

# Analysis on Role Positioning of the Local Government Against the Background of Creative Cities Network

A Case Study of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen

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**Abstract**—With the rapid pace of globalization, the development of creative cities shows a trend of networking. More and more researches on “Creative Cities Network” are found in the academic circles, but most focus on “City of Design”, and rare research on other types of creative cities is made, which is not conducive to getting a correct and overall understanding of “Creative Cities Network”. Therefore, this paper, based on Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen, the three cities that have successfully applied for the “City of Crafts and Folk Arts”, summarizes the role of local government in the process of “Application for Creative City” in four aspects: guide for industry planning, provider of service platform, promoter of cultural inheritance and external exchange liaison. For other cities, they can learn from the experience of the three cities, clarify the role positioning of the local government in the process of “Application for Creative City”, aiming to provide experience and reference for other cities so as to achieve success in the “Application for Creative City” in the future.

**Keywords**—creative cities network; local government; role positioning

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the process of the realization of economic and social development through creativity, cities are playing an increasingly important role and become the center of creative activities [1]. As Florida pointed out: cities can “improve economy expansion, development science and technology, provide opportunities for human resources, realize ideas into reality and inject innovation to investment” [2] With the rapid pace of globalization, the development of creative cities shows a trend of networking, and one of the specific reflection is the “Creative Cities Network”, a project UNESCO launched. As of 2017, there are 180 cities in the Network [4]. Among the cities included into the Network, Chinese cities are the most, including 12 cities, covering four creative fields: Design, Crafts and Folk Arts, Gastronomy and Media Arts, showing a strong growth trend. Since 2008, one Chinese city is included

into the Network every year on average, reflecting the rapid development of China’s creative industry and the strong willingness and positive acts of Chinese cities to apply “Creative Cities Network”. In this background, there is more and more research on “Creative Cities Network” are found in the academic circles, but most focuses on “City of Design” [3], and rare research on other types of creative cities is made, which is not conducive to getting a correct and overall understanding of “Creative Cities Network”. Therefore, this paper, taking as examples, Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen, the three cities that have successfully applied for the “City of Crafts and Folk Arts”, discusses the role of local government in the process of “Application for Creative City” and based on this, puts forward the dynamic mechanism of “Application for Creative City”, aiming to provide reference for other similar cities.

## II. INTRODUCTION TO UNESCO “CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK”

“Creative Cities Network” is a significant action of UNESCO to promote cultural diversity development of the world, and its launch traces to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in November 2001.

Created in October 2004, “Creative Cities Network” is an international city network alliance, aiming to promote international cooperation and encourage to share experience and resources, so as to promote local development through culture and creativity, and is another significant action of UNESCO to promote cultural diversity development of the world after the protection measures for world culture and heritage and intangible cultural heritage. The Network covers seven creative fields: Design, Literature, Music, Crafts and Folk Arts, Gastronomy, Film and Media Arts.

Each category of title of “Creative Cities Network” requires corresponding strict international standards. Thereinto, Standards for “City of Crafts and Folk Arts” mainly include

six aspects: first, having long lasting handicrafts and folk arts of a certain form; second, having modern production of a large number of handicrafts and folk arts; third, having a large number of craftsmen and local artists; fourth, having vocational training centers related to handicrafts and folk arts; fifth, having platforms for promoting handicrafts and folk arts, such as (festival, exhibition, fair, market, etc.); sixth, having infrastructures involving handicrafts and folk arts (museums, crafting shops, local art fairs, etc.) [5].

Among the members of “Creative Cities Network”, Chinese cities Hangzhou joined the “Creative Cities Network” in April 2012, both Suzhou and Jingdezhen in December 2014, and the three Chinese cities are included into the Network as “Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts”. To achieve succeed in “Application for Creative City”, the municipal governments of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen launched a lot of work in aspects of industry planning, service platform, cultural heritage, external exchange, etc. Therefore, this paper intends to analyze the role of the government in the process of “Application for Creative City”, aiming to provide reference for other cities for “Application for Creative City”.

