

Creative arts and cultural professions within the Europe 2020 Strategy

A few issues and challenges

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Introduction

Focusing on the cultural and creative arts sectors is inspiring from a number of standpoints. For instance, European governing bodies agree to state that they contributed around 2.6% to the EU's GDP in 2008, and employed around 3.1% of the European workforce, a percentage that is equivalent to that represented by farming. Culture is therefore a key sector for the European Union, and is a particularly good fit with the Europe 2020 Strategy, even if it is not mentioned in the text.

In fact, it appears to be a major player in "smart growth" and in the knowledge economy, towards which the EU would like to aim: artists are good at thinking differently, and are therefore a source of innovation not only in the cultural field itself, but also in technological innovations, research and education.

As drivers for economic recovery and technological innovations, the creative arts professions appear to be a source of innovations and social cohesion, and of "inclusive growth". In fact, artists and creative arts professionals are artistic operators, who not only create social ties thanks to their creative activity, but also anticipate changes in society. Accordingly, culture plays a major role in regional development. Many urban areas have already understood this potential; for instance, Brussels introduced a "Cultural Plan for Brussels" in 2013, which positions cultural policies as major social and political challenges for the region¹.

As summed up by Culture Action Europe, an organisation that defends the role of the arts and culture in the development of the European Project, culture is a transversal European issue: " culture interrelates with a variety of other fields and almost every aspect of contemporary life and society, e.g. the cultural industries, media and new technologies, tourism and leisure, urban planning, regional development, education and training. (...) the cultural sector generates employment and [that] it

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contributes to social cohesion, innovation, sustainable development and other common objectives in the EU².

Moreover, focusing on the creative sector means focusing on a sector that combines a number of major challenges faced by other economic sectors, and more generally by the European Union. In fact, a report published by the French Ministry of Culture in January 2014 has just pointed out the economic importance of culture, the value-added of which no longer needs to be proved³.

Like players in the social economy, professionals in the creative arts sector must find appropriate business models and forms of entrepreneurship, which take the activities resulting from both the market economy and the non-market economy into account. Creative arts professionals also face challenges relating to an increase in non-standard jobs, including low and irregular income, relatively inappropriate social security cover, and difficulties in accessing lifelong education. These issues also affect people who make a living from non-standard jobs and work on an hourly basis (in personal care services and manufacturing industries, etc.) or on a project basis (contracted university staff and IT technicians, etc.), as well as the low-paid self-employed, to varying degrees.

The purpose of this report is to put cultural and creative arts professions back into the European context in which they are performed, and which has a growing influence over this sector, like all other professional environments. It also questions the links between cultural and socio-economic issues, and more specifically between culture and the "social enterprise" model, which has also been a focal point of European policies since the Social Entrepreneurship Initiative (2011). Lastly, it focuses on "project-based" working conditions (a characteristic feature of the sector, which is dominated by non-standard forms of employment) that are also influenced by the European Union. This report aims to act as a catalyst for questions, by setting out various issues (including the way in which we view them) where answers still need to be drawn up, and on which we will continue to work while remaining open to any contributions.

These various questions brought together a series of players in Brussels on 14 October 2013, during a European conference on "Creative arts and cultural professions within the Europe 2020 Strategy"⁴. This conference was the inspiration for this report, which attempts to summarise the challenges and issues relating to this topic. In addition to the comments that were contributed, this event also enabled cultural players to connect with Europe, not only in order to gain a better understanding of the strategies that concern them, but also to make Europe more aware of the realities on the ground. The keywords of this encounter were therefore "dialogue" and "unity", so as to enable the real importance of culture to be recognised, and players in the cultural field to prosper within a rapidly changing social, economic and urban framework.

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² Culture Action Europe, "Glossary—Structural funds".

³ See for instance Piquard, A., "The State spends over €13 billion on culture" in *Le Monde*, 04.01.2014, available at the following address: http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/-13/22/la-chirurgie-au-champ-d-honneur_3518282_3224.html

⁴ View the programme for this event and the speakers' CVs (in English) and speeches here: <http://www.ess-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Culture-20131014-Bio-Speakers.pdf>

I. Creative arts and cultural professions – A European issue

Culture in European policies and programmes

The first observation to make in order to understand the role of culture in the European Union's strategies and programmes is that it is not the subject of a clear definition; depending on the context, it may be understood as synonymous with art, expressions of societal heritages, and cultural industries, etc. The vagueness surrounding this concept has not always enabled culture to play a choice role within European policies, despite its potential in many areas (social cohesion, development, creativity, innovation, etc.).

