

CREATIVE CLUSTERS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC – STRATEGY FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OR FASHIONABLE CONCEPT?

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Abstract

In an era of globalization and increasing competition among cities, creative industries are gaining greater attention as a catalyst for local and regional development. This is reflected in the theory of Richard Florida, which was accepted after 2002 by professionals in the field of urban planning, especially in North America and Western Europe, but critically analyzed by the academic community in the field of urban and regional development for its insufficient empirical evidence. Creative industries might be fostered through clusters that are widely accepted as concepts for improving the economic efficiency of regions. This paper introduces the concept of creative clusters into discussions by Czech geographers, while analysing the pioneer project-led development of an Audiovisual Cluster in the Zlín Region, and the possible transfer of the creative clusters concept to other Czech regions.

Shrnutí

Kreativní klastry v České republice – strategie lokálního rozvoje nebo módní koncept?

V období globalizace a silící konkurence mezi městy nabývají na významu kreativní průmysly jako katalyzátor lokálního a regionálního rozvoje, což se odráží v teorii Richarda Floridy. Tato teorie byla přijímána praktiky z oblasti plánování měst po roce 2002, zejména v severní Americe a západní Evropě a kriticky analyzována akademiky z oblasti rozvoje měst a regionů pro svou nedostatečnou empirickou evidenci. Impuls pro rozvoj kreativních odvětví mohou dát geograficky blízká odvětvová uskupení – klastry, přičemž koncept klastrů je akceptován jako motor ekonomického rozvoje regionů. Tento článek přináší téma kreativních klastrů do debaty mezi českými geografi a analyzuje založení prvního kreativního klastru v České republice – Audiovizuálního klastru ve Zlínském kraji. Cílem článku je zhodnotit možný transfer konceptu kreativních klastrů do dalších regionů České republiky.

Key words: cluster, creative industries, audiovisual cluster, Czech Republic

1. Introduction

Globalization, market liberalization and European integration have led to deepening territorial, economic and social disparities. Thus, cities and regions are looking for development strategies that will help them to stay competitive and establish themselves on the global market, strategies that will create new jobs and avoid 'brain drain'.

One of the concepts for improving economic efficiency in regions is the concept of clusters. Although Porter (1990) often gets the credit for inventing the cluster concept, in fact it was Alfred Marshall who used the term of industrial district to describe the cutlery industry in Sheffield in 1890 when speaking about geographically concentrated clusters (Hospers, 2002). Considering that the western world is going through a massive process of deindustrialization, cities and regions have for the past twenty years endeavoured to put in place policies to foster emerging and growing industries that might ensure their economic development for the future. One strand of these "promising" industries is represented by cultural and creative industries (CCI). Support of CCI has increasingly become a part of the political agenda in a number of European countries.

The discourse over trade and culture has its predecessors in the work of Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Walter Benjamin of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and 1940s (Footer and Graber, 2000). It was they who coined the term "culture industry", when criticising the

emerging serialisation of production related in particular to radio, film and recorded music sectors. The label "creative industries" was then picked up again in Australia to signpost the policies supporting an interface between commercial cultural activities and emerging new media driven by technological change (Foord, 2009). In the United Kingdom, the term creative industries was extended in the 1990s to highlight the economic contribution of commercial cultural production, leisure activities and entertainment, as well as the economic potential of many subsidized cultural activities (UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport: DCMS, 1998). The UK definition of creative industries refers to industries which "have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS, 2001, p. 5). The notion that creativity is a limitless resource is central to the current popularity of creativity-led economic development (Foord, 2009) and enterprise strategies.

The concept of creative industries has been adopted uncritically by central and east-European countries from west-European countries, however, without paying attention to different structural and institutional contexts. "When a strategy is formulated in a European context, it is important to realise that the environment consists of different national environments" (Van den Bosch and Van Prooijen, 1992, p. 176), so it might be said that a national strategy should

accept regional differences as well. This paper discusses challenges involved in an uncritical application of a certain policy model in the Czech Republic. In policy-making terms, assessing the position of creative industries in the economy and mapping the potential of this sector plays a key role at any spatial level (Higgs and Cunningham, 2007), and particularly during the facilitation of creative clusters (Lazzeretti, Boix and Capone, 2008).