### III. ROLE POSITIONING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF HANGZHOU, SUZHOU AND JINGDEZHEN IN THE PROCESS OF “APPLICATION FOR CREATIVE CITY OF CRAFTS AND FOLK ARTS”

#### A. Guide of Industry Planning

The reason for the three cities success in applying for “Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts” is mainly that they attach great importance to the development of creative industries and have a good industrial foundation, which is inseparable from the reasonable planning and guidance of local governments on creative industries, mainly reflecting in the following aspects:

1) *Training and introduction of creative talents*: As early as October 2011, Hangzhou issued the “Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of Talents in Cultural & Creative Industries” which plans to introduce about 100 industry leaders and develop 1,000 local outstanding talents in cultural & creative industries, and train more than 10,000 college students [6]. In addition, Hangzhou has taken a series talent training measures including proposing to implement the Three-Year Action Plan for Training and Introducing 100 Masters of Arts and Crafts, formulating the statistical survey system of crafts and folk arts industries of the city, conducting dynamic monitoring and analysis of the development of crafts and folk arts, etc.[7]. After the success of the “Application for Creative City”, Suzhou also undertook to support and subsidize about 85 high-level talents in a planned and focused way by 2015, including more than 20% introduced talents, and by 2010, support and subsidize more than 200 high-level talents [8]. Jingdezhen, after years of development, now owns more than 200 national level and provincial-level masters of arts and crafts and ceramic arts, more than 1,000 senior artists of

ceramic arts and crafts, and a large number of workers in the ceramic industry, which lays a solid talent foundation for the ceramic cultural & creative industries system [9].

2) *Aggregation of creative industry parks*: “Application for Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts” requires a city has to own modern production of handicrafts and folk arts, and one of the common carriers of modern production is creative industry parks. After the success of the “Application for Creative City”, Hangzhou proposed to build a national and even international important base in processing, production, display and trading of arts and crafts based on the cluster of arts and crafts such as arts and crafts museums, Qinghefang, Tiangong Art Gallery and Yuewang Art City [7]. By 2015, Suzhou plans to build 80 cultural industrial parks with a total planned area of 160 m<sup>2</sup>, and an overall floorage of 14 million m<sup>2</sup>, expecting 6,000 various enterprises [8]. In 2014, Jingdezhen launched the construction of three cultural industrial parks, namely, world ceramic culture Expo Park, ceramic industry headquarters base and ceramic creative center, and has initially built a cultural & creative industries cluster district based on ceramics science park and Xindu private ceramic park [9].

#### B. Provider of Service Platform

“Application for Creative City” requires that the city has to have a large number of platforms for promoting handicrafts and folk arts. Therefore, the governments of the three cities take innovative measures based on the original base to provide good developing environment for crafts and folk arts.

1) *Establishment of festival activity platforms*: Hangzhou proposed to make a success in holding exhibitions and events including Cultural & Creative Industries Expo, Seal Culture Expo, Crafts and Arts Expo, develop international cultural & creative industries, establish development for display and trade of crafts and folk arts, as well as continuing to hold successfully the festival activities combining folk arts and leisure tourism including Chinese Folk Artists Festival, China Hangzhou West Lake International Tea Culture Expo to promote the integration and development of folk arts and tourism and folk arts and modern design [7]. Suzhou proposed to make a success in holding exhibitions and events including Cultural, Creative and Design Industries Trade Expo, China Embroidery Art Festival, “Zigang Cup” Jade Carving Expo, etc. [8]. Jingdezhen successfully organized the International Ceramics Expo, the Chinese Cultural Heritage Day and other host city activities, as well as launching the Global Launching Ceremony of Chinese Original Ceramic Artists Club to build a internet trading platform characterized by superior resource complementarity [9].

2) *Establishment of industrial financing platforms*: No enterprise can develop without the support of policies and funds. Many cultural and creative enterprises based on cultural, innovative and creative products are middle and small-sized enterprises in terms of the scale, and they have the common characteristics of “small proportion of fixed assets

and large proportion of intangible assets”, so financing difficulty has always been the bottleneck problem hindering the development of cultural and creative enterprises [6].

