



THE SHARPIE INDEX

UK TOP 20 CREATIVE TOWNS

THE FUTURE LABORATORY FOR JCPR

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**'THE FUTURE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED;
IT JUST ISN'T VERY WELL DISTRIBUTED'**

WILLIAM GIBSON



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IDEAS, TRENDS, BRAND FUTURES AND INTELLIGENCE

The Future Laboratory was established in November 2001 and is globally recognised for its innovative approach to forecasting, consumer insight and brand strategy.

Via its 2,500 strong LifeSigns Network and its 15 in-house analysts and ethnographic researchers, The Future Laboratory offers clients qualitative and quantitative insights into future consumers and how to target them in terms of products, services and brand tone of voice.

Quarterly, weekly and daily, 200 clients in the retail, technology, finance, automotive, food, fashion and creative industries sectors use our news feeds (www.lifesignsnetwork.net), insight reports, consultants, strategy documents and brand personality audits to keep their brands on track, and their design, marketing, research and strategy teams informed, cohesive and insightful.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

London has topped the list of the UK's most creative towns and cities in the first annual Creative Towns Index, developed by celebrity pen manufacturer Sharpie and consumer think tank The Future Laboratory.

'While London topped our list, it was a very close call, with Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Brighton almost beating it in the final stages of assessment,' says The Future Laboratory's Martin Raymond.

Although a number of previous studies have looked at creativity in the UK, all have been carried out from a purely business and commercial standpoint. In contrast, the Sharpie Index of the UK's Top 20 Creative Towns set out to measure the creativity of town and city dwellers themselves, as well as the outputs of the creative industries and businesses in each town.

The results, excluding London, with its undoubted talent for attracting the best in British and global creativity, are very surprising. While there has been much talk about Newcastle and Gateshead, Oxford, Cambridge and Cardiff being new and emerging creative hubs, none of these made it into our top 10. Bristol, Sheffield, Leeds and Birmingham beat them on a number of criteria, not least in terms of the sheer volume of creative acts engaged in by local people alongside more 'official' sources or creativity and culture.

Experts such as Dr Kevin Stolarick (senior research partner, the Creative Class Group), Dr David Bell (human geographer, Leeds University), Dr Charles Rolfe (human geographer, Bristol University) and Hasan Bakhshi, (senior policy analyst and creative industries expert, policy and research unit, NESTA), are just some of the experts on the panel used by Future Laboratory researchers to validate and contextualise towns on our list. These experts helped to identify where creativity levels were more embedded in the fabric of a town's community than within its official institutions.

Names such as Ekow Eshun, artistic director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Rosy Greenlees, executive director of the Craft Council, David Kester, chief executive of the Design Council and Deyan Sudjic, director of the Design Museum, were likewise called upon to validate and sanction our final lists, which saw initial 'sleeper' candidates like Plymouth, Margate, Norwich and Huddersfield make it into our final Top 20.

Indeed, in the cases of Huddersfield and St Ives, local community initiatives, new and emerging creative hubs, and growing investment in new media and digital design, all lifted them high on our list, beating old-world seats of learning such as Oxford and Cambridge in the process.

Armed with an original list determined by data provided by the 60 UK national and local organisations we consulted, we worked with our panel and an in-house team of researchers to create more definitive lists, using the following quantitative and qualitative criteria:

- **Creative output, including numbers of residents employed in the creative industries, numbers of self-employed residents, and awards for creativity**
- **Creative funding, measuring financial investment in creativity**
- **Sexual, racial and cultural diversity**
- **The existence of thriving subcultures**
- **Sustainability, an emerging cornerstone of modern creativity**
- **Cost of living; the creative industries tend to be low-paid**
- **Creative consumption in terms of festivals, fairs, museums and galleries**
- **Education and technology**

With the help of our creative experts, these quantitative results were refined to take into account first-hand experiences of each town's creativity, alongside the research we had gathered to create a unique portrait of each town. These qualitative insights enabled us to adjust our Top 20 to establish the final ranking, which was finalised as follows:

The Top 20 Creative Towns

1. LONDON
2. MANCHESTER
3. LIVERPOOL
4. GLASGOW
5. BRIGHTON
6. EDINBURGH
7. BIRMINGHAM
8. LEEDS
9. SHEFFIELD
10. BRISTOL
11. NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE
12. NOTTINGHAM
13. HUDDERSFIELD
14. CARDIFF
15. ST IVES
16. OXFORD
17. CAMBRIDGE
18. NORWICH
19. MARGATE
20. PLYMOUTH

There are quite a few surprises here, with traditional seats of learning appearing low down on our list, and towns with a strong working class ethic and creative class population rising high. The reasons for this are explained in our methodology section at the back of this report. Case studies supporting the inclusion of seemingly anomalous towns such as Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield over Cardiff (of late touted as a creative centre par excellence) are contained in Section Three.

We have also devised two additional Top 10 lists; one consists of up-and-coming creative towns within the Top 20, those to watch, excluding already well-established creative capitals such as London and Manchester.

The other features towns that did not make our shortlist. But on the recommendation of our judges and consultants, using their expert insider knowledge of official and consumer-generated creativity in the UK, we feel these towns should be considered as secondary creative hubs.

These, we predict, will earn their places on future lists of this kind as their creative and cultural regeneration unfolds and becomes more focused and specific. Our Top 10 Towns to watch, then, are:

1. GLASGOW
2. LIVERPOOL
3. NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE
4. ST IVES (AND CORNWALL GENERALLY)
5. CARDIFF
6. HUDDERSFIELD
7. MARGATE
8. SOUTHEND
9. LEEDS
10. NOTTINGHAM

The Top 10 Secondary Creative Towns

1. GATESHEAD
2. BELFAST
3. LEICESTER
4. COVENTRY
5. DUNDEE
6. BRADFORD
7. STOKE-ON-TRENT
8. WATFORD
9. DUBLIN
10. SOUTHEND

Much of the above can be attributed to a number of key and core shifts in how we work, rest, play and create. Our researchers have identified these as the arrival of the Conceptual Age. Our results are also due to the emergence of a new and potent creative group which we have dubbed The New Expressionists, a vital 31% of the population who are not only creative consumers but active participants and creators and are reconfiguring the concept of creativity.

Alongside this, we are witnessing the emergence of a plethora of creative and culture-related trends and activities in key cities and centres of creativity across the UK. These include:

- *The renaissance of drawing*

Initiatives such as the Campaign for Drawing and the Drawing Research Network aim to get everyone drawing. Drawing is a skill that forms a vital bridge between all the disciplines that are essential to British culture and creativity, from representational art to design to science and technology, and it was one of the areas we looked to when developing our index.

- *Cultural promiscuity*

Ekow Eshun, artistic director at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, says: 'UK creativity is marked by a lack of boundaries between creative forms – architects make design objects, artists make film and fashion designers make music.' Again, we looked at

towns where there is a substantial quantity of good-quality, well-documented mash-ups between consumers and the arts.

- *Scribble status*

Scribbling, doodling and graffiti are increasingly being legitimised as creative forms, as we discovered. National Doodle Day, which started in 2003, has helped raise the profile of the humble doodle into auction-worthy art. Artists who work in felt-tip pen are gaining acclaim: Aleksandra Mir's marker-pen masterpiece Cold War has appeared in the Saatchi Gallery, part of her 'Sharpie marathon' project, a non-stop group work in Sharpie pens.

- *The play principle*

One of the key components of creativity as we defined and looked for it is the concept of 'play', increasingly being promoted by policymakers, educationalists and funding bodies. Towns such as Bristol, Leeds, Cardiff and Brighton figure highly on our list because of their numerous bars, clubs, coffee shops and 'third sector' work spaces where the lines between work and play are deliberately blurred.

- *Cultural rebooting*

Culture and creativity are becoming increasingly democratised in the UK and audience participation and accessible culture are becoming the norm. Last year, more than 42m UK consumers visited an art gallery – more than attended a football match. This factor in itself pushed London way up our list.

- *Creative economy*

The partnership between creativity and commerce is the defining trait of UK 21st-century creativity. The Design Council measured 63 firms on the Stock Exchange who acknowledged that design was at the heart of their business and found these outperformed the FTSE by 200%.

In the following sections, we offer a more comprehensive, in-depth analysis of our findings.

TOP TOWNS

Although a number of previous studies have investigated creativity in the UK, many have been compiled from a purely business perspective. In our Sharpie Index, however, we set out to measure the creativity of town and city dwellers themselves, as well as the outputs of the creative industries and businesses located there.

We wanted to look at creativity relating to DIY, craft, art, online collaboration and digital activity. We also wanted to measure more traditional forms of creativity, which are increasingly on the rise once more: art forms and pastimes such as sketching, scribbling, graffiti, and doodling. All, as we shall see, are essential to stimulating the brain's creative and conceptual abilities. Conceptual thinking is rapidly becoming a skill that is highly sought after, according to Daniel H Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind: How to Thrive in the New Conceptual Age*. Pink suggests that we are entering a period of creative and evolutionary development that he has dubbed the Conceptual Age.

