



Ideopolis – defining concept and use

E-consultation

27 July 2005

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About this consultation

The Ideopolis is city of ideas, where knowledge, creativity, enterprise, connectivity and the quality of life combine to create a dynamic local economy. In effect, Ideopolis are Cities where those who can choose where to work and live, choose to work and live.

The Ideopolis is shaped from a number of converging forces. These range from its physical assets through its energy and connectivity to its knowledge base. From the interplay of these forces it is possible to construct measures for profiling the past, current and future capacity for specific communities to become Ideopolis and, as such, lead the economic development of their region, nation or continent.

The failure to focus on the drivers of creative entrepreneurship (inside) or outside the Ideopolis can undermine and understate the potential of the core concept. A great deal of qualitative work has been done around the concept and drivers of Ideopolis. It is time, however, to identify quantifiable measures to enable cities and city-regions to put these concepts to practical use. By defining a set of Ideopolis indicators, cities and city-regions will be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, compare themselves to similar cities and city-regions globally and have the tools to put in place practical solutions to areas of weakness.

The aim of this E-consultation is to gather international opinion on the following issues:

- The concept of the Ideopolis
- How can the concept be used?
- How are people currently trying to use it?
- Is it possible to put together a set of measurable indicators?
- What might these indicators be?

The document that follows outlines the concept of the Ideopolis, and contains a report of the expert panel held in London on 31 March 2005. We would be grateful for comments, suggestions and feedback on any or the issues raised, or any others that you feel are relevant. The consultation period will run for approximately one month. Following this, a report of the consultation findings will be circulated to all respondents.

Background

The Ideopolis is distinguished primarily by a set of key physical and economic features; second, by a particular social and demographic mix; and third, by a specific cultural climate and set of commonly-held values. Will Hutton of Britain's *The Work Foundation* recently described the Ideopolis as:

'A twenty first century metropolitan version of what we first saw in Italian renaissance city-states. The key elements are the airport, the university and the capacity to create new ideas – either within or outside existing companies – that buoyant demand, intellectual capital and business self confidence help to sustain.'

The appeal of becoming a "City of Ideas" in the first decades of a knowledge-based industrial revolution is enormous. The ability to attract talent and convert that talent through ideas to prosperity is the only secure long-term economic strategy. Already cities often identified as Ideopolis such as San Francisco, Boston and Seattle in the USA and Barcelona, Edinburgh and Helsinki in Europe are seen as hubs for creative, dynamic communities. They demonstrate one feature of the Ideopolis that encapsulates the best, brief description – the communities where people who can choose where to work and live, choose to work and live

The Ideopolis concept

New economic environment

The Ideopolis is the city/ community, built around and driven by the creative search for and the application of ideas, thinking and knowledge and is firmly rooted the creative transfer of ideas, to opportunities, to innovation and, eventually, to production. At its heart the Ideopolis is merely the most extreme manifestation of the dynamic which has driven the development of science and technologies parks i.e. that environments in which entrepreneurship, innovation and knowledge are juxtaposed are uniquely well suited to the environment of the new economy being shaped in the 21st Century.

In *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, John Judis and Ruy Teixeira identified the Ideopolis with sectors they term as 'soft technology', such as 'entertainment, media, fashion, design, and advertising', plus business or personal services from retail banking to venture capital, extending beyond corporate consulting to personal mentoring.

Talent workers

The people who can choose where to work and live are those talented, entrepreneurial, highly educated professionals, who are closely identified with the new technologies, high-added-value services and internationally traded goods and services that have driven the latest wave of economic growth.

As their greater economic power and increased mobility converge the new professional, entrepreneurial and talent groups become more discriminating and demanding. Richard Florida calls them the creative class – "a fast-growing, highly educated, and well-paid segment of the workforce on whose efforts corporate profits and economic growth increasingly depend. Members of the creative class do a wide variety of work in a wide variety of industries--from technology to entertainment, journalism to finance, high-end manufacturing to the arts. They do not consciously think of themselves as a class. Yet they share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit." They are highly mobile and chose where to live and work on the basis of not only the amenities and physical assets, but the perceived values and dynamics of the city or community and Ideopolis.

Many of these talent workers have invested heavily in their skills and competences, and get their returns through entrepreneurial returns or wage and salary premia. Crucially, however, Judis and Teixeira also identified that such people were more likely than ever before to come from, or be enthused by, diverse, multicultural urban areas.