In fact, culture is not actually included in the text of the Europe 2020 Strategy⁵ (unlike environment). This prevents cultural players from easily finding their bearings within this fundamental framework, which has steered all current policies since 2010, and will steer them until 2020. However, Europe is implicitly banking on culture as a driver for economic development, (technological, social and economic) innovation, and regional development. In this context, culture should be synonymous with "growth" and "job creation", although it must not be limited to this "economic" approach, as it plays many other roles: in fact, it contributes towards another form of growth, since creativity and the cultural industries are undoubtedly capable of developing a new sustainable business model that does not make seeking profits its focal point, and that also contributes more broadly to the transition process in our societies.

However, aside from the EU Global Strategy, there is a programme dedicated to supporting the creative and cultural sectors, which has been developed under the name of "Creative Europe"⁶, for the period between 2014 and 2020. The aim of this programme, which has a budget of €1.46 billion, is to provide financial support to professionals in the creative arts and cultural sectors, support trans-national co-operation projects, assist networks and platforms for professionals in the cultural sector, and simplify access to private capital for the sector, as well as more specifically awarding the title of "European Capital of Culture" or supporting the audio-visual industry in Europe (MEDIA sub-programme).

This approach is in keeping with the "European Agenda for Culture", which results from a communication regarding a "European agenda for culture in a globalising world"⁷ issued by the European Commission in 2007. This Communication encourages European institutions, and national authorities in the cultural sector to promote cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue, culture as a driver for innovation and creativity, and culture within the EU's international relations⁸. To achieve this aim, States are required to co-operate via the open coordination method (OCM), while cultural players can enter into discussions with the EU via the various channels that have been organised (theme-based platforms and culture forum).

⁵ European Commission, "Europe 2020": http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_fr.htm

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⁷ European Commission, Communication regarding a European cultural agenda in a globalising world, COM(2007), 242 final, Brussels on 10.05.2007.

⁸ European Commission, "European Agenda for Culture", http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/european-agenda_fr.htm. For further information see for instance Culture Action Europe, "European Agenda for Culture", <http://www.cultureactioneurope.org/lang-fr/advocate/eu-agenda-for-culture>.

Challenges facing players in the cultural sector

Culture therefore falls within the European Union's scope for action from various standpoints, although it is not included in either the goals or the initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, it could be researched more closely and taken into account at the Community level, primarily from the standpoint of the social, economic and environmental transition, or of social cohesion. In fact, operators in the creative arts create ties thanks to their creative activities. For instance, artists play essential roles within a village, a district or a city: they not only create their works and disseminate them, but also represent a very important aspect of the cultural momentum, and sometimes even of the economic and social momentum. Likewise, culture is not only a source of innovation in the field of culture itself, but also from the standpoint of technological, research and education innovations etc. The "Impact of Culture on Creativity" report explains this in the following way: *"this culture-based creativity is linked to the ability of individuals – and especially of artists – to think in an imaginative or metaphorical way, and to defy conventions, as well as appealing to symbols and emotions in order to communicate. It has the capacity to break down conventions and received wisdom, in order to enable the emergence of new approaches, ideas and products. The nature of culture-based creativity is closely linked to the nature of artistic contributions, as expressed in artistic and cultural productions. This spontaneous, intuitive, and unique nature, which expresses human sensitivity, enriches society"*⁹.

Culture is therefore at the heart of society; it is essential for safeguarding democracy, as it provides a feeling of belonging and of sharing in the common good. The cultural aspect of individuals' development and fulfilment is increasingly recognised (including in terms of developing "soft skills"). This means that culture is linked to quality of life and well-being, and also creates identity and values that strengthen social ties, wealth and ideas that contribute to economic momentum and innovation, and an inheritance to hand down to future generations, in the same way as the natural environment¹⁰.

It also gives individuals and society the tools to understand and withstand the surrounding environment in a better way, which are essential assets for living through transition periods like the one we are currently experiencing in a more aware manner. This is why it is important for professionals in the sector to put culture back at the centre of society and policies, to highlight it and enable it to percolate through every policy, rather than confining it to a political action area that is limited and underfunded. The challenge today is very similar to the one faced by environmentalists 20 years ago, i.e. turning a marginal concept into a key and focal concept for any development strategy. To achieve this aim, politicians first need to consider the creative arts and cultural sector outside its sole contribution to the market sector, while learning to use qualitative measures for assessing the initiatives performed at the same time.

