CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS: CULTURAL ANTS
'IDENTITY, PERSPECTIVES AND DILEMMAS'

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Abstract

For the past decade the sector of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) has gained a growing interest, both within the political arena and amongst policy developers. Within the sector we can identify two different positions. On the one hand we find Art Managers, holding managerial responsibilities within cultural and art organizations. In this article we concentrate on a second profile; the Cultural and Creative Entrepreneur. The largest part of the Cultural and Creative Industries consists of very small, independent entrepreneurial initiatives. This Cultural Ant works within a continuous, fast changing environment, characterized by uncertainty. We challenge the dilemma's facing the support of these small-scale entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Creative Economy, Entrepreneurship, Cultural Management, Training dilemmas, Innovation, Creativity

INTRODUCTION

In 2000 the German sociologist Ulrich Beck announced the '*end of the employee society*' in his book *The future of work and democracy*. According to Beck the future of work no longer finds itself in employed labour alone, but is increasingly being formed into new descriptions, constructions and models (Beck, 2000). Now, fifteen years later a (relatively) new character, the '*entrepreneurial individual'*, found its way to the top of the modern workforce pyramid. Especially in Cultural and Creative industries this multi-skilled, flexible and psychologically resilient is what the current entrepreneurial creative culture demands (Ellmeier, 2010). The strong trend in the

recent years, towards a more entrepreneurial-minded European Welfare-state labour market, has undoubtedly its implications for arts management support, education and training.

Managers and Cultural Entrepreneurs

For the past decade the sector of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) has gained a growing interest, both within the political arena and amongst policy developers. The UNCTAD Creative Economy Report proved that the cultural and creative sectors are a significant driver of growth and jobs in Europe (Dos Santos Duisenberg, 2010). In addition they offer a key source of creativity and innovation, as well as contributing significantly to social cohesion and well-being. In the follow-up of the economic success, a lot of statistical data supported the growing interest of policy-makers in culture and its role in society, the economy and the cohesiveness of Europe (European Commission, 2010). The Educational Institutions have followed suit. Various universities have initiated professional educational curricula, both at a Bachelors and Masters Level.

Often the CCIs are treated as one homogenous sector. Within the CCIs however, one can identify different types of organizations, with different positions included. On the on hand we find institutionalized art- and cultural organizations like museums, organizations in the performing arts (theatre, dance and music), event organizations and production houses, etc. Within these formal organizational structure one identifies '*arts managers'*: people officially appointed at a specific post within a formalized organizational structure; a museum, concert-hall, theatre production, pop music venues, etc. They operate within hierarchical structures, hold explicit responsibilities, comparable to '*regular*' institutions; hiring and firing personnel, steering the different departments, deciding about policy and strategy issues, etc.

At the other end of the spectrum we find the *entrepreneurs*; those that look for new products, new opportunities and markets, initiating things that '*have not been there before'*. Their activities are genuine 'innovative'. Often these – mostly small scale – entrepreneurs operate from a local level, creating multiple networks in order to find a sustainable existence. In this article we will concentrate on these Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurial dimension

When discussing the entrepreneurial dimension of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), one can identify two general positions. Either one argues that the sector is like any other business, or one can stress the specific characteristics of the Creative sector (Kooyman, 2009). The entrepreneurs in the Creative Industries share a number of common characteristics with their colleagues in other sectors. Seen from an occupational perspective creative entrepreneurs

own and manage one's own business enterprise. They can be categorized as '*business owners'*; they create value. In essence, the creative entrepreneur is a creator of economic value (Sternberg & Wennekers, 2005, April, p. 193).

Moreover, they are engaged in innovative practices, and/or assuming entrepreneurial risk - i.e. pursuing new untapped markets, developing product innovations; recognizing and seizing economic opportunity, or the pursuit of change, etc. (Roberts and Woods, 2005). In accordance with Joseph Schumpeter a number of embody entrepreneurial behaviour: developing new and innovative products, proposing new forms of organization, exploring new markets, introducing new production methods, searching for new sources of supplies and materials (Schumpeter, 1975).

