



...Katarsis

KATARSIS

D2DISSEM

“Bottom-up Creativity to Overcome Social Exclusion”

Dina Vaiou

Haris Konstantatos

Dimitra Siatitsa

With comments from NTUA team: Anna Baharopoulou, Maria Mantouvalou, Maria Mavridou, Katarsis partners: Richard Kimberlee, Enrica Morlichio, Ine Pisters, Matteo Scaramella, Bas Tierldof, Katarsis User group: Carme Fructuosa Barea, Marco Gil Cervantes, Elisa Cricri, Gerald Faschingeder, Sebastien Lailheugue, Helga Leitner, Dimitris Leoudis, Bart Lodewijks, Pierre Muylle, Francesco Roberto, Karin Schmalriede, Jim Segers, Jan Walsh, Jim Willis

January 2009

Contents

Bottom-up creativity to overcome social exclusion	3
Introduction	3
Culture, arts and creativity	3
Dimensions of Art, Culture and Creativity: discourses and policies	4
Culture and creativity in the European context	4
The return of culture(s) in the cities: economic potential	5
Cultures as social platforms: A socially rooted view of arts and culture in the city.....	6
Case studies	8
End note	12
References.....	13
ANNEX.....	15

Bottom-up creativity to overcome social exclusion

Introduction

This paper focuses on bottom-up creative strategies, often, but not exclusively organised around themes of arts and culture. It looks at, and provides an overview of different creative experiences and strategies as described in the literature and as lived by the network of 'practice' user groups.

In our approach, bottom-up creative strategies will be analysed from an angle of "reinvention of culture and arts as platforms for social and creative strategies to overcome conditions of exclusion", with particular attention to identify the innovative dynamics and the "culture of change" in each of the creative cases.

To this purpose specialised literature on the role of culture and arts in motivating and empowering people and groups, as well as case-study experiences, will be confronted. The aim is to analyse how a broader view and practice of arts and culture, incorporating a range of place- or community-specific material practices and knowledge, can foster dynamics to overcome situations of deprivation and social alienation.

Culture, arts and creativity

In recent years, culture, arts and creativity have acquired central place in the debate on urban development and as means of successfully combating social exclusion and marginalisation of deprived neighbourhoods. This debate is multi-faceted and ambiguous. In our analysis we will refer to arts, culture and creativity as follows:

Bottom-up creativity not necessarily related to arts and culture but also creativity in the sense of inventiveness, to imagination, in order to include various socially innovative practices, material practices of survival etc., creativity as a social process.

Culture not only in a *"territorial or (exclusively) ethnic sense, but as a sort of collective sensitivity, a collective social imaginary"*, and also as perception, practice or habit, in order to include notions such as "cultures of change", "communicative culture", urban culture etc.

Art as distinguished in high art and (bottom-up) social art in order to include spontaneous artistic expression such as rap music, graffiti and other urban arts, popular events etc.

Nevertheless this report does not have the intention to give an exhaustive overview of the multiple and complex meanings of culture. Following the goals set by the project we will focus mostly on "practical" aspects related to the terms of culture and arts. Especially since our empirical material is related to socially creative initiatives mobilising culture and arts as an asset or talent for the pursuit of wider issues related to overcoming social exclusion.

Dimensions of Art, Culture and Creativity: discourses and policies

Culture and creativity in the European context

In the past 20 years or so culture has gradually acquired a prominent, albeit changing, position in EU discourse and policy-making. Many documents stress its importance for the EU project and for the competitiveness of European economy/ies, while a variety of studies have been commissioned to assess its role and importance. In the deep restructurings, which European economies and societies have undergone after decades of de-industrialisation in the fordist heartlands of Europe, 'culture' seems to be promoted as a development engine at various geographical scales. Particularly in the context of the Lisbon process, the EU is to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, with a leadership in creativity and innovation, in which culture seems to be a key component.

In different contexts, one encounters different references to these concepts or combinations of them: 'the economy of culture', 'creative economy or sector', 'cultural sector', 'creative industries', 'cultural industries', 'experience economy', 'copyright industries', 'content industries', and many more, indicate different approaches to culture and creativity, which are linked to different institutional arrangements and policies.

These terms of re-discovery of culture, however, raise a number of questions, to do both with the concept itself and with a whole set of other concepts and issues which

are at times used interchangeably or in a context of “economization of culture”: the cultural sector, creative occupations, creative milieus, creativity governance/management/ policies...

The conception of culture as a catalyst for competitiveness is not, however, the sole take on culture in European documents. Indeed, as part of a rhetoric, which stresses European heritage and values, culture is also assumed to perform a whole host of social and political functions, which are linked to concrete policies at local, national and European scale.

As far as local development is concerned, one can identify three contributions of culture: (i) its ability to attract tourists/visitors (reinforcement of the image of a city or locality triggers further interest from tourists and investors), (ii) the generation of local employment, particularly through ‘cultural clusters’, (iii) social regeneration, aimed at including and empowering marginalized groups and ensuring better cohesion. It is to this latter aspect that the report mainly focuses.

