

CREATIVE LEBANON

A FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE PROSPERITY

BY STEPHEN HILL

"..one should not forget the rich tradition in Lebanon as concerns the press, publishing, literary and musical production, publicity and marketing. The computer industry is but the continuation of this tradition of creativity using 21st century technical means"

Salim M Edde, in Nasnas (2007) p174.



Creative Lebanon

A Framework for Future Prosperity

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“Beirut will not become a Creative City because its government or its institutions say so – important though this will be. Beirut will become that Creative City when its inhabitants make it so, and when the regional and international communities recognise it as such”

SUMMARY

Increasing awareness of the economic importance of Creative Industries such as architecture, film, music, advertising, fashion design, gaming, crafts, visual arts and performing arts, just to mention some, is not only confirmed by recent research in developed countries (Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, the United States and the United Kingdom) and the evident boom of digital media worldwide, but is also highlighted by the research and government attention in developing or transitional economies (Brazil, China, Estonia and Colombia).

Despite the difficulties of finding reliable, consistent and comparable data for the Creative Industries all over the world, and Lebanon is not an exception, there is some hope for improvement. Mapping exercises, such as the one carried by the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon between 2005 and 2007, are providing the foundations for much better evidence and knowledge.

For a country like Lebanon, rich in traditions and well recognized as an entrepreneurial and creative society, it is of paramount importance to consolidate regular and reliable sources of data and information, in order to allow a transition from advocacy-based to evidence-based policies, including policies to nurture the Creative Industries.

This paper is an example of the kind of comprehensive strategies that can be devised through a combination of evidence, experience and vision. Yet this is not a panacea. It is just an integrated proposal for helping Lebanon to begin catching up in the global economy, by placing the Creative Industries in the core of a strategy to transform Beirut into a Creative City.

Six strands are identified to reach achievable goals: innovation, entrepreneurship, education, connectivity, creativity and safety. All of them have in common the belief in a better future for Lebanon, in the courage and endurance of its people and the conviction that an improved quality of life is both a means and an end.





1 INTRODUCTION CREATIVITY AND PROSPERITY

Creative industries are a key driver of future prosperity in the global economy. Arts and culture have long been regarded as important in any sensible broad definition of well-being, but more for their contribution to the spirit than to the pocket. The notion of creative industries takes a step further in connecting ideas with wealth creation. An early mapping study defined creative industries as those *“activities which have their origins in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”*. The emphasis is then on wealth creation from the exploitation of intellectual property rights, and hence the subsequent significance of institutional arrangements to protect those rights. There is an emerging academic and policy literature about the contribution of arts and culture to economic development, and a discourse that goes beyond traditional arguments in favour of public subsidy such as participation, identity and cohesion, into a harder edged economic reality of legal frameworks, multipliers, and externalities.²

The fundamental issue is how do what are essentially trading nations prosper, in a networked world where comparative advantage comes from ideas rather than physical resources. This economy is characterised as weightless, where people trade ideas and knowledge in order to make a *“living on thin air”*. In a post-industrial, post-modern society: *“Three forces are driving modern economies - finance, knowledge and social capital. It is no coincidence that all are intangible: they cannot be weighed or touched, they do not travel in railway wagons and cannot be stockpiled in ports. The critical factors of production of this new economy are not oil, raw materials, armies of cheap labour or physical plant and equipment. These traditional assets still matter, but they are a source of competitive advantage only when they are vehicles for ideas and intelligence which give them value”*.³

Creative industries are a central part of this new economy, whereby customer relationships and product specialisation become more important than massed production and minimised costs, where creativity extends to the application of innovative technology and to new forms of organisation. Here the typical firm size is micro to SME (small to medium sized enterprise), engaged in a shifting complex of collaborations, coalitions, joint-ventures and networks, continuously forming, dissolving and reforming according to market opportunities and localised knowledge. The typical firm is more knowledge-intensive than capital-intensive, with creativity used to add value to ideas. The key assets of the company are not tangible property or equipment, but intangible intellectual and social capital, customer relationships and collaborative networks. Value-adding ideas and content are expensive to develop but very cheap (such as television broadcasts, CD's) or even free (the internet) to distribute: hence the need for legal

frameworks to limit copying and to provide incentives for content development, although balanced, particularly in the developing world, by the need for low cost access to appropriate technology. It is creativity that is the vital input in sectors such as advertising, fashion or performance – but a new kind of creativity that matches artistic expression with enterprise and a commitment and dedication to turning creative ideas into marketable products or services. A typical classification of contemporary creative industries could be:

