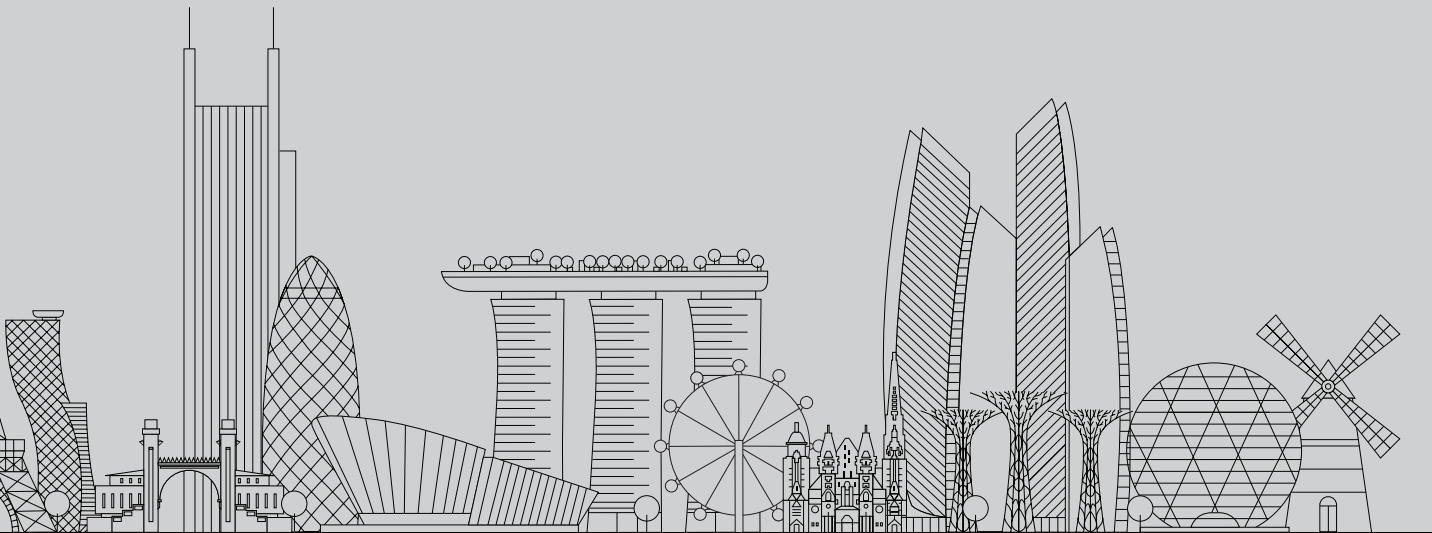


CITIES OF OPPORTUNITIES:

CONNECTING CULTURE AND INNOVATION

Edited by Jason Pomeroy



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Dear Emanuel,

Thanks for your valued
contribution. Now let's make
something digital!

2020.

Contributors



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Cabinet Member and Minister of Climate Change and Environment

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

His Excellency Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi was appointed Minister of Climate Change and Environment for the UAE in February 2016. In this role, he oversees the Ministry's mission to spearhead the UAE's drive to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change and protect the country's ecosystems through developing and implementing effective measures and policies. He previously served as Permanent Representative of the UAE to IRENA and Director of the Department of Energy and Climate Change at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation. In 2015, he was awarded the first GCC Prize for Excellence in recognition of his efforts in renewable energy. His Excellency Dr Al Zeyoudi holds several degrees, most notably a PhD in strategy, programme and project management from SKEMA Business School.



EMMANUEL BENBIHY

Producer, Cities of Love Franchise

Shanghai, China

Emmanuel Benbihy has 25 years of experience as a creator, strategist and film producer. He has been living in Shanghai since 2009. With the movie *Paris, je t'aime*, he created the 'Cities of Love' series, now pursuing its journey around the world (New York, Rio, Berlin, Jerusalem, LA, Shanghai, to name a few). The 'Cities of Love' global initiative is building the 'communities of the people who love their cities' through creative city-centric media platforms and initiatives. Benbihy is developing a network of non-profit enterprises whose purpose is to engage millions, lift spirits, foster creative contribution to city life and support sustainable urban development.



TOMAS DIEZ

Director, Fab Lab, Barcelona

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Tomas Diez is a Venezuelan Urbanist specialising in digital fabrication and its implications on future cities and society. He is the co-founder and director of Fab Lab Barcelona at the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC) and is a founding partner of the Fab City Global Initiative. He is also the director of the Master in Design for Emergent Futures. Diez was appointed by *The Guardian* and *Nesta* as one of the top ten digital social innovators to watch in 2013, and was awarded by the Catalan ICT association as the entrepreneur of the year in 2014. His research interests relate to the use of digital fabrication tools to transform reality and how the use of new technologies can change the way people consume, produce and relate with each other in cities.



