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# CREATIVE CENTERS AND INCUBATORS: CASE STUDY CREATIVE CENTER BRNO

## Kreativní centra a inkubátory: případová studie Kreativní centrum Brno

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### Annotation

Paper discusses the phenomenon of incubation in the field of cultural and creative industries. After the theoretical anchoring, attention is paid to the upcoming Creative Centre Brno project, which should include a creative incubator. This case study aims to analyze the creative environment of Brno in connection with the environment in which the project should be implemented. The selected locality of Cejl is being discussed. Based on results area seems to be ideal. The study further describes the project development, including the challenges and potential pitfalls for implementation. Results showed that the creative industries potential in Brno is considerable. The implementation of the project would mean not only development of the creative industries but also development of locality. Findings show that the project was realizable in the premises of the former ward, which would revive the brownfield. Another positive is further revitalization of the Brno Bronx as well as the creation of space for creative class employment opportunities. The arrival of a creative class could help to remove the sticker of the dangerous site that Cejl has. Also it is a challenge to integrate the Roma population into the designed project. The integration of local authorities is also worrying.

### Key words

*cultural and creative industries, creative centre, creative incubator, Creative Centre Brno, Czech Republic*

### Anotace

Príspevek pojednáva o fenoménu inkubace v oblasti kultúrnych a kreatívnych priemyslov. Po teoretickom ukotvení problematiky je pozornosť venovaná pripravovanému projektu Kreativního centra Brna, který by měl zahrnovat i kreativní inkubátor. Uvedená případová studie si klade za cíl analyzovat kreativní prostředí Brna v souvislosti s prostředím, ve kterém by měl být projekt uskutečněn. Diskutována je zejména vybraná lokalita Cejlu. Na základě výsledku se jeví oblast jako ideální. Studie dále charakterizuje vývoj projektu, výzvy a nástrahy pro jeho implementaci. Z výsledku výzkumu vyplynulo, že je potenciál kreativních odvětví v Brně značný. Realizace projektu by znamenala nejen rozvoj kreativních průmyslov, ale také rozvoj dané lokality. Důležitým zjištěním bylo, že je projekt realizovatelný v prostorách objektu bývalé káznice, čímž by došlo k revitalizaci brownfieldu. Za další identifikované pozitivum lze považovat nejen impuls k další revitalizaci deprivovaného brněnského Bronxu, ale také vytvoření prostoru pro pracovní příležitosti kreativní třídy. Příchod kreativní třídy by mohl napomoci k odstranění nálepky nebezpečné lokality, kterou Cejl disponuje. Výzvou je také začlenění romské populace do takto navrženého projektu. Obavou je také míra zapojení vedení města.

### Klíčová slova

*kulturní a kreativní průmysly, kreativní centrum, kreativní inkubátor, Kreativní centrum Brno, Česká republika*

**JEL classification:** *O140, O180, R112*

## 1. Introduction

Many domestic and foreign studies point out the contribution of creative industries to the global economy (Germany 2013; Florida, Mellander, Stolarick, 2011, and Evans, 2009). Creative industries are a balanced ecosystem where human creativity and innovation create economic or social potential and are a driver for dynamic growth (IDU, 2014; Cross Innovation, 2012; Kloudová, 2009). They represent a sector that generates stable jobs,

