Jean-Dominique Billaud/Samoa

# CULTURAL AND CREATIVE DISTRICTS: LEVERS FOR REVITALISING METROPOLITAN AREAS

**THE WORLDWIDE PROLIFERATION OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE DISTRICTS (CCD'S) TESTIFIES TO A STRONG ASPIRATION OF THE METROPOLISES TO STRENGTHEN THEIR INFLUENCE AND SINGULARITY BY REVITALIZING THESE URBAN AREAS AND ENSURING THEIR (RE)DEVELOPMENT. THESE STRATEGIES ARE BASED ON PROMOTING CULTURE, STIMULATING GROWTH AND REINFORCING SOCIAL COHESION.**

**C**ulture is at the heart of both metropolitan urban planning projects and the strategies aimed at attracting creative workers and businesses. Examples of the relationship between creative industries and territorial dynamics are abundant. This will be the subject of a report by L'Institut Paris Région to be published in early 2020 presenting an international case study, of which this *Note rapide* gives an initial overview. Cultural and creative districts (CCDs, see Glossary) embed culture in the heart of cities by gathering creative workers together into an urban space conducive to the dissemination of culture and innovation. Our study assesses the territorial impact of these districts, but also presents their features, location choices and best practices, without ignoring certain tensions that may arise.

**THE RISE OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE DISTRICTS**
The concentration of artists in limited geographical spaces is nothing new: it foreshadowed the emergence of cultural neighbourhoods. Historical examples include writers in Saint-Germain-des-Prés (Paris) and artists' squats in Berlin (Germany) in the 1990s, etc. These gatherings were underpinned by artist's way of working, who often sought centrally located premises with attractive rents and places where they could collaborate with other creative workers to develop their activities.

Thus, a significant number of clusters (see Glossary) developed spontaneously as an alternative way of occupying urban space, such as in Amsterdam's NDSM neighbourhood. However, the emergence of policies supporting, or even initiating, the *ex nihilo* creation of CCDs has been more recent. This interest in creative ecosystems, coupled with the internationalisation of culture and tourism, has had a great impact on local public decision-makers, some of whom have been confronted with

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Erwann Terrier/Cité du design

Saint-Etienne (Loire county,
France), a former mining and
industrial town, has become
an emblem of cultural resilience
thanks to its specialisation in
design. Since 2010, it has belonged
to UNESCO's network of creative
towns and cities.

the challenges of international competitiveness, economic transformation or increasing territorial disparities. Indeed, cultural policies have been upscaled in territorial, economic and social terms because of their multiple objectives, namely: to intensify territorial impact and attractiveness; develop cultural and creative industry clusters; and revitalise territories affected by deindustrialisation or social difficulties.

In spatial terms, these goals have sometimes led to the will to make various fields of public policy converge within specific neighbourhoods in order to support or create CCDs. These strategic aims have induced some cities to specialise themselves in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in order to forge their own identities and attract new target populations.

Thus, the early 2000s featured a rise in these clusters (the Quartier des Spectacles in Montréal/Canada, the Museum district in Vienna/Austria, etc.). Other completely planned development models have relied on the creation of cultural and creative clusters, such as in Fort Worth, Texas (United States), a neighbourhood that has become a marker of the city's identity and a recognised and well-promoted tourist destination, even internationally.

## CHARACTERISATION OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE DISTRICTS

Although the term "cluster" is derived from economic theory, it can also be applied to CCDs. It refers to a range of activities, events, players and facilities connected with the creative sector that generate a local dynamism. Such a neighbourhood attracts a lot of attention and stands out from the rest because of its cultural density. This exposure is intensified by branding and urban marketing strategies. In addition, a neighbourhood may be reputed to be creative because of its history and strong cultural tradition.

