

# THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON CREATIVITY

A Study prepared for the European Commission  
(Directorate-General for Education and Culture)

June 2009



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*« Il faut apprendre à juger une société à ses bruits, à son art, à ses fêtes plus qu'à ses statistiques. »*

Jacques Attali

Creativity is a powerful catch phrase. In Western societies it epitomises success, the modern, trends for novelty and excitement. Whether linked to individuals, enterprises, cities or regions creativity establishes immediate empathy, and conveys an image of dynamism. Creativity is a positive word in a society constantly aspiring to innovation and “progress”.

Culture is the general expression of humanity, the expression of its creativity. Culture is linked to meaning, knowledge, talents, industries, civilisation and values. The objective of the study is to have a better understanding of the influence of culture on creativity, a motor of economic and social innovation. Does music, visual art, cinema and poetry for instance contribute to creativity as a way to stimulate job creation, economic prosperity, learning and social cohesion? What is the impact of artistic creation on innovation? Why do companies want to be associated with culture and art? What is the social function of artistic and cultural creativity?

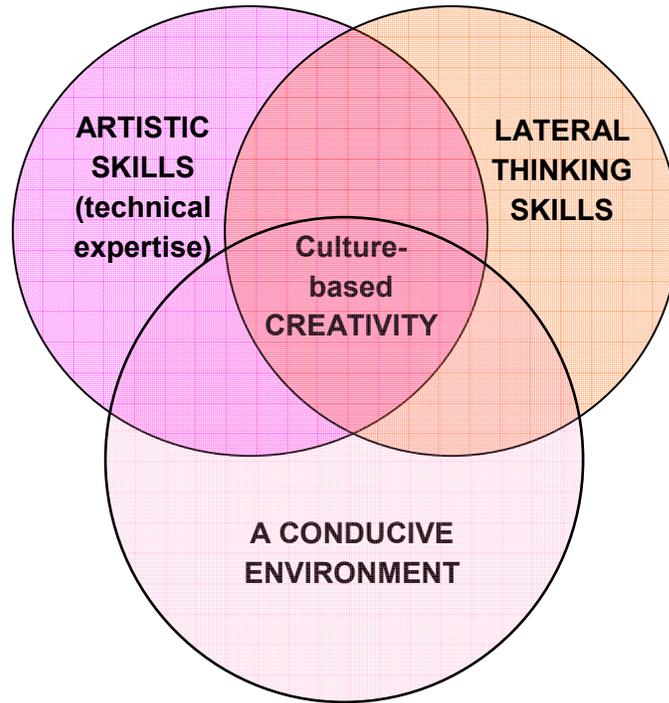
The report develops the concept of culture-based creativity, stemming from art and cultural productions or activities which nurture innovation, and going beyond artistic achievements or “creative content” feeding broadband networks, computers and consumer electronic equipments.

This culture-based creativity is linked to the ability of people, notably artists, to think imaginatively or metaphorically, to challenge the conventional, and to call on the symbolic and affective to communicate. Culture-based creativity has the capacity to break conventions, the usual way of thinking, to allow the development of a new vision, an idea or a product. The nature of culture-based creativity is closely linked to the nature of artistic contribution as expressed in art or cultural productions. The spontaneous, intuitive, singular and human nature of cultural creation enriches society.

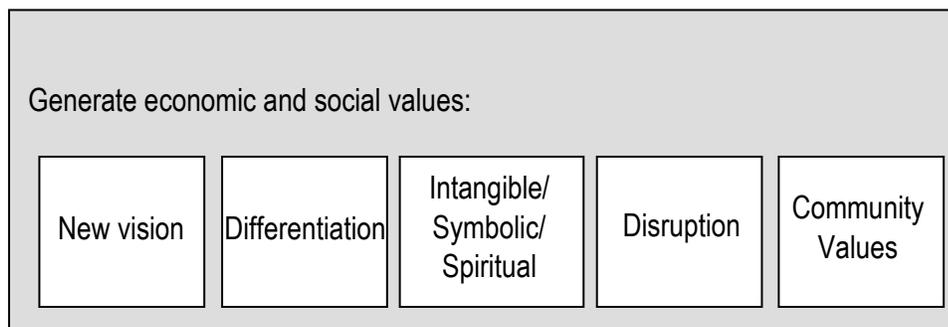
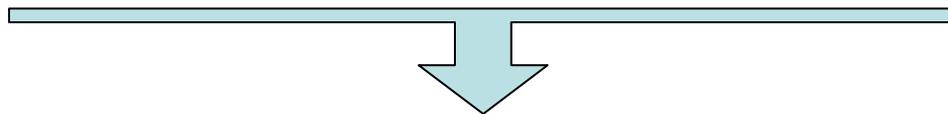
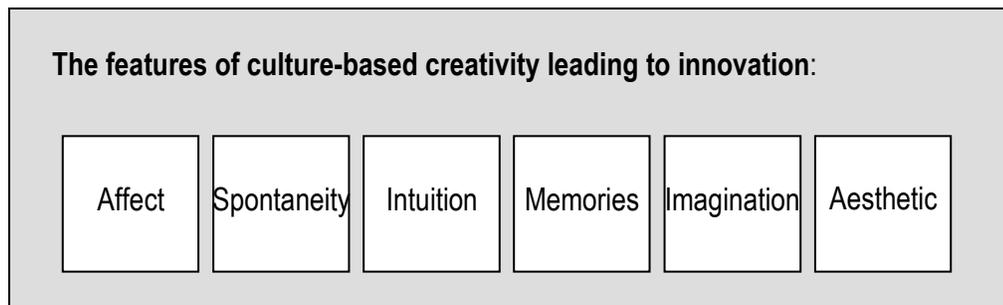
To emerge culture-based creativity requires:

