

Creative Transformation: Lessons from China

Prof. Tamara Jovanov Apasieva, PhD

Faculty of Economics, Goce Delcev University, Stip, Republic of Macedonia,
tamara.jovanov@ugd.edu.mk

The possibilities of the Thousands of alternatives for development of societies, as opposed to the mantra of NO Alternative, are upon us.

Let me begin my chosen topic on “Creative transformation: Lessons from China” with a quote attributed to one of the most visionary and creative leaders the world has known (in my humble opinion), Deng Xiaoping: “No matter if it is a white cat or a black cat; as long as it can catch mice, it is a good cat.”

This sentence encapsulates the fundamentals of creative transformation – the process of thinking beyond conventional boundaries, questioning established norms, innovation, and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances.

Creative transformation can occur in various domains, including technology, business, art, culture, and society, and it often leads to positive change and growth.

Today, I want to explore the lessons we can learn from China's outstanding journey of creative transformation, with a particular focus on the transformative potential of collaboration between China and the Western Balkans (Macedonia) through the Belt and Road Initiative.

For this, I must take you on a short trip in China's history, not so far ago - notably the period of Deng Xiaoping's leadership, late 1970s, which was characterized by creative reforms:

- **Eclectic Economic Reforms (as I like to call it):**
- **Global Integration and Collaboration.**
- **Innovation in Science and Technology.**
- **Infrastructure Development.**
- **Education and Skills Development.**
- **Investment in the defense system of the country.**
- **Orientation towards collective, instead of personal prosperity.**

The creative transformation led to remarkable economic growth, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty.

Therefore, one must ask, what lessons can we pick up from this remarkable journey?

The lessons from China's transformative era, provide a valuable framework for understanding how creative transformation can drive development in other regions, such as the Western Balkans, including Macedonia. Here lies the inspiration to explore opportunities for collaboration and transformation, this time, through China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - a monumental infrastructure and economic development project that spans across Asia, Europe, and Africa, which aims to enhance connectivity, trade, and cooperation among participating nations.

The collaboration between the Western Balkans and China through the BRI holds the promise of a creative transformation for the region. **Here's my opinion on what would benefit Macedonia (and the region) the most:**

- **Education (and Skills) Development.**
- **Infrastructure Development.**
- **Development of business collaboration.**
- **Increase in Cultural Activities and Exchange.**
- **Sustainable Development.**
- **Trade and Investment.**
- **Increased collaboration with the NGO sector for improving the awareness of the public on China's potential and increased online promotion of China (in the native language of the countries).**

The Western Balkans has the potential to realize its own transformation by embracing the opportunities presented by the BRI. Let us draw inspiration from China's example and work together to create a brighter future for the Western Balkans, our home.