- *Theatre, Film, Radio and Television*
- *Music composition, Performance and Recording*
- *Heritage, Visual Arts, Fashion design and Crafts*
- *Advertising and Graphic Design*
- *Architecture and Design*
- *Publishing and Print media*
- *Software, Video Games and Website design (AUB, 2007)*

Nor is creativity confined to creative industries. Of course in a competitive world all industries must be creative, since the process of creative destruction casts aside those who are slow to respond or change⁴. Innovation and creativity are then both consequences and imperatives in a market economy, with the economic returns to innovation secured through the protection of intellectual property rights. The differences that characterise 21st century notions of creative industries are both the rates of change and innovation, and the ease and low cost of distribution. Creative inputs are increasingly required by sectors well-outside of the typical creative industries grouping, with, for example, design, relationship management and corporate image becoming key aspects of company performance. Adding value through creativity and knowledge is a challenge for all sectors: modernising traditional industries as well as developing new ones.

Given this prime role for creativity in the application of ideas and knowledge to generate value, how is creativity to be nurtured, developed and applied? More particularly, what are the characteristics of economy and society that are conducive to this economic notion of creativity, and how can these characteristics be encouraged and maintained in a specific locality? At the heart of this issue is the notion of culture and its particular relationship to economy⁵.

1 DCMS 1998 – Department of Culture Media and Sport
2 See for example Throsby (2001), Caves (1999) or Florida (2002).
3 Leadbetter (1999) – see also www.guardianunlimited.co.uk
4 Shumpeter (1970)
5 Hill and McGovern (2005)

The construct of culture is well developed:

*“Culture is essentially about people and the way in which they behave as a result of their background and group affiliations. It is not about individual behaviour... but about shared systems of meaning within and across ascribed and acquired social groupings.”*⁶

Culture is then a system of learned social norms and values shared across some group or society that is not universal, but which acts as a boundary between groups. It is the sharing of ideas (social learning) that can provide a pathway to economic development through creativity and notions of agglomeration and networks. Agglomeration economies are the economic advantages that firms and organisations get from mutual proximity, and which provide the rationale for spatial concentrations or clusters of firms within similar sectors such as creative industries. Whilst public policy itself cannot generate creative industries, it can encourage the characteristics and circumstances that enable the development of creative industries to the critical mass that allows growth to be self-generating.

Just as traditional definitions of sectors (such as the Standard Industrial Classification scheme) may be inappropriate to activity in a modern economy, established views of the economy and familiar constructs of culture may be unsuitable for economic development in the 21st century. One recent view⁷ is that ideas of economy and culture have begun to converge, especially in relation to the analysis of spatial relationships. In this perspective the economy/culture relationship within a given space can be considered in two distinct ways:

- A commoditisation perspective of culture within the spatial economy, or the production, distribution, promotion and consumption of those products and services that could be characterised as cultural, ranging from fashion to cuisine, or from local broadcasting to cultural tourism.
- An instrumentalist perspective via the identification of culture with people and places, (cultural quarter, creative city), or in attitudes and skills such as enterprise, creativity, tolerance and multilingualism that can encourage or restrain economic development.

These alternative approaches to the culture/economy relationship either see culture as a source of differentiated products and services (with culture and tradition often providing the source of diversity⁸), or view culture as a characteristic affecting the quality and quantity of economic resources (such as enterprise start-up and growth). Neither need be mutually exclusive, with strategies to develop cultural products sitting comfortably alongside efforts to improve cultural awareness, creativity and enterprise.

The commoditisation hypothesis provides the rationale for a substantial body of economic development initiatives that emphasises competition via cultural production and consumption, such as support for heritage tourism and the sponsorship of cultural festivals, seen as opportunities to position the region as a place of cultural distinction or as creative nation. One approach⁹ in particular charts the association between place and prosperity in terms of the conditions necessary for the *“rise of the creative classes”*. These conditions include not only a quality, often historic, physical environment but more generally an ambience of culture and tolerance, in which distinctions between work and leisure become increasingly blurred. Then sense of place becomes an important ingredient in the development mix.

⁶ Mercado et al (2001) p433

⁷ Simonsen (2001)

⁸ See for example Hill and O'Sullivan (2007)

⁹ Florida (2002)





Left: © Samer Karam, bloggingbeirut.com. This page: START workshop 2007, Photograph by Houssam Mchajemch © British Council.