2.1 BUILDING EMPOWERING MEDIA ECOSYSTEMS FOR CITIES

By EMMANUEL BENBIHY

SYNOPSIS

When we envision sustainable urban development, we omit a key element that makes everything possible at the scale required: sustainable media and content. Traditional film and media industries are under the influence of unsound industry logics. Their pursuit of profit, therefore of people's attention at any cost, has become detrimental to human development. Instead of creating nurtured content, private media owners tend to appeal to the lowest impulses of their audience. Our future lies in cities and urban communities. We have an opportunity to create positive media outlets and responsible media ecosystems under the umbrella of these cities whose purpose will be to reconnect us with life, to empower us as urban citizens, and to inspire us to take part in sustainable development. Media has a duty to reconnect people, serve development, and promote diversity and peace. The 'Cities of Love' global initiative is applying innovative media models to the smart and sustainable development of cities. It has started to demonstrate the positive impact when city authorities, businesses, creative professionals and urban citizens come together to celebrate urban life and act for development. Using smart media to help build smart cities; and to engage people towards a better future, is fundamental today. Using social media to spread good news and to help people convey pride and happiness in being together are key contributions to human prosperity. Together, we can give media a completely new role in our societies, and we can create and showcase content that entertains, inspires people and drives sustainable development.

1. INTRODUCTION

A film producer is a dreamer. Giving life to film projects starts from an embryo of thought, a casual exchange, a moment you wouldn't suspect to be important. Yet, a few years later and after some invisible efforts, millions of people all over the world go and watch a story unfold on a big screen. This reality truly makes you believe in the power of content. And that power does not come without responsibilities. What content we are exposed to shapes our lives (*Image 1*).

“Media environments impact our development”.

- Benbihy, 2019

Twenty years ago, we took a unique path and decided to make the impossible movie. We were in love with our city, Paris. And that film, *Paris, Je T'aime*, took six years of our lives. Many films show the culture of a city as a backdrop to the central story, but our approach was to give our city the leading role and to explore it through a myriad of different film languages.

Why did so many talents fly from all over the world to work on 20 love stories located in the 20 'arrondissements' of Paris? And this for almost no money. Where did the magic come from? Cities have their own ways to take over our lives. They fascinate us. They inspire us. We love them. We hate them. We feel blessed. We feel lost. We are never indifferent. No doubt ... it's a love affair.

Paris was the first 'City of Love'; the first installment of the 'Cities of Love' film franchise. It was meant

to be a statement in favour of cultural diversity, and to prove the feasibility of creating a single work of art with so many people coming from so many countries. It was meant to shatter the sacred Hollywood dogma: 'Thou shalt tell a story in three acts'. It was meant to build unity with diversity. It was meant to prove that the wind was shifting for short formats and that an 'omnibus film' could be commercially successful.

But it was never meant to pave the way to a unique model that would help cities build their own media ecosystem, independent from traditional media industries, and answer people's innate if not apparent needs for smart and reconnective content.

Today, the 'Cities of Love' global initiative is a non-profit venture with the mission to spread love 'in' and 'for' cities. Here is how we can celebrate the cities we love, promote them and generate the change we need.

2. CINEMA & SOCIETY

In early cinema, films did not carry any story or narrative. The first audience to experience a moving image on the screen in 1895 witnessed 'Workers leaving the Lumiere factory'¹.

“Cinema started as a mere reflection of society and evolved towards a form of communication to become a powerful vehicle for culture, education, leisure and propaganda”.

- Benbihi, 2019

Looking back at the first steps of that new medium, its urge to explore and define itself, its childish freedom and nonchalant errancy to 'delight and instruct'², we can be amazed by the large variety of topics covered in the 1920s and 1930s. The instrumentalisation of images, for the sake of propaganda during the multiple conflicts that undermined the 20th century, soon determined a parallel agenda and brought new perspectives.

“Films carry ideas, values, lifestyles and more”.

- Benbihi, 2019

No doubt they can impact society and public opinion, as they shape our knowledge of the past, our perception of the present and our perspectives on the future.

In the 1960s and the 1970s, with the emergence of the 'author', a new generation of talent led change: film was a means of expression and a director could have a unique language — a personal filmmaking grammar. Jean-Luc Godard, Martin Scorsese, Akira Kurosawa, Francis Ford Coppola, François Truffaut, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Satyajit Ray, Stanley Kubrick; their movies inspired and connected to our lives.

“Films generated heated debates on television and triggered conversations within society”.

- Benbihi, 2019

They influenced other arts as well as imposed themselves as a noble form of entertainment. After surfing the wave of the 'The Glorious Thirty'³ (the post-World War Two years from 1946-1975, often perceived as a golden age for self-expression and risk-taking), the cleavage between art films and commercial films was established. In the 1980s and the 1990s, marketing took over: cinema was, after all, an expensive medium involving a myriad of profit-driven players, operators and stakeholders. Production budgets skyrocketed. Experimenting or sourcing new talent became a costly diversion, and it was time to 'scale up' and 'cash in' with high concepts, stories with franchise potential, and tent poles supporting the sale of tie-in merchandise. Special effects opened new perspectives for storytelling.



Image 1. Behind the scene © guruXOX/Shutterstock

“Cinema turned into a service that extracted audiences from their daily life and movies became products like any other giving people comfort”.