What is to be found in these spaces, whose urban forms are more or less defined? There is no single model for CCDs. However, several common features have been identified. Their structural components are often museums and major cultural institutions (theatres, opera houses, creative spaces, etc.). The existence of small exhibition spaces and artists studios contribute to their vitality. They also feature spaces dedicated to economic activity, such as business premises, cultural start-up incubators, fab labs or coworking places. The presence of universities and schools (dedicated to design, IT, applied arts, etc.) add value to these spaces. Finally, a significant number of leisure hotspots (cinemas, "underground" night spots, etc.) round off this urban landscape.

CCDs are notable for their liveliness and animation, which stimulate a sense of community. This urban vibrancy reflects rich cultural programming, featuring festivals and temporary events. The way such public spaces are used greatly enhances the

perception of certain neighbourhoods as "creative". This includes the deployment of rehabilitation, revegetation and pedestrianisation solutions. Objects present in public spaces (signage, totems, works of art, wall frescoes, etc.) are often used to assert the cultural identity. Thus, public spaces that used to be mere transit points have become full-fledged living spaces and cultural sites. The trend towards the opening up of culture has prompted the development of off-site cultural initiatives, such as those currently being deployed in the museum district of the city of Rouen (Seine-Maritime county, northern France, see opposite pages).

## A TOOL FOR REVITALISING TERRITORIES

The emergence of a CCD has an impact that goes well beyond the cultural sphere alone. In addition to fostering the development of an artistic community, it brings in its wake operations that promote the local heritage, opening up multiple alternative possibilities, redefining social cohesion and boosting economic attractiveness.

### The promotion of the local cultural offer

Cultural production and dissemination hotspots are at the heart of the planning and development strategies of CCDs. These districts showcase the cultural offering, enabling art works to be exhibited and highlighted. Artists located in them enjoy a high profile and benefit from a branding effect that confers a certain legitimacy on their work. In addition, they benefit from the mutualisation of work tools, while their integration into a creative ecosystem fosters the implementation of joint projects and intensifies their creativity.

Creative clusters can act as value-enhancement drivers to local heritage, some of which have been unoccupied for long periods. For example, Vienna's museum district has been developed inside the former imperial stables, with the architectural choice of preserving existing buildings side-by-side with the construction of modern buildings. Brownfield sites are also often taken over by artists, as exemplified by the Alstom industrial storage halls in Nantes (Loire-Atlantique county, western France, see opposite pages), which is now a major place of the "Quartier de la création", or by the former weapons factory in Saint-Etienne (Loire county, central France).