2 THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The arrival of the first personal computer in 1981, and the access opened to the internet in 1988, laid the foundations for a truly global cultural revolution, though not so much in the sense of its contents, as in the ways to enjoy it.

The digitalization of creative products “materialised” what has been heralded for decades by scores of social scientists: the mass production, reproduction and exchange of contents. Yet contrary to most predictions, the diversity and richness of content has boomed, giving way not only to more sophisticated products, but also to new cultural expressions as well as new business opportunities; perhaps for the first time without demanding a trade off between quality and access to markets.

A number of governments from developed, transitional and developing economies have undertaken a wide range of measures to improve the environment in which creativity translates into business. Those measures have tried different formulas, but with a common core: the recognition of talent as a resource that needs to be nurtured in order to release cultural, social and economic benefits to people.

In order to achieve that ‘nurturisation’ of talent, three elements can be highlighted:

- **Creative development/regeneration of infrastructure:** this is particularly prevalent in developed countries (UK, US, Denmark, Finland and Hong Kong.), but can also be identified in some which are developing (Colombia, China and Brazil). Although big projects of the developed countries get most

publicity (ie. the Tate Modern Gallery in London, or the architectural renovation of Barcelona), there are equally impressive projects in relatively poor countries (ie. the four mega libraries and the Maloka interactive museum in Bogotá, the renovation of 32 industrial buildings in Shanghai as creative hubs, or the revitalization of the old Opera House in Sao Paulo).

- **Entrepreneurialism:** support for the creation and development of new businesses is another common factor. The acknowledgment of the creative activities as important drivers of economic development has opened up to entrepreneurs in the Creative Industries the same kind of opportunities available in other sectors. Examples include the proliferation of “incubators” for creative enterprises with the support of the regional and local development agencies across the UK, the eligibility of the creative industries to apply for micro-credits in Colombia, the initiation of an entrepreneurial group inside the Ministry of Culture in Estonia, followed by an EU agreement for the use of Structural Funds to establish similar groups elsewhere.
- **Networking:** Talent feeds from diversity, and is transmitted between people. As obvious as this sounds, it is, perhaps, the most difficult to nurture and achieve. The value of contacts is realised through time, some investment and a dash of serendipity¹⁰. Networking is a serious business, but it is intangible and unspecific in nature.

¹⁰ For a more formal treatment see McCann, 2007



3 THE LEBANESE CONTEXT

Lebanon is a small country (around 3.5m to 4m people), with a rich and varied culture and history alongside a series of recent and contemporary challenges, including political instability. For what now seems a "Golden Age", Lebanon flourished as a trading nation post between East and West, with a tolerant multicultural and multilingual society toasted as the "Paris of the Middle East". This period ended abruptly with the Civil War of 1975-1990. In the peace that followed, reconstruction was both slow and partial, with internal divisions and external interference matched by modest economic growth and rising public debt.

Table 1 summarises the economic situation since 1992.

	1992	1996	2000	2005
GDP LLbn (constant p's)	18.0	23.1	24.7	28.1
Gov Debt as % GDP	50	95	151	196
Exchange Rate LL/\$	1,713	1,571	1,508	1,508

Source Nasnas (2007)

Between 1992 and 2005, GDP in real terms grew at an estimated average annual rate of 3.5%. However population increases reduce the per capita real rate of growth to an average of just 0.7% over the period. Meanwhile, despite upheaval, the structure of the Lebanese economy has remained remarkably stable, with the share of Services in GDP being the same in 2002 (68%) as it had been in 1973. Whilst Agriculture and Industry have both declined (from 9% of GDP to 6% for Agriculture, and from 16% to 13% for Industry), the share of Public Administration had almost doubled from 7% in 1973 to 13% in

2002. Partly as a result, public debt has increased rapidly, until by 2005 interest payments were 37% of Public Expenditure compared to just 30% on Wages and Salaries¹¹.

By mid-2007 identified economic and social problems included the high cost and inefficiency of public services, prolonged recession in consumer demand, high costs of energy and telecommunications, high real interest rates and continued emigration. These economic problems were magnified by the 33 days of hostilities and two months of embargo in late summer of 2006, when up to a third of the Lebanese population had been displaced. Finally internal political and military tensions cast a shadow over reconstruction hopes following access to substantial external funding facilitated by the Paris III Agreement of January 2007.