There are at least three different types of creative clusters (Klaus, 2006):

1. Creative clusters as strategies for image development and urban regeneration (Moommaas, 2004), (e.g. MuseumsQuartier in Vienna, Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam);
2. Creative clusters as a development and employment policy – in Montreal, the cluster strategy was developed to protect the future of filmmaking in the context of increased competition in the sector from the United States and other Canadian provinces (Tremblay, Cecilli, 2009); and
3. Creative districts and quarters with a “cool” subculture, creative freelancers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (e.g. Escher-Wyss-Areal in Zürich-West).

For the purposes of this paper, the concept of creative cluster is understood as a development policy for strengthening regional competitiveness, which is the second type of creative cluster. Within URBACT (European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development, financed by the European Development Fund), the project “Creative Clusters in Low Density Areas” was implemented to counter the notion that “the development of creative clusters is only considered viable in big cities and metropolises” (URBACT, 2010). An important question is actually what are appropriate ways to manage creative clusters, or what sort of intervention can help foster successful creative clusters? In general, the establishment of creative clusters up to the present has been promoted top-down by European, national, regional and local authorities who recognize the importance of their development. As an alternative, clusters can emerge spontaneously in a bottom-up approach (URBACT, 2010). At the European level, there is a European Cluster Policy, developed and steered by the European Cluster Policy Group.

Having a suitable external framework for supporting cluster development from European funds and operational programmes has helped certain regions in the Czech Republic to embed clusters into regional policies. According to funding conditions (set by the government organisation CzechInvest), the establishment and development only of manufacturing clusters could be fostered.

Creative clusters are not an unknown concept in the Czech Republic, however. Some cluster initiatives have already occurred¹ such as Tableware, Music Czech Made and Spa Cluster located in the Karlovy Vary Region (Zemanová, 2009), but they were not suited for the support conditions of the Czech Ministry of Trade at that time. The lack of money and know-how in cluster management were the barriers to establish these initiatives as clusters. One example of the latter which was initiated by policy is the interregional cooperation supported by the EU project “Transborder

cluster initiative for developing creative industries”, led by Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín (Czech Republic) and the University of Trenčín (Slovakia), which was funded by Slovakia – Czech Republic Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme in the years 2011–2012.

This paper describes the project-led creative cluster development which gained political and financial support but which was not accepted by local entrepreneurs and creative firms. The paper aims as well to start academic debates about the concept of creative clusters in the Czech Republic, in terms of their potential benefits for the development of Czech regions.

2. Theoretical background

The theory of national, state and local competitiveness in the context of a global economy was introduced by the American business economist Michael E. Porter (1990). He developed the concept of industrial cluster as a new way of looking at national, state, regional and urban economies, pointing out the new roles of companies, governments and other institutions in the possibility of increasing competitiveness (Brusková, 2003). According to many authors, regional clustering is part of a new industrial order (Hospers, Beugelsijk, 2002): “Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g. universities, standards agencies, trade associations) in a particular field that compete but also cooperate” (Porter, 1990). They also “trust” one another and frequently exchange knowledge (Tremblay, Cecilli, 2009). Entities within a cluster should cooperate but they compete with each other as well. The cluster is expected to create an inspiring environment to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information, which then implicitly leads to generating innovation in both products and services in the sectors of the creative sphere: “Real competition will create innovation and innovation will create competitive advantage” (Van den Bosch, Van Prooijen, 1992, p. 173). One must be careful when targeting different industries because governments exclusively focusing their attention on traditional activities may run the risk of delaying economic restructuring, which may be needed for a region to remain competitive (Hospers, Beugelsdijk, 2002, p. 393). According to Porter (1990), the government has an important role to play in clustering, but it should promote and contribute to (not dictate) a cluster development strategy.

Historically, creative clusters developed informally: artists find a cheap space to set up studios. Recently, the clusters have shifted from a spontaneous and organic evolution to a planned process, mostly driven by political agendas for economic and cultural prosperity. Although the organic growth of clustering appears to be more favoured than a rigid planning process, Porter and Barber (2007) argue that both a “hands-off” or “hands-on” approaches have their disadvantages, for instance, driving up real estate prices that leads to exclude the artist community. By using many European examples, such as Manchester’s Northern Quarter, Sheffield’s Creative Industries Quarter and the Temple Bar, they claim “non-intervention may be no longer an option”.

¹ Cluster initiative is an informal association of various stakeholders, whereas cluster is understood as an established formal organization.