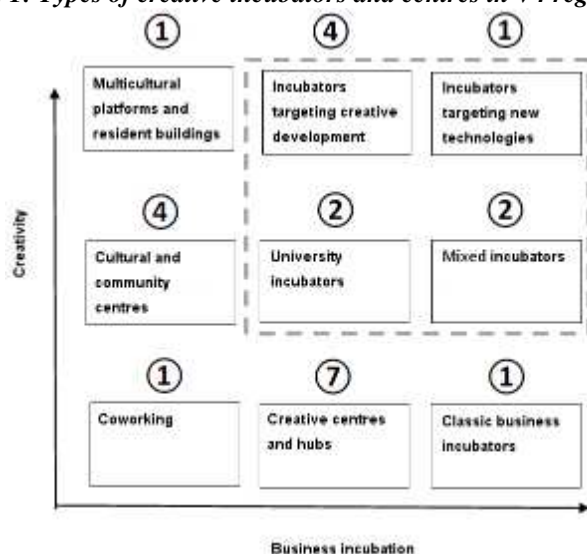
contributes to the prosperity of other sectors (tourism, digital economy, etc.) and plays a significant role in shaping the quality of life or local identity (Fujiwara, Dolan, Lawton, 2015; Landry, 2008). Creative industries bring a number of specific issues (e.g. Can a uniform, universally valid definition of basic terms be created?). There are very traditional and recently unknown and emerging professions, which together seek a way to achieve sustainability in the current environment (Bakhshi, Windsor, 2015; Isar, 2013; Araya, Peters 2010). In the context of the development of cultural and creative industries, a new phenomenon of creative centres and incubators is beginning to emerge (Evans, 2009 or Foord, 2009).

### 1.1 Creative centres

First, you need to realize the difference between the creative centre and the creative incubator. A creative centre is an institution that provides cultural services outside of society, organizes seminars, lectures and cultural events such as concerts and exhibitions. We do not necessarily have an incubation function here. Creative incubation is providing space and time for an artist who can calmly develop the concept and creative activity. At the same time, it provides the opportunity to meet other artists, discuss with them the arts and develop them. Creative incubation is aimed at presentation externally, in order to have a well-thought out form and method of realization (De Pinho, 2011; Montgomery, 2007). Both concepts are very fluid and their significance overlaps in many ways. Creative centres, however, very often provide an incubation function, even though they themselves call themselves a “creative centre”, which is why this work mentions both concepts side by side.

Creative centres and hubs are principally based on co-working, but they offer something extra. These can be networking actions that are useful for building new contacts, organizing training sessions, or focusing specifically on the creative profession. For some creative centres, work areas are further expanded by studios or test rooms that can be rented. As can be seen from the graph below, in the Czech Republic, the most common are creative centres and hubs, which are often mistakenly referred to as creative incubators.

Fig. 1: Types of creative incubators and centres in V4 region



Resource: Jaurová et.al., 2013, edited

Richard Florida (2002) described the creation of creative centres based on his concept of creative class. He argued that creative centres and incubators were created by clustering the creative class. This clustering results in talent clustering, as Charles Landry (2008) writes: “The drive for innovations required working environments where people wanted to share and collaborate for mutual advantage. This was necessary outside the workplace and increasingly the notion of the creative milieu came into play, which is a physical urban setting where people feel encouraged to engage, communicate and share. Often, these milieus were centred on redundant warehouses that had been turned into incubators for new companies.”

According to the *Kreativní a aktivní Zlínsko* study, the most successful creative centres are those who use every opportunity to use creativity and place creative people, organizations and institutions in the middle (not the clash) of political and local events. The study also highlights examples of cities (Antwerp, Dublin, and Glasgow), where the process of creative centres establishment included top-down public sector interventions, with some examples being a natural development in which creativity encouraged further creativity (Ghilardi, 2014).

## 1.1 Creative incubators

Creative incubators represent a relatively new phenomenon of support for creative industries. According to the *Policy Handbook on Cultural and Creative Industries in the Local, Regional, and National Development Strategies* issued by the EU Creative and Creative Industries Expert Group, which focuses on creative economy, creative or artistic incubators, there is no uniformly recognized definition (OTM, 2012). Most sources operate with a simple definition that a creative incubator is a business incubator aimed at supporting cultural and creative industries (Etmanowicz, 2015; Essing, 2013). The term “incubator” is defined by Polish Art Inkubator (2013) as an organization that supports future entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and artists in their entry into the creative industry. Artist incubator is a platform that helps artists and organizations to realize their business and artistic ideas. This definition also uses another concept of an art incubator, which is perceived similarly to an incubator aimed at a narrower segment (most often arts and crafts).