- *Benbihi, 2019*

In the 2000s, the competition to grab people's attention was declared open. Globalisation raged and advertisers led the chase in buying airtime on television networks, as networks represented a key window for movie financing. Using fast-paced narratives, sensational and fear-driven content, studios established new norms for what was deemed 'commercial', backed up by digital technology and heavy promotion.

With television first and the internet after, these new standards blossomed and influenced all forms of content, from negative news reports to online videos:

“People’s eyeballs and ‘available brain time’ ultimately became commodities, and storytelling as an instrument with meaning seemed lost”.

- *Benbihi, 2019*

Content that does not respect these norms, fictional or not, long or short, seems to address a niche, as the appeal of a programme is determined by its wide 'commercial' attractiveness — its capacity to capture audiences' attention, to get them addicted and to engage them into promoting the content itself.

Today, content creators, with the ambition of reaching a mass audience, have limited choices but to appeal to the lowest impulses of the audience with the hope to be financed and distributed by leading media players. At the same time, they work hand in hand with corporations and institutions to sustain people's illusory needs of more products. The large majority of the content produced abides by this logic.

Most meaningful content has extremely limited access to mainstream distribution channels and theatrical distribution, with the exception of rising online platforms such as Netflix⁴ or Amazon⁵ that have started producing massively. How content resonates with our lives, how it affects our spirits, how it influences the evolution of our societies over time are rarely discussed or questioned

and is quite problematic to assess objectively. The mass of content and the concentration of media power are such that a debate about any change seems in vain.

“The media environments we are exposed to affect our development. Yet, with the exception of a few documentaries that attempt to raise awareness around important developmental topics, most of the content relayed in mass media appears to follow a profit-driven logic detached from any sense of responsibility to contribute to our development as a species”.

- *Benbihi, 2019*

3. CONTENT & DEVELOPMENT

The power of content has never been greater. Our existence is filled with screens, but images are mainly aiming at monetising our attention using narratives that are relentlessly alarming. People feel threatened in their daily lives, constantly exposed to a recurring echo: lack of economic opportunity and unemployment, safety and access to healthcare, education costs and food security, rising inequalities and government accountability, extremism and poverty, large-scale conflicts and migrations, climate change and artificial intelligence.

“Most people feel helpless when it comes to addressing the challenges of our time, as they are constantly reminded of their own perils in a fast-changing society, with no real resolution”.

- *Benbihi, 2019*

The worrying changes in media and content happen during the same time as urbanisation. Nowhere other than in cities do audiences experience more acutely the anxiety manifested in media. In cities, we have never been so disconnected with our local culture, rarely portrayed on mainstream media; with others, despite the fact that we live among so many people; with nature, as we are unbalancing the ecosystem that gave us life; and more generally, disconnected from a positive perspective on our collective and individual cultures.

“Media in cities have the opportunity to reshape our identities and urban development can lead the change we need”.

- *Benbihi, 2019*

Through social media, people and community engagement stand out as a solution which urgently requires the implementation of innovative, effective and scalable bottom-up strategies. We live in an age where people have been ‘blessed’ with social media and convey more information than any private or public operator. The civilisation shift we need will not happen without the emergence of media platforms that massively and positively engage and empower urban citizens.

4. IN LOVE WITH PARIS

Our attempt to define a new media model for cities started in 2000 with *Paris, Je T’aime*, the first opus of the ‘Cities of Love’ franchise celebrating love for cities through cinematic storytelling made by world-renowned international artists. Eschewing the singular and instead embracing 24 directors, 34 writers, 43 lead actors, 18 cinematographers and 10 editors, the film was selected as the opening film of the 2006 Cannes International Film Festival Un Certain Regard section (*Image 2*).

This critically acclaimed and commercially successful film was distributed in 58 countries and generated US\$48 million in global revenues and marked a shift from the conventional ‘anthology’ to the ‘collective feature’ film genre. *Paris, Je T’aime* was a statement for cultural diversity after the World Trade Organisation’s attempt to treat culture as any other commercial product and service in international treaties and agreements in the mid-1990s. Producing a movie that celebrates a city generates a lot of enthusiasm from a large spectrum of stakeholders and was a meaningful labour of love.

The first success of *Paris, Je T’aime* had been to gather an extraordinary pool of renowned talent, from the Coen Brothers (*Fargo*) to Alfonso Cuarón (*Gravity*), from Juliette Binoche (*The English Patient*) to Natalie Portman (*Black Swan*); from Elijah Wood (*The Lord of the Rings*) to Willem Dafoe (*The Last Temptation of Christ*), all creatively ecstatic to work in Paris and

take part in an unconventional endeavour alongside new local talent — quite a few of whom have made a remarkable career since then (*Image 3*).

The second success came from the audience: French viewers were proud to see their city on the big screen and audiences around the world responded to the opportunity to discover or rediscover the City of Love. Celebrating Paris on film generated a variety of positive human emotions as well as a sense of pride. Viewers experienced a feeling of satisfaction to live or have been there; and a desire to be associated or connected to Paris.