In most writing on clusters, it is recognized that cluster development is a long-term process that is based on the mobilization of key stakeholders in the community, local or regional territory (Tremblay, Cecilli, 2009). Cassidy et al. (2005) have identified four stages in cluster development: latent, developing, established and transformation, indicating that many creative clusters are in the latent or developing stage. Evans (2009) offers another differentiation (see Table 1). NESTA (2010) suggests that building clusters from scratch is notoriously difficult: it is far better to identify whether there are any latent clusters 'hidden' in their regions, or localities that would benefit from networking and awareness-raising. Castells and Hall (1994) claim that the costs of developing new clusters are high and, if successful, the clusters will need a long time before they are embedded in their environment.

Creative industries, and thus creative clusters, are considered to have distinct characteristics that differentiate them from other types of businesses and business clusters (Bagwell, 2008). They are often characterized by flexible organizational arrangements, with temporary, project-based teams rather than a permanent workforce. Furthermore, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) tend to feature more prominently in the creative industries than in most other sectors of the economy (DCMS, 2001). Due to the nature of such industries, however, the formation of creative clusters does not tend to follow the conventional process of forming clusters, which generally speaking, tend to be attracted to an area by its market potential or to the existence of a technology institution or university. Similar to industrial clusters, there are external savings for creative clusters such as: sharing a common infrastructure and technologies, sharing a common labour market, knowledge transfer or attraction of the same target groups or joint marketing (Hitters, Richards, 2001). It is generally considered that the location of a cluster is very important because social networks are based on those specific places where culture is produced and consumed (Markusen, 2004). A key factor encouraging informal information exchange "face-to-face" is the spatial proximity of individual institutions (Heebels, van Aalst, 2010). At the same time, a cluster can contribute to stimulate and motivate other actors in the field of creative industries and to increase their activity in the form of cooperation or competition. Functioning and successful

creative clusters should contain both companies focused on local markets and those oriented to exports outside the region (Slach et al., 2013).

Taking everything into account, the notion of creative clusters is very fluid. It is comprised of a number of parameters around issues such as economy, culture, top-down or bottom-up governance, hands-on and hands-off approaches, production, consumption, local or global identity, geographic locations, and many other factors. The cluster concept even faces a lot of criticism, especially from academics. Cassidy et al. (2005) indicate that cluster initiatives have become a sort of "magic recipe" to meet the challenges of the new economy – up to the point that they have become dangerously fashionable. According to Martin and Sunley (2003, cited in van Heur), the cluster concept remains rather a "chaotic concept" that is often applied very liberally in theory and practice. Hospers and Beugelsdijk (2002) for example, call regional clustering for stimulating regional economic development a "mantra". Nevertheless, there are "best practices" used for cluster policy around the world, such as those in the MuseumsQuartier, Cultuurpark, Westergasfabriek, and others. The idea of creative clusters as catalysts for regional economic development emerged in the Czech Republic only recently. The development of the first Czech creative cluster is discussed in this paper.

3. Research methods

The methodology used here is based on the qualitative research paradigm (Blaxter et al., 2001) – in this case participant observation (the author worked as a research assistant on CreaClust – the Cross-border Cluster Initiative for the Development of Creative Industry, 2011–2012), interviews with experts and involved actors (in total five unstructured interviews), media analysis, internal documents and study of documents related to the European and Czech cultural and cluster policy. The research was conducted in the period from the second half of 2010 (collection of data) to the first half of 2013 (drafting the text).

The structure of the paper is as follows: in the introduction, the initial analytic concept of creative clusters is defined with a focus on their role in local and regional development. The main part of the paper consists of the presentation of the case study of the project-led development of the

Stage	Definitions
1. Dependent	Creative enterprises developed as a direct result of public sector intervention through business support, infrastructure development for cultural consumption and finance to SMEs and micro creative enterprises. Public subsidy required to sustain the cluster. Limited and underdeveloped local markets. Examples: UK creative industries quarters, Sweden – Digital Media City.
2. Aspirational	Some independent creative enterprises and/or privatised former public sector cultural enterprises in place but limited in scale and scope. Underdeveloped local markets and limited consumption infrastructure. High levels of public and institutional boosterist promotional activity. Examples: The Digital Hub – Dublin, Westergasfabriek – Amsterdam.
3. Emergent	Initiated by growing number and scale of creative enterprises with infrastructural investment from the public sector. Developing local and regional markets. Visible cultural consumption, internationalisation of market reach. Examples: Product design, architecture, digital media - Barcelona, Film/TV – Glasgow.
4. Mature	Led by established large-scale creative enterprises in specific industries with established subcontracting linkages and highly developed national and international markets. Business to business consumption. Arms-length public intervention. Examples: Film/TV - Los Angeles, Fashion and furniture design/production – Milan, Fashion – New York.