Institute of Art in the second volume called *Mapping of cultural and creative industries of the Czech Republic* clearly does not define creative incubators but points to bipolarity in their concepts: artistic and entrepreneurial (Žáková et al., 2015). The creative incubator can be seen as a place for creative personalities and artists, for whom it is important to create a free and inspirational place without commercial pressures and, on the other hand, as a site offering resources, contacts, know-how and sales support for the creative and cultural industries. It is right to combine both approaches to create a space that connects the world of culture with business and helps creative innovations in commercial use (IDU, 2015). Just as business incubators, the creative ones may vary in a number of aspects such as size, location, scope and focus. They can provide different forms of physical space - offices, co-working, studios, workshops. The creative incubator usually provides some kind of service that meets the needs of projects, most often mentoring, training seminars, contacts, or financing.

The EU expert group on cultural and creative industries also identifies three main reasons for differentiating creative and business incubators:

- In general, cultural and creative industries seek an inspirational and lively environment, such as open studios or offices;
- The cultural and creative industries need special consultancy services and services tailored to their specific operational requirements;
- Cultural and creative industries often operate on prototype or project principles; the ability to work within a community of like-minded colleagues from other areas of the creative and cultural industries often leads to synergies, new business intentions, and opportunities (OTM, 2012).

Creative and cultural industries are industries that, unlike traditional industries, have different working processes, a style of work and needs across physical space and the type of service, so classic business incubators can fail to help with creative projects. Agata Etmanowicz mentions in her contribution *Creative Incubator – a Fancy Thing to Do?* yet another important dimension why artists do not enter into business incubators—a human factor. She states that in many ways the business incubator does not differ from the creative incubator except that they operate with very fragile material: the creative people (Etmanowicz, 2015). It may seem that this remark is a great generalization and builds on a certain stereotype of the perception of artists or creative people. On the other hand, it is absolutely relevant to assume that, for example, the entrepreneurial mindset of graduates of art schools will be on a significantly different level than that of technical or economic disciplines.

The authors of the V4 creative incubators (Jaurová et al., 2013), who studied the typology of creative incubators, distinguish between:

- Protective-nurturing creative incubators, where the primary role has been shown to protect and care for newly established businesses and help in the first steps of the business. The aim of such incubators is to lead the process of entering the market with a new product and to provide the necessary physical and non-material background for creative creation. This type works most often as a non-profit organization and offers its program for free or at a minimum fee
- Supporting creative incubators, which are closest to classic incubators. Infrastructure and services are tailored to their core function of launching new businesses and products. The incubation system is completely open, it can be limited by some requirements, and the project incubation works in round-robin fashion. Supporting incubators can work profitably or non-profitably.
- Cooperative creative incubators, which are closest to the co-working centre and are the most distant from the classic concept of the incubator. Emphasis is mainly on infrastructure. Incubators create a workspace for individuals and groups from different backgrounds, encouraging their natural cooperation. It is the most open system that works self-regulated—clients enter and exit as needed.

As stated by the authors of the V4 Creative Incubators study, this is not the final enumeration, but a certain typology based on research conducted in Central Europe. The main problem with this typology is the fact that it divides subjects according to characteristic features that do not distinguish creative incubation from other forms of support for creative business such as co-working spaces or cultural and creative centres (Jaurová et. al., 2013).

## 2. Methods and purpose of work, data sources

The above-mentioned publications, studies, and outputs were key data sources for creating the theoretical framework of creative centre and incubator issues. Based on inspiration from these domestic and foreign sources, the creative centre was defined as a place to support the development of creative industries and a creative incubator as a tool to promote entrepreneurship in the creative industries. To create such a space for the development of creativity is a great challenge in the Czech Republic, which can be partly reflected in the example DEPO2015 in Pilsen, which is the first Czech creative incubator (DEPO2015, 2015).

This case study deals with the project of the creative centre in Brno. Case study, which is often used in similar types of contributions both here and abroad, aims to identify the creative environment of the city of Brno in connection with the identification of the environment in which the creative centre project should be realized. Specifically, it is a characteristic of the project and the reason why the chosen Cejl site for the project is ideal for the project. The study also describes the development of the project, including challenges and potential pitfalls for the implementation and operation of the project. For the purpose of qualitative mapping, research was carried out in the form of an analysis of available materials, final reports of materially related domestic and foreign research and studies. The structured interview with the Creative Industry Coordinator at Brno City Hall, Tereza Chrástová, and Creative Brno Project Manager, Zdeňka Kujová, was carried out to clarify and supplement the information obtained. To highlight the further development of the project and to identify the extent of public sector involvement in the implementation of the project, it was also important to discuss the implementation of the Strategic Planning Department at Brno City Hall.