However, despite these stark realities, Lebanon and its economy have a number of durable positives. These include a resolute, irrepressible and enterprising population. By 1998 there were some 22,000 manufacturing establishments employing over 140,000 people and producing 14% of GDP – high figures for a small nation, signifying considerable entrepreneurship and drive. Lebanon is certainly multilingual, facilitating access to both Arab and Western markets and (mostly) multicultural. The tolerance of strangers is almost palpable¹². There is a strong sense of community, some sense of shared history and considerable determination to move forward, as well as the willingness to engage in critical analysis and reflection, evidenced by the Economic and Social Council Action Plan¹³.

¹¹ All figures from Nasnas (2007)
¹² One of Florida's keys to developing a creative class (Florida, 2002)
¹³ Nasnas op cit



In terms of potential for the creative industries, the AUB Report (2007) outlines a large number of individual and collective success stories in Fashion and in Performing Arts, including the ability to turn inspiration into commercial success¹⁴. Lebanon has in place an educational, health, communications and telecommunications infrastructure, which, whilst expensive, sometimes slow, and not always accessible, provides a foundation for growth¹⁵. Intellectual property rights are in place, if not always rigidly enforced. Tariffs are falling, and the withholding tax on intellectual exports is at least being reconsidered.

There is clear evidence of significant creative industry activity, especially (but not exclusively), in Beirut. *Table 2 outlines the number of VAT registered enterprises attributable to broad creative sectors:*

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total Registered Enterprises	3,074	4,338	5,346	5,089	5,674	4,971
Printing and Publishing	55	50	82	75	73	66
Research and R&D	28	47	45	64	48	79
Engineering Design & Architecture	99	136	120	94	112	157
Publicity and Marketing	71	93	95	108	101	211
Total Creative	253	326	342	341	334	513
Creative as % Total	8.2	7.5	6.4	6.7	5.9	10.3

Source: www.cas.gov.lb

Despite the problems of the past few years, the number of enterprises has continued to grow, especially in Marketing. It is not difficult to understand the role that Creative Industries play in Lebanon and the region. Beirut is the broadcasting centre for the Arab world, with a Pan-Arab market of some 280m people. It is the production (and post-production) centre for television programmes, as well as for cinema, with regional advantages in terms of film locations, creative writers, actors and directors, a continuing influx of technical graduates from Lebanese university's (although many choose to work abroad) and a comparative advantage in translators, with many creative people in Beirut fluent in (at least) three languages. There are seven Lebanese universities that offer course in Film Production or Audiovisual Arts. Lebanon itself has seven active "licensed" TV channels, as well as a small number of unlicensed ones. Most of these are entertainment channels. Lebanon has around a dozen production houses, producing TV ads, music videos, and corporate films as well as TV programmes, and several post-production companies, including state-of-the-art animation facilities. The average Lebanese household has two television sets, with 65% of Lebanese adults watching TV for 2-4 hours per day, and 82% watching television news on a daily basis. Almost 80% of Lebanese households have access to cable television¹⁶. Whilst Dubai may have government subsidy and some success in developing a media city, it has a long way to go in terms of the creative context that produces quality broadcastable outputs.

SMS (Short Message Services) has proved a popular means of communication, both between (especially) young people and as a way of interacting with television. Some television stations can generate up to \$1m per month from SMS – popular interactive TV programmes like Star Academy and Superstar can generate much more. MMS (Multimedia Message Services) offer potential but are not yet very significant in Lebanon.

In terms of music, including performance and recording, the outstanding success story in Lebanon is Rotana, with around three-quarters of its contracted singers being Lebanese. Lebanon provides the only Middle Eastern audience for orchestra performance, and has even overtaken Egypt in the popularity of its contemporary diva's, led by Magida el-Roomi and Fairouz.

¹⁴ A second of Florida's keys to developing a creative class (Florida, 2002)

¹⁵ The third of Florida's keys to developing a creative class (Florida, 2002); the "3Ts" are clearly present in Lebanon.

¹⁶ All figures from IMonthly, various issues.



