

The logo consists of several red dots of varying sizes arranged in a cluster, with some dots connected by thin lines, suggesting a network or cluster.

creative **Clusters**  
in low density urban areas

Barnsley **Óbidos** Reggio Emilia Hódmezővásárhely Mizil INTELI Enguera Viareggio Catanzaro

## Introducing the URBACT thematic network

Óbidos [ Portugal ], January 22, 2009

**1. The vision**

2. The concepts

3. The model

4. The main sub-themes

5. The outputs

A vision for the next ten years considers creativity as one of the engines for economic growth in cities and regions.

A driver to consider seriously in the “creative” destruction process which is being provoked by the global downturn.

“Creative industries must move from the margins to the mainstream of economic and policy thinking”

*Creative Britain - New Talents for the New Economy [2008].*

**The creative issue is already re-shaping many local agendas in economic development**

...

and we think that creative issues in local development are also a functional pattern outside the context of main urban hubs and core cities. **This is a main added value of this URBACT project.**

To transfer the “creative city model” to low-density urban areas. In other words, to transfer a range of so far considered urban attributes like

- accessibility,
- cultural life,
- tech. facilities,
- competitive clusters,
- global networking,
- ...

to middle-sized and small towns.

This is relevant at EU level because we are going to explore the capacity of the creative issue to impulse a sort of **leapfrogging in terms of social and economic development for small and midsize towns**, as well as an opportunity to re-think rural development.

In this framework “low-density urban areas” will match with: i) the OECD concept of “intermediate region”; and ii) the remoteness / proximity duality, in fact accessibility to a main urban hub.

Combining both criteria, the **intermediate regions close to a main urban hub account 36% of population of the EU27.**

	Predominantly Urban	Intermediate			Predominantly rural			EU-27
		Total	Close to a city	Remote	Total	Close to a city	Remote	
Average annual % change in population, 1995-2004	0.29	0.31	0.31	0.24	0.02	0.10	-0.18	0.25
% of regions with a reduced share of national population 1995-2004	55	44	44	48	64	54	81	54
GDP per head 2004, EU-27=100	127	84	84	71	70	71	68	100
% of regions with a reduced share of national GDP 1995-2004	57	55	55	52	64	59	72	58
Population density in 2004 inhabitants/km <sup>2</sup>	552	112	114	65	40	51	27	113
Access to flights	1 059	475	483	215	237	286	114	685
Number of NUTS3 regions	416	475	454	21	393	249	144	1 284
Share of NUTS3 regions in %	32	37	35	2	31	19	11	100
Total population in 1000s	215 022	184 143	178 463	5 680	90 506	64 516	25 990	489 671
Share of population in %, 2004	44	38	36	1	18	13	5	100

### EU REGIONS ATTENDING THE REMOTENESS / PROXIMITY CRITERIA

Source: Dijkstra, L. and Poelman, H (2008) Remote Rural Regions. How proximity to a city influences the performance of rural regions.

EU-DG for Regional Policy, Regional Focus, n° 01/2008

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## PEOPLE | *CREATIVE CLASS*

People who work on arts, entertainment, culture... but also in science, engineering, design... in this context, the notion of **creative entrepreneurs** is emerging.

Increasingly cities and regions are competing to **attract and retain not only companies but talents.**

In fact, the success of the creative issue in both business and local development is an answer for **placing people at the core.**

**Elisa Seravalli.** Reggio Emilia  
Free-lance artist and entrepreneur  
on video design



## **ECONOMY | *CREATIVE INDUSTRIES***

This concept is broader than cultural industries: ICTs, fashion, design, video, computer games, software, architecture, visual arts, advanced services, etc.

Where creative individuals, managers and technologists can meet together.

This kind of clusters are a **powerful source of innovation that in most cases remains 'hidden' at the light of traditional indicators.**

Creative activities usually act as a more relevant actor diffusing innovation than we think. This has important **consequences in term of spatial development.**