As he says, 'In the 21st century, people are going to have to do work that is hard to outsource, hard to automate, and that delivers on the growing non-materials desires of an abundant world. That means they will be relying more on high-concept, high-touch abilities such as design, storytelling, invention, empathy, and big picture thinking. And that, in turn, has edged concepts like 'creativity' from the periphery to the centre of economic life.'

Such abilities, as we shall see, already exist in abundance in many of the towns we profile in this section. This shift in part explains why certain towns with a strong industrial history fall to the bottom of our list, while those where the accent has been on being creative, and on encouraging creativity and creative collaborations, have achieved high rankings.

Overall, as we have seen, our our Top 20 list runs as follows:

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It is important to understand how and why certain towns were pushed up or moved down our list by our experts and consultants, so below we summarise the key points and statistics cited in the decision-making process.

London 1/20

It is no surprise that London tops our list as undisputed winner. As well as being the UK's creative capital, it is arguably the creative capital of the world, and benefits from a wealth of infrastructure, talent and finance.

A higher proportion of Londoners work in the creative industries than anywhere else in the country: currently 625,000 individuals, and this figure continues to grow. The vast majority of creative businesses choose to make London their base, and it is the first choice of location for creatives from abroad seeking to establish themselves in the UK and Europe. This is partly because London offers a diverse, multi-lingual workforce, a key component of 21st-century creativity and essential to globalisation.

The creative industries are worth £21bn to London's economy. Ken Livingstone, the mayor of London, is committed to seeing the city's creativity thrive and compete internationally and in 2004 he launched Creative London to boost the capital's reputation and performance as the world's leading centre for creativity. London now has more wifi zones than New York, with 7,130 wireless networks.

Where possible, we focused on Southwark as London's creative heart. This area of London benefits from over £1,175k of Arts Council funding, more than the majority of individual towns in the UK.

In the following section of the report we will explore the UK's cultural renaissance, in which London's Tate Modern museum, the most visited museum in the world, has played a significant part: more people visited the museum than went to a football match last year. A new development by Herzog & de Meuron will shortly see the Tate Modern more than double in size.

There are also many intangible but unmistakable elements that contribute to London's status as the UK's top creative hotspot. These include the new rave subculture explosion in New Cross, the fashion industry's contribution to Shoreditch's regeneration as a creative hub and the indie music scene HQ at Camden's Hawley Arms pub.

Manchester 2/20

Manchester is automatically associated with music, from 70s punk to 80s acid house and 90s Brit pop. Manchester, or 'Madchester' as it became known, deserves an award for its contribution to music, both nationally and internationally. New Order, the Smiths and the Chemical Brothers are just a few of the great bands born and bred in Manchester.

History aside, Manchester today certainly demonstrates its calibre as one of the UK's leading creative cities. It is second only to London in terms of its creative workforce of 59,700, and holds the most patents of any UK city. The Manchester International Festival has become a must-see art event and premieres local and international talent.

At the centre of the city's success is Manchester's passionate local community and its population of some 80,000 students, who come from far and wide to study in the city. One community project to note is the forthcoming Urban Screens Manchester 07 (11-14 October). Digital public displays including LED, LCD, plasma screens, large-scale projections and media facades will be positioned throughout the city. They will harness new possibilities for artistic and non-commercial creativity and members of the community will be encouraged to interact and display their creations.

The city boasts 254 wifi hotspots (the most outside London), and two thirds of the north west's Gross Value Added (GVA, a measure of productivity) comes from the city of Manchester.

Manchester's Northern Quarter is probably one of the city's most creative hubs. The Northern Quarter is famed for its diverse independent shops, clubs, bars and galleries, a selection second only to London and influenced by the city's emerging youth culture. One of Manchester's newest hotspots surrounds the Urbis building. Architecturally prominent, it hosts a range of groundbreaking exhibitions and events, including Manchester Fashion Week in September. Salford is an emerging area of the city; the BBC is currently developing a major media project here to provide space for 1,500 creative and related businesses.

Liverpool 3/20

Liverpool may have come third on our list but it was named the 2008 European Capital of Culture back in 2003, and has been working hard since then to live up to the title! The combined efforts of the city and its citizens were credited for swinging the title in Liverpool's favour, as Sir Jeremy Isaacs, former Royal Opera House chief, who was on the judging panel, has said. 'If one had to say one thing that swung it for Liverpool, it would have to be there was a greater sense there that the whole city is involved in the bid and behind the bid!'

There are more cranes in Liverpool than the rest of the UK put together, such is the commitment to regenerating the city. More Arts Council money is being invested in Liverpool than anywhere else in the UK². Liverpool John Moores University's School of Art and Design, scheduled for completion in 2008, will be a major catalyst for design activities and creative business start-ups. Tate Liverpool was chosen to host the 2007 Turner Prize and the Liverpool Biennial attracts over 350,000 visitors.

The city has many other authentic and accessible cultural attributes. Liverpool's most famous export may have been The Beatles, but today its underground music scene continues to thrive and innovate, via bands such as the Coral, the Zutons and the emerging Wombats. Once centred around super-club Cream, Liverpool's dance scene is now close-knit community of clubbers, djs and promoters, with club nights like Chibuku Shake Shake, No Fakin' and Evol leading the way. The depth of its music scene stems from Sir Paul McCartney's Liverpool Institute for Performing Art, which has established itself as one of the UK's leading performing arts schools.

Liverpool's size also makes it unique: all the varying hubs lie within easy reach of each other and it has been described as a 'big village'.

Glasgow 4/20

Named European City of Culture in 1990, Glasgow has been steadily winning cultural recognition and is a new focus for most of the creative experts we interviewed, which is why we placed it first in the Top 10 To Watch.

Glasgow has become a hotbed for UK music, from Franz Ferdinand to Mylo to the Fratellis and Domino records, and the music industry is increasingly heading to the highlands to seek out fresh talent.

Edinburgh (sixth on our list) has traditionally overshadowed Glasgow, but we feel Glasgow demonstrates a truer reflection of 21st-century creativity. It is more cutting edge and is redeveloping faster than Edinburgh, particularly in terms of fashion and music; like a Gothenburg to Edinburgh's Stockholm.

Glasgow has 21,179 residents working in the creative industries, way ahead of Edinburgh at 16,328. Further evidence of Glasgow stealing Edinburgh's thunder comes from the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, which received 1.9m visitors in 2006, overtaking Edinburgh Castle as the most-visited attraction in Scotland.

Glasgow is keen to retain its local creatives. According to experts such as Ekow Eshun, artistic director of the ICA, who visited the Scottish pavilion at the Venice Biennale this year, 'there's lots of talent being nurtured by Glasgow's art and design colleges.' Glasgow University was the first in the UK to establish a research and enterprise unit to promote links between the university, public authorities and local businesses.

Brighton 5/20

Over the last 10 years, Brighton has become a magnet for disillusioned Londoners and creatives looking for a new lifestyle, and Cornwall and Margate are now also becoming eager competitors in the quality-of-life stakes. The Fat Boy Slim effect saw a flourish of music industry creatives, clubbers and student settlers make Brighton their base. Like London and Manchester, Brighton was automatically shortlisted for our Top Twenty, such is this compact city's reputation.

Brighton is a concentrated camp of vintage shops, burlesque clubs, student haunts and gay festivals, all of which underpin the creative lifestyle, help shape Brighton's inclusive nature, and foster links within the community. Brighton is also home to the headquarters of the Big Issue magazine. It deserves its reputation for diversity, liberalism and tolerance. In a 2003 Demos report, Brighton was ranked top in terms of sexual diversity, one of the key components of Richard Florida's theory of creativity.

Community spirit is infectious in Brighton, due in part to the fact that more than 10% of the workforce is self-employed. Our research shows many more also work flexibly, which means networking, hanging out and spontaneity are part of the town's ethos. This helps to nurture the next big adventure, eureka moment, or knowledge transfer.

Brighton recently hosted the Develop Conference, a meeting for leading European game developers, indicating its status in new technologies. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport also recognises Brighton as a new media centre.

Edinburgh 6/20

Long established as a cultural power force, Edinburgh was among the first cities we added to our shortlist. The Edinburgh Festival and the Festival Fringe bring the city international acclaim and can be relied upon to dish up some of the UK's most exciting talent. This also means young creatives are attracted to settle here, and Edinburgh's appeal is enhanced by its top arts university. In the Guardian's respected league table for arts and design universities, Edinburgh University came second, just behind London's UCL.

Like many of the towns in the Top 20, Edinburgh harvests both classic and cutting-edge creativity and is increasingly blurring the boundaries between mediums. Last year, Matthew Williamson, Vivienne Westwood and Jonathan Saunders all held catwalk shows at the Edinburgh International Fashion Festival. Fashion and individual style thrive in the city, thanks to a wealth of vintage shops, 75 in total, the most outside London.

Birmingham 7/20

Shortlisted for the 2008 European Capital of Culture award, Birmingham has long been established as the UK's 'second city', and its creative economy has benefited from comparisons with London.

Birmingham Royal Ballet, formerly Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, was the first ballet company to relocate from London to Birmingham in 1990. It is also the first ballet company to set up a degree course for its dancers.