Lebanon has an outstanding historic heritage (not always conserved to best advantage), with almost 250 archaeological sites, including UNESCO World-Heritage listed sites at Byblos, Baalbeck, and Tyre. Coupled with some outstanding natural beauty (Mediterranean coastline, Cedar Forests), sun in summer, skiing in winter, gastronomic skills (not just in the quality of Lebanese dishes, but with Indian, Chinese, Japanese and other restaurants of global standards) and a lively cultural scene, then the potential for heritage and cultural tourism becomes very substantial. Lebanon leads the region in terms of visual arts, with far more exhibitions each year than any local competitor, and Lebanese nationals (not always working in Lebanon) dominate the Middle East design market, including graphic, packaging, publicity and billboard design. Beirut is now the website design capital of the Arab world.

Lebanon produces around three hundred Architecture graduates each year, providing the critical mass for Beirut to be the architectural sub-contractor for pan-Arab construction. These graduates are just part of the total number of creative industry students working towards degrees in Beirut. Lebanese universities provide a range of creative and technical support courses ranging from theatre production to video-gaming.

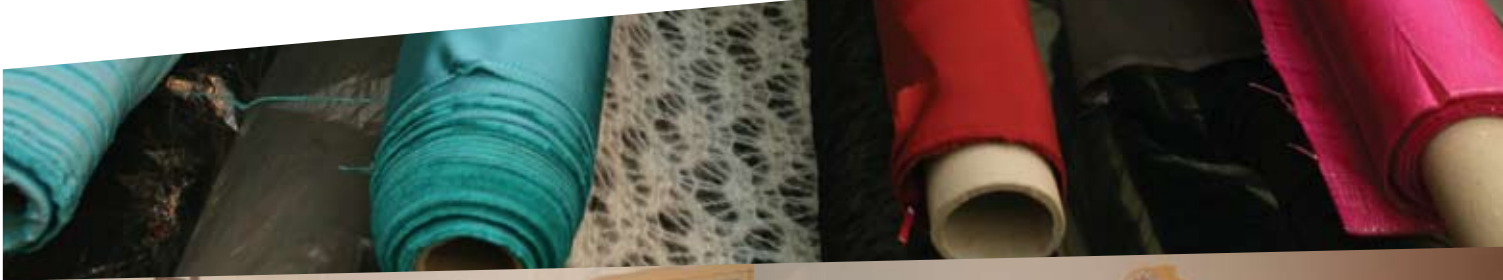
More generally there is an active cultural scene, well documented by *L'Agenda Culturel*, a lively festival scene, many centuries (if not millennia) of historic civilisation, and a fusion of Eastern and Western styles (evidenced in music, fashion, dance, culinary arts etc) that appeals to international markets. More particularly, there is an international diaspora of some 15m often successful and wealthy Lebanese abroad, forming ready-made markets and a rich source of support, funding and collaborative ideas. Not surprisingly there is a thriving book-publishing industry in Lebanon, supplying not only this diaspora but also that 280m strong Arab market.

Lebanon already has in place many of the elements of a support infrastructure that can help creative businesses to grow and prosper. *Berytech*, *Kafalat* and *Bader* provide extensive support for new start-ups. *L'Agenda Culturel* provides a catalogue of creative and cultural activities, whilst The Lebanese Association for the Development of Private Funding for Culture (*Liban Mecenat*) encourages and supports the developments of cultural projects and initiatives.

Whilst much has been achieved, the potential for creative industries in Lebanon remains in its infancy. There is sufficient detail above, and in the AUB report, to evidence the ability of Lebanon to generate ideas, and to turn those ideas into commercial success. However the figures of **Table 1** also show that this is a long way from happening at a level and mass that can improve, or perhaps even touch, the lives of the majority of Lebanese people.

Part of this project's initiative was a comprehensive mapping of the creative sectors in Lebanon, providing both a detailed picture of their contemporary relevance and a benchmark for future development. There have been serious practical obstacles to achieving this objective. First and foremost was the lack of official data, both on the sectors and on the economy as a whole, which made it impossible to ascribe relative significance to the evidence gathered. Secondly that evidence itself was often partial and incomplete, not least that provided by the sectors itself, reflecting a reluctance by business to expose itself to numerical scrutiny. Thirdly was the lack of sectoral or indeed mapping expertise. Ultimately the AUB team confined its attention to just three parts of the Creative Industries in Lebanon: Advertising, Fashion and Performing Arts. Their work provides a rich narrative on these sectors in contemporary Lebanon, but makes no claim to be a comprehensive picture of the Creative Industries as a whole¹⁷.

17 AUB 2007



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Next page: © How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool's joke, Rabih Mroué. Photograph by Houssam Mchaimch © Ashkal Alwan, 2008. Atelier Rabih Kayrouz © Maison Rabih Kayrouz, 2008.



