



Cultural Base

Social Platform
on Cultural Heritage
and European Identities

New Frameworks of Cultural Creativity

Vision Document
(cultural creativity axis)

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Abstract

The purpose of this Vision Document is to go beyond the prevailing view of cultural creativity as one dominated by economic considerations and to look for emergent alternatives. In the present instance, we would like to consider new institutional and practical frameworks of cultural creativity, which are also situated far from an economic way of thinking. In this Vision Document, firstly, we point out the limits and negative effects of the current context of cultural creativity dominated by the economic paradigm. Secondly, we explore new frameworks, narratives and policies of cultural creativity beyond the economic paradigm, highlighting challenges, future scenarios, key areas of change and possible ways forward.

1. Introduction

The current context of cultural creativity

Over the last few decades a great number of European cities have seen heavy investment in cultural facilities and policies designed to encourage the development of companies and institutions characterized by the generation of cultural goods and services. These strategies fall within two clear directional groups. On the one hand, those aimed at developing economic sectors linked to the production of cultural goods by encouraging activities related to the so-called **creative economy** (i.e. developing cultural and creative industries such as film, radio, television; web, textile, graphic and industrial design; fashion, advertising, photography and architecture). On the other hand, those aimed at generating cultural services to attract tourism and business by recovering the heritage that already exists in towns and cities (urban regeneration), creating cultural institutions and facilities (such as museums and cultural centres), organizing events, etc. under the umbrella of **creative city** policies.

Within this context, both academic literature, as well as reports and recommendations in public and cultural policies, start to use creativity as a key concept for understanding and promoting urban regeneration processes and economic development in many European cities. The result has been the emergence of a new creativity narrative, where this concept is understood within



the economic framework and linked with innovation processes. Concepts such as *creative economy* (UNCTAD 2008), *creative cities* (Landry and Bianchini 1998) and *creative class* (Florida 2002) are a representative sample of this new narrative.

Cultural creativity under the economic paradigm has rapidly become a hegemonic and dominant discourse that has served as a foundation for seductive speech for many policy interventions, not only in Europe but also in the rest of the world (Frankfurt 2005). This new situation is reflected in a vast range of reports at the European (European Commission 2010) and international level (UNCTAD 2008), which are aimed at promoting and encouraging public and cultural policies, where creativity is understood as a key element for innovation and economic growth.

Limits of cultural creativity narrative under the economic paradigm

Policies and interventions promoted and legitimized under the economic paradigm of cultural creativity have several limitations and undesirable effects that have been identified by numerous academic papers and discussed in the framework of the Cultural Base project.

Economic limitation: Economic reductionism is the main shortcoming and limitation of this kind of narrative. In this sense, creativity is only discussed in the context of socio-economic interactions, leaving out other frameworks of (non-economic) interaction and creativity. Some analysts point out that social and cultural diversity is understood and valued only as an input for innovation, economic development and the competition between cities in this context (Bodirsky 2011).

Social limitation: The treatment of workers involved in this type of economic interaction are also reductionist. While many scholars within the economic paradigm of cultural creativity understand and promote diversity from a broad perspective, ranging from ethno-linguistic factors, national origin, vocational and sexual orientation as a key element of creativity, innovation and economic growth (Florida and Gates 2001); it excludes social origin in its approach. Therefore, diversity is reduced to people with "talent" belonging to the so-called "creative class", which means highly qualified workers from the middle and upper middle classes of society (Bodirsky 2011; Eriksen 2006). Within this kind of hegemonic



narrative, creativity is also understood as an "individual" talent, and not as a social and collective processes.

Territorial limitation: This kind of narrative tends to focus and promote policies almost exclusively in urban city centres, omitting suburban and rural areas. Secondly, the analysis and recommendations under the umbrella of creative cities tend also to promote urban regeneration processes from a strictly economic point of view (Bodirsky 2011) linked to cultural consumption. Sharon Zukin pointed to the problems of "planned aesthetic" in cities such as New York, namely, the privatization of public space, building a multicultural landscape artificially dissociated from the true social context (Zukin 1992, 1995), and the problems of "gentrification" that generate these kind of processes (Zukin 1987). Finally, the economic paradigm also creates a picture of the space of creativity as a bounded and restricted realm of specialists, which is focused on commodified cultural products and the gifted creators that produce them, where a strict barrier separates those creators from consumers who are essentially passive, and where there is a radical hierarchization of places, cultural institutions and cultural creators.

Political limitation: Finally, several of the cultural policies within the economic narrative of cultural creativity, especially those related to urban-regeneration processes and economic development, come about following a top-down logic that places the definition of the project, and a good proportion of its development, in the upper levels of government, with little effective participation of the local community (Comunian 2011).