The knowledge edge

Just as knowledge, mobility, enterprise and communication are key characteristics of these new professionals and entrepreneurs, the amenities which underpin these shape the Ideopolis. A knowledge hub, probably a University or cluster of Universities, is at the cornerstone of the Ideopolis.

The Universities "funnel ideas and, more important, people into the hard or soft technology industries", service and professional sectors and create an environment in which media industries, culture and leisure sectors thrive.

Elite Universities play an especially important role in attracting geographically mobile talent while ensuring that funds are available for advanced research leading to technology (and other) spin-offs. The same elite Universities are linked into global networks of people, ideas and, increasingly, finance. It is no coincidence that when Bill Gates and Microsoft funded major developments in Higher Education, they linked Harvard (USA) with Cambridge (England) – probably the two highest ranked Universities in their respective countries.

Only with the parallel development of the new economy, sometimes called the knowledge economy did recognition of the synergy between economic and knowledge growth emerge. By 1980, Landes could observe that “the heart of the whole process of industrialisation and economic growth is intellectual.”

The growth and increasing vigour of the science and technology park community was not a coincidence. The underlying economic drivers are the same. These drivers are the search for the maximum return from valuable, often new resources and the ability of entrepreneurs to find innovative ways to extract, process and distribute this resource.

Linkages

For aspiring Ideopolis, the knowledge base links into the wider communications systems. International airports have an economic role, which extends far beyond the movement of passengers. Many are logistics hubs providing physical storage, security, trading networks and access to local and global marketplaces. For the new entrepreneurial professionals, the international is their natural gateway.

Despite the dramatic shift in physical communication that have highlighted the importance of international airports – road, rail and water born communications continue to play their role – especially in domestic transport. Helsinki, for example, with an excellent harbour and good road communications can stretch its networks across the Baltic, into Western Russia and Eastern Europe besides the rest of Scandinavia.

Physical access is only one aspect of the sets of linkages that are shaping the evolution of the Ideopolis. Telecommunications systems probably do more to shape the image, reputation and appeal of communities than direct experience for the vast majority of people. Manchester, England provided a vivid example of this during 2002, when the success of a sports event (the Commonwealth Games) had a profound effect of the City’s image, far beyond those who visited.

Environments

It is probably no coincidence that the Cities most often quoted as Ideopolis – “Boston and San Francisco” or “London, Edinburgh, Paris, Helsinki, Amsterdam, Marseille/Aix and Lyon/St Etienne, Milan and Barcelona” are either very attractive physically, with an outstanding built environment or contain large areas of such environments. Not surprisingly, those who can chose where to work and live, chose to work and live in physically attractive environments. The built environment of a location like Philadelphia, Edinburgh or Perth reflects not only the sense of pride felt in the past, but the potential for a future in which tangible and intangible assets merge.

The built environment in the Ideopolis is not merely the city as museum, but includes a willingness to build and shape a vibrant contemporary environment. This can include iconic, new physical developments but includes

quality housing especially for the young and mobile alongside a quality, physical infrastructure. Barcelona's new retail facilities and modern subway system are as important as the restaurants in the Barri Gòtic, the Raval and Gràci.

Equally, investment by the private sector in high quality and high amenity facilities is associated with an expectation of public sector provision of high quality social provision. This is most noticeable in education where the highly educated entrepreneurs, professionals, technocrats and workers expect good public schools and schooling. In health, there are substantial, international differences in assumptions about the source of provision, but few differences among these key groups about the expected quality of provision.

Parks, museums, galleries, opera houses are emerging as economic assets, whose value can greatly exceed their costs and any subsidies. High art and culture are part of a creative environment that ranges through night clubs, jazz, rock and comedy clubs to tolerance for diversity and difference.

Values and dynamics

Richard Florida and Gary Gates argue that "a city's diversity— its level of tolerance for a wide range of people—is key to its success in attracting talented people. Diverse, inclusive communities that welcome unconventional people—gays, immigrants, artists, and free-thinking "bohemians"—are ideal for nurturing the creativity and innovation that characterize the knowledge economy."

It is an argument that parallels that put forward by Uffe Elbaek in his claim that "the businesses, cities and nations that show curiosity and tolerance towards other cultures will stand strong. The vital 'buzz word' is diversity. Diversity of lifestyles and housing. Diversity of ambitions, skills and career opportunities. Diversity in cultural and social life. It is the dynamic and interplay between all of these 'diversities' which is the deciding factor for whether the society of a city or nation becomes a 'people-smart', socially responsible and culturally diverse space or a 'bad neighbourhood'."

