Creative Aging City
Future Urban Design and Planning for Aging Population and Emerging Creative Economy

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Research Hypothesis
- Lessons of ‘Small’ and ‘Old’ Cities to Construct ‘Future Creative Cities’
- Valorizing ‘Expertise’ and ‘Maturity’ to Promote ‘Sustainable Creativity’
- Connecting the ‘Old Economy’ with the ‘New Economy’

Research Methodology
Integrating Design Thinking methodology with Sociological approach to research on Sustainable Built Environment.

Phase 1: Conceptual Framing
- Conceptualization: sustainable creativity, creative aging city
- Identification and selection of case studies
- Micro-demographic study
- Background research on urban planning and design

Phase 2: Case Studies & Community Design Lab
- Field work on selected cases to study urban planning and spatial typologies that support or encourage sustainable creativity
- Collaborative ideation process with seniority to co-design prototype of urban spaces and systems

Phase 3: Integrated Urban Planning & Design Framework
- Testing and evaluation of prototypes
- Synthesis of data from case studies and feedback from design prototypes
- Categorization of planning and design requirements into multidisciplinary design framework

By linking two major urban challenges—‘aging population’ and ‘creative economy’, this research proposes ‘sustainable creativity’ as a conceptual tool for new urban design of a ‘creative aging city’. The existing notion of a creative city (Landry 2000; Florida 2002) has directed urban development from increasing productivity towards fostering creativity. Such development requires young and mobile talents, who are expected to achieve innovations in the new economies. Yet, urban populations are rapidly aging. By 2050, 22% of the world population will be above 60 (United Nation Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2002). Moreover, most cities are not mature-industrialized or big enough to facilitate infrastructures, capital and talents for the new economies. This means that cities will become rapidly aged without significant possibilities of industrial transformations. However, urban design based on the existing concept of a creative city tends to produce more gentrified urban spaces fitting to the lifestyles of the creative class. Due to such limitation, we pay attention to the concept of a creative city given by Masayuki (2003). He argues that cities should make use of the accumulated traditions and local industries for more sustainable post-industrial reformations. Thus, instead of competing for a limited supply of creative class, this research hypothesizes that the new urban design should encompass the issue of aging population, local human capital and locally-rooted creative industries. In this respect, the proposed design concept, a sustainable creative city, should value the expertise, experience, maturity, locality and connectivity as part of ‘social creative capital’ for the city. We anticipate that these social and urban particulars will inspire a new framework of urban design for future creative aging cities.

This research begins with case studies of small-sized yet self-sufficient, self-assembled, and externally connected neighbourhoods and their social and commercial spaces. Specifically, we focus on cities which are largely aging but facilitating creative industries and connected to the global markets. They include Ubohoi (Japan), Hongseong/Imsil (Korea), Hangzhou/Shanghai (China), Nîmes (France) and Cremona (Italy), where alternative urban agriculture, health, gourmet, craft, music, media, design and publishing industries have been developed. We aim to examine the local contingencies and ecology of these proposed cities, which have boosted technological and industrial innovation with limited population and resources. Then, we will analyze the elements of urban design that have contributed towards connectivity, productivity and self-governing of each city. This will be followed by a ‘community design lab’ to be conducted in Singapore, which will involve design prototypes of urban spaces and systems and a hands-on design exercise in order to verify design issues and constraints and to explore new social and design solutions.

Candidates for Case Studies
- Ubohoi, Japan
- Nîmes, France
- Cremona, Italy
- Imsil, Korea
- Tianzifang, Shanghai
- Santa Fe, USA