Birmingham is both modern and traditional in its approach to creativity. Its jewellery quarter is described by the English Heritage as 'a national treasure'³, while trendy media and artist hub the Custard Factory was designed to support a young, bohemian creative community via affordable studios, a nightclub and holistic therapy rooms.

Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre (NEC) stages more exhibitions than any other major European centre, and hosts the UK's top trade and public events. Meanwhile, Selfridges Birmingham, created by Future Systems, sets a new standard in retail design.

Leeds 8/20

Leeds won our most female-friendly town award last year, and its tendency towards right-brain thinking is one of the key factors in its cultural status, a concept we will explore further in the following section.

There are more than 2,000 creative industry businesses in Leeds and its growth is becoming so London-like, analysts predict a congestion charge in the near future. Leeds recently launched its first ever cultural strategy, so we expect to see a more political and economic approach to creativity over the next decade.

Leeds is part of the craft renaissance. Leeds Craft Mafia is a local female craft network set up last year to promote independent craftsmanship and DIY culture in the city and introduce the concept to business. Feminist-friendly music festival LadyFest helps make Leeds a hub for female fanzines, punk music and grass-roots politics. The festival promotes diversity, ideal in a city that is home to over 75 different nationalities.

University and student culture are also enjoying a renaissance in Leeds; the university is replacing Bristol and Edinburgh as the toff's higher education choice, bringing diversity, finance and upper-class eccentricity to the city.

Leeds is also bringing creativity to the forefront of education through its HE Academy's Imaginative Curriculum project which explores ways of teaching, supporting and assessing creativity in schools. Similarly, the city recently hosted the Counting Creativity symposium, which discussed the role of auditing, reporting and measuring creativity: an issue which dogs 'true' creativity, and, indeed, one of the challenges we faced in compiling this report.

Sheffield 9/20

Sheffield has finally shaken off its 20th-century manufacturing image with a slew of 21st-century creative economy developments. The city's economy is worth over £7bn a year, and is one of the UK's fastest growing. Sheffield's two universities generate over 12,000 graduates a year with a broad range of skills.

The Melt initiative, launched in 2005, is a three-year digital content development programme which supplies R&D funding for leading artistic, media and technical talent. Local musicians Arctic Monkeys propelled themselves to fame and fortune via MySpace, a route that was once novel but is now becoming the norm and democratising the music industry.

Sheffield follows London in the number of patents it lodges, signalling its inventive spirit. The Designers Republic, a Sheffield graphic design company, has worked on projects for the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale, Issey Miyake, Aphex Twin and Sony.

Bristol 10/20

Bristol has been establishing itself in the past few years as a creative hub for digital media, thanks to its strong links with the documentary film and animation industries. The city hosts leading film festival Encounters (formerly Animated Encounters) and is responsible for producing 25% of the world's wildlife films.

Bristol was shortlisted for the European Capital of Culture 2008, helping to earn its place on our list. The city enjoys a reputation for a vibrant music and youth culture scene, supported by one of the best universities in the country. Bristol-educated creatives include David Walliams and Derren Brown. Bristol-born Banksy is responsible for the city's increasingly positive graffiti policy.

The Paintworks quarter in Bristol is a landmark development. Similar to Birmingham's Custard Factory, it is a live/work space for a range of creatives from sculptors to Endemol, the television company that created Big Brother. Bristol is also noteworthy for its circus and theatre scene, thanks a high student thespian population and the Circomedia circus school, one of the most dynamic in Europe.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne 11/20

Newcastle narrowly missed out to Liverpool for the 2008 European Capital of Culture title. Last year it was named arts capital of the UK in a survey by tv channel Artsworld.

Initiatives such as culture10, a 10-year programme of cultural ideas, innovation, investment and promotion, are helping to rebrand Newcastle into an arts hotspot in a way that develops new audiences and promotes participation among residents. The region, with which Gateshead's cultural repositioning is closely tied, was chosen to host the UK's first national design biennial, Dott 07. The Running Line, to be launched in October, will be the world's longest photographic exhibition, stretching 13.1 miles.

The Baltic centre for contemporary art transformed a derelict warehouse in neighbouring Gateshead into one of the biggest art spaces in Europe. The Biscuit Factory, which invites visitors to buy works and explore artists' studios, is also another draw for art lovers. Thomas Heatherwick's Blue Carpet has transformed the square outside the Laing Art Gallery.

This year saw Newcastle's first food festival, Eat!, which focused on regional food. Newcastle (with Gateshead) is also the only place in the UK to have a fashion collection dedicated to it and showcased at London's Fashion Week.

Nottingham 12/20

Nottingham has a world class information and communication technology infrastructure. It has become a regional base for three major telecommunications network providers, BT, Kingston inbusiness and ntl. Between them, these companies have invested over £1bn in upgrading Nottingham's fibre-optic communications infrastructure.

The Broadway Media Centre, a multi-media attraction, workspace and training facility receives over 400,000 visitors every year. Former alumni include Shane Meadows and the centre has a strong relationship with local creative industries.

Active Ingredient, based in the Broadway Media Centre, is a digital arts company that works in the mobile gaming industry, creating innovative projects that merge location, play and creative experiences presented as both artworks and games prototypes. These have been shown in the UK, Singapore, Berlin, San Francisco and Tokyo. Active Ingredient won the East Midlands New Technologies Initiative Award for Innovation 2005 and worked on the prestigious Chatham Vines project, which won the Rowse Kent Award for Contemporary Art in 2006.

The gaming industry is well-represented in the city, which is why the first GameCity festival, set to become a regular showcase, was hosted in Nottingham last year. The city has the third largest number of wifi hotspots in the UK after London and Manchester, which must be a tempting draw to the gaming community.

Nottingham has a thriving student community, with over 48,000 undergraduates between the two major universities; Nottingham Trent is a nationally renowned arts university. This figure goes some way to explain why Nottingham's nightspots attract over 50,000 people every weekend. And, while the city struggles with a well-documented reputation for crime, we would argue that this backdrop could also be a contributing factor to igniting creativity, particularly in such forms as graffiti and open-source and youth subcultures.

Huddersfield 13/20

Back in the 90s, Huddersfield was quick to recognise the importance of the creative industries to its economic development. In 1995, Huddersfield was one of the winners of a competition held by the European Commission to find Europe's most innovative towns and cities. Out of 500 entries, only 26 towns and cities were finally selected, including just two from the UK, and were given a brief to disseminate the results to the rest of Europe.

The Creative Town Initiative (CTI) nurtured and supported the creative sector in Huddersfield through £10m-worth of investment and explored how cities could be made more liveable by harnessing residents' imagination and talent. CTI created 168 new jobs as well as safeguarding 179 jobs in the local creative economy. Developments also included the Creative Lofts centre, live/work spaces designed for young people working in new media.

Blink Media is one of the town's most exciting new creative companies. It creates projects which explore how technology can enable and enhance creative engagement. These include RFID snakes and ladders, which invites people under the same roof to play the game together using the building itself, and Pocket Culture, which allows arts organisations to create a dialogue with their visitors via mobile phones.

Huddersfield is developing a reputation as the digital centre for the north of England. It runs the We Love Technology conference, which explores how creatives are using technology in arts projects and coming up with innovative ideas in the process, such as responsive architecture and biotechnology on the web. Huddersfield University has been awarded centre of excellence status for digital design by regional development agency Yorkshire Forward. The town also hosts Ultrasound, an international electronic arts and sound festival. R&D initiative DRU supports creative research in the area, with a focus on digital and interactive media.

Cardiff 14/20

Another city in the running for the 2008 European Capital of Culture title, Cardiff has been cultivating a reputation for its move towards new technologies and a knowledge-based economy in order to gain competitive advantage on a global scale. A flourishing 6,600 residents are employed in the local creative industries.

Nearly 20 years ago, the Cardiff Business Technology Centre was launched to promote the development of innovative small companies and encourage technology transfer. Through the Intelligent Cities initiative, Cardiff businesses and creatives enjoy a high-speed data network and ubiquitous broadband access.

Cardiff has the UK's largest film, tv and multimedia sector outside London and more original entrepreneurial ideas than the capital, based on the number of patents it lodges.

The city hosted the Creativity or Conformity? conference earlier this year to discuss fostering creativity within the education system. Cardiff's students enjoy a vibrant 75-strong club scene, the third largest in the UK after London and Manchester.

St Ives 15/20

Cornwall is now the number one destination for internal migration. Creatives are driving this influx, taking advantage of a better quality of life and mobile technologies which allow them to work outside the main creative capitals such as London. In the process, they are establishing new creative hubs.

We chose to focus on St Ives because it enjoys a developing reputation as an arts hub. The town has a well-established community of artists. Over the past five years, Tate St Ives has averaged 240,000 visitors a year.

It is estimated that over 10,000 people are employed in the creative industries in Cornwall, contributing over 5% to the overall economy. Cornwall County Council uses the marketing strapline 'The Place to be for Creativity', reflecting its active support of local creative industries.