- personal abilities (ability to think laterally or in a non-linear way, to be imaginative),
- technical skills (often artistic skills or craftsmanship),
- a social environment (a social context through notably education and learning that encourages, and appreciates creativity as well as an economy that invest in culture and culture-based creativity).

### Components of culture-based creativity



### The impact and value of culture-based creativity on the economy



## The impact and value of culture-based creativity on the economy

The report illustrates the impact of culture in the development of new products and services, (including public services), driving technological innovation, stimulating research, optimising human resources, branding and communicating values, inspiring people to learn and building communities.

Culture-based creativity is an essential feature of a post-industrial economy. A firm needs more than an efficient manufacturing process, cost-control and a good technological base to remain competitive. It also requires a strong brand, motivated staff and a management that respects creativity and understands its process. It also needs the development of products and services that meet citizens' expectations or that create these expectations. Culture-based creativity can be very helpful in this respect.

Digital technologies play an important role in this intangible economy as they provide new forms of social exchanges and contribute significantly to new expressions of creativity. Of course cultural production (such as music, publishing and movies) makes new technology more relevant to consumers, enables the development of new markets and contributes to digital literacy. However the successes of free and open-source software and services, such as Wikipedia, are also trends that prefigure an economy in which sharing and exchanging knowledge and skills is not principally based on securing financial gain. These new forms of exchanges give more importance to social ends and therefore culture-based creativity. Art and culture (in particular music) is often the basis on which social networking takes place (peer-to-peer file sharing).

It therefore becomes an imperative for industry to meet and to create new kinds of demand that are not based merely on the functionality of a product but are instead rooted in individual and collective aspiration. In this new paradigm, marketing and services are as important as production. This requires creative skills and thoughts as productivity gains at manufacturing level are no longer sufficient to establish a competitive advantage. Culture-based creativity is a powerful means of overturning norms and conventions with a view to standing out amid intense economic competition. Creative people and artists are key because they develop ideas, metaphors and messages which help to drive social networking and experiences.

*Apple's success is intrinsically linked to the founder's vision that technology, marketing and sales alone are not sufficient to deliver corporate success. A key factor is to have people who believe very strongly in the values of the company and who identify it with as creators and innovators – the ad campaign "Think different" featuring Picasso, Einstein, Gandhi was described by Steve Jobs as a way for the company to remember who the heroes are and who Apple is.<sup>1</sup> Apple has succeeded to create empathy for technology that other technology companies have failed to provide. The aesthetic of the product range, through innovative design, also yielded success.*

To succeed in a post-industrial economy, businesses across a very wide range of sectors must ensure that what they are selling offers a rich and compelling experience. Such experience enables differentiation from competing brands or products. These developments lead to the creation of the "experience economy".

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<sup>1</sup> The seed of Apple's innovation, *Business Week*, 12 October 2004.

*When Virgin Atlantic entered the airline business the differentiation came from entertainment services and the experience offered on transatlantic flights. Virgin was the first airline to offer massage on board or multiple choices of music and videos; a service that has now become a standard norm in air travel. It is no accident that Virgin founder, Sir Richard Branson, came from the music business and applied the “hip” and “cool” values” associated with the Virgin record label to the airline industry. Virgin Atlantic decided that it would do more than transport people from place to place.*

Culture-based creativity is a fundamental means for industry and policy decision makers to adopt and implement more user-centred strategies (less about “making things” more about providing a service).