However, some major creative cluster projects seem more like real estate building programmes designed to take advantage of urban renewal, but devoid of any real cultural purpose. To ensure the creative nature of a neighbourhood, it thus seems necessary to locate within the neighbourhood genuine venues for artistic creation, such as artists redidencies or workshops. Some sites opt for being closed to the public and rely totally on creative activity. This is the case today of l'Orfèvrerie in Saint-Denis (Seine-Saint-Denis county, northern Paris), which is temporarily located in the former works of Christofle,
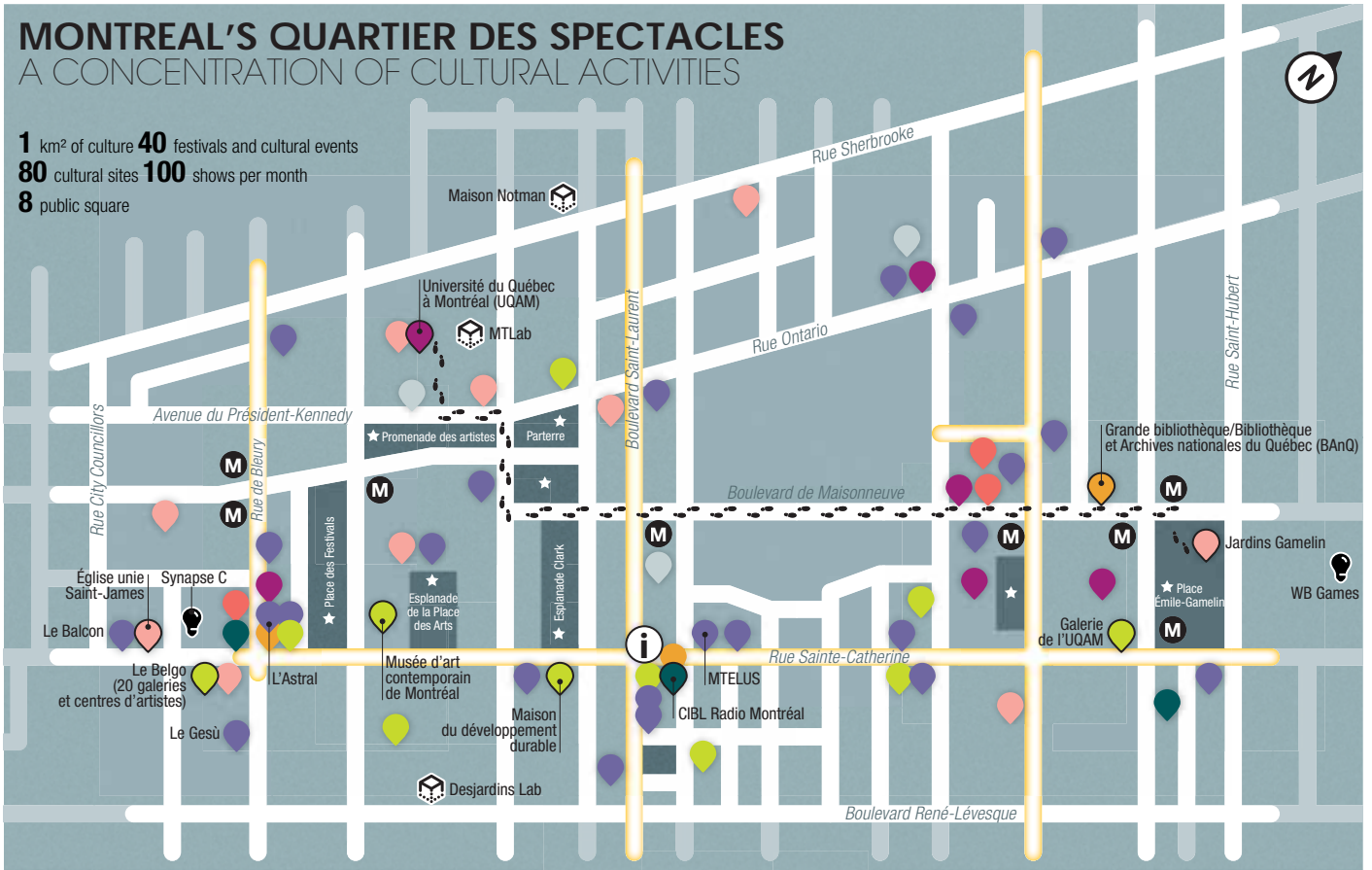
# MONTREAL'S QUARTIER DES SPECTACLES
## A CONCENTRATION OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

**1** km² of culture **40** festivals and cultural events
**80** cultural sites **100** shows per month
**8** public square



Maison Notman

Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

MTLab

Rue Sherbrooke

Rue Ontario

Boulevard Saint-Laurent

Rue Saint-Hubert

Avenue du Président-Kennedy

Promenade des artistes

Parterre

Grande bibliothèque/Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ)

Rue City Councillors

Rue de Bleury

Boulevard de Maisonneuve

Église unie Saint-James

Synapse C

Place des Festivals

Esplanade de la Place des Arts

Esplanade Clark

Jardins Gamelin

WB Games

Le Balcon

Place Émile-Gamelin

Galerie de l'UQAM

Le Belgo (20 galeries et centres d'artistes)