Tab. 1: Stages of creative cluster development
Source: Evans, 2009

Audiovisual Cluster in the Zlín Region. From a theoretical point of view, the benefit lies in the description of the creative cluster concept. From the perspective of benefits for practice, the evaluation of the process of establishing the first Czech creative cluster is fundamental, and formulating recommendations for the implementation of a creative cluster development policy in the Czech Republic should be addressed from this case study.

The main research questions guiding the study were:

1. What is the definition of the concept of creative clusters? What is their role in local and regional development?
2. What are the differences between industrial clusters and creative clusters?
3. Why and how should the development of creative clusters be supported in the Czech Republic?

4. Results – Development of the first creative cluster in the Czech Republic: the audiovisual cluster in the Zlín Region

The Zlín Region is situated in the eastern part of the Czech Republic with an area of 3,964 square kilometres (Fig. 1). The region's population is nearly 600,000, and there are 304 municipalities in the region, 30 of which are towns. The regional authority is located in Zlín, which is also the region's largest city. The region consists of three specific ethnographic areas: Wallachia, Moravian Slovakia and Haná. The city's development is connected with the world-known shoemaker Tomáš Baťa. Zlín Region and its surroundings are also popular by housing the Days of the People of Goodwill in Velehrad, a charity event held together with the national pilgrimage to celebrate the mission of Cyril and Methodius, the International Festival of Films for Children and Youth, the Summer Film School in Uherské Hradiště, and many popular folklore festivals such as the Kings Ride in Vlčnov, the Summer of Kunovice, Festivals in Liptál and Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, Haná Festival Chropyně and many others. The Forfest festival of spiritual music, which takes place somewhat further away in Kroměříž, the renewed salons of fine arts in Zlín and the Prostor Zlín exhibition of contemporary avant-garde arts, have also helped spread the fame of the region. Motor racing fans will certainly know the Barum Rally, which has recently been awarded Europe's highest ranking.

To strengthen regional competitiveness, two clusters exist already in the Zlín Region. The first one is the Plastics Cluster with 33 members, which was established in 2006, and the second one is the Moravian Aerospace Cluster

with 25 members. Both clusters are operating in industries that are historically associated with this region. The project of establishing the Plastics cluster was co-financed by the Zlín Regional Government and was supported by a grant from the Operational Programme Industry and Enterprise. The Moravian Aerospace Cluster is an association of aircraft companies and educational institutions sharing a common interest with the aim to develop a competitive aircraft industry.

The new Audiovisual Cluster intended to be connected to the traditions of the region, too. The establishment of the cluster was based on the CreaClust project – A Cross-Border Cluster Initiative for the Development of Creative Industry funded by the European Regional Development Fund. Inspired by similar international initiatives, the aim of the CreaClust project was to connect the region's cultural and arts heritage with local creative industries, to support the development of business prospects and to develop potential. The benefits of the new cluster for all target groups (as indicated by project leaders) are presented in Table 2. A key ambition of this cluster was to revitalize Zlín's film industry, which was built on talents in artistic and audiovisual areas fields decades ago. Zlín Film Studios date from 1936, when Jan Antonín Baťa started the endeavour to produce advertising spots for his shoe empire. Since then, the city has been also hosting one of the oldest international children's film events, the Zlín Film Festival. Leading partners of the CreaClust were the Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín, Faculty of Economics and Management, and Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín, Faculty of Socio-Economic Relations.

Within the CreaClust project, a quantitative mapping of the regional creative potential was made. In total, 4,951 firms were revealed in the process of mapping creative industries in the Zlín Region (Bednář, Grebeníček, 2012). As to the size of enterprises with employees, a major finding was the absence of large companies over 250 employees. Thus, creative enterprises with employees (663) in the Zlín Region consist exclusively of micro- (578; 87.2%) and small-enterprises (70; 10.6%) and medium-sized enterprises (15; 2.2%) pursuant to the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361, regarding the small- and medium-sized enterprises definition (Bednář and Grebeníček, 2012). These results confirm the weak position and the low proportion of creative industries in the region's periphery and their concentration in the core areas.