In recent years, Hangzhou has issued a number of supporting policies, such as holding the Cultural and Creative Industry Investment and Financing Fair, establishing state-owned cultural and creative industry investment corporation, setting up Hangzhou City cultural and creative industries investment fund based on private capital, establishing China’s first risk compensation fund for loan secured by cultural and creative industry intangible assets, establishing Hangzhou Cultural Assets and Equity Exchange, etc. [6]. After the success of the “Application for Creative City”, Suzhou undertook to set up a special fund for construction and operation of “Creative Cities Network” to support the development of crafts and folk arts and cultural and creative industries. In the same time, Suzhou also actively attracts social capital to participate in the construction and operation of the “Creative Cities Network” [8].

3) *Establishment of creativity incubation platforms:* The incubation platform is a new-type platform for social economy organization and enterprise development between the government, the market and the enterprises, which helps the relatively weak enterprises newly founded or at the initial stage by providing them with a series of management support and resource networks required so that these new enterprises can operate independently and develop healthily [10]. In this process, the government plays an important role in promoting communication. For example, on the point of the success of “Application for Creative City”, Suzhou “Cultural, Creative and Design Industries Trade Expo” Organization Committee signed with YANG DESIGN in Shanghai to officially launch Suzhou “New Arts and Crafts Movement” where traditional crafts combine with contemporary design methods and brand innovation system, so that the innovative products derived from traditional crafts can meet the aesthetic standards and lifestyle of modern people, with the purpose to help expand market space for the craftsmen and traditional enterprises [11].

### C. Promoter of Cultural Inheritance

“Application for Creative City” requires that the city has to have long-standing handicrafts and folk arts, vocational training centers corresponding to these handicrafts and folk arts, as well as having a large number of craftsmen and local artists. These require the city to have good cultural inheritance. Cultural inheritance, characterized by the nonprofit nature, is similar to public goods, so its suppliers are mainly the government rather than enterprises.

1) *Establishment of inheritance bases:* The establishment of inheritance base is of great significance to the promotion of cultural inheritance. After the success of the “Application for Creative City”, Hangzhou awarded ten units including Xiling Society of Seal Arts, China National Tea Museum, Southern Song Dynasty Guan Kiln Museum, etc. as the first batch of inheritance bases of the “City of Crafts and Folk Arts” [7].

2) *Strengthening of social introduction and marketing:* Hangzhou proposed to carry out a series of activities such as the selection of arts and crafts masters and folk arts masters of municipal level; the second classroom for adolescent students; crafts and arts auditorium, etc. to guide citizens and teenagers to actively support and participate in the inheritance and popularization of crafts and folk arts [7]. Suzhou has also taken a series of measures, such as promoting primary and secondary schools to compile school-based teaching textbooks which knowledge about Suzhou crafts and folk arts is included in as important content of characteristic education; carrying out show tours including “Kun Opera in School”, “Pingtan Story-Telling”, “Play Chinese Zither from Early Age” etc. as well as Suzhou embroidery, clay figurines, jade sculpture and other handicrafts exhibition tours in migrant laborers’ children schools; carrying out “Growth Ring of the City” Crafts and Folk Arts Protection Volunteer Service Project, etc. [8].

3) *Strengthening of professional education and training:* After the success of the “Application for Creative City”, Suzhou is committed to further expanding professional and research and training institutions related to crafts and folk arts, establishing and improving the assistance system for the vulnerable groups and those in need, as well as imparting traditional handicrafts to certain people at fixed time. Every year, Suzhou government aims to help 20 disabled people to master a technique, recommend job opportunities to 10 disabled people as well as subsidizing handicraft and folk art inheritors to carry out the inheritance by investing no less than RMB 2 million yuan each year [8].