The return of culture(s) in the cities: economic potential

In the context briefly outlined above, although cities have always had cultural functions, the evolution of a global, service-orientated economy during the last decades of the 20th century, has contributed to a re-evaluation of culture/arts/creativity, and a re-assessment of their role in local/urban development and in forging global-local links. One witnesses a move away from traditional notions of “art for art’s sake” or of culture as art and heritage to a view of culture as an economic asset, with a significant contribution to the economy.

In a neoliberalised environment, many cities have actively used culture/arts/creativity as a response to de-industrialising and as tool for economic regeneration through competition for diminishing (public and private) investments.

Culture has come into political and economic debates, which define it in terms of “cultural and/or creative industries” or “cultural products and services” and, as such, as an important direct input to the economy but also as a valuable producer of

marketable (city) spaces. Creativity and innovation, as well as their management and/or governance, have forcefully come into the agendas of urban policy maker.

An emphasis on culture as an economic asset within urban policy “tends to be made in purely functional terms that prioritize the question ‘what can the cultural bring to the economic’ rather than allowing the delivery of social and cultural developments and recognizing their intrinsic value for urban regeneration”. So it seems that, while culture is being used to reinvent cities as centres of excellence for business and tourism consumption, its role as a critical force that can question the status quo is being progressively diminished. The problem with this trend is the limited capacity of cultural endeavours to address issues of social inclusion and multicultural representation.

Discourses of urban creativity have been criticized from a variety of perspectives, but also eagerly adopted by a great number of cities/municipal authorities. Two issues are relevant for the purpose of this analysis: a) the bright side of creativity obscures the hard labour realities of many ‘creatives’, b) the unconditional pursuit of creative urban advantage leads to urban landscapes where display, fashion and presentation of (a marketable) self prevail, and where creative disadvantage and questions of distribution and entitlement are out of the picture (e.g. the effects of creative gentrification).

Cultures as social platforms: A socially rooted view of arts and culture in the city

To conceive of a more holistic and everyday view on culture, we can define ‘culture’ in a broad anthropological sense, not just as a way to achieve material welfare but as the final goal of development. Moreover, culture is not owned by individuals or the result of their achievements, but defines a way of living together. Creativity is not the prerogative of art; and the enjoyment of prestigious art should not lead to the neglect of projects that bolster social structure. Creativity is expressed not only individually, but also collectively.

Our approach intends to give a special focus on “social art projects”, conceived as part and parcel of a multi-dimensional, socially innovative approach to city and

neighbourhood development. In this approach, self-standing artworks are seen as expressions of local imagining and identity but also as contributing to the 'refreshing' of neighbourhoods, in a variety of meanings: revitalizing, inspirational, innovative and empowering. In that sense, culture as 'refreshing' comes much closer to its anthropological meaning: culture as a mode of communication, as a ground for rediscovering social identity, as day-to-day activity in community-building, as creativity of local artists, by themselves or in co-operation with neighbourhood communities or social groups within the city. Culture is rediscovered as popular culture, democratically decided and created.

In this sense, social art projects play an important role in urban renewal by mediating between functions and meanings which citizens attribute to the notion of urbanity. More importantly, social art projects can be seen as an answer to the loss of public place, as re-conquering it from privatisation or restrictions.

In the European urban context a broader view of arts and culture has been promoted. Over the last decade, deprived neighbourhoods have harboured artistic projects meant to encourage co-operation between their inhabitants and to reconstruct local community identity stepwise. The following dimensions of arts and culture in the city are relevant in a socially rooted perspective:

- Communication as the getting-together
- Culture as expression of critique, dissatisfaction and existential crisis
- Medium for participation-planning tool:
- The relationship between individual and collective expression.
- Neighbourhood revitalization and artistic expression of identity
- Economy and employment. neighbourhood development plan and social economy / socio-economic activities
- Sub-cultural protest from socially excluded groups.

Case studies

In the context of Katarsis, our idea was to work along the lines of qualitative methodologies and use relevant methodological tools in order to discuss bottom-up creative strategies, as they come out of the experiences of an already known (and only partially extended) number of “Users”. The diversity of the Users’ experiences is an asset for the purposes of this WP, in that it provides a broad range of “cases” from which to approach questions of creativity and social innovation in different contexts. Prior knowledge/contact of these Users with some or all members of the academic team is another asset, in that it establishes a level of trust, which is necessary for the deployment of such methods.

In particular, a more interactive methodological choice was made: a focus group session was organized, based on a thematic guideline, which was pre-circulated to users via e-mail. The logic of this choice was twofold: On the one hand people involved in day-to-day praxis are expected to respond more eagerly in a discussion environment, rather than through formal interviews. On the other hand, the co-presence and interaction of users was expected to create a different dynamic and bring out issues that perhaps had not been considered on an individual user basis. On both aspects the focus group session proved to be very rewarding and provided rich material, which is partially presented in the following sections of this report.