In connection with the mapping, the most promising creative industry sectors were selected and the project team carried out semi-structured interviews with relevant companies, organizations and institutions for cooperation and networking. The team also completed study visits and established international contacts and cooperation in order to obtain and exchange experience on the successful development of clusters and regional cooperative networks in creative industries. The audiovisual industries (CZ – NACE: 59, 60, 62, 73) were chosen as the most promising ones. Companies and institutions in this industry are not abundant in the Zlín Region but they have tradition and historical significance, particularly with regard to the preparation of new talents at the Faculty of Multimedia Communications of Tomáš Baťa University (internal documents of the CreaClust project). In addition to small- and medium-sized enterprises, this field includes freelance filmmakers and artists in occupations with high added value (creativity and talent) related to the audiovisual cluster

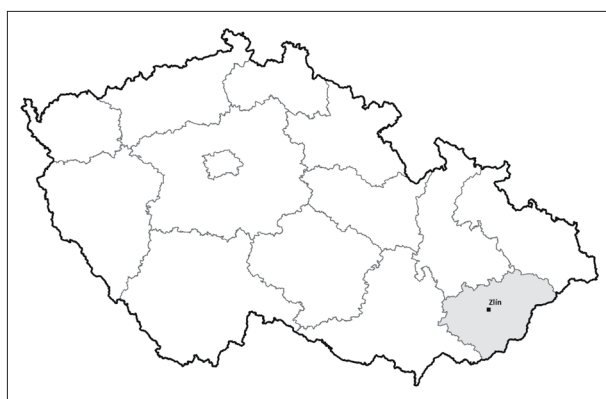


Fig. 1: The Zlín Region
Source: Author

Target Group	Benefits
Public administration, municipalities	Expanding the information and database by incorporating the findings of scarcely researched sectors forming a creative industry, their influence on regional economies, development, and cross-border cooperation; the ability to concisely specify development sub-objectives and target them to facilitate regional as well as cross-border inter-regional cooperation.
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	Strengthening contacts, cooperation and participation in joint projects of a cluster initiative, particularly for SMEs from creative industry area; including the possibility to join the pilot projects (1x in Zlínský, 1x in Trenčianský Region) implemented within this initiative.
Local initiatives related to cultural, social and leisure time activities	Involvement in direct cooperation within the cluster initiative. Creative industries are closely linked with cultural and leisure activities. Benefit from the implementation of selected pilot projects and participation in the preparation of further projects for international cooperation; better visibility and analysis of the status of this target group and the possibility to obtain data on its importance in the development of creative industries.
Centres for innovation, science and technology parks, incubators, research institutions	Involvement of target groups in a new, unmapped cooperation sector - creative industries.
Citizens of the regions	Participation in the joint cluster activities; further indirect benefits to tourism and culture due to further development of the creative industries in the regions; increase in information awareness and cross-border contacts.

Tab. 2: Actors in the creative cluster development: Zlín Region

Source: Internal documents of CreaClust, Author

value chain (stage of development, financing and production of a wide range of creative professionals for postproduction, distribution and promotion, screening).

Leaders of the audiovisual sector in the Zlín region are as follows:

- FilmFest, s.r.o.;
- Summer Film School, Uherské Hradiště;
- Golden Apple Cinema, a.s.;
- Film Ateliers Zlín, s.r.o. (declining);
- KINOSERVIS s.r.o.;
- Film Laboratories, Ateliers Bonton Zlín a.s.;
- Czech Association for Film and Video Kroměříž; and
- Private companies (VAFIS, Hubafilm and more).

The cluster foundation was announced officially at the final project conference towards the end of 2012. The main actor of the Audiovisual Cluster is the Faculty of Multimedia Studies of Tomáš Baťa University. The City of Zlín, among others supporters of the Zlín Film Festival, declared support for the Audiovisual Cluster too, mentioning it in the Development Strategy for the City of Zlín until the year 2020. The government agency for tourism development (CzechTourism) should have an important role in the activity of the Audiovisual Cluster as well, because CzechTourism will launch a regional office of the Czech Film Commission in the Zlín Region to attract filmmakers to the region.

Another objective of the cluster is to avoid 'brain drain' from the region (interview: Brusková, 2012). The main activity of the Audiovisual Cluster will be the establishment of a creative incubator for students from the Faculty of Multimedia Studies and the introduction of a regional film fund that would be the first one in the Czech Republic. Financial sources for these activities are not known yet but these pilot projects should provide for the functioning of the cluster structure.