### D. External Exchange Liaison

According to the procedures of applying to join the “Creative Cities Network”, the applicant not only has to submit a formal letter from the Applicant City’s Mayor presenting the candidature, a formal letters of support from active national professional associations in the creative field concerned and a formal letter of endorsement of the candidature from the National Commission for UNESCO of the country in which the city is located and a formal letter of support from a member of the “Creative Cities Network”. Therefore, in the application process, an important role of the city government is to actively carry out foreign exchange activities, display the city’s characteristics and charm on the world platform to get more understanding and support.

1) *Strengthening of external exchange:* During the “Application for Creative City”, Suzhou invited representatives of the mayor of an American city Paducah, and the mayor of an South Korean city Icheon to visit Suzhou. In addition, In June 2014, the first International Conference on Language was held in Suzhou, Suzhou seek this opportunity reported the progress of Suzhou’s “Application for Creative City of Crafts and Arts” to General Secretary of UNESCO Irina Bokova, Chairman of Executive Board of UNESCO Mohamed Sameh Amr and other ambassadors members and give them the album and videos for the

application. At the same time, in order to cooperate with the application, Suzhou also held various publicity activities such as photo exhibition, craft demonstration and special shows [8]. During the “Application for Creative City”, Jingdezhen actively contacted with the member cities of the Network from different continents to ask for a letter of support, and dispatch personnel to the embassies and consulates in China of these member cities’ countries to ask for urging the issuing of the letter of support [12].

2) *Normalization of international exchange programs:* After the success of the “Application for Creative City”, Suzhou proposed to formulate an international exhibition, performance and exchange plan of crafts and folk arts every year, organize arts and crafts exchange, economic and trade cooperation and friendly communications between the folk art celebrities, crafts masters, experts and scholars of Suzhou and other countries. For example, Suzhou invites two masters of

arts and crafts from the “Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts” themed cities to Suzhou to give arts and crafts guidance through the “Citizen Auditorium” every year; launches an international youth camp exchange activities of “Crafts and Folk Arts”; holds “Crafts and Folk Arts” themed international youth camp exchange activity every two years, and each term, financially aids 1-2 members of the youth camp of the member cities; each term, invites 2 international masters of arts and crafts of the member cities to teach and perform in the youth camp [8].

From above, we can see that the local government plays an significant role in the process of “Application for Creative City” of Hangzhou, etc. three cities. The government’s role positioning can be summarized as four aspects: guide for industry planning, provider of service platform, promoter of cultural inheritance and external exchange liaison, and each aspect contains rich and diverse specific connotations "Table I".

TABLE I. ROLE POSITIONING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF HANGZHOU, SUZHOU AND JINGDEZHEN IN THE PROCESS OF “APPLICATION FOR CREATIVE CITY OF CRAFTS AND FOLK ARTS”

Role positioning	Guide for industry planning	Provider of service platform	Promoter of cultural inheritance	Promoter of cultural inheritance
Specific connotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and introduction of creative talents</li> <li>• Aggregation of creative industry parks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of festival activity platforms</li> <li>• Establishment of industrial financing platforms</li> <li>• Establishment of creativity incubation platforms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of inheritance bases</li> <li>• Strengthening of social introduction and marketing</li> <li>• Strengthening of professional education and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening of external exchange</li> <li>• Normalization of international exchange programs</li> </ul>

#### IV. PROVIDING REFERENCE FOR OTHER SIMILAR CITIES PLANNING TO APPLY FOR JOINING THE “CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK”

The success of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen in “Application for Creative City” means they can share experience with other cities through this international platform, create opportunities, carry out activities relating to creative economy and creative tourism, etc. For other cities, they can learn from the experience of the three cities, clarify the role of the government in the process of “Application for Creative City”, so as to lay a solid foundation for the success of “Application for Creative City” in the future. Specifically, they can start from the following aspects:

##### A. Finding the Coincident Point Between the City and the Application Requirements

Each city has its development history, cultural traditions and resource endowments, but not every city is suitable for developing creative industries or joining the “Creative Cities Network”. Just as Hospers has pointed out objectively that the city government should not mechanically and arbitrarily propose competitive creative development strategies, but should provide macro-guidance based on the internal and external conditions of the city [13]. The success of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen in “Application for Creative City” is based on their own resources and industrial advantages: Hangzhou and Suzhou are famous historical and cultural cities in China, with profound historical accumulation, abundant

cultural resources and a long tradition in protecting, inheriting and innovating folk arts and crafts; Jingdezhen has a long history, unique cultural features and exquisite craftsmanship in porcelain making, and now still remains rich cultural diversity. For other cities that intend to apply for creative city, if without the conditions of “Application for Creative City”, they may waste the human and material resources and time that should be spent on other advantageous areas of the city. Therefore, a city should find its own advantages and characteristics through industry survey, catalogue compilation, expert consulting, etc. and select the appropriate theme to apply on the premise of meeting the requirements of “Application for Creative City”.

##### B. Forming Agglomeration of Competitive Creative Industries

As mentioned above, one of the important reasons for the success of “Application for Creative City” of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen is that they all have certain agglomeration of competitive industries of crafts and folk arts. Thus, a city can promote the formation of an competitive creative industrial cluster, based on its specific cultural resources characteristics. First, the local government can reasonably plan key projects and key directions in the field of creative industry by formulating detailed development plans and development guidance catalogue for the creative industries; second, establish a platform for exchanges and communication among enterprises in the industry cluster, so as to enhance the complementarity of business management and technology advantages and promote mutual trust and cooperation among enterprises in the cluster [14]; third, explore the mode for

establishing creative industrial parks and strengthen the financial, monetary and legal support systems needed for the development of creative industries; finally, according to the differences in functional positioning of creative industrial clusters and their respective advantages, strengthen cooperation between different industry clusters and actively construct the industry chain among the clusters [15].

### C. Actively Carrying out Economic and Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries

The original purpose of setting up “Creative Cities Network” is to link cities that are interested in promoting local development by sharing creative experience, ideas and good practices around the world together to weave a network of cities to maintain cultural diversity of the world, so as to jointly promote the social, economic and cultural development of cities around the world. Therefore, actively carrying out economic and cultural exchanges with foreign countries is an essential part of the process of “Application for Creative City”. Specifically, on the one hand, the local government can, by means of “inviting in”, use the festivals and events and other platforms to actively invite journalists, famous writers and creative industry figures from all over the world to come and experience the culture of the city, so as to expand the city’s international influence by means their news reports, literary output, artistic works, etc. Besides, the government shall also make the best use of all kinds of opportunities to invite the principals of relevant UNESCO functional departments and theme cities that have joined the “Creative Cities Network” to visit. On the other hand, the local government shall actively “go out”

### D. Forming International Creative City Brand

The crafts and folk arts of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen have certain popularity and brand influence at home and abroad, which is an important foundation for their success in “Application for Creative City”. Therefore, other cities can further identify their most distinctive and potential areas and focus on developing these areas so as to develop their creative city brands with domestic and overseas influence. First, the city government supposed to formulate a medium - and long-term brand publicity plan and make full use of various media and channels, such as TV, newspaper and the internet, to create a good image of the creative city by carrying out various public relations activities and advertising campaigns, and in the propaganda, they should pay attention to highlight the characteristics of the applied theme; secondly, form a large-scale branding creative industry chain, on the basis of deeply exploring the connotation of the city’s competitive creative industry; finally, guide the city to form good creative atmosphere and develop the infrastructure construction and supporting management services, etc. for the development of the creative industries.

Of course, the “Application for Creative City” itself is a long process, and successful application does not mean completion, so it is required to establish a long-term dynamic mechanism to constantly adjust and maintain the specific connotation of the role positioning of local governments on the premise of clear development goal of the city.

## V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, based on their own characteristics and advantages, local governments can strive to join the “Creative Cities Network” through a series of measures, so that their cities can achieve social, economic and cultural development on a larger platform. However, as some scholars have pointed out, if “Application for Creative City” itself becomes another vanity project, achievement showing project or results in a city’s relying on “policy incentives”, it completely defeats the cultural purpose of this issue, which not only endangers the city’s future, but also today’s society in development [16].

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