'REALISE your right to art' is a new initiative designed to promote understanding of the social and economic values of the creative industries and encourage locals to engage with art. Cornwall is so ambitious to be recognised Europe-wide for its creative status it is lobbying the EU to become the first ever European Region of Culture!

Oxford 16/20

Another contender for Europe's 2008 Capital of Culture award, Oxford is working towards modernising its cultural image, with the creation of organisations such as Oxford Inspires, which led the bid and sees sustainability as part of modern creativity. Oxford Inspires has rebranded Oxford as the 'Evolving City', part of a strategy to challenge perceptions of Oxford.

Oxford hosted to a Conservative Party media summit last year to discuss ways of supporting the creative industries. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport recognises Oxford's input into the creative industries as a centre for publishing.

A rich, world-class education system and student body underpins Oxford's creative class, which is becoming increasingly diverse due to government reforms that aim to increase the number of disadvantaged pupils at the university. The John Fell OUP Research Fund makes £5m of funding per year available for young academics and pilot projects, and will encourage creativity and attract even more research talent. Oxford's focus is also shifting towards children's education and creativity, as the Imagine exhibition at Modern Art Oxford demonstrates.

Cambridge 17/20

Like Oxford, Cambridge enjoys a reputation for producing the knowledge workers essential to the new demands of the creative economy, but similarly it is looking to expand its remit. It will focus on its large youth population: 7% of Cambridge inhabitants are aged between 16 and 19, members of the MySpace generation.

This is one of the reasons Cambridge is beginning to develop into a new technology hub. Around a quarter of Cambridge's creatives, 4,440 individuals, work in the computer gaming, software and electronics sector. Cambridge is also promoting and funding the collaboration of art and technology through the Arts Council-funded New Technology Arts Fellowships, which facilitate matchmaking between artists and technologists.

The Creativity Partnership runs courses and workshops on creativity and innovation, and regularly provides inspiring speakers at conferences worldwide. The company has worked with Rolls-Royce, Sainsbury's and the Department for Trade and Industry.

Cambridge is also a source of some of the UK's freshest and most successful entertainers and comedians, and is home to the Footlights comedy group whose alumni include Sasha Baron Cohen, Stephen Fry and Mitchell and Webb.

Norwich 18/20

Norwich is arguably the east of England's creative capital, according to the experts we consulted. Norwich has a strong creative workforce, particularly in fashion, architecture and antiques, comprising just over 17,300, which puts it in fifth place out of our 20 towns. Norwich combines a vibrant modernity and a meditative approach to creativity. The city is home to the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, which attracts around 40,000 visitors a year. The Norfolk & Norwich Festival, established in 1772, is Britain's second oldest arts festival. The University of East Anglia is one of the country's leading centres for creative writing.

The city is also expanding into new technology and was swift to establish a municipal wifi network; in general, there is a sense that Norwich is 'on the ball'.

One of its unique creative traits is its proximity to the 'Slow City' movement, which is about fostering a slower, more craft-driven way of life that highlights sustainability, community and independent shopping, very much cornerstones of modern creativity. Diss and Aylsham in Norfolk are two of a growing number of towns that have signed up to the movement.

Margate 19/20

Margate is starting to reap the benefits of its most famous local artist; the 'Tracey Emin effect' is causing arts funding to flood into the town. By 2010, Margate will boast a multi-million pound gallery, the Turner Contemporary, designed by Snohetta and Spence, named for JMW Turner who once lived in the town. Margate is trying to rebrand itself as a modern creative hub, rather than a fading seaside destination.

The town is benefiting from a funding initiative called Arts Solutions, working in collaboration with Thanet District Council, which seeks to regenerate the county and develop a creative economy. Local estate agents report that regeneration has started, with house prices climbing and new shops and restaurants opening.

Margate benefits from its location close to Ramsgate, which has Roman heritage, trendy café culture and is replacing Brighton as a draw for London creatives looking for quality of life and vicinity to the capital.

This autumn will see Margate joining the indie film circuit with the release of Exodus, following Tracey Emin's debut, Top Spot. Over a wider area, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has singled out Kent as a major growth area for the creative industries, with new homes and jobs being funded by government bodies.

Plymouth 20/20

Along with Bristol, Plymouth is one of the creative powerhouses of England's south west. Its expertise lies in the audio-visual domain, with 81% of its creative workforce employed in this sector, compared to 61% regionally. GVA⁴ per capita is also proportionally higher here than anywhere else in the region.

Plymouth is home to the Innovate Centre for Creative Industries, an ideas exchange and technology transfer organisation which fosters understanding, research and commercialisation of the creative industries. Plymouth University recently collaborated with the Digital Arts Development Agency on an interactive version of the Canterbury Tales, which combined theatre with web technology and allowed the audience to become different characters, as well as creating networks between graduates, actors and web designers.

The section above explains the final choice of towns. In the following section, we look at why the notion of creativity and how we define it in the 21st century is so important.

1 Liverpool named European capital of culture, Guardian, 2003

2 Excluding London: we focused on Southwark when collecting these figures

3 <http://jquarter.members.beeb.net/index.htm>

4 Gross value added (GVA) is the difference between output and intermediate consumption for any given sector/industry. That is, the difference between the value of goods and services produced and the cost of raw materials and other inputs used in production (Design Council)

UK CREATIVITY

In this section of our report, we set out to explore and define a 21st-century, UK-centric definition of creativity to underpin our Sharpie Index.

The Conceptual Age

Across the UK, and particularly in the towns that achieved recognition in our Index, the art world is booming, music festivals and museums are packed out, the home is now a gallery, and institutes of learning have become destinations for cultural experience. In the Conceptual Age, as Daniel Pink noted in the previous section, art is the new fashion and its creators our icons.

The cities we have named in our report are thus cited less for their commercial concerns and more for their cultural status – Cardiff, Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester, Brighton and Edinburgh especially.

A number of factors have driven this shift, according to Vicky Richardson, editor of the architecture magazine *Blueprint*. ‘There have been a couple of really influential texts, by the likes of Richard Florida [The Rise of the Creative Class], and now the ‘Bilbao effect’ has filtered through to a local level.’

For example, David Adjaye’s Idea Store, a 21st-century reinvention of the library for Tower Hamlets, has nearly doubled visitor numbers since 2003, to 2m a year. Think also Zaha Hadid’s designs for Maggie’s Cancer Care Centre in Kirkcaldy, Fife, and for Lambeth’s forthcoming city academy.

As our experts explain, creativity is at the heart of the Conceptual Age. This period is redefining and democratising the concept of creativity.

In his book, Pink suggests that the skills, capabilities and values that powered the Information Age of the late 20th century – those associated with the left side of the brain, such as logic – are not sufficient as we enter the Conceptual Age of the early 21st century. Right-brain qualities, once seen as the domain of artists and eccentrics, will be essential in the western workplace.

Quick on the draw

Computers and online creativity hubs and technology play their part, especially in places like Cambridge, Bristol, St Ives and Huddersfield. However, more traditional manifestations too are returning to the fore, as our researchers discovered.

The Association of Illustrators is seeing membership, currently at its highest level ever, rise by 10% a year. But this is not purely about professional artists. The Campaign for Drawing aims to get everyone drawing – and children in particular. The campaign, inspired by Victorian visionary John Ruskin, was initially launched in 2000 with a national drawing day, then a week, and now holds the Big Draw month every October, which covers 1,000 venues nationwide. Patrons include David Hockney, Gerald Scarfe, Posy Simmonds and Lord Foster.

Sue Grayson Ford, the campaign's director, says that the campaign's success reflects a growing acknowledgement of the importance of creative expression. 'An amazing number of supporters from around the country are recognising drawing's value as one of the most effective interactive tools we have. What is new is making it publicly available. One of the most delightful outcomes of the campaign is a new thirst for first-hand experience of our museums, galleries and heritage sites.'

Quentin Blake, another of the Campaign for Drawing's patrons, also underlines the wider relevance of drawing. 'The Campaign for Drawing has brought thousands of people into our galleries and museums. Many of these might not otherwise have come; and, almost more importantly, the Campaign has, noticeably, altered the relationship of these visitors with the institutions. They arrive with a purpose, their interest has a focus. This is a triumph of the best kind of accessibility, establishing the importance of drawing not only as a mode of self-expression but a tool in learning and in science and design.'

The draw bridge

Drawing, however, is not just about art in the purest sense. It is a skill that forms a vital bridge between all the disciplines that are essential to British culture and creativity, from representational art to design to science and technology. Drawing assists thinking, says Dr Steve Garner, senior lecturer in the department of design and innovation in the Open University's faculty of technology, and director of the Drawing Research Network, a thriving online community of professionals and individuals with an interest in drawing.

Drawing, explains Dr Garner, is an essential creative visualisation tool for chemists and physical scientists, designers and technologists, just as much as fine artists. 'One of the most cutting-edge current theories is that of emergence, with no right or wrong. Drawing is a strategy for helping ideas emerge. Its application is very profound, right across the traditional split between art and science.'

