The Network Dependence of Creative Minds

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I. INTRODUCTION

A high-quality work of art, according to Oscar Wilde's 'The critic as Artist' (1891) is the one which reveals new thoughts and not the repetition of already existing. Suppose you know two painters. One tells you the idea for a great painting but does not paint it. The other has the same idea and paints it. You could easily say the second is a great artist, but you could say the same thing from the first? Obviously not. He talks and does not paint, but might have given an impulse to somebody else to do something. That is precisely the problem with creativity – often one cannot trace the origin of an idea and its pure ownership.

In general today's creative work is lead through cultural policy today, but with all its best intentions it rarely happened to produce outstanding works. How could we encourage creative work to do better?

II. ENVISION OF END STATE

Opposite of the idea of a 'genius' on creativity, creative thinking depends upon making transitions and connections between seemingly contradictory references, thinking styles and collaborative contexts. The research assumes that creative persons have developed a *distinctive organizational culture*, based on the specific demands of creativity and creative work. It is commonly assumed that creative processes are only individualistic, unpredictable and irrational, but they are most of the time collective, rational and calculable.

Any kind of creative mind is embedded in networks of like-minded collaborators in a specific geographical region. Content is produced in face-to-face communities (e.g. bars and coffee shops), a more local network, whereby the more global networks serve mainly for the distribution of ideas and products. Time limited and short term projects emerge from situations and project teams that are assembled and redistributed within a wider project ecology, which are not easy to depict and therefore not well researched. Taking as its starting point an analysis of the complexity and diversity of the creative process undertaken by one person, this research will *analyse a community with shared values and experience* against the 'individualisation' of artists and mediators, and it aims to question the *conventional separation of 'creative minds' and 'consumers'*.

III. DEFINING APPROACH

The existence of different networks and their intersection in one single person is going to be the base for the definition of new fields of co-existent collaboration. Therefore the key unit of analysis is not the individual work of an artist but his relation to his networks and systems that he is a part of. The British photographer John Donat (1933-2004), a significant example for the tendency of photo-journalism applied in architectural photography during the 1960's, tried everything to expand the influence of architectural photography beyond the narrow borders of the profession. Working actively not only as photographer, but also as an architect, writer, editor, broadcaster and teacher at the same time, his overlapping activities make him particularly interesting as a subject of study. His concern for overcoming the gap between the professional world of architects and the public suggests his consciousness of the importance of a network culture. John Donat did not wake up one morning and say to himself, today I'm going to take a new kind of photograph. He did not think about it until maybe his private relations, son in law of the British editor Monica Pidgeon, lead him into the publishing business.

There was much debate over the perfect representation and expression in the 1960s. To define 'the' perfect way of expression might not be necessary, but for sure some styles are far more close to other artistic areas than people would like to admit.

The approach for the study of connecting networks chosen here is to measure the *growth of the creative infrastructure for artistic production* during Donat's most influential period, by analyzing links between producers and users - number of publications, journals, and readership. This structural development was influential on the production of art work during this time. By identifying clusters and hubs of infrastructure (business activities), such as museums and galleries, cultural councils, publications, and schools, through which creative networks were supported, and then by comparing them with the individual work of John Donat, this research looks for how communication has been built up and how his ideas were connected to the market.

Besides studying the main historical events of a time span it is equally important to observe the less-important ones. Often we focus on the `important' global-scale pattern of evolution while the events of minor importance can silently acquire the strength to change the world, as it happened through the punk movement in the 70s. In the 'unimportant' issues, like fashion or music, we have the possibility of expression escaping the

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control of superiors (reference to M. Kundera *'The book of the rice and the oblivion'[1]*, M. Greil *'Lipstick traces'*).

The large number of different, highly interacting components (places, disciplines, institutional support) results in dynamic behaviors, and these systems often evolve, adapt, and exhibit learning behaviors. The applied idea *of non-linear time-zones* by Edouard Glissant[2] allows both the imagination of various contact zones between different cultures and disciplines and to find points of stimulation for development and innovation. Through the analysis of a single person's network, the paper wants to promote a community, or shared values and experience, against 'individualisation'. The hope is to inform policies to improve 'network culture*'* and not only through cultural sponsorship of single artistic works but also through an 'attractive' city planning (rents, guidance, communication).

REFERENCES

[1]   Chris Bilton, Cultures of Management: Cultural Policy, Cultural Management and Creative Organizations (University of Warwick, 2006)
[2]   John Donat, World architecture 1 (1964) - 4 (1967). (London : Studio Books)
[3]   Marcus Greil, Lipstick traces : a secret history of the twentieth century, (Harvard University, 1989)

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[1] *„Wir stehen im Bann der erstarrten Auffassung darüber, was wichtig und was bedeutungslos ist und heften unseren Blick ängstlich auf das Wichtige, während das Unwichtige im verborgenen, hinter unserem Rücken seinen Guerillakrieg führt, der die Welt letztlich unbemerkt und uns unvorbereitet treffen wird."* **Milan Kundera** (2000). Das Buch vom Lachen und Vergessen. München : dtv. p.264; © 1978

[2] Edouard Glissant (1928 -), was a Francophone writer, poet and literary critic. His thinking seeks to interrogate notions of centre, origin and linearity, embodied in his distinction between atavistic and composite cultures (from the book *Do it*, ed. Obrist).