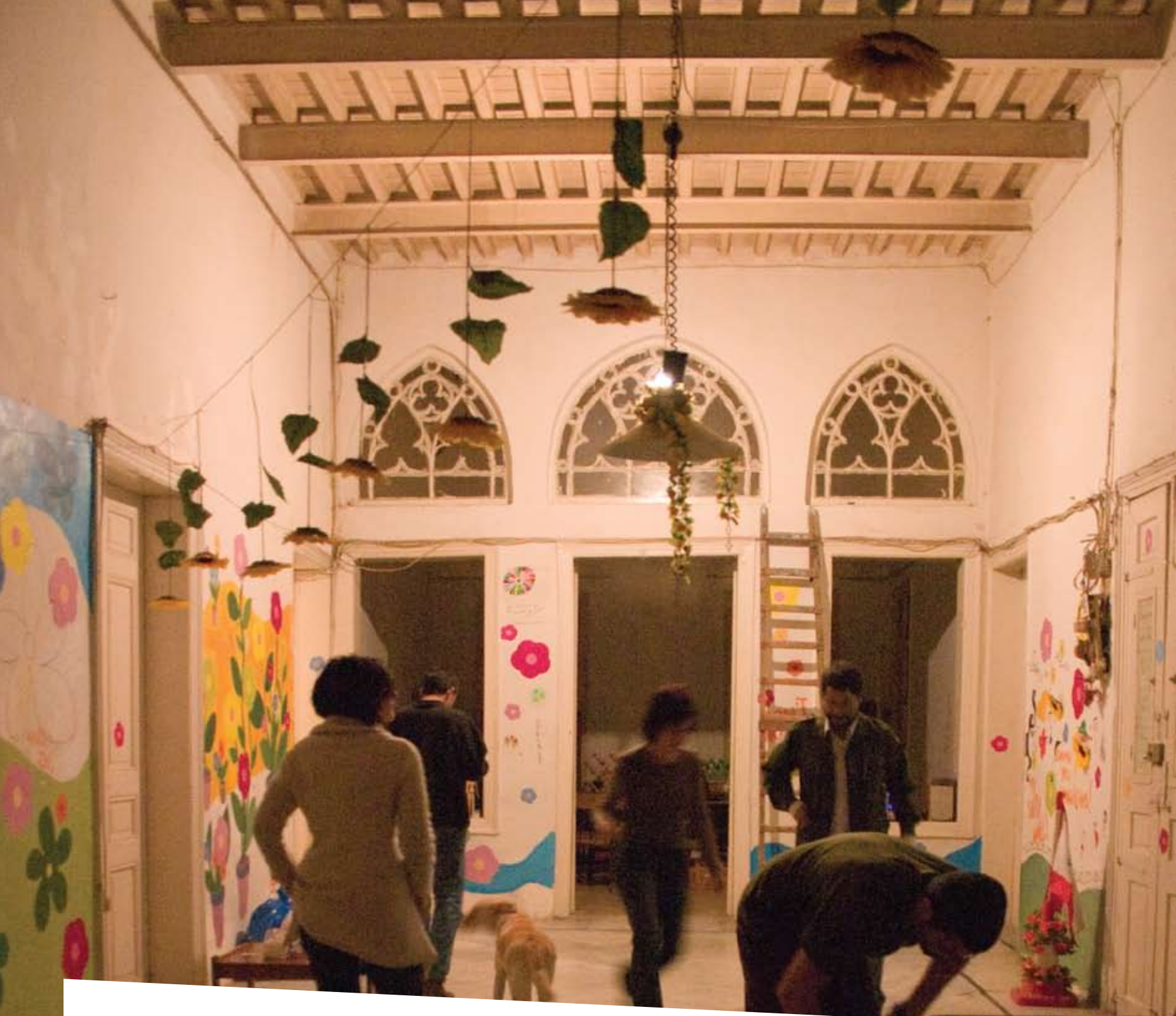
4 A VISION FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN LEBANON

Earlier pages have outlined the conceptual rationale for a focus on Creative Industries as an important element in a much needed economic development strategy for Lebanon. Such a strategy must incorporate certain key characteristics, including a vision that is specific enough to be achievable but broad enough to capture different interests, should include a brief analysis as a pointer to recommendations, and, most of all, should detail an action plan that is sufficient to drive from the current to the desired situation. Hence a strategy should be both inspirational and practical, should set targets that are challenging but achievable within a limited timeframe, and should set benchmarks for progress along the way to the goal¹⁸.