2. Challenges: Looking for new frameworks, narratives and policies of cultural creativity

Cultural Creativity should be distinguished from innovation and the economic paradigm. It has to be conceived, on the contrary, as an open-ended process that develops in a certain historical context and under given conditions, but one which possesses no necessary or immediate goals. A non-restrictive conception of creativity would imply finding and defining new frameworks, narratives and



policies beyond the economic paradigm. In this respect, there are three important *challenges* that we would like to address.

Challenge 1: To identify empirical examples and good practice of cultural creativity beyond the economic paradigm.

Key questions: *Is it possible to identify cultural creativity frameworks outside of the economic paradigm related to innovation? What kind of dynamics, institutional contexts and scenarios of cultural creativity can be identified outside this economic framework? What are best examples of dynamics, scenarios and good practice of cultural creativity processes from a non-economic point of view? [Empirical and analytical issues]*

Identifying examples of **new scenarios, dynamics and good practices** not oriented to an economic purpose is the first step to go beyond the economic framework of cultural creativity. There are several examples of artistic practices, which are not strictly economic and are oriented and open to the exploration of purposes. Some of these artistic practices are permeable to the problems of the social and local environment, such as community-based arts theatre scene in the Netherlands: *Utrecht's Stut Theatre*, *Rotterdams Wijtheater* or the *International Community Arts Festival* are some outstanding practices in this scope. *Ballhaus Naunynstrasse* in Berlin or *Copenhagen Music Theatre* should be considered as groundbreaking initiatives. On the other hand, problems of the social and local setting can be faced from the creative process as a raw material in performing arts, as a great number of community-based organizations committed to social inclusion working with *Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed* methodology in Europe have proved.

Other artistic practices raise **dynamics of social and public engagement to educational purposes**. Wide-ranging programs like *Apropa Cultura* in Catalonia, a social and educational program targeting the social sector and *Kultura Dostępna* in Poland; or area-specific programs as *Diamond Project* (Dialoguing Museums for a New Cultural Democracy), which brought together a group of scientific museums and research centres committed to providing learning opportunities for adult people through the use of ICT and storytelling. All above are good examples of cultural creativity practices with social engage and educational purpose.



Other questions concern the ***institutional configurations and frameworks*** that underlie the new dynamics of creativity. Is it possible to identify examples of institutional spaces supporting these new dynamics? We have witnessed the enhancement and upraising of art factories, industrial heritage sites transformed into creativity hubs and catalysts. Under the paradigm of *La Friche La Belle de Mai* in Marseille, public programs in Spain like *Fàbriques de Creació de Barcelona* in Catalonia, *Fábricas de Creación* in Basque Country or *Matadero Madrid* are reshaping the idea of institutional spaces for creativity.

Finally, what about ***peripheral, rural or non-urban areas***? Are there examples of effective creative places of this kind in spite of the difficulties these situations create with respect to connectivity? The change that the *Ruhrgebiet* area has undergone serves today as a model for the radical social, economic and cultural transformation of a former industrial area through creativity without the denial of its heritage. Enterprises as *La Harinera* (Pedro Muñoz, Ciudad Real, Spain), *La Métive* (Moutier-d'Ahun, Creuse, région Limousin, France) or *Ozu* (Monteleone Sabino, Lazio, Italy) are examples of good practices in rural areas.

Challenge 2: Creating a common normative consensus that works as a basis to develop a new theoretical and conceptual framework on cultural creativity beyond the economic paradigm.

Key questions: *Is it possible to define a new cultural creativity narrative outside of the hegemonic economic discourse? On what grounds should this be based? What conceptual and theoretical elements should be taken into account in its definition? [Normative and theoretical issues]*

From the examples provided above, it is necessary to create a common normative consensus that works as a basis to develop a new theoretical and conceptual framework on cultural creativity, beyond the economic paradigm. A new narrative on cultural creativity is necessary in order to prevent a narrow understanding of the social processes behind cultural creation being solely part of innovation and economic proposes. Disconnecting cultural creativity from innovation helps us to understand and promote other social practices that connect the creative forces of a society with more democratic purposes, such as social and cultural inclusion;



improving the social conditions of people; seeking for better models of social participation and organizations; promoting the emergence of new and alternative forms of scientific and artistic production; establishing more sustainable relationships with our natural, social and cultural environment. Changing the cultural creativity paradigm does not imply disconnecting creativity from innovation processes, nor from the market. On the contrary, it seeks to create better social and cultural conditions for cultural creation, through the empowerment of individuals, groups and organizations.

The foundation of cultural creativity under a new paradigm involves the generation of a theoretical framework for understanding both the notion of cultural creativity as the role and dynamics of the participation of creators, mediators and institutions. How should cultural creativity be understood? As an individual talent or as part of a collective and social process? Should cultural creativity be understood within collaborative or conflicting social dynamics? How can the roles of creators and mediators be redefined in the context of such a new paradigm of creativity? How does the relationship with heritage change in this situation? How inclusive are these paradigms? Are marginal groups, like immigrants, minorities, elderly people, unemployed and youth included?

