof Soedarto Tembalang Semarang, Telp. 024-7063999, Fax. 024 7063888, email : nuri.undip@gmail.com.

Penulis B, Jurusan Arsitektur Fakultas Teknik Universitas Diponegoro Semarang, Jl. Prof Soedarto Tembalang Semarang, Telp. 024-7063999, Fax. 024 7063888, email : nuri.undip@gmail.com.

Penulis C, Jurusan Arsitektur Fakultas Teknik Universitas Diponegoro Semarang, Jl. Prof Soedarto Tembalang Semarang, Telp. 024-7063999, Fax. 024 7063888, email : nuri.undip@gmail.com

into derelict city urban areas, and turned to “culture”. The creation or nourishment of cultural clusters has been increasingly taken up as an alternative source for urban development. The returns expected from investing in museums, events, theatres and “cultural industries” were in the form of profits, jobs, and physical regeneration.

#### Cultural responses

Artists and cultural organizations are urban agents, and have always contributed to the vitality and character of the cities. According to Landry<sup>2</sup>, in the United States, since 1960s, they have shown how they can contribute to urban renewal, often through the creation of studios and “cultural quarters” in run-down central districts. And in the aftermath of recession in 1981, British cities began to look around for solutions to their economic problems, and some hit upon these American and parallel European experiences. The use of cultural activity to fuel urban regeneration was principally economic in conception and purpose.

Mixtures of cultural functions and activities, from production to presentation and consumption, and from theatre and the visual arts to pop music and the new media, are grouped together in a great variety of spatial forms. Projects may restrict themselves to standalone buildings or larger building complexes, or they may include entire quarters or networks of locations. Mostly, the projects are housed in former industrial complexes, but quite often they also imply the building of new sites. While some clusters are restricted to genuine artistic/cultural activities, most of them also incorporate a great variety of leisure and/or entertainment elements: from bars, restaurants and cultural retail spaces to health and fitness complexes.

Sometimes, the projects have started as places left over after planning, subsequently took over by informal groups of cultural producers who turn them into alternative cultural sites. Sometimes, the cultural clusters began their existence in the minds of cultural managers, searching for ways to strengthen the market position of their amenities within a more competitive cultural and leisure market. In other cases, the projects came to life on the drawing board of urban planners, looking for ways to revitalize urban quarters or to strengthen the local 'creative economy'.

Some of European examples of such projects are the Temple Bar area in Dublin, the Museums Quarter in

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<sup>1</sup> Binns, Luke. Capitalizing on Culture: An Evaluation of Culture-led Urban Regeneration Policy. 2005. p.1

<sup>2</sup> Landry, Charles. The Art of Regeneration: Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity. 1996. p.iv