Entrepreneurs in general share the willingness to assume risks in the face of uncertainty. For example, risks such as a possible loss of business capital or the personal financial security, risk associated with the uncertain outcome of an entrepreneurial undertaking (Knight, 1921). As other entrepreneurs they share the change perspective. As Peter Drucker states: *'Entrepreneurs see change as the norm and as healthy'*. They do not have to bring about the change themselves. But, and this defines the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship — the entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it and exploits it as an opportunity (Drucker, 1985, p.28). In general entrepreneurs are involved in networks of multiple and changing clients, competitors, colleagues, etc. In accordance with the perspective of Gartner (1988) entrepreneurship share the activity to create organizations*. 'What differentiates entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs is that entrepreneurs create organizations, while non-entrepreneurs do not'* (Gartner, 1988, p.11). Entrepreneurs are actively involved in the search for constituents, contracts, projects, location, etc.

The Specific Characteristics of the Creative Industry

In general the Creative Industries share the common entrepreneurial characteristics mentioned above. Yet, a number of arguments can be found in order to express the specific characteristics of the Creative Industries. Characteristics that underpin the need for specific attention for the creative entrepreneur. What are characteristics of the creative industries that set them apart from standard concepts of an industry?

Differences in the labour market

The cultural fabric of the Creative Industries is complex and thrives on numerous small initiatives. In 2001 a first European report was published covering the topic *'Exploitation and development of the job potential in the cultural sector'*. It stresses the importance of the

relationship between the creative sector and the digital culture; Telecommunication, Internet, Multimedia, E-commerce, Software and Security (TIMES). The study points both at the growing attention for the cultural sector, and stresses the fact that *'The cultural sector is characterized by a high share of freelancers and very small companies. A new type of employer is emerging in the form of the 'entrepreneurial individual' or 'entrepreneurial cultural worker', who no longer fits into previously typical patterns of full-time professions.'*

The majority of the Creative Industries consists of micro-enterprises, some 70 to 80 % is smaller than 10 persons. Even further, some 58 % operate on a semi-individual basis, or share their activities with no more than one other person. As a consequence most enterprises are classified by one or two entrepreneurs. We might have to position them as a separate category, in order to differentiate them from the micro-enterprises; the very small '*nano-enterprises'*.

Figure 1 Distribution of Enterprise among Industries per size class
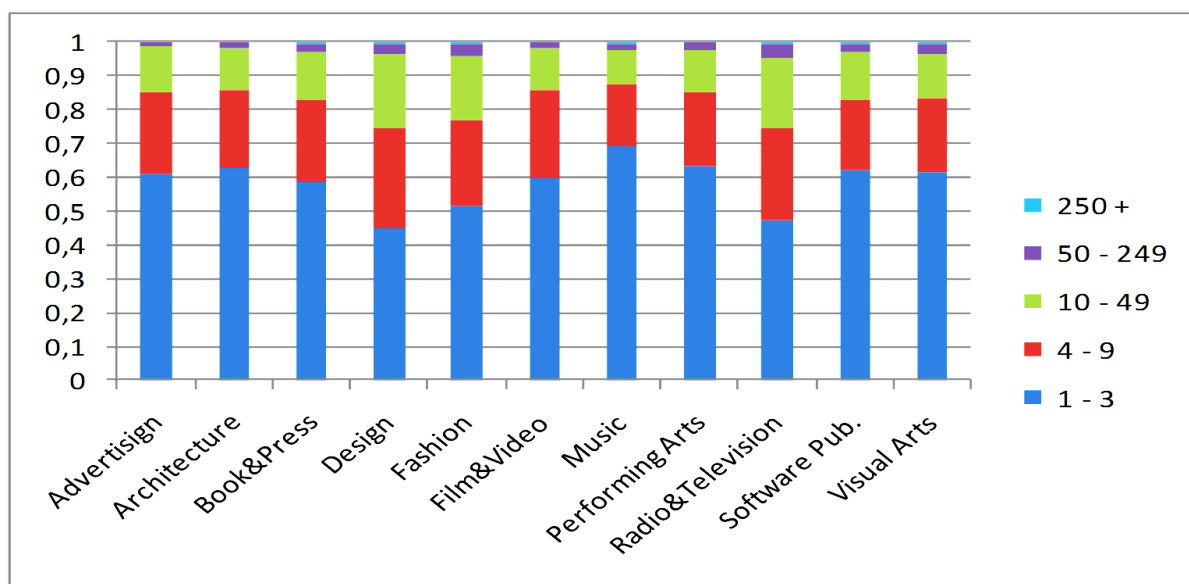
Source: Eurokleis 2009

These very small micro-enterprises do not follow the standard entrepreneurial habits. Creators are far more likely to hold non-conventional forms of employment – part-time work, temporary contracts, self-employment – than the workforce in general (e.g. Benhamou 2003). In most of the cases, full-time workers receiving regular pay, are in the minority (Thorsby 2001).The simple dichotomous work/leisure choice of standard theory is complicated in the case of creative entrepreneurs, by the phenomenon of multiple job-holding. Often regular working hours are not relevant. Often multiple job-holding is a very common formula as the cultural workers need a minimum income for survival and some degree of financial security.