Its third success was to receive the attention of producers all around the world inspired to follow our path, but also to be noticed by city governments and communication agencies working with them. *Paris, Je T’aime* was perceived as a new approach to engage people and institutions around cities, going way beyond the limits of traditional city promotion and tapping into authentic storytelling.

All along the process, we crossed paths with countless people who loved Paris and had a direct interest or a strong wish for the film to exist. Unfortunately, they did not have the money to finance it. Ultimately, the only way the film could be produced was to fundraise US\$13.1 million. Thus, in a strict industrial context, those who can give life to a movie are mainly focused on its commercial appeal and potential return on investment.

From that moment on, as innovators within the system, we never ceased to work hard on the design of a context that would support the production of more ‘Cities of Love’ films — an ecosystem that would not just envision the financial return of a movie but also its multifaceted impact on people, cities and society.

High-quality, city-driven content can provoke the desire to belong to a place or provide a gratifying validation of our choice to live somewhere: such content has the potential to be empowering and reconnective. Against all odds, good, positive, relevant content can stand out on its own. Building smart and happy cities is about fulfilling a dream. It is about celebrating our urban lives and making them better (*Image 4*).



Image 2. Paris, Je T'aime poster, 2006 © Cities of Love

“The love people have for the city where they live, whether they have chosen it or lived there all their life, or the aspiration they have to live somewhere, is a powerful source of energy. With the right content, that energy can be activated in order to drive people’s engagement and inspire action”.

- Benbihi, 2019



Image 3. Natalie Portman in *Paris, Je T'aime*, 2006 © Cities of Love

5. A NEW FILM FORMAT

The impact and the experience of *Paris, Je T'aime* encouraged us to pursue our journey and improve the creative format with *New York, I Love You* (Image 5). In terms of production process, such a movie is distinctly different from a conventional film: number of talents, time commitment, creative steps, legal framework, crew organisation, financing opportunities, promotion, distribution, and nature of social impact. Our objective was to simplify, rationalise and share our modus operandi with the intention to empower producers from all over the world, and to scale up the number of these films as contributors to the celebration of cities’ cultural identity.

Creating a breakthrough format in the film industry and producing a first version of it on US soil required the blessing of key operators in the Hollywood power structure (unions, guilds, talent agencies, entertainment lawyers, managers, publicists, film funds, financiers, etc.), and this after having convinced the highest ilk of talent themselves. *New York, I Love You* formalised

the launch of the ‘Cities of Love’ film franchise, with our know-how and methodology consigned in an optimised production guideline, thus opening the possibility for producers to reach out to us and make their own ‘City, I Love You’ movie.

Driven by the success of *Paris, Je T'aime*, we continued to attract top talents and nurture creativity from around the world for our new city in focus. *New York, I Love You* was also the opportunity to keep supporting the emergence of new talent as we gave Bradley Cooper his first international part and produced the first short films directed by Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson. The film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival 2008: its success directly led to the licensing of *Rio, I Love You* to an experienced pool of Brazilian producers.

Despite an attractive lineup, *New York, I Love You* reminded us once again that we were evolving within a more and more conservative and product-driven film industry.

“Our film was unconventional and its multiple purposes were considered irrelevant as investors were focused on traditional narratives with blockbuster potential”.

- Benbihi, 2019

Developing new ways to finance such content was pressing as it felt undeniable that an ensemble of established stakeholders outside of the media industry, thus deemed ‘unqualified’ to fund movies, were rooting for us to succeed and to make an impact.



Image 4. Keira Knightley in *Berlin, I Love You*, 2018 © Cities of Love



Image 5. New York, I Love You poster, 2008 © Cities of Love

6. BUILDING A MOVEMENT OF LOVE FOR A CITY

Any content creator knows that reality is always richer than fiction. Celebrating a city through the combination of multiple original love stories was challenging, exciting and fun. But we knew that millions of love stories were happening in real life and waiting to be told. Stepping into the non-fiction realm by putting the spotlight on people's lives seemed like an approach to build an online audience for our films way before their release. It was also time to widen our definition of 'love', and to merge our love for cities with our love for future generations through stories that pay tribute to urban citizens dedicating their lives to others and acting every day in favour of sustainable development. Little did we know that Cariocas⁶ were craving for such attention and content documenting their lives in a positive way, at a time when Brazil was also emerging as one of the region's most social-media savvy. With 199-million people by 2013, Brazil was second in population only to the US, and the Brazilian government had spearheaded a progressive push to extend Internet access across the country, with the result that nearly 100-million Brazilians would soon be online. It was estimated that up to 80% of the population would have Internet access by 2016. Plus, all signs indicated Brazil was just hitting its social stride: average time spent on Facebook among Brazilians increased 208% in 2012, to 8.9 hours per month. By comparison, global use had declined by 2% during the same period⁷ (Figure 1).

Rio, Eu Te Amo (*Rio, I Love You*) was the next installment of our newborn franchise after the signature of a 'Coproduction & Licensing Agreement' at the Cannes International Film Festival in May 2009. But in Rio de Janeiro, it took a couple of years to attach an established team of producers, advertisers and marketers, as well as several attempts to launch the project before deciding to pivot our strategic approach. In early 2012, two years before the film release, we first launched an online media platform activating the Rio community around love for the city with the goal to build 'A movement of love for the city that will become a movie' (Image 7).