## 3. Results

The potential of creative industries is undoubtedly high in the Czech Republic. According to the *Mapping of Cultural and Creative Industries in the Czech Republic - The state, needs and trends*, which is mainly based on the historical foundation of culture given by the rich infrastructure, whether it is physical background or cultural traditions, professional activities and a high degree of involvement and participation of citizens in cultural events which is evidenced by the relatively high popularity of domestic production (Žáková et al., 2015). Nor is there any doubt that the second largest city of the Czech Republic, Brno, is undergoing a significant economic transformation. The nationally oriented industrial economy is beginning to shape itself as a city of knowledge embedded in the global economic. This is not only a spontaneous development of the market but also strategic planning of the city administration, which, in cooperation with universities and the private sector, facilitates this transformation in accordance with the principles of neoliberal urban governance. (Glick, Çağlar 2013)

Brno's Cejl has attracted the attention of the city administration, journalists and social scientists that have recognized it as problematic for decades. That is why the neighbourhood is often referred to as the Bronx in Brno. However, this approach has changed since the beginning of the first decade of this century, and Cejl is becoming more and more often recognized as a place of opportunity, freedom, and cultural heritage. Thus, the term Bronx in Brno is new because it offers a parallel with the current New York Bronx, which has changed much since the 1980s (Sidiropulu, 2013).

The phenomenon of multiculturalism during the interwar plays a very important role in the transformation of the image of Cejl in Brno, which allows the creative class to recognize the forgotten stories in the locality, adding to the neighbourhoods a unique cultural value. The concept of a creative class is addressed in particular by Florida (2002), which defines it as a new social class, which includes a number of professions and professionals that do not have a routine job but form it. On the other hand, the phenomenon of recollection represents a legitimate strategy that the creative class frames its vision of the future transformation of a neighbourhood into a creative neighbourhood. This discourse, nostalgically reminiscent of the golden era of the quarter, shapes the perception of a neighbourhood in the eyes of the Brno creative class, and in the neighbourhood recognizes an authentic cultural value that cannot be found in other districts of Brno (Sidiropulu, 2013).

The Creative Centre Brno project decisively influences the perception of the area. The aim is to concentrate Brno's creative professionals from various professions in the inspirational building of Josefínská káznice. According to information from the "kreativnibrno.cz" website, which was created to raise public awareness of the upcoming project, the Creative Centre Brno project is the work name since 2008. A year later, the project became part of

The Regional Innovation Strategy of the South Moravian Region (RIS JMK), the Concept of Economic Development of the City of Brno, and in 2012 also the Brno Cultural Development Program (JIC, 2018b). The qualitative analysis carried out as part of the RIS JMK project have revealed a specific demand from entities engaged in the creative industry in general (industrial design, etc.) on premises other than the existing incubators. As an ideal one was defined the object that would arise from the reconstruction of the brownfield, where it could serve as an important element for solving the problems associated with the social exclusion of problematic sites (Magistrát města Brna, 2009).

The initiator of the project is the Brno's municipal authority, a feasibility study by the South Moravian Innovation Centre, an association of legal entities established by the South Moravian Region, the Statutory City of Brno, Masaryk University, the University of Technology, Mendel University and the Veterinary and Pharmaceutical University in Brno. The South Moravian Innovation Centre (JIC) focuses on supporting innovative business and commercial exploitation of research and development (R&D) and facilitating the interconnection of universities and research institutions with the business sphere in order to maximize R&D at regional and national level (JIC, 2018a).