L'Astral

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

Rue Sainte-Catherine

MTELUS

CIBL Radio Montréal

Le Gesù

Maison du développement durable

Desjardins Lab

Boulevard René-Lévesque

### Cultural and creative sites

⬡ Major cultural sites
⬤ Architectural projection venue
⬤ Performance halls / show bars
⬤ Cinema
⬤ Book and media library
⬤ Museum and exhibition location
⬤ Cultural media
⬤ Teaching facility
⬤ Other space

### Creative economic activities

💡 Cultural and creative business
⬡ Third-places (incubator, fab-lab)

### Public spaces

★ Public square for cultural events
▢ Shopping street
Ⓜ Metro station
ⓘ Cultural showcase "La Vitrine culturelle"
⋯ Walking distance: 15 minutes

0 — 200 m

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*Source‡: Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles*

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## A PROJECT WITH AN INTERNATIONAL SCALE AND SCOPE

Inaugurated in 2003, Montreal's Quartier des spectacles is often cited as a typical example of a cultural and creative district that has reached a major stage of development. Following a period during which the neighbourhood's reputation declined, to the extent that it was known as "the Red Light District", the project to turn it into the Quartier des spectacles emerged during the Montreal summit in 2001. Right from its design stage, this project was a response to two major issues: the revitalisation of the neighbourhood and the strengthening of Montreal's reputation as a creative city. The desired objective thus became to embed the cultural institutions, festivals and artists in the District in order to enhance what existed and to generate creative synergies.

In addition to its cultural aspect, the project featured a genuine urban development dimension. In 2007, this major planning project was upgraded to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) whose main features were the revitalisation of some areas and the creation of public squares suitable for major cultural events and greater user-friendliness.

This central district of Montreal has all the main features of cultural districts: venues for cultural events, festivals and shows; a dense population of creative workers (over 7,000); and culture-dedicated businesses (over 400). The Quartier des Spectacles Partnership, a non-profit organisation (NGO) set up by the city of Montreal in 2003, plays a major role: it brings together the main representatives of the worlds of culture, real estate and business, manages public spaces and squares, organises free activities and takes charge of the technical aspects of festivals.

Now viewed as a symbol, this neighbourhood has enabled Montreal to develop its worldwide image as a creative and dynamic city. However, this very advanced model of a cultural district cannot be identically replicated as certain aspects of its success are due to the local context: the city is innovative, already well-endowed culturally, collegially managed and well-funded by the municipality. Furthermore, some people find this quarter to be "too commercial" because of a decline in the share of creative activity for the benefit of entertainment and the proliferation of tourist activities. The neighbourhood's success has also accelerated the gentrification process.

Pol'N

## Nantes: the Olivettes off-district and the "Quartier de la création" (France)

The Olivettes and "Quartier de la création" face each other across the Loire river. The former features an ancient cultural heritage, with numerous workshops and arts associations, while the latter is closely linked with the urban transformation of the western part of the Island of Nantes, which has led to the development of cultural and creative industries in and around Alstom's upgraded industrial halls. This 30-hectare project is managed by Société d'aménagement de la métropole Ouest Atlantique. Since 2012, it has focused on innovation and research through the location of teaching institutions (school of applied arts, school of design, etc.). As a result of a top-down initiative, it has a very high profile due to the organisation of national events and to its integration into the Global Cultural District Network, unlike the Olivettes neighbourhood, which wants to remain unconventional and authentic.



Laurette Ardila

## The Bronx Distrito Creativo project in Bogota (Colombia)

Commonly referred to as the Bronx, this central and historic neighbourhood of Bogota has been affected by decades of violence and the presence of gangs and drug traffickers. The Bronx Distrito Creativo forms part of a large urban development programme of the Bogota municipality aimed at revitalising the city centre, which should start in 2021. The purpose of this programme has been clearly stated: using culture as a means of deeply changing this neighbourhood's identity and image. This ambitious task involves urban developments and upgrading public spaces. The project also features at its heart social and participatory goals: thanks to meetings and workshops, the inhabitants are involved at all stages in order to enhance their sense of community.