We started a transformative process of social engagement in Rio: we sponsored, supported or endorsed initiatives, new or already existing; co-branded

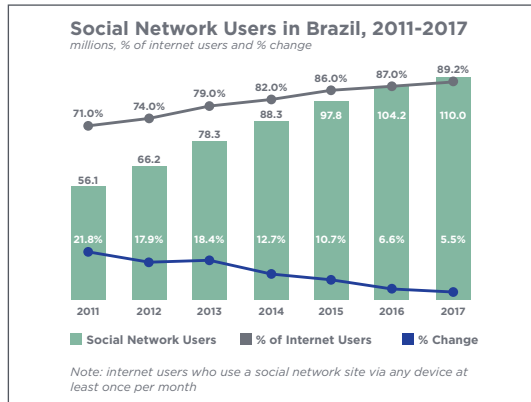


Figure 1. Social Network Users in Brazil, 2011-2017. Source: eMarketer, April 2013

free shows and entertaining events; created and launched educational, social or green projects; unfolded specific campaigns, sometimes introducing brands as genuine contributors to people's lives; launched contests; promoted sports and the city's unique lifestyle; created a space for bloggers to cover their city; partnered with digital communities or initiatives; created and sold original *Rio, Eu Te Amo* merchandising (co-branded or not), using a dedicated store or our own mobile station travelling throughout the city.

We orchestrated numerous activations proving our ability to interact with city life, to positively disrupt the relationship people had with their city by opening their eyes on others, the beauty and the good around them; thus going against their feeling of loneliness by making them feel included, and treating them as important and impactful actors in their city's future (Image 6).



Image 6. University students putting messages of love on the walls of Rio, 2014 © Cities of Love

Most importantly, every partnership, initiative or action was filmed in an effort to portray unsung heroes, to illustrate their personalities and explore their choices, filming them in intimate settings, as genuine tributes to these people's lives and choices. These touching cinematic inserts were insightful, personal and meaningful; engaging people and creating empathy. Natural lighting and camera movements, close-ups and evocative details, imagery, subjective film grammar and languages, entertaining style and accessible visual metaphors were all meant to generate emotion.

Our content was addressing that missing link in our urban lives, what used to make the cement of our social fabric, this feeling of togetherness that shapes a city's cultural identity, everything we hoped that our *Rio, Eu Te Amo* would portray. It was what we like to call 'Reconnective Content' and Cariocas responded massively.

Rio is populated by 6.7-million people with a metropolitan area of 12-million people. In its first year of activity, the *Rio, Eu Te Amo* movement attracted 1.1-million local active followers (commenting and sharing our content) on its Facebook page, reaching an average of 257,000 people per day and 4-million people per month in the Rio metropolitan area, with some video viewership peaks up to 6-million locals. The

Rio, I Love You community grew at an average pace of 60% per month. But the most important breakthrough that changed the course of this production and marked the first step of 'Cities of Love' as a model was to realise that 74% of our active followers were aged between 13 and 24 years old.

Even though we were going against the norms, covering topics and producing content that were judged undesirable and uncommercial by mainstream media operators, young viewers were the driving force of the *Rio, Eu Te Amo* movement. This came as a validation that the quality, the angle and the relevance of our content made a difference, but the secret of our success was really to empower our viewers by making them proud, and feeling that they were living at the right time at the right place in a city that they loved. Despite the proliferation of content, young people needed it more than any other segment of society.

Rio's citizens' engagement was such that we felt the movement had a life on its own. The love people share for their city is a powerful connector capable of bringing together key components of urban life — such as music, art, fashion, culture, film, literature and food — through the spectrum of unsung heroes and sustainability, and always with an inspiring, inclusive and positive outlook on life.

