

REGIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

by Lidia Varbanova



Dr. Lidia Varbanova is an international consultant, educator, coach researcher. Her portfolio focuses on strategy, policy development, entrepreneurship and innovations, organisational development and online technologies, with a special emphasis on arts, culture and creative industries. Lidia's professional experience extends to over 55 countries. She has been permanent and visiting professor in prominent universities and training centres in Europe and Canada and has received a number of distinguished awards, among them: Dragan Klaić European award for excellence in teaching, FULBRIGHT Program, Japan Foundation fellowship, and many others. Her latest books are: Strategic Management in the Arts,(2012) and International Entrepreneurship in the Arts (2016), published by Routledge.

Entrepreneurship in the arts and in local creative and food industries contribute to both economic growth and social life in a local territory. It is therefore important to set up a local support system in the short and in the long-term to help arts entrepreneurs to make their innovative ideas become a reality.

Short-term support mechanisms range from assisting start-up companies, to developing specialized organizations and networks, to fostering communication between entrepreneurs and potential external investors. Among them, commonly adopted methods are incubators and accelerators for arts entrepreneurs, specialized start-up networks, or artistic collectives that provide common spaces for creative work such as studios or exhibition spaces. Another option is service-learning, a module that IGCAT is currently developing with its global network of experts from different sectors. The aim is to develop bespoke training packages that train local trainers and administrators to go on to support local creativity and project developments.

Long-term investment in many cities can be seen to link the cultural sector to urban planning for example in the development of cultural districts and innovation districts, encouraging employment and entrepreneurship in arts and culture, recreation, and tourism. Based on participation of local communities, cultural districts revitalize empty industrial quarters to become attractive places for visitors and residents. Canadian examples include: Quartier des Spectacles in Montreal, Cultural District in Calgary and Distillery Historic District in Toronto. Innovation districts are identified as *“geographic areas where leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups, business incubators and accelerators”*. They help entrepreneurs, companies, universities, researchers, and investors across all

sectors and disciplines to invent and produce in a collaborative environment. Examples are: Quartier de l'Innovation in Montreal and Research Triangle Park in North Carolina.

IGCAT advocates the development of an extended version of these, the creative clusters model whereby organizations, associations, training and academic institutions, companies and individuals involved in different phases of the creative industries' value chain, pool resources to optimize the overall production and dissemination of creative products. Creative clusters help bridge culture and arts with other areas such as food production and gastronomy, marketing, branding, research, science, technology, environment and others.

My latest book *International Entrepreneurship in the Arts* (Routledge, Oct 2016), provides plenty of other strategies, methods and tools for city and local support of arts entrepreneurship, including also for expansion and growth of creative ventures abroad. Also, together with other IGCAT experts, I will also be holding an introductory course in the summer of 2017 specifically designed for local policy-makers to discover their role as lunch-pins for local and regional development.

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The Expert is promoted by **IGCAT** as he share IGCAT's mission of empower and facility local communities to realise the potential of their distinct food, culture, arts and sustainable tourism and local resources.

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