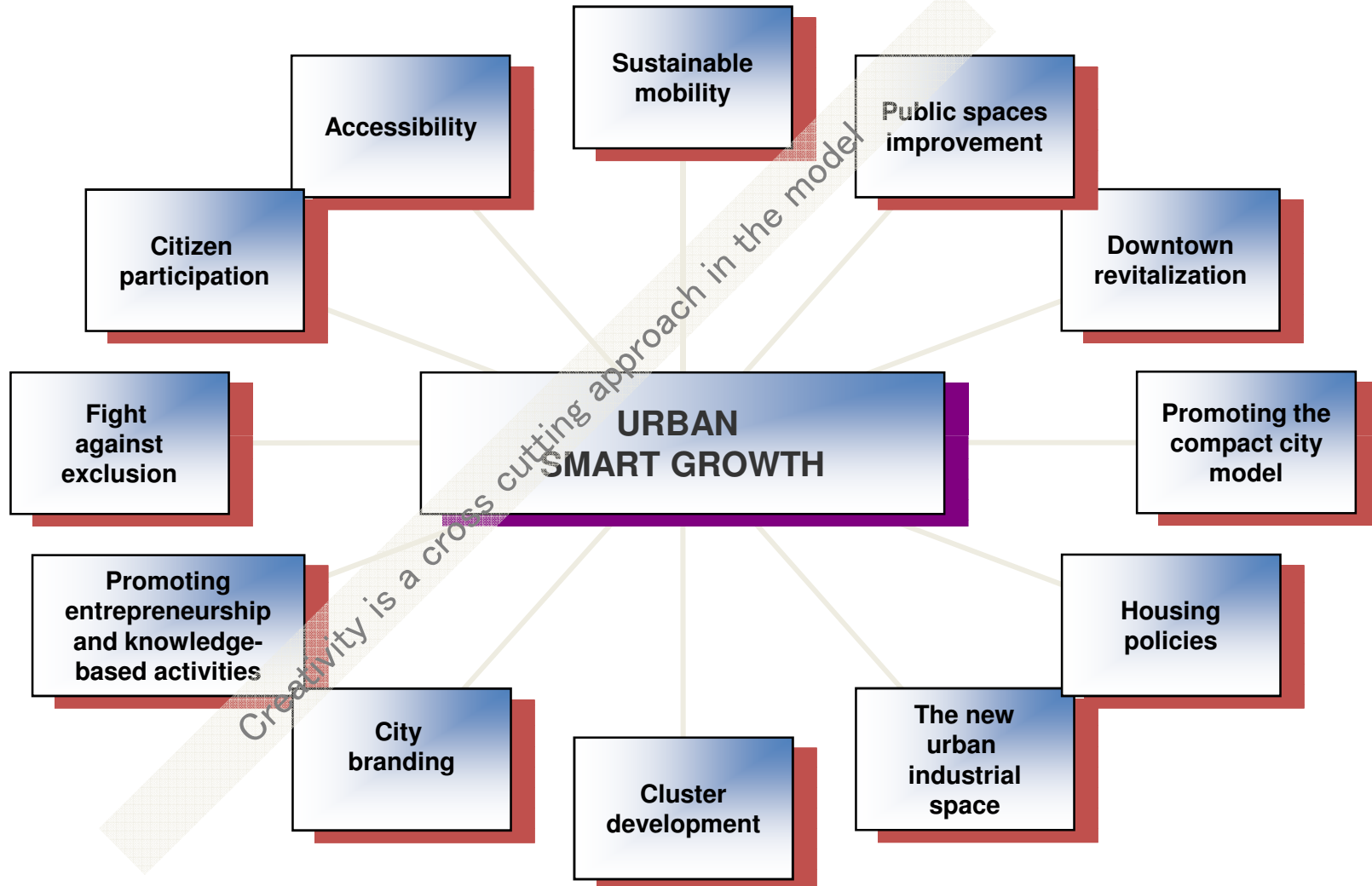
## PLACES | *CREATIVE CITIES*

The nexus of competitive advantage shifts to those **places that can generate, retain and attract the talent**. This assumption, rapidly diffused due to the successful work of Richard Florida, is re-shaping many agendas in urban economic development, especially in the OECD context.

However, take care about approaching the Florida ideas in a simplistic way. Nobody can take the “three T model” as a truly urban theory, but as an inspiring idea to refresh urban policy.