Challenge 3: To elaborate new cultural and public policies of creativity beyond the economistic paradigm.

Key questions: *Is it possible to define new public and cultural policies that encourage cultural creativity outside the economistic paradigm? What guidelines and objectives should be followed? What examples of existing policies should be taken into account as a reference? What kinds of mechanisms of recognition, support and legitimation would be necessary for sustaining a new dynamic of creativity beyond the market? What kinds of cultural and education policies might favour or hinder it? And what other structural conditions might be considered important (for instance, historical and material contexts, conflict and cooperation dynamics, power relations, levels of development, infrastructure)? [Normative issues and policies]*

One of the main problems that new policies on cultural creativity should face is the issue of periodicity and sources of finance. Public grants and subsidies are mostly goal-oriented in a short-term lapse, hindering creative processes and proposals



that go beyond annual budget cycles. Longer budgetary and evaluation cycles are far away of being widely adopted.

On the other hand, bottom-up transnational processes of cultural creativity are by far not widespread, generating isolation and a hindrance to permanence. The lack of non-sectorial networks of cultural creative actors might be an important issue in this fact.

3. Keys of Change: Cultural Creativity under the parading of hybridization and sustainability

Creating a common **normative consensus** that works as a basis to develop a **new theoretical and conceptual framework** on cultural creativity is an important task to develop. There are several frameworks of cultural creativity beyond the economic paradigm. Examples of this alternative framework link creativity with social innovation, artistic and educational goals, and psychological development, etc.

From the contributions and discussions among academics and stakeholders during the first phase of the Cultural Base Project, at least two possible bases have been identified to analyze and promote processes of cultural creativity beyond the prevailing economic paradigm. One alternative is to use the notion of **hybridization** as a ground for analyzing processes of cultural creativity. Another alternative is to inscribe the processes of cultural creativity within the paradigm of **sustainability**.

Cultural Creativity under the paradigm of hybridization

Within this paradigm, cultural creativity could be understood as the basis for new practices oriented to promote inclusion in the framework of European multicultural societies. The multicultural coexistence originating from recent migration has turned out to be more complex in Europe than in other places because of the new conditions in which it has been produced: there is a greater cultural distance and strengthening of the ties that current immigrants to Europe maintain with their countries of origin, which causes greater resistance to cultural



absorption (Lamo de Espinosa 1995). In these conditions, the pattern of multicultural coexistence has tended to be latently conflictive, with only a relative integration of immigrants into Western culture, and a distant mutual tolerance between immigrants and the native population. This pattern could become positive through cultural creativity and artistic and cultural expression. In this sense, cultural creativity under a paradigm of hybridization can function as a basis for understanding and promoting inclusive policies and practices among groups with different socio-cultural backgrounds (e.g. immigrants, minorities, unemployed, youth or elderly people) (Rodríguez Morató, Zarlenga, and Zamorano 2015; see also Vision Document 4).

Cultural Creativity under the paradigm of sustainability

Within this paradigm, the processes of cultural creativity can be linked to sustainability. Creativity under the economic paradigm of the creative city has generated unsustainable practices in many European cities. These practices are expressed in the existence of urban hierarchies due to the economic competition between cities; processes of homogenization and standardization of the urban landscape, due to the existence of similar processes of transformation of city centers; social networks based on noncommittal relationships -good for searching for jobs- but not for creating strong communities on socially and culturally sustainable levels (Kirchberg 2015). Sustainability could function as a basis for understanding and promoting sustainable urban development and creative processes related to ecological resilience and socially equitable and inter-culturally vibrant modes of life. To achieve this goal, both the role of urban artists and their artistic creative processes, and cultural institutions in general, should assume the values of cultural sustainability as: civic participation through bottom-up urban governance, equal justice, multiple dimensions of diversity, freedom-with-responsibility of alternatives in values and lifestyles, diversity, and the political support of indigenous, home-grown and idiosyncratic cultural values in local communities (Kirchberg 2015)

The above paradigms are not the only possible alternatives to cultural creativity. However, they could serve as a basis to discuss new models of understanding and to develop policies of cultural creativity that facilitate citizen integration,



participation and sustainable relationships with the social, cultural and natural environment.

Conclusions

The necessity to understand and promote processes of cultural creativity beyond the dominant economic narrative, not only allows for the constraints and problems that this type of framework causes to be identified, it also promotes social inclusion, civic participation and a more sustainable relationship with the social, cultural and natural environment. To achieve this aim, the identification of new scenarios, dynamics and good practices in cultural creativity is extremely relevant. Based on these examples, and the contribution of relevant academic papers on the subject, it is possible to create a new normative consensus that works as a basis to develop a conceptual framework and theoretical approach on culture creativity, and to elaborate new and public policies of creativity.

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