*Jan Timmer – the former CEO of Polygram, the music and film subsidiary of Philips - turned the company Philips (on the verge of bankruptcy in the late 80’s) around by developing a strategy based on the view that technology was not an end in itself but a means of improving life. This led to a change in processes aimed at focusing on people, not technologies per se. The use-centred design approach called on new skills in the company including designers, sociologists and anthropologists. From its “Make things better” slogan Philips has moved to “Sense and simplicity” reflecting the shift to the experience economy.*

Culture-based creativity helps to promote well-being, to create lifestyle, to enrich the act of consumption, to stimulate confidence in communities and social cohesion. It is increasingly used in the management of human resources, notably through artists-in-residence projects.

*For instance AIRIS is a Swedish project based upon a programme in which artists join a company for a period of 10 months to work together on a cultural project. It was initiated by TILLT, an organisation set up by the region of West Sweden since 1973 to promote and support collaboration between artists and firms.*

Culture-based creativity is therefore a key input for businesses or public authorities which want to communicate more effectively, challenge conventions and look for new ways to stand out. It contributes to product innovation, to branding, to the management of human resources and to communication.

### **Culture-based creativity and social innovation**

Cultural productions, as communication tools charged with subjectivity and emotion, have participated in the expression of social life since the origin of human kind. Culture-based creativity plays a key role in generating social innovation.

Art and culture can benefit public service delivery and innovation in a variety of ways:

- public service broadcasters are an example of this and many make much of their reputation as 'trusted media providers';<sup>2</sup>
- participation in cultural activities can emphasise a feeling of belonging in society, which also increases trust in the public realm and public services. Culture can therefore help to bring certain public services closer to their constituents;
- some public services have pioneered new methods of collaborative feedback and decision making by means of integrating creative media innovations – online discussion fora, social networking sites and online petitions allow the public to interact more easily with public services;
- Finally, some public services promote participation and involvement, often of marginalised groups – the development of community media and community arts, more generally, are good examples of this.

Culture contributes to strengthening social ties among communities and thereby nurtures individual as well as organisational self-esteem and ultimately well-being.

Social cohesion can be defined as a set of shared norms and values for society which also encompasses the diversity of people's different backgrounds and helps to ensure that those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities. It is the ability of cultural activities to help express specific cultures, while also developing strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools, and within neighbourhoods.

Culture can offer new approaches both in terms of tackling what are sometimes referred to as 'social problems', for which current approaches are deemed inadequate. Policy areas in which culture has successfully helped in this respect include urban regeneration, social cohesion, crime prevention, health and the fight against pollution.

### **Art and culture learning to stimulate creativity**

Society plays an important role in developing and advancing creativity. A fundamental external factor that influences creativity is education and learning. Education and learning play a fundamental role in shaping a creative environment. Art and culture have the ability to stimulate people's imagination and creativity in schools, in colleges and universities and in lifelong learning.

Creativity in learning is about fostering "flexibility, openness for the new, the ability to adapt or to see new ways of doing things and the courage to face the unexpected."<sup>3</sup> Imagination, divergent thinking and intuition need to be considered as important characteristics of progressive arts education – by schools, universities and further education providers.

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<sup>2</sup> Davies, G., *The BBC and Public Value*, London, Social Market Foundation, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Cropley, *Creativity in education and learning, a guide for teacher and educator*, Routledge 2001.

Undue emphasis on outcome rather than process is likely to frighten children away from originality. Taking risks without fearing failure is the cornerstone of creative endeavour. The “testing-culture” that holds sway in most EU countries militates against this idea of experimenting and taking risks without fears of failure. The mainstreaming of the arts is also a way to achieve high-academic results in other disciplines.

Arts schools specifically nurture creativity, as demonstrated in the way that art is taught and learned about. Their modes of teaching consist of promoting critical reflection, innovation, and the ability to question orthodoxies.

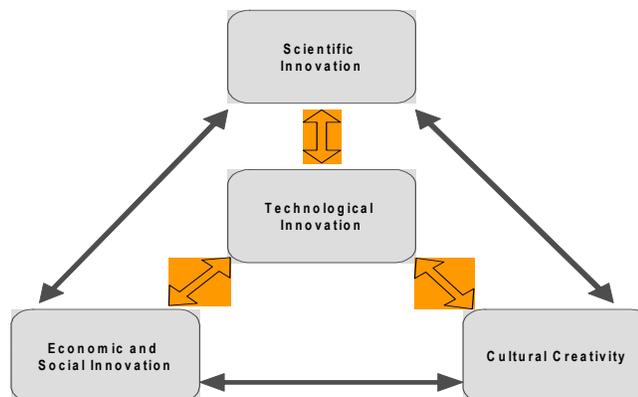
This makes a strong case for arts schools and arts-related disciplines to play an important role in this learning transformation in higher education. The education sector's response to the need for both business and technology to acknowledge the importance of culture-based creativity is to introduce inter-disciplinary learning across educational fields. Finland recently initiated a paradigm shift away from technology-driven innovation towards more human-centred innovation; with the ambitious Aalto University project (a private-public partnership) that brings together art, business, and technology studies on the same campus.