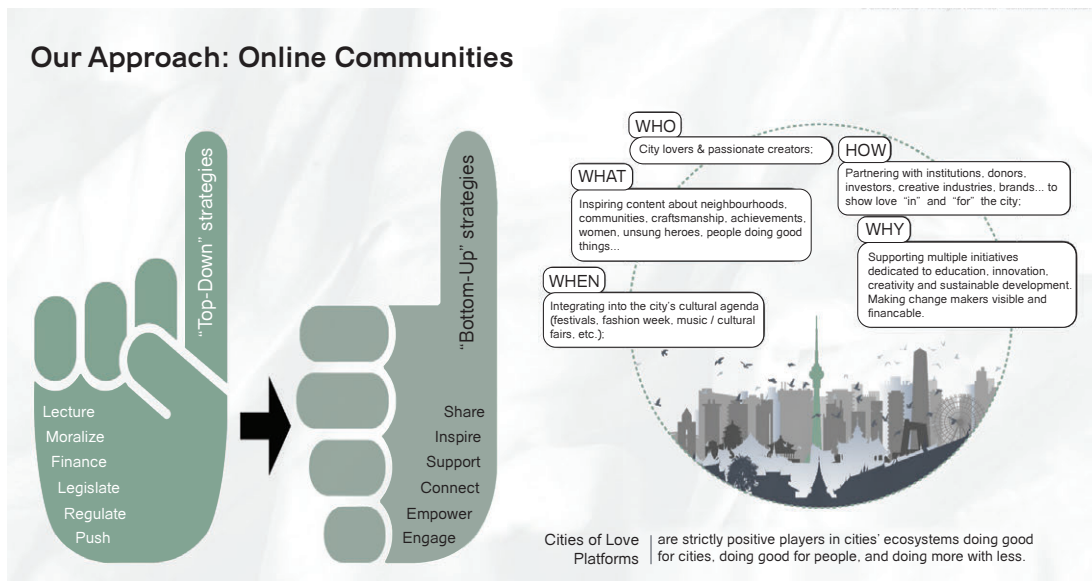


Figure 2. Bottom-up Strategies, 2018 © Cities of Love

People started to contribute naturally and enthusiastically to the sustainability efforts of their city and some of the green initiatives that we pushed started to have a life of their own. People needed to take ownership of their city and they quickly forgot where the spark was coming from. We had activated an urban community, giving hope and faith to people by providing them with a beautiful mirror of their lives (Figure 2).

That's when we realised that we were doing much more than building an audience for a film. We started to witness the fact that empowering urban citizens through media, spreading love 'in' and 'for' the city, could not only revive a city's cultural identity but could develop into one of the rare bottom-up models that can generate positive change. There is a pressing opportunity to link media with city life in the perspective to engage people and solve problems: content can actively serve human development.

7. TOWARDS A NEW FINANCING SCHEME

Once it reached millions of people locally, the *Rio, Eu Te Amo* platform was in a position to attract sponsors and to take them on a responsible journey. Finding the right cinematic language to engage young people around a wide variety of important topics immediately attracted corporate partners. A genuine and spontaneous movement naturally implies a responsibility towards urban citizens when it comes to involving brands searching for publicity or a sense of belonging. Primarily, we were conscious that we could only co-operate with brands that were truly careful about their social, economic, environmental and cultural impact.

We worked with corporations to define a project that could become their contribution to the city. They financed both impactful actions and a campaign to be attached to the *Rio, Eu Te Amo* initiative. Through content, we almost acted as a local agency introducing their authentic contributions to the life of local urban citizens, making them belong in Rio, without ever placing or promoting any product. In times of social media,

“building the community of the people who love a city relies on the authenticity of the relationship”.

- Benbihy, 2019

Such an initiative is an opportunity for brands and partners to exchange short-term promotion for long-term engagement, product-driven content for solid value-driven campaigns — thus building brand equity and legitimacy to be part of people's lives in their city.

By doing so in the early 2010s, we were at the forefront of two major global trends: first, the ongoing replacement of traditional advertising and promotional storytelling by the construction of a lasting and genuine relationship with local consumers; second, the decay of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the blatant need for brands to be authentic and start doing 'business for good'.



Image 8. Building gym stations in Rio, 2014 © Cities of Love

Our strategy triggered options and ideas that could activate and celebrate a city based on its specific cultural identity, challenges and priorities. In Rio, we chose to support wellness and sports by building 60 new gym stations all along the beaches (Santander Bank) (Image 8); to renew all the volleyball infrastructures, and to cover training, contests, even selection for the upcoming Olympics (Unilever) (Image 9); to sponsor all the beach sports and make them accessible to all free of charge (Nextel); to share and spread love in multiple fashion in the city through the celebration of unsung



Image 9. Unilever sponsors volleyball in Rio, 2014 © Cities of Love

The Rio Case: new perspectives for city-driven content

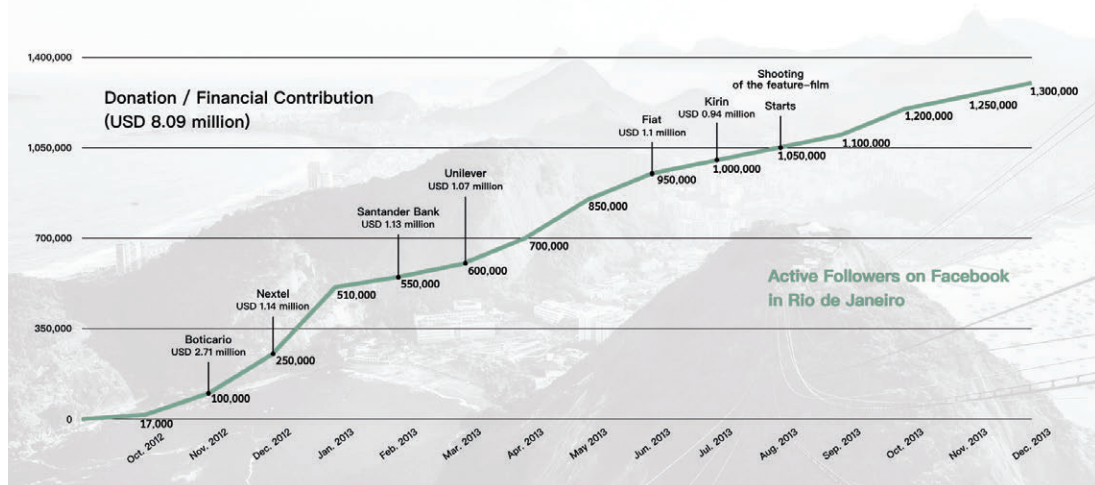


Figure 3. The Rio Case, 2014 © Cities of Love

heroes and role models, to disseminate exclusive gifts all around town (Rio Municipal Government); to offer tons of free flowers to people as long as they show gestures of affection, to create the official scent of Rio or help migrant workers write letters to their loved ones (Boticario); to showcase local food culture and create merchandising (Kirin); and to design a city-themed special edition car addressing local needs and lifestyle (Fiat).