The Drawing Research Network, set up in 2001, currently has around 350 members worldwide and is growing each month. It takes a particular interest in drawing in schools. 'Teachers are taking drawing way beyond the art curriculum,' says Dr Garner. 'Some of the most interesting work is cross-curricular, in languages, maths, geography, design and technology. Drawing helps students to communicate and express themselves. It is about generating ideas.' He points out that one of the conclusions of the Cox Review of Creativity in Business is that drawing should be taught to all.

As Sir Roger Penrose notes on the Campaign for Drawing website, 'Drawings are an invaluable aid to my mathematical thinking and an essential ingredient of most of my mathematical expositions.'

Cultural promiscuity

Caroline Bolingbroke, co-director of the Creativity Centre, which specialises in creativity R&D, defines UK creativity today as 'pushing forward the boundaries to create something original and significantly better than what has gone before.' The UK, she notes, has a strong history of this. Ekow Eshun, artistic director at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, says: 'I would define it in terms of cultural promiscuity. UK creativity is marked by a lack of boundaries between creative forms – architects make design objects, artists make film and fashion designers make music.'

The links between various aspects of pop culture, as Eshun puts it, continue to define UK creativity. UK creativity is also characterised by its accessibility. 'Creativity in the UK is not informed so much by high-brow culture, but the dirty corners of the city, such as the YBAs [Young British Artists] coming out of London's East End and Glasgow's College of Art. The UK gives credence to 'messy' and 'improper' creativity.'

Scribble status

Scribbling, doodling and graffiti are increasingly being legitimised as creative forms. Earlier this year, the Creativity or Conformity? symposium discussed ways of making the UK's higher education system more creative. The conference included a presentation entitled 'Scribbling on the Walls', which suggested scribbling as a method of encouraging adults to be more creative by behaving in a child-like, playful, deviant way. National Doodle Day, which started in 2003, has also raised the profile of the humble doodle into auction-worthy art.

A growing number of creatives and art institutions celebrate the art of the doodle, the sketch and low-brow design. Dr Sketchy's bills itself as an 'anti-art school' where students draw life models from the burlesque and circus worlds and enter drawing contests where the emphasis is on the bizarre. Doodle Jam is a hip club night organised by a group of graffitiists and illustrators; attendees are requested to bring a pen and participate in a group doodle. The Future Laboratory has reported on the rise of Extra-Ordinary Design, a trend which sees basic but perfectly designed objects become highly desirable.

Sharpie at the Saatchi

Artists who work in felt-tip pen are gaining acclaim and are seen as modern and irreverent. The Felt-Tip exhibition at last year's London Design Festival was launched by Grafik magazine and featured the work of graphic artists who work in this medium. Famous and fashionable names include Daisy de Villeneuve, Frank Sidebottom and Gary Rough. Aleksandra Mir's marker-pen masterpiece Cold War has appeared in the Saatchi Gallery, part of her 'Sharpie marathon' project, a non-stop group work in Sharpie pens.

Illustrators such as Jason Brooks have elevated their art form and the 'scribble set' are doing so too. Artists such as Banksy, whose works are now sold at Sotheby's, are helping to shift graphic art towards cultural status.

The play principle

One of the key components of creativity which recurred in our research and interviews with creative experts was the concept of 'play'. Gordon Sturrock, chairman of the Play Practice, says the link between play and creativity is inextricable. 'Without playing – the lucid dimension – there can be no creativity.' He believes play is almost absent from our education system and this is why much of the UK's creative output is unsupported and unauthorised.

The considerable unauthorised aspect of creativity was also cited by our consultant human geographer Dr David Bell. 'The impact on creativity of this adult blindness is that our creative industries – a massive import earner for the UK – are largely fuelled by a default school curriculum. Take pop music, where the musicians get together out of school and make things happen.' We would add, however, that this backdrop contributes to the highly individualised and groundbreaking spirit of creativity in the UK, as the enfants terribles of our fashion industry demonstrate.

Policymakers, educationalists and funding bodies are starting to promote play, which we believe will be increasingly related to the concept of creativity, particularly for children. Sturrock says Brighton (fifth on our list), Essex and Wales are spearheading change in this area.

Cultural rebooting

Culture and creativity are becoming increasingly democratised in the UK and this is leading to what we call 'cultural rebooting', which is changing the nature of creative audience and participation.

Last year, more than 42m UK consumers visited an art gallery¹ – more than attended a football match. At Tate Modern, 600,000 people slid down Carsten Höller's installation in the Turbine Hall in the first three months. Over 1,000 schools have visited Charles Saatchi's contemporary art gallery, and his latest enterprise, STUART (Students' Art), an online resource where artists can post their work, has registered more than 12,000 student artists since its launch in November 2006.

Create-your-own experience In an age where the consumer calls the shots, culture is being designed to be more accessible and more customisable. Tate Britain's 'Create Your Collection' scheme enables visitors to create their own gallery tour according to their mood (including the 'I'm Hungover' collection). The Royal Opera House and Royal Ballet have made costly, high-brow culture freely available through their Summer Screens scheme.

In our increasingly culture-positive society, art can be found anywhere, from Tube stations in London to brick walls in Newcastle via the city's public art initiative Blue Carpet.

Collaborative branding

YouTube culture means consumers want to upload and share creativity as much as they download it and clever brands are facilitating user-generated content. 'With 21st-century creativity everyone is involved,' says Hasan Bakhshi, creative industries expert at the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA).

Alessandra Lariu, senior creative at digital advertising agency Agency Republic, believes technology is helping the democratisation of creativity. 'Creativity will eventually become so fragmented and so available, there is going to be no 'mainstream' way of going about creativity. In the digital age, people

won't pay for books and films anymore. The only way creativity will be able to justify an economic value is by offering unique experiences – the gig as opposed to the mp3.'

Peter Ride, artistic director of the Digital Arts Development Agency, says technology is becoming the great enabler of creativity and innovation. A new breed of tech-addicted artist has been dubbed the 'technocraftsman' or 'digital poet'. 'In 1995, I was working with some artists on a concept piece of an online shop,' says Ride. 'What seemed like lunacy then is now reality. This is why artists should be working in technology, it is blue sky research for corporations.'

New Expressionists

We are witnessing the rise of a new creative class we have dubbed the New Expressionists. Our New Expressionists are not only creative consumers but active participants and creators and are reconfiguring the concept of creativity. New Expressionists embrace digital and traditional creative forms alike, from the straightforward pen to digital easels. As a report by Mintel shows, the pen is not being made defunct by the keyboard, with sales set to grow by 11% to £605m by 2011/2. Mintel also found that Britons are beginning to treat writing instruments as fashion accessories and trade up to quality and designer brands.

New Expressionists now make up 31% of the UK population, according to trend forecasting agency the Future Foundation and to our own research. They work in the tech, creative, culture, knowledge, insight and science and innovation sectors. Their jobs are increasingly portable and virtual. As a group, they trade in creativity and self-expression.

Creative recruiting

New Expressionists are in high demand. Corporate recruiters are hiring at art school graduate shows and institutes such as the London Business School have established artist-in-residence programmes. In the UK, the number of design students climbed by 35% between 1995 and 2002.

Art portfolios

Meanwhile, as pension performance becomes less certain, financial advisers are recommending contemporary art as a good investment, suggesting art fairs and graduate shows as the place to begin. In the UK, 11% of the population bought a piece by a living artist in 2005, and a total of £826m was spent on arts and crafts products, up from £400m 10 years ago, according to the Arts Council.

Creative economy

The creative industries are increasingly being recognised for their vital input into the economy. In the UK, they contribute 8.2% of GDP and are growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy, according to UK Trade & Investment, the government body that supports UK companies. London remains the undisputed heart of British creativity. This is why the creative industries are now a strategic priority for Regional Development Agencies, many of whom we worked with to compile this report.

The partnership between creativity and commerce is the defining trait of UK 21st-century creativity. As Caroline Bolingbroke of the Creativity Centre says: 'The only way the UK can stay ahead in some industries is by producing products and services that are more creative than its rivals.'

Jane Shepherdson, former brand director of Topshop, says this is certainly true in the fashion world. 'It is no longer enough just to copy something or someone to become commercially successful. You have to innovate. At last designers are being given the kudos they deserve, in that they are being accepted as the driving force behind a brand.'

Ekow Eshun believes creatives no longer fear 'selling out', as the blurring between commerce and art has made them more ambitious – and more acceptable to the establishment. This does not mean that creatives are starting to play it safe, however. 'The more scandalous the work, the more it sells. The personal has replaced the political,' notes Eshun. Tracey Emin's art is a perfect example.

'Today's creativity is tangible,' says David Kester, chief executive of the Design Council. 'Design is a good aspect of creativity to measure because you can see its impact. We measured 63 firms on the Stock Exchange who acknowledged that design was at the heart of their business and found these outperformed the FTSE by 200%.'

Retail theatre

This is why retailers are looking to the cultural sectors for new ideas on how to draw consumers into their stores and keep them there. Paul Smith's Curiosity Shop blurs the experience of being in a museum with shopping. Other brands such as Diesel and Louis Vuitton are launching festivals, hotels and galleries to make their brands more experiential.