In addition, the sectors show specific dynamics of frequent job changes, and working on short term contracts is normal (Ernst & Young, 2014). It leads to a situation in which the distinction between '*employed*' or '*unemployed*' is obscure, blurred and problematic. The share of independent workers is more than twice as high in the cultural sector as in total employment. The traditional categories of the *'full-time job society'* (here the worker; there the employer) no longer apply. (KEA 2006, pg 91).

In addition the Creative Industries in general contains heterogeneity of human resources categories. Entrepreneurs can enter the market as a result of a higher professional training, from a vernacular background, craft industry or any other category. And there is an abundant supply of established practitioners and new entrants, supplemented by the presence of a sea of semi-professionals and amateurs that blur the existing quality criteria applied when judging the potential entrepreneurs. Commissioners in the arts place little reliance on certification based on formal schooling and often use their own screening devices (art competitions, referees, etc). Certification by means of a degree or diploma also plays an ambiguous role in the creatives' labour markets. Besides formal schooling, there are other screening devices available, such as prizes and competitions, awards from Arts Councils and other forms of informal certification that offer information regarding the quality and reputation.

Given the variety within the different sectors it is difficult to analyse the sector as a homogenous group, due to the fact that inside the Creative Industries – and within the individual sectors - there exists a considerable diversity of occupational status.

As a result on average creators accept below average pecuniary earnings (Wassal and Alper 1992, Towse 2001). This is explained either by risk-seeking behaviour (Towse 2001) or a preference for creative work over other types of work (Throsby 1994, Frey 2000, Caves 2000). Often, the non-monetary rewards of being a creative entrepreneur – the spin-off effects - represents an important argument. Also the over-supply of entrepreneurs and ferocious competition might be a factor involved. This is complemented by the motivational aspects of the entrepreneur and the lifestyle of the creatives, the inner drive of the creative spirit, '*creativity-as-a-way-of-life'*, which offers to the creatives non-pecuniary rewards. Creatives often receive their rewards in private satisfaction and other non-monetary income such as social and cultural status, based on authenticity and individualism. Their cultural orientation leads to '*being different'*; creating a cultural distinction between those networks that possess the same kind of cultural capital as they do, and those social strata that hold other values (Bourdieu, 1984).

As a consequence one has to realize that it is unrealistic to assume that within the creative industries all self-employed individuals act in an entrepreneurial manner (Carey & Naudin, 2006). There are several push- and pull factors at stake. In most cases the cultural

dimension interferes with the entrepreneurial one. In some cases one can even describe workers in the creative industries as '*accidental entrepreneurs'*, as many are faced with significant (self) exploitation, and challenges in adopting entrepreneurial practices (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009).

Creative and Cultural entrepreneurs: independent interdependency

Especially in the start-up phase, the cultural and creative entrepreneur needs to find his specific position, profile and business model (Hagoort, 2009). This requires a certain level of independence in order to develop one's specific position. Yet, at the same time the (starting) entrepreneur depends on sources of external initiatives, drives and inspiration. In this sector the individual entrepreneur is looking for a situation in which he can combine his independent status with a social cooperative networking configuration.

Cooperative networks are created and sustained for a number of reasons. The Creative Entrepreneur wants to create a product that is interesting for himself, yet that will also be appreciated by his peers, and will hold the potential of being bought by a (potential) client. Hence, Creative Entrepreneurs are involved in networks of multiple and changing clients, competitors, colleagues, etc (Gardner, 2007). Consequently, creative initiatives are developed within a cooperative context that has the potential of sustainable value creation.

Training and support

'Educational training and employment are increasingly diverging, i.e. education serves as the basis of knowledge but is no longer a guarantee of a specific job.' (Ellmeier 2010)

When educating and supporting creative entrepreneurs, we often use the '*general*' theoretical notions derived from the '*regular*' managerial theories. We teach (prospective) entrepreneurs to develop a business plan, taking into account the regular market analyses, pricing procedures, entrepreneurial planning and alike. Most of these theoretical notions are based on the traditional goal/means rationality (Weber, (1922) 1973) (Habermas, 1979) ; if we want to reach this goal, we should develop such a product that fits in our market analyses, and will have to be priced in such a way that it can create a sustainable income.