**Fig. 2: Creative Centre Brno in prison building?**



Resource: [www.kreativnibrno.cz](http://www.kreativnibrno.cz), edited

The Creative Centre Brno is planning to set up an incubator for novice entrepreneurs in the creative industries. Visions include rental of studios, testing rooms, and workshops. According to information from Tereza Chrástová, Creative Industry Coordinator, the main goal of the project is to help develop the creative potential of talented people, thus avoiding their outflow outside Brno. The centre can attract a new kind of investor connected to the creative industry. As an ideal location for the centre, the former prison was chosen. It is now being examined whether it is really a good place for these purposes. The Creative Centre can open and make a less attractive area more attractive for the general public, which is also included as a problem zone in the Integrated City Development Plan. However, this project aims at concentrating all creative industries from the South Moravian Region into one centre, creating a relatively large campus.

According to Chrástová, the approval of the grant by the Brno City Council was a key point of the Creative Centre project. In December 2012, the representatives also approved the continuation of the project planning and the establishment of a team of investigators, which consisted of project managers, JIC staff, and City Strategy Office staff. From January 2013, Zdeňka Kujová, became the project manager under whose leadership the feasibility study was established. Currently, the project management is backed by the City Strategy Office again. In June 2014, a feasibility study of the Creative Centre project was carried out in the framework of the preparation of the project in a former prison, which concludes:

- In Brno, there is a strong potential of creative industries;
- project is needed, desirable and beneficial for the development of creative industries, locality development, city development, companies using creative industries for higher growth;
- the project is realizable in the former prison—the state of the building is preserved, the various types of risks (statics, ecological burden, groundwater) have not been confirmed, the size is sufficient, the actors find this object suitable, the stability allows building new floors if necessary, the site may have a gentrification effect and may play an important integration role;
- can be realized, financed and run by the private sector—it is considered a stable but not a rapid return that is interesting for a certain type of investors and developers, the documents for the negotiations are now available and the interest of investors;
- can be implemented, financed and run by the public sector - the possibility of using new structural funds that newly take into account the importance of creative industries;
- the operation is self-financing after the initial phase - in two out of three options, the operation is roughly from 4 to 5 years as self-sustaining (revenues exceed the costs), interesting investment for the public sector;
- is a convenient time to implement;

- it is possible to cooperate with other countries - Central Europe, the Baltic States, the Nordic countries - similar intentions are taking place in all countries and neighbouring countries, it is an opportunity to get Brno on a Creative Europe map;
- there is interest in temporary operation - Tripitaka o.s. showed an interest in being a coordinator of cultural and community events in eventual reconstruction in the discipline, which may have a positive impact on the project, the object and the location;
- promoting the growth of creative industries (JIC, 2014).

In the framework of its work, the project team focused on mapping of cultural and creative industries in Brno and the South Moravian Region, where the project involved quantitative and qualitative analysis of creative industries, profiles of individual areas and summary SWOT analysis, which represents the state of KKO in Brno (Adamcová et al., 2014). In addition, the neighbouring area was also investigated and the DNA of site was created. At the beginning of 2016, the Ministry of Culture initiated the process of remembrance of the building, as the prison building is historically very valuable. The City of Brno has agreed with the National Monument Institute on the process of rescuing the former prison. In addition, the team was preparing for a construction-technical survey of the prison, where, according to the results of the survey, it was recommended that the Brno City Hall undertake a reconstruction to prevent further degradation. In addition to future reconstruction, a temporary use was proposed. Reconstruction works have prevented further deterioration of the building while allowing for safe access. These works mainly focused on repairing the leaking roof, opening the entrance from Bratislava Street, repairing of the wiring, repairing the chimney and installing the ventilation bars in the windows. These works were completed after half a year in June 2016. The third area of interest of the working team was the design of an operational and financial model. The comprehensive vision of the project was followed by volume studies, financial analysis and assessment of the organizational models of the Centre in cooperation with the private sector. A search of possible public resources (Structural Funds and Community Programs) was carried out for period 2014–2020.