The Audiovisual Cluster is a civic association registered with the Ministry of Interior as a legal entity. The constituting

assembly of cluster members has not been convened at this time, but when it is the statutory body, the executive board and the president will be elected.

The full operation of the cluster and the fulfilment of the above objectives depend on human resources, i.e. a cluster manager and his/her team (at least one part-time person) and "the funding is expected to be provided from public funds by the form of subsidies in the initial phase" (internal documents of the CreaClust project). In the Czech Republic, there is still no grant programme to support clusters in creative industries. Since national resources to support emerging cluster organizations in the creative field are not available in the Czech Republic, "it will be necessary to create an initial downward creative cluster funding from the Zlín Region" (internal documents of the CreaClust project).

To set up a regional cluster policy, the Faculty of Management and Economics of Tomáš Baťa University is currently working on a certified methodology for a regional cluster policy, where the recipient of this methodology will be the Zlín Region. This activity is funded by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, Omega Programme. Thus, the local university develops the cluster methodology according to real experience with forming clusters, while knowing the regional environment. This methodology was not published at the time of drafting this text.

5. Conclusions

Although the creative industries do not represent mainstream topics in Czech regional policy and the term has occurred only recently within national cultural policy, we may say that the concept of creative clusters (although fragmented and as yet undefined) has started to apply in the Czech Republic. Creative clusters are tools of urban regeneration (Moommaas, 2004; Klaus, 2006), local and regional development, and they help to develop a new image of industrial areas and are part of employment policy (Tremblay and Cecily, 2009).

As of 2013, creative cluster initiatives are not eligible for financial support from the Operational Programme Enterprise and Innovation in the Czech Republic because this programme is set up to support clusters focused only on manufacturing. One very specific example is the existence of the non-manufacturing Moravian-Silesian Tourism Cluster, which is funded mainly from cluster members' contributions (Marková, 2011). More than 20 Czech clusters are members of the National Cluster Association (NCA), that brings together organizations and individuals with the purpose of coordinating the sustainable development of cluster initiatives and to develop cluster policy in the Czech Republic, based on the concentration of knowledge, experience and expertise to strengthen the competitiveness of the Czech Republic.

NCA president Pavla Břusková was also the main coordinator of the top-down CreaClust project that led to the establishment of the first Czech creative cluster – the Audiovisual Cluster in the Zlín Region. In the year since this cluster was registered at the Czech Ministry of the Interior, the relations between cluster actors have not been activated efficiently.

The stage of the development of the Audiovisual Cluster is dependent (Evans, 2009) as a public subsidy is needed to run the cluster and to develop the local market in the Zlín Region. Thanks to the financial support provided by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, the first methodology for a regional cluster policy is being prepared by Tomáš Baťa University in the Zlín Region. Other regions must be aware, however, that (successful) examples of regional clustering cannot be taken over mechanically (Hospers, Beugeldijk, 2002).

Ghilardi (Marková, 2011) claims that in today's world, it is probably more important to learn to practise urban and cultural 'acupuncture' rather than to rely on top-down, large-scale approaches. Essentially, there is a need to improve cluster diagnostics first, and this includes also improved capacity of understanding the creative cluster's potential for spillovers (to other sectors). Moreover, there will be a need for joint approaches (i.e. coalitions of creatives, industry leaders, stakeholders from different departments of local and regional governments and local community representatives) to nurture such clusters.

Local stakeholders in the Zlín Region (mainly creative enterprises, representatives of independent culture and students) have not been involved sufficiently in the cluster initiative from the beginning (interview: Kujová, 2013). Experienced and strong local leaders of the audiovisual industry were also missing. This case study of the Audiovisual Cluster demonstrates that a top-down cluster strategy without the early involvement of local actors led to the establishment of a dependent cluster, which needs additional financial support to awake it from "hibernation". The support of existing, hidden latent clusters (Cassidy et al., 2005; NESTA, 2010) that need a hands-on approach from government agencies, professionals and experts to establish themselves on the market locally and internationally, might be less costly and more efficient than creating new clusters (Castells and Hall, 1994). It will be interesting to see how the cluster policy is further developed in the Czech Republic, and whether the cluster methodology for a regional policy applied in the Zlín Region can help to foster creative clusters as such. Clusters existing on paper only may have a fashionable image but bring nothing to regional development!

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Interviewees:

Pavla Břusková, Lia Ghilardi, Marek Koňářík, Zdeňka Kujová, David Mírek

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