In the Ideopolis the search for tolerance is associated with demands for security, public administration and social leadership of the highest standard. In the USA, in particular, personal security, effective policing and civic leadership are now key components in the economic development mix. Florida and Gates have posited a Diversity Index which linked proportion of gays, foreign born and "bohemians" (creatives, artists and musicians) in US metropolitan areas. Their analysis drew out a high correlation between the ranking of cities in terms of this Diversity Index and the Miliken Tech-Pole Index which attempts to measure the concentration of high technology industries in similar metropolitan areas.



Expert panel: Ideopolis indicators

Report

Thursday 31 March 2005

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Initial thoughts and questions

It was agreed that the Ideopolis concept is evident in a number of UK cities, in particular London. However, the extent to which the concept is really understood and agreed was questioned. The worry was raised that the term 'ideopolis' was being used as a buzzword, meaning different things to different people and to different cities. It was proposed that it was too early in Ideopolis research to begin to look for quantifiable measures, and that more work was needed to clarify and define the concept first. It was also suggested that more work was required on how the concept of the Ideopolis related to other growth strategies, for example science cities.

Related to this research, more work is needed on how the concept is being used in terms of regional and urban policy, and how it has potential to be used. Three key initial issues were identified:

- Definition of the Ideopolis
- How can the concept be used?
- How are people currently trying to use it?

Concept

It is possible to identify a range of broad preconditions common to 'Ideopolis cities', for example critical mass, size, property stock (including rentable) and the flow of people. However, once you get beyond these common factors, the concept becomes far more complicated. Issues include the following:

- Cities do not exist in isolation. The role of a city must be viewed within a complex network of other cities, and its role within the British, European and Global economy.
- Some iconic places which are commonly viewed as emblematic of Ideopolis are not cities, for example Silicon Valley. In addition, there are fast growing cities which do not fit into the Ideopolis model. There is a need for a clearer distinction between clusters and ideopolis'.
- The Ideopolis concept is currently being used to express a general desire to join the new economic environment, without analysis of what is distinctive and useful about the Ideopolis concept. Not every successful city is an Ideopolis.
- If a range of factors is required for a city to be categorised as an Ideopolis, are all of these required for a city to qualify? How can the variety and diversity of cities be accounted for (without blurring the distinctiveness of the Ideopolis).
- In UK terms, it is difficult to discuss London in relation to other UK cities. Similarly, does the Ideopolis concept cross national and global boundaries, or is adjustment needed.

Although it requires work, the Ideopolis concept does have distinctiveness and function. The current attempts to define and characterise the Ideopolis concept have highlighted the following:

- The Ideopolis concept is about trying to generate a new sort of economy based on intellectual property.
- Within the Ideopolis, education, traditions of work practices and cultural assumptions have embedded within them innovation, ideas and creativity.
- The Ideopolis is urban. It works through a centripetal force created by a range of, as yet nebulous, drivers. The Ideopolis is often linked to a boom in inner city population, but the question of which comes first is unanswered.
- Ideopolis are rarely new cities, they are cities with an historic and cultural fabric.
- Ideopolis citizens are moving within different spaces – geographical, technological, social and economic.

The methodology for further work needs to be discussed. Case studies are one option but face the problem of the identification of cause and effect in hindsight when not apparent in real time.

Work on current accepted Ideopolis will be useful however, as long as questions are clearly identified. For example – is there an Ideopolis out of nowhere? New Mexico, Boulder, Dublin, Helsinki and Barcelona have all been identified as Ideopolis, but the success of Boulder may be the most interesting to investigate, as it has less strategic impact or economic clout than the others. Issues such as liveability, university links and family-friendly elements may be influential.

Ideopolis drivers

Almost all the discussion of what drives the Ideopolis needs more research and analysis. Broad areas of interest have, however, been identified as follows:

New economic environment

Within the Ideopolis, there is an interrelation between knowledge based industries-growth-research institutes. In an Ideopolis, these linkages create growth and change through opportunities. Mobilisation of the private sector is essential.

The Ideopolis is based on a new sort of economy based on intellectual property. The question of which comes first, however – creativity or the new economic environment, is unanswered.