Beirut is both the capital city and major population centre for Lebanon. Its position roughly in the centre of the country and reasonable infrastructure links in all directions (including shipping networks) suggest that economic activity in Beirut can quickly have positive spill-over effects to the rest of the country. The concentration of business and intellectual infrastructure on Beirut, together with its multilingualism and multiculturalism, provide it with the potential to re-awaken its international reputation. Hence the focus of this creative industries strategy is to support and expand the The Lebanese Association for the Development of Private Funding for Culture (*Liban Mecenat*) idea to develop Beirut into a Creative City by 2012. This is a timescale, and a challenge, that is both demanding and achievable. The key to this achievement is to establish the principal characteristics of a Creative City and then work back from there to identify the major changes, and hence preliminary small steps, necessary to achieve this objective. Beirut will not become a Creative City because its government or its institutions say so – important though this will be. Beirut will become that Creative City when its inhabitants make it so, and when the regional and international communities recognise it as such.

18 Hill (2000)





5 DEFINING SUCCESS: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CREATIVE CITY

- A. Significant clusters of successful enterprises in key sectors of the Creative Industries
- B. Effective and inexpensive telecommunications, including mobile telephony and broadband internet access. Children will be teaching their parents about computer literacy and the uses of global information.
- C. The attraction of talented people and talent-intensive firms from abroad to work in the city.
- D. A legislative environment that nurtures and then protects intellectual property, but which also challenges monopoly supply.
- E. A physical environment that is clean, friendly and welcoming, with long-term ambitions of becoming a Green City.
- F. An effective public transport system that links different parts of the city to each other and to the rest of Lebanon, cheaply and with preference over private transport users.
- G. An education system that encourages enterprise and

creativity to global standards, which nurtures excellence as standard and which rejects mediocrity.

- H. A city ambiance that is warm, safe and inviting, where strangers are welcomed and integrated, and where the distinctions between cultural production and consumption are increasingly blurred.
- I. A city whose location is an internationally recognised symbol of cultural quality.

Achieving these characteristics will take time, resources, partnerships and commitment, involving and engaging partners ranging from national and local government to private sector banks, creative firms and organisations, television stations, city authorities, universities, schools and even political parties.

Effectively marketed, this is a concept and a strategy that can be a unifying and cohesive force for the city, and a bridge to the rest of the country. Beirut already has much of the infrastructure and environment in place to enable creativity to flourish. From this start these advantages need to be nurtured, developed and embraced. Beirut becomes a

Creative City when its inhabitants, with their efforts, their passion and pride, and their sense of belonging, make it so. 2012 is just four years away – by then Beirut will be an attractive, safe and increasingly green city, returning to its recent roots as the Middle eastern capital of culture, design, information technology, tourism finance and hospitality.

Recent history shows that places can and do change, and that human endeavour and spirit can overcome enormous obstacles and conflict, when strategic vision can be used to unite and inspire, backed-up by resources and careful planning. Local examples include Cyprus – previously war torn and bereft, and Dubai. More distant examples include Ireland – equally war torn and bereft twenty years ago, now on track to become the richest country in Europe through a strategy of investment and incentives, consistently applied over two decades. Dublin has not only attracted back many of the Irish diaspora, but also a wide range of global high-technology companies. Equally impressive is Belfast, home to massive redevelopment that transcends old sectarian divides. Just ten years ago such progress was difficult to imagine in a city at war with itself. In the context of the history of Beirut, from now to 2012 is but the blink of an eye.



Left page: © Samer Karam, bloggingbeirut.com. This page, clockwise: © Sabbah Media Corporation, Caramel movie, 2006. © Fantascop productions, Bosta movie, 2008. © British Council, Those Eyes That Mouth, Grid Iron, Beirut, Nov. 2005. © Sabbah Media Corporation, Caramel movie stage, 2006.

6 PRIORITIES: THE COMPONENTS OF STRATEGY

INNOVATIVE BEIRUT

- Adopt financial incentives for innovation (tax-breaks, investment incentives)
- Establish or strengthen links between Higher Education and Business – encourage start-ups and spin-outs, get Higher Education Institutions to play a role in planning.
- Encourage the exploitation of new ideas – establish a Beirut Centre for New Business Development, providing on-site services and expertise.