The strategy, coupled with a favourable tax environment in the state of Rio incentivising corporations to invest in films, created the right context for the *Rio, Eu Te Amo* platform to fundraise more than US\$8 million in its first year of activity. Each participating sponsor was channelling part of its investment towards the movement and another part towards the film in order to be associated to its global release. This was the first element of a model for doing good for cities and its people and opening new perspectives for content producers.

The *Rio, Eu Te Amo* movie was financed exclusively with 'soft-money', mainly coming from an ensemble of domestic and global brands, but also with subsidies and tax benefits from the city and the state of Rio. Thus, we were in a position to market a star-studded international feature-film monetising the notoriety of our production

without having to reimburse any investor or loan. Each movie ticket or foreign territory that we sold became profit from day one as backend revenues no longer depended on the success of the film since no money was owed to any third-party financier. All producers and talent shared the first position in the revenue chain. A dream scenario for any industry player (Figure 3).

8. STRUCTURING CITY-DRIVEN MEDIA ECOSYSTEMS

When *Rio, Eu Te Amo* was released in 2014, we were in a position to define the concept of a self-sustaining, replicable and scalable online platform for future 'Cities of Love' initiatives. We were also coming up with a way to re-create the Rio context in other cities and countries. Our goal is to set up media ecosystems under cities

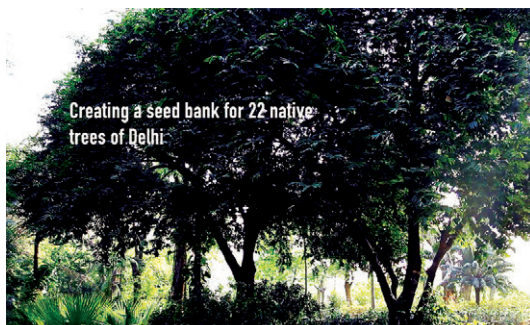


Image 10. Delhi Seed Bank Project, 2018 © Cities of Love

Media for Sustainability



Figure 4. Media for Sustainability, 2018 © Cities of Love

supporting productions that are positively relevant with modern urban lives; to co-operate with brands and launch campaigns that generate sufficient revenues to finance additional actions and content. All this in order to empower and engage citizens for them to embrace sustainability with a smile on their faces (Figure 4).

From planting rare trees or cleaning the city in Delhi (India) (Image 10) to celebrating unsung heroes in Malmö (Sweden), from helping migrant workers write love letters in Rio (Brazil) to being introduced to Rotterdam (Netherlands) by local artists, from celebrating night-time food experiences in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) to supporting the emergence of a new generation of filmmakers in Shanghai (China) (Image 11), the 'Cities of Love' global initiative has been experimenting all along and activating cities around the world.

There's a chorus of participants, from young people to brands, from creative communities to local authorities that are eager to applaud and support the production of content away from mainstream norms. Yet, such a value-driven approach cannot be implemented by profit-driven organisations, as they would tend to monetise urban citizens' attention without concern. A value-based media ecosystem needs strong governance, an entity which acts as a guardian of its purpose and protects



Image 11. Shanghai, I Love You Young Filmmakers Awards Ceremony, 2015 © Cities of Love

it at all times. Only foundations or social enterprises would put the interest of the city and its citizens ahead of profit. Also, providing tax deductions would optimise competitiveness with communication agencies and allow such ecosystems to tap into corporations' CSR budgets (Figure 5).

“We have reversed the logic behind mainstream content creation and created a city-driven media platform that can finance and produce any content as long as it is relevant to our lives and is solution-oriented”.