Rouen Normandie Tourisme & Congrès

## Rouen and its Museum district (France)

The Museum district forms part of a project aimed at upgrading the city-centre, called "the Heart of the Metropolis". It has many goals: to forge a cultural identity by creating links between the five central museums; to improve the inhabitants' living environment; and to enhance the attractiveness of Rouen thanks to cultural tourism. The main urban development projects (pedestrianisation, revegetation, etc.) have been completed, but work on the Beauvoisine project is still in progress involving spaces for rental by artists.
The municipality's overall strategy is to drive a new dynamic based on a "museum route", which will subsequently allow the establishment of a creative ecosystem featuring artist workshops, art galleries and cultural and creative industries.

the silversmithing and tableware company, listed as a French historical monument. Since 2018, the Orfèvrerie has been home to 200 artists and creative individuals involved in a temporary urbanism project initiated by the Quartus group, a general contractor specialised in new urban usages.

*An urban and social project*
Culture is a key driver of the transformation of an urban area's degraded image and can give some pride back to its inhabitants. The establishment of cultural activities triggers two dynamic mechanisms. On one hand, the neighbourhood redefines its local identity and promotes it, as in Saint-Etienne (Loire county, central France), which is now well known for its specialisation in design. On the other hand, the inhabitants' perception of their living environment is positively renewed. The construction of a culture-based territorial narrative can generate a sense of pride and belonging. Citizen participation, access to culture, the arts education of young people are sources of fulfilment, learning experiences and help increase social cohesion.
In the Paris region, collectives as diverse as SoukMachines, Plateau Urbain, Yes We Camp, as well as "neighbourhood-like" places such as la Ferme du Buisson, le Centquatre, Mains d'Œuvres all focus on artistic production and the social impact of projects, in association with local people and artists.

*A vector of attractiveness and economic development*
CCDs generally strengthens economic attractiveness, be it locally (a town within a large urban centre) or nationally and internationally. The concentration of cultural and creative industries creates a virtuous circle by encouraging other businesses and private investors to locate in the same places so as to benefit from agglomeration (clustering) effects. Moreover, the "cultural recognition" of a neighbourhood gives it a brand image. This massively increases a town or city's tourist attractiveness and international renown.
Cultural strategies are occasionally perverted when certain players use them as pretexts to massively develop profitable retail activities (bars, restaurants, shops, etc.). These commercial activities settle in complement of creative activities, as in the LX Factory in Lisbon (Portugal), or replace them as in the M50 art district in Shanghai (China).

## STAKES IN COOPERATION BETWEEN A MULTITUDE OF PLAYERS
Driven by spontaneous gatherings of artists, these cultural spaces have gradually been structured around art collectives and non-profit associations, with the support of private cultural and creative industry stakeholders. After becoming aware of the potential of these clusters, local and national governments have asserted their involvement. In this regard, their role sometimes consists of supporting creative workers or of providing funding, but they can also sometimes initiate projects.

No matter how they were born – out of political will or private initiatives – the development of CCDs goes through several stages: emergence (spontaneous or planned); development of certain functions and activities; integration or not into an urban project, followed by a maturity period. Their governance has to evolve and adapt to these "moments" in order to best meet the needs of creative workers.

Furthermore, the multiplicity of stakeholders, with opposing interests, requires the setting up of collective and participatory management procedures. These will enable a shared vision to emerge for setting objectives and drawing up action plans. Creative districts generally feature public-private partnerships. This leads to a number of complex questions of governance and long-term support. The success of a CCD calls for joint action and cooperation between the various stakeholders, namely: creative workers, public institutions and inhabitants. In other words, this participatory approach that enables the stakeholders to work together in a neutral and effective framework has a strategic dimension to it.

## A MAJOR PHENOMENON TO BE REGULATED: POTENTIAL GENTRIFICATION
Against a background of gradual institutionalisation, major CCD projects are sometimes presented as marketing tools at the service of economic development, overshadowing artistic dimension. Such initiatives may be accused of accelerating the gentrification process: they push local shops and businesses and inhabitants beyond the boundaries of a neighbourhood or town to provide space for tourist activity and the upper socio-professional category.