**Warning** 

**Dealing with creativity as a cross cutting-approach is much more than a label**



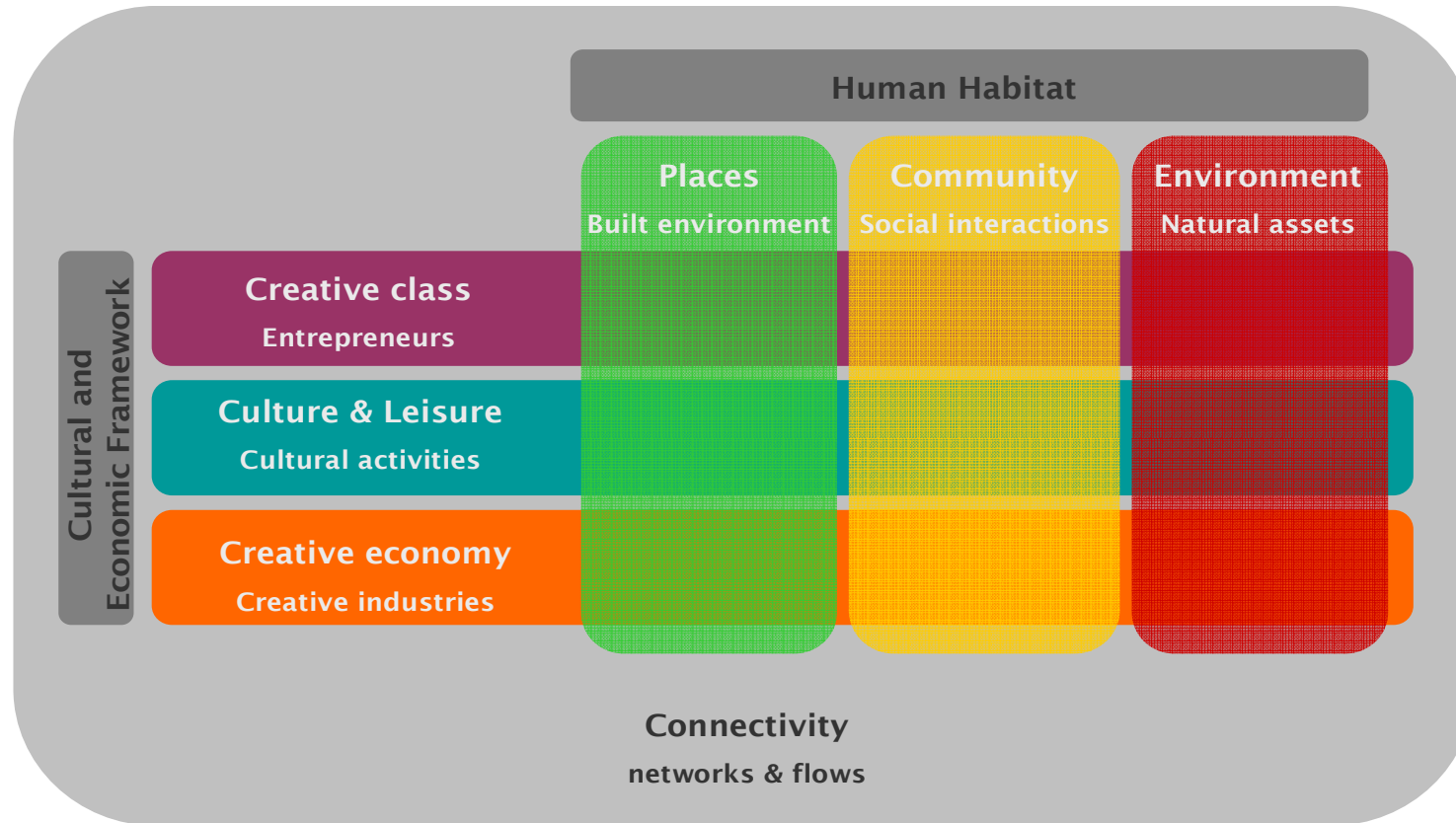
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PROMOTING LOCAL CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTS IN LOW DENSITY URBAN AREAS

Source: INTELI, 2008

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## 01 CREATIVE CLUSTERS: DIVERSIFYING LOCAL ECONOMIC BASE AND OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUNG PEOPLE

A new cluster reading of the local economy to:

- i) impulse **new emergent realities** [e.g. Reggio Emilia and Barnsley on new media clusters];
- ii) and/or activate **new growth potential in existing mature industries** [e.g. Mizil, Enguera in eco-tourism or HMV in ceramics].



## 02 EVENTS AND CULTURAL AGENDAS AS CATALYSTS

Blur the limits between the cultural and the economic development policies at the urban scale.

Keep pressure on the improvement of the cultural life and agenda.

Consider a major creative event, with high credibility, that quickly expands through the word-of-mouth ?