- Benbihi, 2019

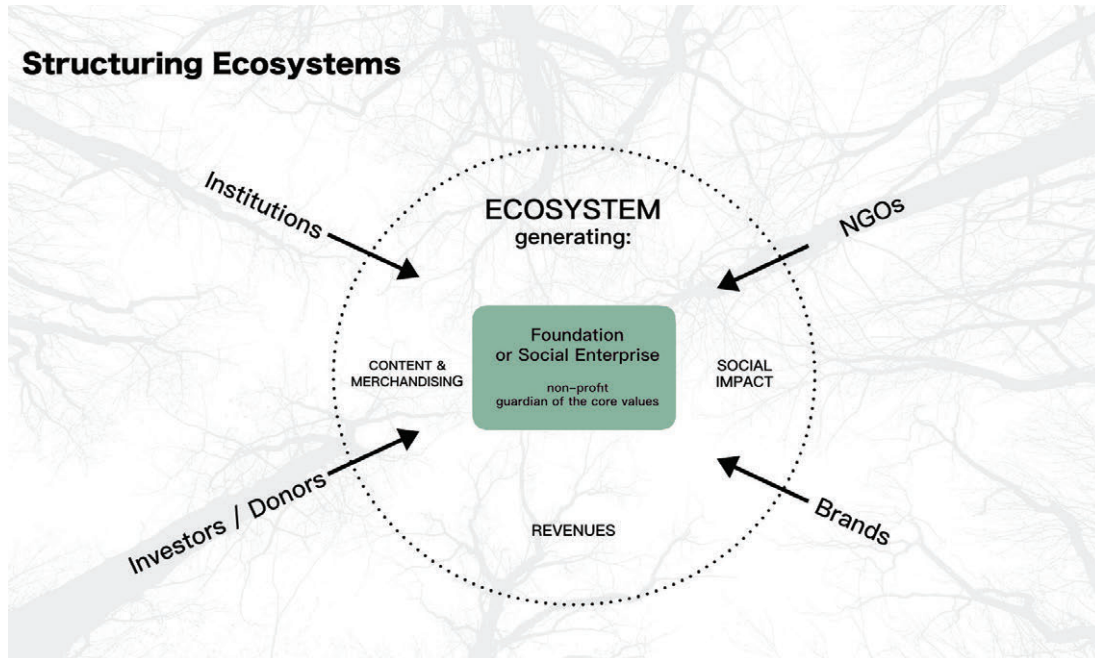


Figure 5. Structuring Ecosystems, 2018 © Cities of Love

Furthermore, each city has its own specific challenges and priorities (i.e. strengthening social harmony, changing food habits, regenerating green spaces, etc.), and a 'Cities of Love' ecosystem can develop and nurture sub-ecosystems dedicated to multiple sustainable solutions by gathering all the stakeholders (institutions, NGOs, brands, etc.) and build a mass audience for such solutions.

Such a sub-ecosystem will then be in a position to generate its own dedicated content (videos, series, movies) and by de facto contribute to raising awareness and making change. Thanks to social media and the implementation of innovative film models, we have opportunities to redefine commercial content norms in today's urban world and celebrate culture in the cities that we love.

9. CONCLUSION

Building media ecosystems serving urban development opens new paths for bottom-up content strategies. Such ecosystems can support the emergence of more producers eager to create videos, documentaries and feature films that reconnect us positively with our humanity, our planet and our future.

Cities need driven operators, content and media outlets that create, tell and showcase a new type of inspiring, entertaining and reconnective stories. Cities need to step into the media world, take ownership of their screens and start engaging their citizens with compelling narratives to empower them.

Using smart media to help build smart cities, to engage people towards a better future, is fundamental today. Using social media to spread good news and to help people convey pride and happiness to others are key contributions to human prosperity.

“Together, we can give media a completely new role in our cities and communities”.

- Benbihi, 2019

We can gather an ensemble of stakeholders around the development of cities, and embark them on a positive and responsible journey that will shatter the norms established by traditional film and media industries. We have an unprecedented and unparalleled opportunity to lead world innovation, reshape our urban identities and open new paths for human development.

NOTES

¹French short black-and-white silent documentary film directed and produced by Louis Lumière. Released on 22 March 1895 in France and on 20 February 1896 in the United Kingdom. 46 seconds, 35mm format, 800 frames

²Aristotle preferred tragedy as an imitation of man 'in action' to epic: he states that man can improve himself through representation as human beings are naturally delighted with representation in general. In his *Poetics*, which was written in 330 B.C. as Vincent B. Leitch has noted, Aristotle explains how representation in the art of poetry can be both pleasing and instructive at the same time. In his 'Ars Poetica', or 'The Art of Poetry', a poem written in 19 B.C., Horace clearly defines the 'delight and instruct' rule whereas with William Wordsworth, 'the instruction' part of the rule has vanished. 'Poetics' (pp90-117), 'Ars Poetica' (pp124-135) and 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems (1802)' (pp648-668), in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, gen. ed. Vincent B. Leitch, W.W. Norton and Company Inc., New York: 2001

³Three decades of economic prosperity combined high productivity with high average wages, high consumption, and a highly developed system of social benefits. *Les Trente Glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* ('*The Glorious Thirty, or the Invisible Revolution from 1946 to 1975*'), gen. ed. Jean Fourastié, Fayard, Paris, 1979

⁴Netflix has historically relied on the high-yield bond market to finance its growth. Its debt load, including operating lease liabilities, has steadily grown to around \$13.5 billion since first tapping the market in 2009, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. *Netflix Borrowing \$2 Billion as War for Content Heats Up* by Molly Smith and Elizabeth Rembert, 21 October 2019

⁵Amazon is a major media player; yet, its core activity is e-commerce, thus pushing for consumerism in the first place and generating tons of waste like its Chinese counterpart, Alibaba

⁶Inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

⁷2013 Brazil Digital Future in Focus Report in *Comscore, Inc.*, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 7 March 2013