This has prompted the public authorities to set up mechanisms that consolidate cultural activity. In addition to instigating and financing major cultural projects, these mechanisms support the efforts of creative workers to develop clusters. For example, the municipality of London has launch "creative enterprise zones" in order to preserve the city's cultural assets and maintain its creative workers by ensuring that rents are attractive.

## TOWARDS A NEW VISION OF CCD DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF TERRITORIAL STRATEGIES
Faced with changes and experience feedback, how do we see and deal with CCDs today? Mega-projects created from scratch, such as West-Kowloon in Hong-Kong (China), do not fit the model favoured in Europe today. There seems to be a growing trend towards smaller creative districts that fit into the urban fabric. Hence the flourishing of cultural facilities on cultural brownfields: numerous former industrial sites have been upgraded and occupied by artists. These sites that have been abandoned for several decades are attractive to artists because of their affordable prices, central

## Various governance models within cultural and creative districts

*+ institutionalised*
*+ centralised*

● **Government-led**
driven and managed by the public authorities

● **Property owners**
or private businesses

● **Public-private partnership**
hybrid model, the most widespread

● **Non-profit arts organisations**
artist collectives, cultural non-profit associations

● **"Artist-led":**
managed mainly by artists

*- institutionalised*
*- centralised*

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*Source : Governance models for cultural districts, Global Cultural Districts Network (GCDN), 2018*

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## THE PARIS REGION CULTURAL INDUSTRY DATA

- 12.1 million inhabitants
- € 680 billion GDP
- 300,000 cultural jobs concentrated in the Paris Region
- 45% of the national cultural workforce
- 21 billion euros worth of cultural wealth generated annualy

locations, very powerful identities and creativity-inspiring qualities. In addition, they provide large spaces suitable for cultural and creative activities. These cultural brownfield sites also address many current problems: the saturation of available land, rising rent levels, environmental concerns (unlike new projects, cultural brownfield do not entail any soil sealing, or very little). The other side of the coin is that they are often occupied temporarily, which means that artists and creative people live in highly precarious conditions.

This seems to be the case in the Paris Region. Although the density of cultural amenities in Paris and the Paris Region is exceptionally high, assessing the number of CCDs is a complex matter. Furthermore, the Paris region faces two major problems: the saturation of cultural sites in the inner city of Paris and the lack of visibility of cultural projects outside the capital city. However, some dynamics are at work and new creative centres are emerging in Paris Region, notably in the North Eastern suburban towns of Saint-Denis, Romainville, Pantin and Bas-Montreuil (Seine-Saint-Denis county, northern Paris).
In these places, most of the new cultural projects have materialised in former brownfield sites. Thus, instead of clearly defined districts, the Paris region features larger spaces on the scale of a town, for example, with a high concentration of cultural venues and creative activities. Initiatives are flourishing in the region. Some neighbourhoods are emerging, such as Komunuma, located on the premises of the former Roussel-Uclaf pharmaceutical laboratories in Romainville, due to open in 2020, or the rehabilitation of the Babcock plant in La Courneuve (both in Seine-Saint-Denis county). ∎

**Maud Jacques,** economist
Economics Department *(Vincent Gollain, director)*

## GLOSSARY

**Cluster:** a geographic concentration of businesses of the same line of business, which forms a local network. This spatial gatherings leads to the emergence of cooperative relations and clustering effects.

**Cultural and creative district:** a neighbourhood in which the density of cultural facilities (museums, theatres, etc.), centres for artistic creation (artists' workshops), key players and events creates a local dynamic and a creative ecosystem. According to W. Santagata's typology [Doeser, Marazuela, 2018], there are four types of cultural and creative neighbourhoods: industrial, institutional, museum and metropolitan.

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