Talent workers

The Ideopolis relies on talented people, both indigenous people and immigrants. A volatile population of people moving into, out of and through the city is a key contributory factor in the whirl of innovation, creativity and ideas.

There is a wariness, however, of the Ideopolis reliance on a non-natural concentration of highly skilled people. There is an impression of too much concentration on talent migrants in discussions to date, at the cost of the indigenous population. It is important to create an environment where the indigenous population are major contributors to the Ideopolis. Less successful cities are losing out at an increasing rate, with the number of graduates moving out accelerating. To remain in a home city should be a positive decision.

Also, the Ideopolis based around innovation, creativity and ideas relies on an infrastructure provided by lower level positions. The nuts and bolts of city life cannot be forgotten.

There needs to be further discussion of the move through time as well as through space. The age and stage of the Ideopolis citizens needs to be seen as a new and key dimension. For example, the suburban areas around cities like Manchester draw talent workers of a different age and stage than city-centre urban populations. This needs to be factored into discussions.

More research is needed into the movement of talent workers into and out of Ideopolis. Who is coming? Why do they come? The ideal is a circular dynamic, with people moving in and out.

The knowledge edge

The economic role of universities is key to the success of an Ideopolis. Often, the economic force of the university is driven hard, exemplifying a powerful interventionist model. For example, US universities are often cornerstones of the local economy, perhaps because they are more geographically bound, and therefore more permanent entities, than corporates.

Work needs to be done to clarify and correlate the relationship between science/innovation and growth.

Linkages

Physical

Physical linkages within and without the Ideopolis are certainly apparent, but there is a sense that these physical linkages (air, rail and road) come from regional growth as opposed to the other way round. ("They are coming, so build the roads" as opposed to "build the roads and they will come")

Virtual

IT communications are changing the whole range of industries. A new economy is developing with increasing returns to scale. An urgency develops due to the concept 'in first – biggest gains'.

Face to face

The urban dynamic that drives the Ideopolis relies on the concentration of key decision makers and policy makers. As functions such as manufacturing and storage become more decentralised, there is an increased reliance on the face to face linkages of head offices, government offices and organisational headquarters.

There are different networks – professional and personal – developing across different spheres and different parts of the city. Communities are changing, with people positively choosing what determines their communities, not necessarily their next door neighbours but carefully chosen networks. Community and locality is no longer determined by physical geographic location by economic, social and cultural factors. Is there a dark side to the Ideopolis, with a lack of community and attachment, or have Ideopolis citizens just got more choice over where they create their personal, social and business linkages.

Environments

A clear locational brand is needed, but based on substance rather than hype. Elements such as the historic landscape and landmark buildings can instil clear symbolism in a city.

The environment has to be distinctive to the city. For example, do creative quarters work everywhere? (e.g. Merchant city Glasgow – teetering on the edge of failure).

There may be a need for smaller cities to energise their centre to a greater degree.

Values and dynamics

Strong local leadership is needed in the city within the city region. For the purpose of creating Ideopolis cities such as Newcastle and Gateshead need to consider joining forces and working together as twin cities (unlikely though that may be).

The Ideopolis requires a coherent vision. This can be achieved through an individual leader or through diffuse partnership working as long as there is consensual politics and a shared vision. Local power is needed to give cities the freedom to innovate in their leadership.

Next steps

A scheme of work needs to be developed which will research and analyse the issues identified:

- Definition of the Ideopolis and its drivers
- How can the concept be used?
- How are people currently trying to use it?

The following initial methodology is suggested to continue this research programme:

- A literature review of the current work on the Ideopolis concept, focusing on the identification of cities that have been named as Ideopolis, leading to a factorial investigation of these cities, identifying factors that are used to explain their Ideopolis status, potential drivers etc.
- A review of any public and urban policy that defines itself in terms of the Ideopolis concept.
- Production of an interim report identifying how others are defining the Ideopolis, and how people are currently trying to use the concept, containing a matrix of cities and the factors that others have determined as the reasons for their success/Ideopolis status.

The potential next stage is the identification of specific and measurable indicators, and these issues have been identified as key considerations:

- Should the measurables be inputs or outputs?
- Why are we measuring? It has been suggested that measurable factors are what public policy actors need in order to benchmark and galvanise action.
- Are all the measurables equally weighted, or are some more important than others?
- There is a need to ensure that we don't just measure the easiest e.g. patents.
- How can we factor in intangibles and perceptions?