However, culture should not develop at any price. In its policies, the EU should therefore ensure, *inter alia*, that creative arts professionals can make a living from their activities under these conditions. Since the problems experienced by artists are similar throughout Europe, and since these workers are required to travel extensively, some themes specific to artists therefore deserve to be developed further at the European level (social security cover, mobility, stability, etc.).

Moreover, aside from the issues relating to recognising the role of culture in a society, it is crucial that arts and culture are not only recognised for their contributions, but that the creative arts sector is allowed room for manoeuvre in order to develop within the context of its own operations and its own codes.

The challenge for cultural players is therefore a double one: on the one hand continuing to advocate a role for the arts and creation in the Europe 2020 tools and other European programmes and instruments, and enabling them to be included in forthcoming Strategies. On the other hand, taking full advantage of the initiatives that have already been implemented by the EU, even if "culture" is not

⁹ KEA European Affairs, *The Impact of Culture on Creativity*, a report produced for the European Commission, June 2009, Summary p. 2.

¹⁰ See Pour la Solidarité, *La transition: un enjeu économique et social pour la Wallonie (Transition: an economic and social challenge of the Walloon Region)*, Les Cahiers de la Solidarité No.°32, Brussels, March 2013, p. 33.

clearly featured in these initiatives (like the Initiative for Social Entrepreneurship and the European Social Fund for instance).

Meanwhile, the EU would be well advised to place more emphasis on culture and creativity if it wants to achieve its ambitious targets, and to not rely solely on the market aspect of culture, on condition that all economic, social and cultural players are involved in the project together, on an equal basis.

II. Culture and social entrepreneurship

Culture and social entrepreneurship are linked, even if both environments have primarily evolved in parallel. In fact, a large majority of professionals in the creative arts have structured themselves into non-profit organisations, and work in accordance with the principles of social economy. In other words, producing work with a social and collective purpose, while placing particular importance on the recognition of the individual, on the principles of exchange, on pooling resources, etc. Furthermore, in addition to the principal of culture's social inclusiveness, many artists take care to work with local players and to develop synergies with them.

It is therefore entirely beneficial to question the ties between culture and the social economy, and to analyse the contributions that the social entrepreneurship model can make to culture, and the potential combination of social entrepreneurship and creative arts professions, especially in the current European context, which has recently been promoting social enterprises.

European background: the Initiative for Social Entrepreneurship

To address the impact of the economic downturn, the EU has banked on the single market, which it wants to strengthen in order to create jobs. To achieve this aim, the Single Market Act (April 2011) had identified 12 "drivers" for "stimulating growth and boosting confidence"¹¹. These drivers included: social entrepreneurship, to which a specific initiative was dedicated. Even though the social economy has been a focal point of European policies since the 1990s, European policy regarding social entrepreneurship has only been structured very recently, primarily due to this initiative.

The Social Entrepreneurship Initiative (SEI) (October 2011) determines the role of social enterprises in the Europe 2020 Strategy¹²: "social enterprises contribute to smart growth by responding with social innovation to needs that have not yet been met; they create sustainable growth by taking into account their environmental impact and by their long-term vision; they are at the heart of inclusive growth due to their emphasis on people and social cohesion. In other words, their key aim is to effect social and economic transformation which contributes to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy."¹³ This communication suggests three main lines of action:

- simplifying social enterprises' access to funding, which is fundamental for enterprises that are facing difficulties in accessing loans and a decrease in public subsidies;
- boosting their visibility and their recognition, by increasing the credibility of social entrepreneurship. This, primarily by reviewing the extent of its impact, and by showing that the social economy withstood the economic downturn to a greater extent, overall;
- and simplifying the legal environment for social enterprises.

¹¹ European Commission, Communication on the Single Market Act – 12 drivers for stimulating growth and boosting confidence. "Together for new growth", COM2011 (206) final, Brussels, April 2011.

¹² See European Commission "Social entrepreneurship", http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/social_business/index_fr.htm

¹³ European Commission, Communication on the Social Entrepreneurship Initiative – building an ecosystem to promote social enterprises at the heart of the economy and social innovation, COM(2011) 682 final, Brussels, 25.10.2011, pp. 3-4.

The ties between culture and social entrepreneurship¹⁴

European measures to promote social entrepreneurship represent an opportunity for giving the cultural sector the resources to develop and to "survive", primarily because the creative arts and cultural professions exist as suppliers of a service to society, and therefore add value society as a whole.