Craft renaissance

We are witnessing a craft renaissance as part of UK 21st-century creativity, with knitting groups in particular the height of fashion. 'I think the re-engagement with craft is about people reconnecting locally and looking for what is hand-made, human and tactile,' says Rosy Greenlees, executive director of the Craft Council. Environmentalism too, she says, is a key factor.

Dr David Bell also points out that craft is a sector that is often ignored in the Florida definition of creativity; we included it in the qualitative aspect of the Sharpie Index.

Social challenges

'The next step for creativity is in meeting the bigger social challenges, such as climate change,' predicts Hasan Bakhshi. Jane Shepherdson is already addressing this in her fashion advisory roles at Oxfam and People Tree, the Fairtrade clothing brand. She says: 'The ability to make something out of nothing, or out of something previously useless, is a challenge that clearly excites many designers, and appears to be gaining momentum.'

Areas such as craft, scribbling, graffiti, the notion of mash-ups, our growing interest in buying art as well as producing it, are all factors that we therefore tried to assess and include in our assessment criteria and judgement. Plainly these made a very powerful and strategic difference when our final list was compiled. The message from our consultants, then, is clear: even the definition of creativity has to be opened up if we are to understand truly the extent of the talent that exists within UK cities.

In our final section, we name and frame the processes and the criteria used by our panel and our in-house researchers to put together our final lists.

- 1 Museums and Galleries in Britain: economic, social and creative impacts, Tony Travers for the National Museum Directors' Conference (NMDC) and Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), 2006
- 2 Personal Stationery, Mintel, 2004

METHODOLOGY

In this section of the report we clarify how we created the Sharpie Index and identified the UK's Top 20 Creative Towns.

Creative panel

We began by brainstorming at The Future Laboratory and speaking to a panel of creative experts from various sectors about the definition of UK creativity, how it is evolving and ways of measuring it, as we explored in the previous section. There were three consultants on the report who helped us define our criteria and measure and refine the data we gathered. Our creative panel includes:

Consultants

- Dr Kevin Stolarick, senior research partner, the Creative Class Group. Creative Class Group is a global advisory services company which specialises in measuring and cultivating creativity in countries, cities and companies; Dr Stolarick is also assistant professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where he teaches information systems and regional economic development.
- Dr David Bell, human geographer, Leeds University. Dr Bell specialises in cultural studies, consumption and lifestyle, sustainability and regeneration.
- Dr Charles Rolfe, human geographer, Bristol University, specialist in creativity, art, aesthetics and community.

Creative industries

- Hasan Bakhshi, senior policy analyst and creative industries expert, policy and research unit, National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA)
- Dr Calvin Taylor, senior lecturer in creative and cultural industries, Leeds University
- Caroline Bolingbroke, co-director, the Creativity Centre, a company which specialises in developing creativity and innovation in organisations and in creativity research

Culture

- Daniel H Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information age to the Conceptual Age*, an authority on the rise of creativity in western culture
- Ekow Eshun, artistic director, Institute of Contemporary Arts

Craft

- Rosy Greenlees, executive director, Craft Council

Design

- David Kester, chief executive, Design Council
- Deyan Sudjic, director, Design Museum

Technology

- Peter Ride, artistic director, DA2 (Digital Arts Development Agency)
- Mike Tibbets, senior executive, Digital Media and Creative Industries Cluster Team, Scottish Enterprise
- Alessandra Lariu, senior creative, Agency Republic, award-winning digital advertising specialist

Fashion and sustainability

- Jane Shepherdson, former brand director for Topshop, now non-executive board director for People Tree

Education and play

- Graham Sturrock, chairman, the Play Practice

Background research

We also looked at numerous reports, surveys and studies related to UK creativity and culture to consider previous approaches to quantifying what is essentially a very qualitative subject. These include:

- 'Staying ahead: the economic performance of the UK's creative industries', The Work Foundation, 2007
- 'So, what do you do?', Demos, 2007
- 'Ideopolis: Knowledge City-Regions', The Work Foundation, 2007
- 'Northwest Regional Economic Strategy Baseline Update Report 2007: Progress One Year On'
- 'The Cox Review of Creativity in Business: building on the UK's Strengths', 2005
- 'Up and coming areas in the UK', The Future Foundation, 2006
- 'Libraries and Archives Council, Cultural Hubs: an evaluation of year one', Hayton Associates on behalf of Arts Council England and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2007
- 'Trading in Ideas and Knowledge', The Work Foundation, 2007
- 'What role do cities play in innovation, and to what extent do we need city-based innovation policies and approaches?', Cities and Innovation Project, NESTA Working Paper 01, Centre for Cities and NESTA, 2007
- UK Innovation Survey, Department of Trade and Industry, 2001
- Creative Industries Economic Estimates Statistical Bulletin, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2006

- Report on the short-listed applications for the UK nomination for European Capital of Culture 2008, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003
- 'The new energy: Creative Industries Strategy for Bristol', Bristol City Council Arts Service/Bristol City Council Economic Regeneration, 2005
- 'Cardiff's creative industries sector', Cardiff Council, 2006
- 'High-level Skills for Higher Value', Design Council/Creative & Cultural Skills, 2007
- 'The impact of Channel 4 on the UK independent sector, creative industries and the economy', PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007
- 'State of the English Cities', Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2006
- 'Boho Britain: Creativity, diversity and the remaking of our cities', Demos, 2003
- Creative and Cultural Sector Study, Gaynor Asquith for Bridging NewcastleGateshead and the Arts Council, 2007

Creative touchpoints

We established the following areas as touchpoints relevant to our definition of creativity, and sought to measure a cross-section of examples through our Sharpie Index.

Media
 Music
 Enterprise
 Technology
 Education
 Art
 Design
 Community
 Film
 Theatre
 Dance
 Accessibility
 Travel
 Liberalism
 Diversity
 Cost of living
 Do-it-yourself
 Entertainment
 Innovation
 Legislation
 Communication
 Subcultures
 Regeneration
 Sustainability

Quantifying the qualitative

From this list, and our research and discussions with consultants and experts, we established the Sharpie Index for measuring a town's level of creativeness. We use the term 'town' even in cases where a town is technically a city for simplification purposes. Some criteria did not reach the final version if they were unquantifiable or flawed, if records were absent or unavailable for every shortlisted town, or due to time and budget restrictions.

It is impossible to create a definitive ranked list of the UK's most creative towns because of these factors and also because of the intangible, qualitative, subjective and evolving nature of creativity. The Future Laboratory approached its task with a focus on emerging towns and the newest concepts of creativity.

The London issue

One of the key points we came across in our research and interviews was that including London is very much a given when it comes to measuring the top creative towns. This is because it is the best-established creative centre nationally as well as internationally, and is therefore leagues ahead of any other town in virtually every possible creative category. As Deyan Sudjic, director of the Design Museum, put it at the start of our project: 'It seems hard to believe that number one would be anywhere other than London, for blindingly obvious reasons. The interest is the rest of the Top 10.'

This is one of the reasons that we devised the additional Top 10s we mentioned in Section Two and included up-and-coming towns in our shortlist, as well as refining the Top 20 towards the most deserving and promising secondary creative hubs, such as St Ives.

We considered breaking down London into separate areas but were then faced with the prospect of following a similar strategy for every other large city in order to achieve comparable data. Where necessary, such as when collating the number of derelict buildings in each town, we focused on the South Bank, based on research which had identified this area as being the best-established creatively. Similarly, where necessary, we collected county or regional data in the absence of town-specific data, as was the case for St Ives (Cornwall) and Margate (Kent) house prices.

Shortlisted towns

As outlined in Section Two, we started with a shortlist that comprised not only the Top 20 but also a Top 10 of secondary creative hubs and some additional towns such as Aberystwyth and Southend, which were cited during our research period. With help from our consultant experts, we scaled the list down to a manageable 20, with a view to including some emerging and surprising towns in the mix, such as Margate and Huddersfield.

Here is a list of the 20 towns we measured in their original ranking order, based purely on the quantitative results of the Sharpie Index. For each criteria in the Sharpie Index, which we clarify below, a point scoring system was devised. Where possible this was from 1-10, awarding 10 points to the town that scored highest on each criterion, nine to the second highest, and so on. Where this was not possible, for example when quantifying a town's graffiti policy, we devised a shorter point system, with two points given to towns with a semi-managed graffiti policy, one for towns with a degree of tolerance and nil for zero tolerance. The points were then added and used to assemble an initial ranking order, as follows.

Town	Points
1. London	132
2. Manchester	115
3. Liverpool	96
4. Glasgow	92
5. Edinburgh	82
6. Birmingham	80
7. Sheffield	74
8. Leeds	57
9. Brighton	56
10. Nottingham	56
11. Oxford	51
12. Huddersfield	50
13. Bristol	47
14. Newcastle-upon-Tyne	41
15. Cardiff	39
16. St Ives	29
17. Cambridge	27
18. Norwich	24
19. Plymouth	22
20. Margate	16

The Sharpie Index

Below is the full Sharpie Index we used to measure each town's creativity. It is broken down into key components of creativity and the purpose of the grouped and individual criteria is stated. Following on, we will show the charts used to record the data, detail the data sources and explain how our final, more qualitative ranking was devised.