As mentioned, however, the individual micro-entrepreneur is less driven by rational arguments. They often work on multiple pulses, derived from very different sources. Often products are developed on intuitive, non-rational drives and motivations. The entrepreneurs are primary interested in the development of their product. The notion of '*selling the product'* often is a secondary one. '*R&D is the main activity, while production is secondary'*. Creativity is their

core-business; developing those things that have never been here before. Among the factors leading to financial success within the Cultural Industries, '*learning-on- the-job'* plays a more significant role than the formal training, and to the role of talent is attached indefinable appreciations.

The lack of entrepreneurial skills

The EU funded study on *The Entrepreneurial Dimension of the Cultural and Creative Industries* has shown that there is a general lack of entrepreneurial skills within all sectors of the CCIs. Limited business skills were cited as the second most important business-related challenge when starting a company (HKU, 2010, p. 139). In the OECD's entrepreneurship framework, the *'culture of entrepreneurship'* is included as a determinant of entrepreneurship, being influential in developing a conductive environment for fostering entrepreneurial activity (OECD, 2009, p. 9). Despite its importance, there is insufficient integration of entrepreneurship education in general curricula and in arts education (DCMS , 2006).

CULTIVATING THE 'ENTREPRENEURIAL IMAGINATION': DILEMMA'S

So, if we depart from the point that society in general, and in specific the creative and cultural industries, is becoming more flexible, digital and entrepreneurial, then the question arises: how can we prepare our entrepreneurs for this dynamic, but at the same time uncertain modern work sphere?

From the teacher's and consultants' point of view a number of dilemmas arise. Can we teach and improve personal entrepreneurship? Can we train people to operate in uncertain environments? How do we develop self-confidence, individual initiatives, and network-building? We will sketch a number of dilemmas that we are dealing with.

Dilemma 1: How do we promote risk taking?

'There can be no question of merely taking a negative attitude towards risk. Risk needs to be disciplined, but active risk-taking is a core element of a dynamic economy and an innovative society.'

According to Kuratko (2005) '*risk taking'* is not common in modern management education curriculum and it's probably hard to find educators who will put '*risk*' at the centre of their own curriculum.

It's obvious that this old tendency to '*secure the environment*' is nowadays not fully sufficient anymore and should be seen as part of a larger quest for creating an 'entrepreneurial culture'. As organizational psychologist Geert Hofstede (1980) already concluded in the early

eighties '*cultural factors' highly determine the entrepreneurial activity of individuals*.' Or as Klamer (2006) states: '*the cultural factor reminds us that people are not entrepreneurial on their own.*' Historical experiences, beliefs, attitudes and values within a certain educational sphere strongly define the way the entrepreneurs' mindset is being developed. If a traditional art management education wants to respond to developments on a larger scale, a new entrepreneurial orientation needs to be developed. Taking (calculated) risks should be an important part of art management education and this would inevitably involve a sophisticated demolition of tradition and heritage.

Dilemma 2: How can we develop an intuitive mind?

Many studies show that entrepreneurs are rather intuitive than rational thinkers (Kirby, 2004). To cope with dynamic environments it is important to have a well-developed sensitivity for the context in which one is working; something we would like to call '*context sensibility'*. This acquires a more holistic and syntactical way of looking at the world instead of a sequential reasoned and randomized method of exploration. According to the German philosopher Wilhelm Schmid (2011) the modern human needs to acquire a trained sensitivity (and additional intuition) to deal with the contemporary world. He distinguishes three levels of sensibility:

1. Sensory sensibility: observing volatile, changeable and striking details in order to be able to make choices based on a '*feeling*';
2. Structural sensibility: theoretical knowledge and understanding of (societal) structures in order to see hidden association, such as power structures whom are hidden under the surface of the sensory perceptible (media structures, policy structures, urban structures etc.)
3. Virtual sensibility: recognizing the possibility of new technologies in order to sharpen the intuition for the movement in the virtual space.

