

Editorial

Creative Economy in Continuous Evolution

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The creative economy has been considered in the past decade as a major force for economic development, as well as a relevant factor for social and economic transformation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic showed the vulnerability of different fields of the creative economy, rising income gaps, and other societal issues that stimulated rethinking the creative economy for a sustainable perspective as well as fair development for all. In this complex, the present issue of *Culture. Society. Economy. Politics* proposes discussions on the evolution of the creative economies, having in mind that they are at crossroads around the world. Cultural and creative industries are increasingly more connected to concepts such as (social) innovation, sustainability, fairness, and wellbeing, being an increasingly more important part of both economies and societies. These evolutions led to the proclaiming of 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, 2021. This UNCTAD initiative is aiming to highlight the complexity and value of creative economy, but also to promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, foster innovation, provide opportunities, generate benefits, ensure empowerment for all, as well as respect for all human rights (UNCTAD, 2019).

The UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions defined the area of the creative economy as very large, encompassing "cultural or artistic expressions communicated through words (literature), sound (music, radio), images (photos, TV, films), movement (dance, theatre) or objects (sculpture, painting, design) and in any format (live, print, audiovisual, digital" (UNESCO, 2005). The Convention revolves around several principles, among which "investing in creativity is a priority for sustainable development". Therefore, the interest in and the relevance of culture go beyond the cultural field and specific industries: audiovisual/cinema, visual arts, design, media, arts, music, performing arts, and publishing, as identified by the Convention. The papers included in this volume, bring arguments supporting the relevance of this principle.

The potential and complexity of the creative economy have been highlighted by a recent Deloitte (2021) report. It also stresses large-scale implications of the creative economies, including regional development and global competitiveness. It can also influence other sectors, such as the outputs linked to intellectual property (Deloitte, 2021, p. 12). Therefore, the development of creative industries, which is registering worldwide, influences the overall world economies and societies.

The need for agile approaches in creative industries has been underlined by the evolutions in the field in the past year, under the fears, shadows and great constraints determined by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will mention only a few, some of them being determined by the pandemic, while others have been only accelerated in the pandemic context, considering its economic, technological, and social effects. On one hand, many artists and creative organizations have struggled to survive the shrinking funding and performance opportunities. On the other hand, the art market exploded, registering some record prices, effects of „bubble” investments, especially in the case of contemporary art, but also NFTs.

For instance, the digital work entitled *Everydays* created by Beeple (Mike Winkelmann is the artist's real name) received USD 69.3 million, from the initial bid of 100 UD (Locke, 2021; Schneider, 2021). This sell could have two symbolic significances: the domination

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of the art market by South-East Asian collectors and organizations, and the maturity of the NFTs market (for understanding this new market and its complex impact, check the studies of Aharon and Demir, 2021; Nadini et al., 2021; Rae, 2021). Spectacular investments in art and NFTs in the past year have also reconfirmed the significant economic value of art and culture. But also, these matters open new questions of the ethical issue on the art market, speculative (“bubble”) investment, „hype“ driven development of art and creative industries, and digital „industrialization“ of creativity.

Another trend that gained significant momentum is the concern for social and cultural inclusion and fairness. Movements such as Black lives matter spread from the United States, have been adapted to various local realities and influenced artistic and cultural productions and organizations around the world. The rights of various types of minorities have been increasingly influencing both creative organizations and artists. Therefore, we observe new ethical and social concerns, which influence the creative economies and cultural activities, sometimes leading to debatable approaches such as the Cancel culture movement, a complex and controversial phenomenon (Clark, 2020; Romano, 2020; Burmah, 2021), or projecting contemporary perspectives into the historical investigation, re-writing cinema, museum, and city narratives. This framework has influenced, no doubt, also the “decolonization” of culture. The return of looted heritage is not a new debate, the past decade highlighting the complex cultural, diplomatic, economic, and political perspectives (see, for instance, Simpson, 2009; Nilsson Stutz, 2013; Magnani, Guttorm, & Magnani, 2018; Colwell, 2019; Wergin, 2021). Nevertheless, 2021 marked a historic moment, when Germany promised to start repatriating from 2022 the Benin bronzes on display in its public cultural organizations (Greenberger, 2021).

In recent years, fairness become one of the important principles for shaping creative economy. It has been appeared as a reflection of the coronavirus pandemic context, showing also a preexisting situation that requires a redefinition of the economic approach to culture and creative sectors. Fair practices in creative businesses, „fair pay“ for artists, “fair wealth” in creative industries as well as how to ensure fair development of creative economy were emerging topics in policy discussions around the world (see Ding, 2015; Guevremont et al., 2020). In the future, those concepts will be fundamental and the cornerstone of balancing act between cultural and economic dimensions of creative economy and society. New collective efforts in addressing global challenges of the creative economy are needed and their focus on establishing sustainable and equitable economic relations between different actors in the creative sectors for their mutual benefit, but also broader cultural well-being of different communities and society (Mikić, 2022).

Digital transformation is also influencing increasingly more culture. The most visible effect is the transfer of cultural productions and creative products in the digital environment, especially in the field of cultural heritage. Digital transformation in the creative sector mostly appears as a “phygital” where the technology is used to bridge the digital with physical objects and to provide an interactive cultural experience to the audience. Still, this is just the tip of the iceberg, that the public can easily observe (for various aspects of digital transformation, one might consider the following studies: Broadhurst & Price, 2017; Li, 2020; Liao, Zhao, & Sun, 2020; Massi, Vecco, & Lin, 2020; Prokūpek, 2020; Solidoro & Viscusi, 2020; Kutzner et al., 2021).

The last aspect we mention is networking. The development of the creative economy and capacity building of creative organizations around the world has been also the result of networking, both locally, regionally, and internationally. This networking, supported or not by matching funding, such as the financing schemes of the European Union, has been closely linked to knowledge transfer, organizational development, as well as to changes in organizational culture, managerial practices, entrepreneurial endeavors, or sectorial cooperation (see some of the studies in the field, such as Daskalaki, 2010; Konrad, 2013; De Klerk, 2015; Zbucnea & Leon, 2015; Bira & Zbucnea, 2019; Cnossen, Loots, & van

Witteloostuijn, 2019; Cruz et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic transferred this process online, which, no doubt influenced its amplitude and effectiveness.

It is a challenging time for creative sector and the time for rethinking traditional forms of work, creative value chains, interrelations with audience and communities, power of culture in rural places as well as digital transformation of culture content. Considering the dynamics and the complexity of the creative economy as a framework for networking idea, culture and people and interactions between them, we believe that the articles included in the present volume contribute to connecting knowledge dots both considering a geographical coverage and a thematic one. We hope that they constitute an interesting and useful reading.

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