ENTERPRISING BEIRUT

- Encourage a new climate for enterprise. Develop Business Angel network to connect good business proposals with potential investors.
- Offer business support (advice, mentoring, networks) to new businesses through government-sponsored and university-backed sector fora.
- Establish a women in business enterprise network.
- Subsidise new graduates to work for one year with small firms.

- Ensure competition in the provision of public utilities, including electricity and water.

BEIRUT – A LEARNING CITY

- Establish a network of schools to provide universal secular education to age 15.
- Identify and overcome barriers to learning at any age – language, transport, facilities etc.
- Encourage Lebanese Universities to establish research expertise. Ensure each university in Lebanon “adopts” a creative sector – undertaking research, providing teaching and training etc.

CONNECTED BEIRUT

- Build on existing telecommunications structures by opening up the telecommunications market to competition.
- Establish Beirut city-centre as a wireless network.
- Ensure all schools, universities and public buildings have broadband internet access, with at least one portal open to public access.

- Seek international investment to rebuild a rail network north from Beirut to Tripoli via Byblos, and south to Tyr via Saida.
- Invest in public transport within Beirut, set tight emission standards for private cars and establish bus-only lanes.
- Enforce speed limits and parking restrictions.
- Develop Beirut Port as a yachting, convention and residential as well as trading facility.

CREATIVE BEIRUT

- Establish a Beirut Committee for the Creative City, chaired by a Government Minister and charged with developing the detailed action plan to accompany this broad strategy. This action plan must detail resources and lead responsibilities.
- Establish partnerships with creative groupings

throughout the Middle East and beyond, to establish and promote best-practice.

- Develop a monthly newsletter, outlining cultural and creative activities in Lebanon, e-mailed to a database of Lebanese and other interested parties abroad.
- Revise Intellectual Property Rights to encourage innovation and creative enterprise whilst challenging business monopolies.
- Develop a communications strategy to promote Beirut – Creative City 2012 across the city and beyond, including an immediate all-party press launch and a poster campaign across the city, outlining events and encouraging participation.
- Establish a Creative Beirut quality mark with defined criteria.

- Encourage tree planting in available public spaces. Create park space in any new city development scheme.

- Auction Television broadcast permits from 2010, setting quality thresholds.

SAFE BEIRUT

- Establish a Commission for Standards in Public Life to challenge and prosecute corruption.
- Enhance the professionalism of the police force through more training and higher pay.
- Establish a network of local representation for local government.

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7 CONCLUSIONS

This paper sets the framework for a national project that involves all people and all sectors, not just those in the creative industries. In a sense, this is precisely the challenge that Lebanon faces: unlike many of the other countries who are exploring the potential of creativity and their related industries, Lebanon is starting off from a different baseline. There needs to be an overall strategy to revamp and reform other sectors in order to be able to start nurturing the creative industries as sources of future prosperity. The notion of Beirut Creative City as described in this document is a proposal to embark on this initiative. This is no doubt a huge task and one that is difficult but not impossible. As mentioned earlier in the paper Beirut will not become creative because its government or its institutions say so. Beirut will become that Creative City when its inhabitants make it so, and when the regional and international communities recognise it as such.

The purpose of this document is to present the framework for a discussion that needs to take place between key Lebanese partners. One of the mediums for this to happen could be the formation of a “think tank”, representing the various sectors involved such as culture, education, environment, economics, etc that will take upon itself the task of developing the overall detailed strategy. This will then translate into projects for the realisation of Beirut Creative City through the engagement of Lebanese public and private organisations as well as Regional, European and International partners.

In this difficult time, there is, more than ever, a need to focus on the regeneration of Lebanon and to plan for the role it will play in the new globalised economy, especially in light of the recent emergence of the new cultural and education clusters in the Gulf States and the Emirates.

Because of the recent political and economic crises, Lebanon is suffering a huge brain drain of its talented youth. There is dire need to put in place a national strategy in order to provide the interesting work opportunities and viable prosperous and stable future that will stem the flow of people leaving. It is also vital to look at ways to capitalise on the wealth of opportunities that the Lebanese Diaspora presents for the country.

This is a call, an invitation to work together for a better future for Lebanon, a call to put in place a structure that will plan and prepare for the release of Lebanon’s economic and creative potential. The importance of creativity and content in any present-day economy presents to Lebanon unique opportunities for growth, development and stability. Grasping these opportunities can transform all our futures.



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