### Policy making and culture-based creativity

Europe has enormous cultural and creative assets, a wealth of ideas, artists and creative people. European brands are amongst the best in the world in technology, luxury goods, tourism, media publishing, television, music, computer animation, videogames, design and architecture. European creators and artists in architecture, design, fashion, cinema, music, and modern art have worldwide influence.

However Europe does not harness this huge potential to the full in order to better serve the economy and society as a whole.

As part of the Lisbon strategy Europe has developed a strong policy framework to support innovation. However, “innovation policy has rather developed as an amalgam of science and technology policy and industrial policy.”<sup>4</sup> Policies on innovation need to be developed so as to recognise the cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary aspect of “creativity” which mixes elements of “culture-based creativity”, “economic” as well as “technological innovation.”



## **Towards a EU creativity policy**

The purpose is to create a Europe that stimulates and encourages creativity and provides individuals, society, public institutions and enterprises with incentives to build on culture for social and economic renewal.

The objectives are to:

- Encourage imagination and talent at school, in firms and public institutions, in life.
- Support the development of a creative economy by integrating creativity into EU innovation policies.
- Promote social innovation through culture.
- Encourage cross-fertilisation between regional identities and culture by clustering talents at European level to foster local development as well as multilingualism.
- Brand Europe as the place to create in the world.
- Move from cultural competition amongst Member States to cultural collaboration to make Europe's creativity visible internationally.

The study proposes a number of concrete measures to implement five actions:

- Raise awareness on culture as an important resource of creativity.
- Mainstream culture-based creativity in policies to foster innovation.
- Re-direct existing financial resources or create new programmes to stimulate creativity
- Brand Europe as the place to create.
- Question and tailor the regulatory and institutional frameworks to support creative and cultural collaboration.

Creativity is a process continuously shaped and stimulated (or constrained) by human, social, cultural and institutional factors. It is proposed to establish a Creativity Index (with a set of 32 indicators) whose aim is to assess the creative environment in EU Member States and to enable the development of a creative ecology in Europe through art and culture.

Culture lies on the fringe of the European project as a subsidiary competence whilst it is at the heart of innovation goals and the development of new economic and social paradigms. As a priority the European institutions as well Member States should review policies aimed at stimulating innovation in the framework of the Lisbon strategy to determine whether they stimulate culture-based creativity and engage the creative and cultural sectors.

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<sup>4</sup> Oslo Manual, *Guidelines for collecting and interpreting innovation data, a joint publication of OECD and Eurostat*, third edition 2005, p.15

Besides reviewing policies related to innovation the report suggests re-directing existing financial resources or creating new programmes to stimulate culture-based creativity. In relation to the EU, programmes and funds should aim to support:

- Creative entrepreneurs, enterprises and research centres that draw on culture-based creative inputs.
- Social innovation through culture.
- Territories using culture as a tool for development.
- Cultural co-operation across different territories.

A range of concrete policies and actions are also suggested to brand Europe as a place to create, to imagine, to express talent; a place that nurtures and values “singularity” and differences.

Art and culture can make a vital contribution to the achievement of objectives that reconcile wealth creation with sustainability and respect for common humanist values because one of the features of art and culture is that they help us to transcend purely economic or utilitarian constraints. We all have a role to play, both as citizens and consumers in drawing on the power of culture and creativity to help deliver new, more sustainable ways of living and working.

Europe’s multiculturalism is a chance to stimulate creativity. Europe’s diverse cultures, its history and geography are a significant source of its creativity. It is Europe’s diversity and its patchwork heritage that has shaped its destiny and will determine its future. Pluralism and openness to influences are distinct features of the European model. This cosmopolitanism is an extraordinary resource of creativity.

The additional challenge for Europe is to make the best of its cultural diversity in the context of globalisation. To a large extent, Europe’s future is dependent on its ability to transcend local identities to harness creativity but also to ensure the presence of diverse local identities in an international context. By asserting and developing its creative ambitions Europe can become a very significant force for the generation of innovative ideas and services which have both significant economic value and the capacity to improve the quality of life of its citizens. Europe should become a central place in the meeting of influences and ideas. At the confluence Europe increases its creativity and innovation potential. In this way, the power of creativity, art and culture could be harnessed to play an increasingly important role in driving economic and social progress in Europe.

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