Culture and the economy

If we consider "economy" to mean the fact of producing goods or services through using resources to meet requirements (which can also be achieved within a non-market dimension), then culture falls within the scope of "economic" activity, even where non-commercial approaches are concerned. In fact, the creative arts sector, and the cultural sector on a broader basis, cannot be entirely viewed as a market activity.

We may take the view that culture operates within a "partially" non-market approach for several reasons. First and foremost, some cultural productions require significant fixed costs; they therefore need to be financed in another way than solely via "pricing": this means that non-market funding is required. In addition, cultural activities have multiple benefits, which not only concern those who "consume" them directly. In fact, cultural activities also enable the promotion of social cohesion and freedom of expression, etc., for society in general. Given that the benefits go beyond consumption, culture cannot simply rely on being funded by consumers.

Lastly, in Europe, there is a social consensus that believes that everyone must have access to culture, and recognises the importance of cultural activities. These activities must be protected, in order to avoid the risk of under-production and under-consumption resulting from a lack of resources for culture. This means that culture is any economic sector that is at least partially in keeping with a non-market approach. However, the non-market sector suffers during economic downturns, in terms of both budgets and recognition.

Culture and society

Culture is currently suffering from its relations with society; it is suffering from the pressure that leads cultural players to resemble other players, who have a market approach and demonstrate immediate effectiveness (for creating jobs, for instance). To deal with this pressure, there are therefore two contrasting solutions for cultural players: either being part of the "standard" capitalist framework, or deviating from the existing model and therefore distancing themselves from society. Evidently, many artists have made the second choice, as we have been seeing culture develop alongside society over the past 30 years: culture has developed on the margins of society, and is not evident as a central cornerstone of society.

On the other hand, through the concept of institutional entrepreneurship, sociologists observe that society can also be influenced by the cultural field. In fact, although society can put pressure on the players involved, the latter can contribute to changes in society in their turn. Players in the cultural sector may therefore develop their own approach, and have it recognised by society in order to transform that society, including from an economic standpoint.

Culture and social enterprises

Social enterprises are private enterprises that are managed in a democratic manner according to non-capitalist goals, i.e. a model that has a social purpose and limited distribution of profits. Thanks to this operating model, and to the hybrid resources on which it is based, social enterprises are able to innovate from a social standpoint, because they have a breakthrough model that does not expect an

¹⁴ Based on the presentation by Sybille Mertens and Rocío Nogales at the conference in Brussels on 14.10.2013 "Creative arts and cultural professions within the European 2020 Strategy".

immediate return. Lastly, they are capable of creativity and systemic change if they communicate with one another.

Culture and transition

According to research on transition¹⁵, when a system is put under pressure and is in crisis, which is currently the case for the capitalist system, it is worthwhile to look at what has been produced in areas that were "niche" up until this point; i.e. experiments that have been conducted away from dominant trends and that meet the unfulfilled requirements of society via social innovation. In fact, what takes place within these niches can inspire a change of system. To achieve this goal, what happens there must be highlighted and disseminated, so that a shared approach that is different from the dominant system can be promoted.

Culture genuinely appears to be a place for niches, which experiment with radical innovations that may have an impact on communities. However, to achieve this aim, culture must renew its ties with society, and confirm its ability to recommend operating methods that correspond to society's requirements. In this sense, culture is in keeping with the same approach as social entrepreneurship, and should therefore form a relationship with this alternative enterprise model.

Challenges

Therefore, since a large number of cultural assets are also being developed within niches, and are a source of creativity and social innovation, culture can certainly adopt the social enterprise model. Culture and social entrepreneurship certainly have a definite interest in linking up, and combining all their strengths in order to build a common approach to a different way for society to operate, based on the general interest. This "other way" undoubtedly involves the development of a new economic model that is similar to the one implemented by social enterprises, namely a model based on sharing and use, rather than ownership. Moreover, to develop, this new economic model must be widely backed by a large group of organisations and projects, that must be able to express their collective opinions on this ambitious project, which exceeds the local framework.

Players in the cultural sector must take advantage of the current European environment, which encourages social entrepreneurship, in order to support the social enterprise model on a European scale.

¹⁵ *Transition Management* (Loorbach 2007, 2010).

III. Project-based working conditions and creative arts professions

The creative arts sector is characterised by the predominance of non-standard forms of employment. Careers in the sector develop on a project-by-project basis, which has huge implications in terms of income, skills development, work organisation and the social statuses adopted. The specific factors are combined with other broader issues like appropriate entrepreneurship, financing, and social security cover for people working on short-term contracts.