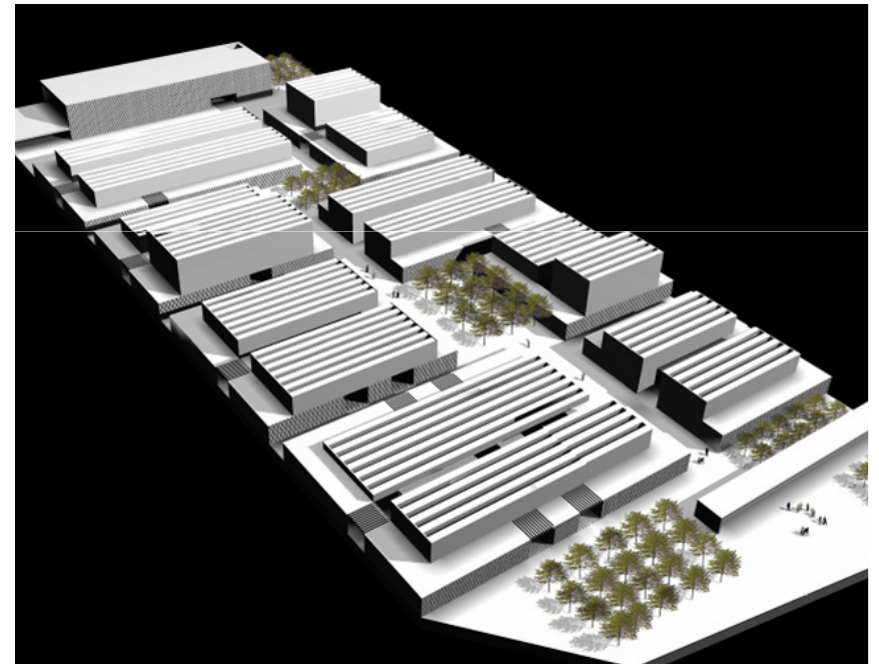


### 03 A NEW RANGE OF FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURES

The enhancing of cultural life and the emergence of new creative clusters demands **a new generation of business and city facilities**, even a new kind of urban public spaces:

Facilities to creative businesses and entrepreneurs: art incubators, artists' residencies, business centres in "inspiring sites" [old industrial buildings]...

Approaching city centres or deprived central areas as creative hubs or cultural districts. The mix of land-uses is crucial as opposite to past zoning schemes.



## 04 CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS AND TALENTED PEOPLE: ATTRACTION AND RETAINING

**Specific support measures to creative entrepreneurs** [still a role to play by the local level]

- Tax reductions, real estate facilities and other measures organized in “welcome packages”.
- Financial tools covering intangible assets.
- Support to networking activities and the creation of economies of scope.
- Support to the recruitment of skilled people in the companies.
- Venture capital systems or effective linkages to business angels.

**Branding the creative place:** as a link within a creativity-based local strategy not a mere label. Branding aimed at the production of a new visibility of the city, a sort of re-thinking local identity.



## 05 SOWING THE SEED: CREATIVE EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS AT LOCAL LEVELS

### A finding from the Development phase:

Cities approaching seriously the creative paradigm are displaying innovative and creative local education systems in primary and secondary levels. They are **incubating the local talented people of the future.**

Reggio Emilia is a benchmark at World level, but also Óbidos or Barnsley are active introducing advanced methods in public education.

It is relevant to diffuse these practices to the whole URBACT community.



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## EXCHANGE AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- **2009. Launching conference** - Óbidos: “Creative Clusters in Small Urban Centres: Challenges and Opportunities”. Linked to the launching of the “**2009 - European Year on Creativity and Innovation**”.  
Session with Mayors: as expected output the signature of a “**Declaration for Creativity**”.
- **2011. Final conference** - Lisbon: “From Creative Clusters to Creative Places: Re-inventing Urban Development Models”.  
Session with Mayors: a **position paper for the EC** will be delivered, to promote the vision from middle-sized towns in the European mainstream related to creative clusters

- **Five thematic workshops**, covering the key sub-themes. Combining in-door sessions with study visits to specific experiences in host cities.
- **Two key study-visits** to creative places outside the partnership. Looking for a demonstration effect for **policy-makers** from city partners.
- Network of Creative Schools as a result of a “**URBACT creative schools contest**”.
- Setting up a **European panel of experts** on creative clusters and creative cities [a sort of LSG animated by our non city partner, INTELI].
- Participation in **major European events** on creative clusters and to establish contacts with other networks.

## IMPACT ON LOCAL POLICIES

- A **local action plan** for each of the city partners.
- **Local support groups**. Systematic invitation to Managing Authorities.
- A “technical action plan” delivered by INTELI, as policy recommendations & strategic guidelines on creative clusters: **an input to the “Green Paper on Creative Industries”** to be produced by the EC in 2009.

*“... to preserve **our scale** as crucial as the development pattern itself. A pattern empowered in cultural and creative economies”*

TELMO FARIA, MAYOR OF ÓBIDOS

*“Thinking small in a big way”*

REMAKING **BARNSELEY**, STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2003-2033





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in low density urban areas



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