Creative output

This group of criteria was designed to measure the size of the town's creative workforce and creative industries and gauge how concentrated and economically viable they are.

1. The number of residents employed in the creative industries. This follows the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's definition of the creative industries, although there may be some individual interpretation by towns.
2. The number of residents who are self-employed. Self-employment is a common work mode for creatives and supports creative working.
3. The number of patents the town holds. This is a measure of innovation, original thinking and entrepreneurialism.
4. The Channel 4 Creative Cities media hub list, which recognises UK areas, particularly those that are up-and-coming, which have strong creative media industries.
5. The number of 16-19-year-olds. We have identified this age group as being among the most creatively active and 'culturepreneurial'. This age group also takes the most modern approach to creativity. Therefore, we feel that a high concentration of residents in this age group enhances a town's creative output.
6. Creative awards. We looked at towns which had been shortlisted for the 2008 European Capital of Culture by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and at Royal Institute of British Architects awards.

Creative funding

The purpose of these criteria was to measure levels of finance towns receive and invest in developing and sustaining creativity.

1. Value (£) of Arts Council funding
2. Value (£) of National Lottery grants

Diversity

Sexual, racial and cultural diversity are essential components of modern creativity, as we explored in the previous section.

1. Ethnic diversity
2. Sexual diversity

Subcultures

Creativity, particularly its modern definition, is often about unauthorised, intangible, deviant and underground. The following criteria was created to identify elements that underpin and nurture subculture, creative communities and alternative forms of creativity. Some of this criteria crosses over into Creative Consumption.

1. The town's graffiti policy
2. The number of nightclubs
3. The number of pubs and bars
4. The number of vintage/charity shops
5. The number of boutiques/independent shops (we requested data on the number of independent fashion, music and book stores)
6. The number of markets

Sustainability

We regard sustainability as an emerging cornerstone of modern creativity and an indication of innovation and cutting-edge, community-spirited thinking. The following criteria aim to identify in which towns sustainability is best being nurtured.

1. Fairtrade Town status
2. The number of environmental awards received within the last five years (our definition of the environment was in terms of 'greenness')

Cost of living

Cost of living is an important factor when considering creativity. The creative industries tend to be low-paid, so maximising disposable income and access to creative spaces, such as derelict buildings, are important. It is also important to make life affordable to retain creative talent. Creatives also tend to be found in areas of a town or city which are regenerating, such as Shoreditch in London.

1. Availability of derelict buildings (David Bell, our consultant human geographer, suggested this would be also be a good way of looking at what underpins subculture)
2. Average house prices

Creative consumption

These criteria are designed to offer a snapshot of residents' creative consumption and consider what each town offers to support this.

1. The number of festivals and fairs (this did not include general events)
2. The percentage of residents who attended a local gallery/museum (most recent annual figures)

Education and technology

These criteria represents a town's ability to nurture quality creative education and support free, always-on technology for residents.

1. Wifi access. We looked at which towns had been quickest to offer free wifi access and at how extensive their coverage had become.
2. Excellence in art and design education. We referred to the Guardian awards for the top art and design colleges and universities in the UK.

Data tables

We used the following information to collate the Sharpie Index data and collate the results. Blanks indicate flawed or unobtainable data.

Number of people employed in the creative industries and technology

Town	Score
London (total)	625,000 10
Manchester	59,700 9
Newcastle-upon-Tyne *	26,000 8
Glasgow	21,179 7
Norwich	17,311 6
Bristol	17,000 5
Cambridge	16,866 4
Leeds	16,470 3
Edinburgh	16,328 2
St Ives	10,200 1
Liverpool	10,000
Brighton	10,000
Nottingham	9,300
Birmingham	8,500
Huddersfield (Kirklees)	7,060
Cardiff	6,600
Plymouth	4,400
Sheffield	
Oxford	
Margate	

* (inc Gateshead region)

Sources:

Regional Development Agencies
 Scottish Enterprise
 Manchester Enterprises
 Creative Brighton
 Perfect Moment consultancy, Cornwall

% of workforce self-employed

Town	Score	
St Ives	13.76	10
Edinburgh	11.2	9
Brighton	10.41	8
Glasgow	8.8	7
Margate	8.46	6
Huddersfield (Kirklees)	7.55	5
London (total)	7.5	4
Bristol	6.91	3
Leeds	6.45	2
Cambridge	6.45	1
Cardiff	6.26	
Sheffield	6.23	
Oxford	6.19	
Norwich	6.05	
Plymouth	5.66	
Birmingham	5.56	
Newcastle upon-Tyne	5.09	
Manchester	4.61	
Nottingham	4.61	
Liverpool	4.33	

Source:

2001 Census

Channel 4 Creative Cities media list

Town	
Manchester	10
Leeds	9
Glasgow	8
Birmingham	7
Liverpool	6
Bristol	5
Brighton	4
Cardiff	3
Oxford	2
Plymouth	1
Edinburgh	
Sheffield	
Nottingham	
Huddersfield (Kirklees)	
Newcastle upon-Tyne	
Cambridge	
Norwich	
St Ives	
Margate	
London (total)	

Source:

Channel 4

Ranking of patents from Demos report

Town	Score	
1. Manchester	1	10
7. Bristol	2	9
9. Nottingham	3	8
12. Cardiff	6	7
11. Brighton	7	6
21. London (total)	8	5
8. Sheffield	9	4
3. Edinburgh	10	3
5. Birmingham	11	2
2. Leeds	12	1
4. Glasgow	13	
6. Liverpool	14	
13. Newcastle upon-Tyne	15	
20. Plymouth	16	
10. Huddersfield (Kirklees)		
14. Oxford		
15. Cambridge		
16. Norwich		
18. St Ives		
19. Margate		

Source:

'Boho Britain', Demos, 2003

1. RIBA National and European Award Winners 2007

2. Shortlisted for 2008 Capital of Culture

3. Environmental awards

Town	1	2	3	Total
Manchester			1	1
Leeds			3	3
Edinburgh				0
Glasgow	1		8	9
Birmingham		1		1
Liverpool	1	1	18	20
Bristol		1	5	6
Sheffield	1		17	18
Nottingham			2	2
Huddersfield			8	8
Brighton				0
Cardiff		1		1
Newcastle		1	11	12
Oxford	1			1
Cambridge			5	5
Norwich		1		1
St Ives			12	12
Margate				0
Plymouth			5	5
London (total)	4	1		5

Sources:

Royal Institute of British Architects
 Department of Culture, Media and Sport
 Town council press offices

Total monetary value of the grant(s) awarded since the lottery began in 1995 (arts specific)

	Projects	Funding/Project	Total funding	Score
Birmingham	1182	£ 85,779.10	£ 101,390,894	10
Glasgow	1997	£ 38,647.95	£ 77,179,963	9
Manchester	966	£ 71,786.20	£ 69,345,466	8
Liverpool	677	£ 93,850.42	£ 63,536,737	7
Edinburgh	1791	£ 30,991.86	£ 55,506,427	6
Leeds	652	£ 69,227.83	£ 45,136,548	5
Cardiff	1147	£ 38,224.99	£ 43,844,064	4
London *	520	£ 83,697.46	£ 43,522,681	3
Brighton	807	£ 51,374.65	£ 41,459,339	2
Sheffield	560	£ 63,165.06	£ 35,372,431	1
Bristol	629	£ 55,825.63	£ 35,114,323	
Newcastle	969	£ 31,716.52	£ 30,733,311	
Nottingham	543	£ 47,341.89	£ 25,706,648	
Cambridge	221	£ 99,556.94	£ 22,002,083	
Norwich	257	£ 53,052.22	£ 13,634,420	
Huddersfield **	368	£ 29,229.78	£ 10,756,560	
Plymouth	91	£ 113,057.33	£ 10,288,217	
Oxford	396	£ 23,091.50	£ 9,144,233	
St. Ives (Penwith)	96	£ 34,675.52	£ 3,328,850	
Margate (Thanet)	86	£ 32,853.85	£ 2,825,431	

* London (Southwark)

** Huddersfield (Kirklees)

Source:

www.lottery.culture.gov.uk

Arts Council Funding

Town	Individual	Organisations	Total	Score
Liverpool	£ 123,047	£ 4,673,918	£ 4,796,965	10
Manchester	£ 468,775	£ 2,678,284	£ 3,147,059	9
Birmingham	£ 337,573	£ 1,804,180	£ 2,141,753	8
Newcastle	£ 416,668	£ 1,716,034	£ 2,132,702	7
Leeds	£ 159,220	£ 1,430,837	£ 1,590,057	6
Brighton	£ 258,471	£ 1,285,681	£ 1,544,152	5
Bristol	£ 182,689	£ 1,308,907	£ 1,491,596	4
Nottingham	£ 176,659	£ 1,173,190	£ 1,349,849	3
London *	£ 283,290	£892,255	£ 1,175,545	2
Cambridge	£ 91,387	£ 1,080,037	£ 1,171,424	1
Sheffield	£ 93,339	£ 1,048,709	£ 1,142,048	
Norwich	492,089	£ 626,650	£ 1,118,739	
Huddersfield *	£ 52,683	£ 473,639	£ 526,322	
Plymouth	£ 34,881	£ 485,522	£ 520,403	
St Ives (Penwith)	£ 56,439	£ 415,967	£ 472,406	
Oxford	£ 49,099	£ 367,910	£ 417,009	
Margate (Thanet)	£ 0	£ 220,030	£ 220,030	
Edinburgh				
Glasgow				
Cardiff				

