

THE ADDED VALUE OF CREATIVE RESIDENCIES

A research into the tangible effects of
the creative sector on vibrancy

REFLECTION

From the start, I had a clear idea of a first outline for the research design. Favoring objectivity above subjectivity myself, I wanted to take a quantitative approach. While exploring the topic further, through both exploratory talks with stakeholders and literature review, the positive effects of the creative sector appeared to be not as obvious as believed by many policy-makers and theorists. After many years of implementing 'creativity and culture' in urban regeneration policies, the evidence base to support this is still not solid.

However, due to difficulties in demonstrating causalities and the availability of sufficient and accurate data, many problems arose surrounding the tangible effects of the creative sector. By choosing to focus on vibrancy, instead of socio-economic effects as a whole, I tried to reduce the scope. Although reducing the scope, this has added another layer of operational research on 'how to measure vibrancy' to my research. Next, finding enough and accurate data for the quantitative part of this research has proven to be a challenge. This has led to incorporating big social data as a proxy for urban vibrancy.

Although I had some basic knowledge of the concepts and challenges of using big data and did some basic statistical analyses before, I really challenged myself by using them more in depth for this research. Before I knew it, I was sifting through doctoral theses of computer scientists. Still, I'm really excited about the topic and methods I chose, not only because I think it produced interesting results and thesis in the end, but even more so because I've forced myself to learn and apply new things instead of reproducing what I had already learned.

Also the complexity, inherent to urban dynamics, has proven to be a challenge. Creating a resilient strategy, which initially was (and ideally would still be) the end goal, touches upon so much different fields, ranging from politics, to economic conjuncture and financing issues, that I didn't achieve this. Besides, the topic of gentrification comes into play here as well, with all the intricacies and controversies it entails.

Concluding, I believe that the overall results of my research are applicable in practice in several ways, although the model should be expanded to fit other purposes. In it's basis however, it could be applied to different cities and even different countries.

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