Specific features of project-based work

The term "project-based work" is derived from artists' working methods, which are extremely varied; their working method differs from traditional salaried employment, since in the vast majority of cases, it is characterised by a sequence of short-term contracts, with changing teams and roles (project backer, stakeholder, contractor, etc.). The professional network is fundamental to the development of artists' careers, both in terms of hiring, and of exchanging ideas and skills. For some people, the sector is a vast network of individual entrepreneurs, where you need to be flexible, mobile and cutting-edge to be successful. A project provides the opportunity to create a team that is as temporary as the length of the project. Each stakeholder must devote all their efforts to the project, and is held responsible for its successful outcome.

Several specific features and issues therefore arise in this context. First and foremost, fragmentation: that of the role of institutions, social solidarity and income. Next, there is the issue of creativity: it is hard to be creative, up to speed with new information on trends, and to give one's best all the time. Time to resource and renew is not allowed, or at least not paid for. Lastly, and more fundamentally, there is the problem of social solidarity, regardless of whether it is at the individual or societal level. In the first case, social solidarity is likely to be functional, and to limit itself to the period of the project. At the societal level, professionals in the creative arts sector find it hard to benefit from social security cover, because their paid working periods are too limited, while their income is not continuous, and is often low.

This means that artists are not only exposed to the risk of being excluded from a social security cover scheme, but also from ongoing training services or conventional banking services, due to the lack of a system that is able to take the specific features of project-based work into account. Working conditions for professionals in the cultural sector are therefore very fragile.

Moreover, the cultural sector is also often characterised by the fact that artists are not looking for an immediate return, and receive intermittent remuneration, even though they work on a continuous basis. The creative arts sector is also a sector where there is strong competition and increasingly high requirements (individuality, mobility, a short-term approach, networking, etc.) that are not particularly conducive to creativity and sustainability.

Challenges

Professionals in the creative arts find themselves in a "grey area" of the employment market in Belgium, somewhere between the status of a paid employee and that of the self-employed (a work relationship model that is increasingly being called into question); they must therefore be the subject of a specific review that takes their special features into account, and guarantees them proper employment conditions. A review regarding a specific framework for project-based workers must be

conducted in all European countries, so that employment rights and labour rights are accessible and appropriate to all those who work on a project basis.

This review must also take into account the need to support these players' creativity, to protect cultural diversity, and to organise social solidarity systems between these very individual workers. The challenge is to be able to design solutions that are sufficiently flexible, given the very different situations that characterise the cultural and creative sector itself.

All these challenges are obviously reflected at the European level. In fact, the European Union should support the creative arts and cultural sector, without restricting it solely to its social usefulness. This, to enable the protection of cultural diversity in Europe and workers in the creative arts and cultural sectors, thanks to better social security coverage (as recommended by the UNESCO Convention on the status of artists that most European Union countries signed in 1980). Moreover, the economic and financial downturn that our societies are currently experiencing is mentioned every day at the European level: this particular context must also be looked at as a factor that influences the working conditions of professionals in the creative arts. The austerity policies implemented by Member States have resulted in budget cuts in all social areas (unemployment benefit, education, health care, etc.). In keeping with this trend, budgets allocated to culture have also been drastically reduced. Is this really what our society needs right now?

IV. Conclusions

The challenges and contributions of the cultural and creative arts sectors and of the social economy take many forms.

Social economy enterprises and professionals in the creative arts sector are economic entities that operate in the market and non-market sectors. Reducing them solely to their contribution to employment and towards increasing GDP means not considering them at their fair value.

Although these aspects have recovered some of their political attraction in the past few years, they remain neglected in many political areas (budget, taxes, employment, etc.), while their social contribution is not yet sufficiently widely recognised. The most likely explanation is political management, which is required to measure the impact of its initiatives and funding in quantitative terms. The social economy in the creative arts sector in general would benefit from helping political decision-makers to design a tool that could offset the impact of policies where the main effect is of a qualitative nature (like initiatives in the education, health care, social fields, etc.). This would enable them to influence the current societal transition, in order to help the values shared by both sectors to prevail, like putting profit at the service of the community rather than of personal gain.

Social security cover for people working on a project basis, and more broadly in new forms of employment, is another challenge that could unite both sectors. In many companies in the social economy (like cooperatives), workers cannot be considered as just employees or employers. Therefore, the accessibility and protection of social security rights becomes problematic, as it is based on an employment relationship model designed for the industrial sector of the early 20th century.

The social economy and the creative arts sectors would benefit significantly not only from learning from one another, but also from joining forces in order to create a critical mass in a crucial political area at a time of economic, social and political transition.