* London (Southwark)

** Huddersfield (Kirklees)

Source:

www.artscouncil.org.uk

Town	Clubs	Pubs/bars	Vintage shops	Boutiques/indie stores
London	1st	1st	1st	1st
Manchester	100	531	75	81
Huddersfield	5	62	20	54
Brighton	16	208	22	640
Cardiff	75	185	25	80
Newcastle	12	230	20	45
Oxford	9	134	19	200
Cambridge	8	136	16	40
Norwich	11	165	28	
St Ives	1	20	3	60
Margate	4	28	9	30
Plymouth			20	75
Leeds	31	361	57	50
Edinburgh	27	330	75	44
Glasgow	37	395	13	132
Birmingham	27	359	62	80
Liverpool	31	381	50	100
Bristol				
Sheffield	20	300	49	200
Nottingham	19	138	19	252

Sources:

Town centre managers
 Experian 2006
 Local council press offices

	Markets	Museum and gallery attendance	Fairs and festivals
20. London	1st	1st	1st
1. Manchester	9	27%	200
10. Huddersfield	4	69%	177
11. Brighton	2	60%	70
12. Cardiff	1	35%	12
13. Newcastle	5	62%	27
14. Oxford	11	74%	150
15. Cambridge	3	10%	11
16. Norwich	7		22
17. St Ives	1	20%	12
18. Margate	1	15%	22
19. Plymouth	10	40%	20
2. Leeds	4		
3. Edinburgh	15		250
4. Glasgow	8	31%	33
5. Birmingham	50	68%	
6. Liverpool	31	23%	13
7. Bristol	12	59%	91
8. Sheffield	14	80%	80
9. Nottingham	12		

Sources:

Local council press offices

Local tourist offices

Main or central museum/gallery

Town	Fairtrade town	Score	Town	Graffiti policy	Score
Manchester	Yes	2	Manchester	Semi-managed	2
Leeds	Yes	2	Leeds	Semi-managed	2
Edinburgh	Yes	2	Liverpool	Semi-managed	2
Glasgow	Yes	2	Bristol	Semi-managed	2
Birmingham	Yes	2	Brighton	Semi-managed	2
Liverpool	Yes	2	Margate	Semi-managed	2
Bristol	Yes	2	Sheffield	Some managed	1
Sheffield	Yes	2	Nottingham	Some managed	1
Nottingham	Yes	2	Oxford	Some managed	1
Huddersfield	0	0	Norwich	Some managed	1
Brighton	Yes	2	Plymouth	Some managed	1
Cardiff	Yes	2	London	Some managed	1
Newcastle	Yes	2	Edinburgh	Zero tolerance	0
Oxford	Yes	2	Glasgow	Zero tolerance	0
Cambridge	Yes	2	Birmingham	Zero tolerance	0
Norwich	Yes	2	Huddersfield	Zero tolerance	0
St Ives	Working towards	1	Cardiff	Zero tolerance	0
Margate	0	0	Newcastle	Zero tolerance	0
Plymouth	Yes	2	Cambridge	Zero tolerance	0
London	Working towards	1	St Ives	Zero tolerance	0

Source:

Fairtrade Foundation

Source:

Local council press offices

Town	Average house £	Score	Town	Derelict buildings*	Score
Glasgow	£116,075	10	Leeds	340	340
Manchester	£154,658	9	Liverpool	337	337
Liverpool	£155,595	8	Huddersfield	135	135
Huddersfield	£157,947	7	Glasgow	107	107
Sheffield	£165,397	6	Sheffield	99	99
Nottingham	£165,413	5	Birmingham	68	68
Newcastle	£171,194	4	Edinburgh	42	42
Birmingham	£183,206	3	Margate	35	35
Leeds	£187,937	2	Plymouth	20	20
Plymouth	£191,278	1	Norwich	13	13
Edinburgh	£193,248		St Ives	13	13
Norwich	£199,761		Bristol	9	9
Cardiff	£209,222		Cambridge	8	8
Bristol	£240,359		Oxford	7	7
Margate	£252,607		Nottingham	3	3
St Ives	£262,056		Brighton	3	3
Brighton	£314,033		Newcastle	0	0
Cambridge	£320,067		London	0	0
Oxford	£351,521		Manchester		n/a
London	£394,730		Cardiff		n/a

Source:

RightMove, 2007

*** Hectares**

Sources:

National Land Use Database

Local council press offices

Town	Institute	Guardian rank/100	Score	Town	Municipal Wifi network	Top 5 wifi hubs	Score
London	UCL	100	10	London	1	3	4
Edinburgh	Edin.	83.8	9	Manchester	1	3	4
Oxford	Oxford	83.1	8	Liverpool	1		1
Plymouth	Plym	77.4	7	Edinburgh	1	3	4
Margate	Kent	67.4	6	Birmingham	1	3	4
Glasgow	*	62.9	5	Leeds	1		1
St Ives	Falmouth	61.3	5	Nottingham	1	3	4
Cardiff	**	60.7	4	Oxford	1		1
Brighton	Brighton	57.1	3	Bristol	1		1
Birmingham	***	53.4	2	Newcastle	1		1
Nottingham	Trent	52.6	1	Cardiff	1		1
Cambridge	****	49.6		Cambridge	1		1
Newcastle	*****	47.3		Norwich	1		1
Leeds	Leeds	46.2		Glasgow			
Bristol	UWE	43.7		Sheffield			
Liverpool	*****	43.5		Brighton			
Manchester	Met	42		Huddersfield (Kirklees)			
Huddersfield	*****	42		St Ives			
Norwich	*****	40.5		Plymouth			
Sheffield	Hallam	31.9		Margate			

Source:
OfCom

- * Glasgow School of Art
- ** Trinity College, Carmarthen
- *** UCE Birmingham
- **** Anglia Ruskin
- ***** University of Sunderland
- ***** Liverpool John Moores
- ***** Huddersfield
- ***** Norwich School of Art

Source:
Guardian Unlimited University Guide

Refining the Top 20

We understood that the Sharpie Index would have to be qualitative as well as quantitative throughout, due to the subjective nature of creativity. Once we had established our quantitative Top 20, we refined it with the aid of our consultants, our first-hand experiences of each town's creativity, and the research we had gathered to create a unique portrait of each town. The Future Laboratory's agenda was also to create a list that also offered a glimpse into the future.

Dr Kevin Stolarick of the Creative Class Group noted that our system of quantifying data was weighted towards towns that performed above average. 'It tends to reward places that do fair or better on all indicators, while punishing those that have below average performance. The truly interesting, much more concentrated artists' colony or creative cluster is not detected because it has a very high concentration of creative opportunities but low numbers.'

Dr Charles Rolfe, our consultant human geographer, similarly recommended we 'disaggregate' the list and come up with different combinations of criteria, rather than basing rankings solely on a total score biased towards established creative hubs. This created a fairer, more nuanced ranking system.

We took these comments on board, and reconsidered our figures in relation to the size of the town. We also looked at criteria where smaller and less-established towns were performing well. This revealed, for example, that places such as Brighton perform exceptionally well on numbers of vintage shops, as does St Ives for museum/gallery attendance. Taking all this into consideration, we adjusted our Top 20 to establish the final ranking.

REFERENCES

Regional Institutes

Manchester City Council
Leeds City Council
Northern Lights Public Relations and Marketing
City of Edinburgh Council
Glasgow City Council
See Glasgow
Birmingham City Council
Liverpool City Council
Bristol City Council
Destination Bristol
Business West
Sheffield City Council
Pure PR
Nottingham City Council
Experience Nottinghamshire
Brighton and Hove City Council
Brighton Business
Cardiff Council
Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council
Tyne and Wear Museums
Oxford City Council
Oxford Inspires
Cambridge City Council
Penwith District Council
Tate St Ives
Thanet District Council
Plymouth City Council
Creative London
Southwark Council
Greater London Authority
Visit London
Kirklees Council
Norwich City Council
Visit Norwich
Manchester Enterprises
Culture North East
University of Leeds
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Executive
Creative Brighton
Plymouth Business Growth
Perfect Moment Consulting
Creative London
Cornwall County Council Creative Unit

Regional Development Agencies

Northwest Regional Development Agency
Yorkshire Forward
One NorthEast
Advantage West Midlands
East Midlands Development Agency
East of England Development Agency
South West of England Regional Development Agency
London Development Agency
South East England Development Agency

National Institutes

Arts Council
The Work Foundation
Design Council
National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA)
Design Museum
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
Demos
The Future Foundation