Although the general understanding of concepts like '*sensitivity'* and '*intuition'* leaves no room for nurturing, many psychological research shows that this human attribute is definitely something which can be developed. It is thereby necessary to cultivate a '*critical sensitivity towards hidden assumptions and subtle relationships in social situations which lend themselves to entrepreneurial interventions*'. Techniques like divergent thinking, ethnographic imagination and hermeneutic interpretation could help to enhance this ability.

Dilemma 3: How do we prepare entrepreneurs for an uncertain world?

Being a nano-entrepeneur means dealing with a great amount of uncertainties. Small entrepreneurs have to learn how to confront uncertainties because '*we live in a changing epoch*

where our values are ambivalent and everything is interconnected'. And because circumstances change rapidly, entrepreneurs need to attain a great amount of flexibility and psychological resilience. The status-quo of today might not be the right point of departure, but rather the status quo of the future. Today's modern entrepreneurs assign great value to '*autonomy*' and '*authenticity*'; both human conditions that are highly valued in modern Western culture. If we want entrepreneurs to be prepared for this uncertain world, one of the most important learning outcomes would have to be '*self-awareness'*. Not in an egocentric way by saying '*what is own to me'* but in a social sense by stressing the proverb '*who am I in the light of the other'*. Becoming an authentic entrepreneur then means to become someone who fully incorporates the art of self-fulfilment and self-actualization, by going into '*dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us'*. This asks for personal leadership, the ability to put one self on the line, being accountable, taking charge and accept failure as inherent to life and work.

Dilemma 4: How do we encourage entrepreneurs to work together?

An '*individual entrepreneur'* who enters the professional domain will be confronted with the fact that he needs to cooperate with others in small scale, bottom-up networks. It is of the utmost importance to create a solid network in order to survive at all. The Cultural and Creative industries highly depend on cooperation, project-based work and interdisciplinarity and demand a communal way of thinking. The craft of cooperation is definitely not easy, and according to American sociologist Richard Sennett (2012) it has become weak in the last decades, but by extensive training and reflection it should be promoted in modern education. Project-based education contributes in large part to this need, but is still very much focused on traditional client-assignment situations. Bottom-up community building with external partners, as a more dynamic educational model, might be more in line with this modern entrepreneurial culture.

Dilemma 5: How do we 'preach' a sustainable attitude?

Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurs have to create their own income, which forces them to go for '*the fast buck'*. They have to generate their individual earnings in a volatile market, with an abundance of cultural products around. Yet at the same time they have to take care of creating a sustainable future. They have to safeguard the opportunities to persist in their endeavours, even in the long run. We have to note that change is one of the main characteristics of the enterprise; change is the only sustainable factor. In addition they have to define a corporate social responsibility, integrating their social concerns in their business, in the interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. (David Williamson, 2006 Vol 67) This means that we

can't ignore moral and ethical questions, which arise in the global community. As being part of a Cultural or Creative industries does not mean that creativity is the preserve of a so- called '*creative class*' but '*often resulting from human interaction across boundaries (e.g. across nation states, professions, industries, organizations, disciplines, social and cultural groupings, methods, epistemologies and rationalities)*'. Therefor it is important to discuss the social and ecological implications of entrepreneurship. Not by preaching, but by showing entrepreneurs that moral awareness is part of modern entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

We have sketched the characteristics of the Cultural and Creative entrepreneur. Faced with a changing social environment, in which individual networking, coping with permanent change, and handling persisting uncertainty are paramount, we will have to re-think our curricula. More than ever we will have to take the evolving lack of pre-defined career-development and planning into account. We have to prepare the entrepreneurial '*ant*' for its lifelong dynamic journey through modern cultural and creative work spheres. A regular income, full-time employment, continuous growth of a micro-enterprise is no longer the standard to long for. Permanent change and innovation has become part of our sustainable surroundings. Our society has more than ever evolved into a dynamic networking environment, asking for basically different entrepreneurial skills.

TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA

Given the increased speed of social innovation, we have to get to grips with the topic of small-scale entrepreneurs in the creative industries. What are the characteristic dimension they use, in order to create, develop and sustain their entrepreneurial activities?

Moreover, we will have to reposition our professional educational institutions in order to match the new developing labour market. A labour market that is characterized by a growing complexity; shorter contracts, network based free-lancers and self-employed entrepreneurs, multi-disciplinary teams, etc.

As a third topic we need to revise our entrepreneurial and management theories, taking into account the different practices take co-exist beside each other; regular business modelling, beside technics developed within the creative sector; serious gaming, design-theory, scrum technics, etc.

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