The idea of a creative centre in Brno's brownfield is inspired by the cultural and creative centres that have emerged in Europe for decades and are one of the most visible examples of the positive impact of culture on regenerating cities, improving the quality of life, creating new job placements and on innovations (Marková et al., 2013). For example, the Westergasfabriek cultural park is one example located in the area of the former industrial complex in the north-west of Amsterdam, which was established in 2003. It was co-authored by representatives of local government as well as private companies and local associations. There are 13 protected industrial buildings in the area, most of which are used by creative industries. Industrial buildings are refurbished only to meet safety standards and user comfort and industrial patina of the 19th century has been preserved. The most famous building is a former gas station used for fashion shows, dancing parties or ad recording. In addition, the park offers studios, various cultural facilities, cinema, restaurants, cafes, shops and galleries, concerts and festivals, offices used by designers, architects, or film production companies (Adamcová et al., 2014).

**Fig. 3: Westergasfabriek cultural park**



Resource: [www.westergasfabriek.nl/](http://www.westergasfabriek.nl/), edited

The realization of the Creative Centre Brno could thus remove the image of a dangerous neighbourhood on the one hand and, on the other hand, it could come to the centre of attention of the creative class from Brno as well as from other cities. The pioneering metaphor in this case makes sense especially because for Brno's creative class, Cejl of its kind is an empty space, or a space with a negative sign, in which it is possible to freely shape the project of its creative transformation. The ideal outcome of transformation of the quarter is to create a space for creative jobs in the former prison, and to bring creative residents to the quarter and thus to eliminate the Cejl's reputation of a dangerous neighbourhood. Ideally, the original Roma population should be included in the proposed project and thus gain some job opportunities that will arise due to the creative transformation of the neighbourhood. The transformation of the quarter's image opens the door of the imagination of an ever-growing creative class in Brno, who is interested in living in the city centre, and who has been avoiding Cejl for various reasons. Changing the image of a neighbourhood to a creative one can make it an attractive location and to significantly increase the

consumers' pressure to allow further investment incentives, revitalizations or rehabilitation. Generally, every step forward is a great asset. The challenge for the coordinated development of the area can be a shortage of financial resources, less adaptable population in the area, as well as, weak cooperation on the part of Brno's policy makers. This fact was also confirmed by Tereza Chrátová at the conference on brownfields of the Czech Republic, where she stated that ten years before the reconstruction began, she pointed to the opportunity to use Cejl to create a creative centre. It was only after the commencement of construction work that the conservationists and the mayor and other stakeholders got involved.

## Conclusion

One of the most visible examples of the cultural and creative industries in practice are creative centres and incubators that have emerged in recent years around the world. As with the whole concept of cultural and creative industries, there is still a lack of more systematic grip, and creative centres and incubators are still in the beginning of the first experiences and views in the Czech Republic. The very definition of a creative centre or incubator is problematic, as confirmed by the V4 Creative incubators survey of creative incubators in the V4 countries (Jaurová, 2015).

After the description of the theoretical framework providing basic insight into the issue of creative centres and incubators, the work focused on a specific case study of the Creative Centre Brno, which is to be built in the former prison building. Part of the centre should be a creative incubator. The idea of the project appeared in 2008, but the project is still more or less on paper, thanks in particular to the vigilant approach of the Brno's officials. This can be demonstrated in the example of the Creative Centre, which is dedicated only to a few enthusiasts, and thus, it impacts the implementation speed. However, some progress has been made, in the form of a feasibility study of the Creative Centre project, which aims to provide space for talented people to reduce their outflows from Brno and, thereby, to increase the quality of life and to foster the growth of creative industries as a potential for innovation. The initial reconstruction of the building to prevent further degradation was successfully completed.

The realization of the project would bring a number of advantages, including the reuse of the regenerated brownfield near the city centre, which will give impulse for further revitalization of the deprived district of the Brno Bronx. Furthermore, it would create space for creativity class jobs and creative consumption. The inflow of creative residents into the neighbourhood could also help to remove the label of the dangerous neighbourhood. On the other hand, a certain challenge and concern is the inclusion of the Roma population, which is abundant in the given area, into the project.

It is certain that the cultural and creative industries are certainly an interesting subject, whether this project will succeed or not as it can have a positive contribution to the creative profession, the location, the business environment, or the city itself. Brno has relatively great potential in this area and has a certain "head start" in comparison with other Czech cities due to a handful of enthusiasts on the part of officials, experts, and volunteers.

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