This second part of the paper is based on the focus group discussion and intends to summarise and regroup the main issues that were highlighted by practitioners and users, thus attempting a methodological contribution to the analysis of Users experiences. The discussion brought back some of the initial questions of this report. At the same time it provided some firm guidelines for the study of bottom-up initiatives and their policy relevance in combating social exclusion.

An initial thematic guideline in a way helped focus the discussion. Four broad lines were proposed revolving around issues of (a) the cultural and artistic dimension of activities, (b) internal organisation and function of the initiatives, (c) the outcomes and effects especially in relation to sustainability and innovation, and finally (d) context and transferability of experience. As expected not all of the above were

equally considered by participants, during the discussion some were over passed and others came out, that were not foreseen.

The following table provides an outline of the main issues discussed organised under the four themes:

<i>Artistic/ cultural dimension and special role of artist</i>	Arts and culture in practitioners' discourses The artist as a specialised actor in social or local development projects Top-down / bottom-linked openings A special focus on youth and new technologies Identity and Multicultural issues
<i>Relations with the neighbourhood/ locality – democracy and empowerment</i>	Engaging with the community and mobilising social capital Mobilising people's expression Avoiding the negative side-effects of arts and culture in local projects Empowerment
<i>Internal organisational form and “external relations”</i>	Sustainability/ Funding Use and exchange (market) value The process of institutionalisation Multiscalar approach
<i>Contextual path-dependency, transferability and policy development</i>	Role of context and existing state institutions

Culture, arts, creativity, innovation are terms which are often used interchangeably in local initiatives and, to some degree, in the broader context of EU discourse and policy towards a Knowledge Based Society. The Users do not seem to be exclusively concerned with the use of arts and culture as marketable assets in their respective environments. They opt, however, to use creatively the potential that such urban/local policies offer. And in fact, when such policies are in operation, there is more room for sustainable innovative initiatives in the fields of arts and culture (eg. Barcelona).

The experiences discussed by the Users brought up four issues, which have been used to structure our analysis, but also contribute to formulate policy guidelines – and in this sense they go beyond the particular cases. As it came out both from the literature review as well as the Integration Exercise with the Katarsis Users these do not relate

exclusively to issues of arts and culture, but have much to do with **the “bottom-up component” of the initiative, its organizational structure and links to various scales.**

The artistic field although approached mostly through its social role within broader bottom-up or bottom-linked projects has to be acknowledged as a creative field having its own dynamics and potentials and as being a field of constant innovation per se. However in socially innovative initiatives the **artistic/cultural dimension** has a crucial pivotal role, revealing also that the very essence of artistic expression and means of cultural production are constantly questioned by such initiatives. The **artist plays a special role as an initiator or a catalyst** during the creative moment of social innovation in terms of concepts as well as methods.

For locally embedded social projects, with stronger or looser territorial bonds, the **relations with the neighbourhood and/or the community**, the targeted group, is of major importance for the effect and sustainability of the initiative. The bottom-up/bottom-linked component targets issues of **democracy and empowerment, openness and creative social experimentation** that can forge changes in socio-spatial relations towards the transgression of social exclusion and deprivation.

Issues of democracy also come out in relation to governance and methods of internal organisational form. **Openness in the setting up and function** of bottom-up creative strategies, **democracy in procedures of decision-making** are also crucial for the constant redefinition and advancement of social innovation. In this process **empowerment and consolidation through networking, bottom-up coalitions and exchange of knowledge** amongst similar initiatives is considered of vital importance introducing a multiscalar approach.

The third issue that came out from our analysis is the relation such socially creative initiatives have with public and/or private institutions especially when it comes to terms of **sustainability and funding**, where issues of autonomy and integrity versus dependency are countered. However running after EU, national or local support programs are seen as an unavoidable risk. The balance between taking the risk of being incorporated or institutionalized through funding and on the same time keeping

intact the initial goals and principles of the project is a constant battle for such initiatives.

These sets of generic attributes that we used in our reading: the role of art and the artist, relations with the locality, methods of internal organisation and relations with public/private institutions, acquire different forms in relation to structural mechanisms in each context: governance, existing institutional framework and path dependency/path shaping factors. They are also very much defined by the specificities of each particular initiative.

End note

Social initiatives cannot be narrowed down to become an object of universalist, top-down policies. Their temporalities, which depend upon a multiplicity of random factors, do not allow their incorporation into instrumentalist strategies that focus on the “effective”, direct deliberation of tangible results, especially of a marketed character. Local, socially embedded cultural and artistic projects must not be understood as objects of policies but rather as a source of diverse new forms of urban socialisation coming out from the social imaginary. *"...exploring these practices might outline alternative strategies and a framework for action... drawing upon the notion of culture as a resource to be "mobilised for the resolution of social problems, binding and empowering marginalised communities"* (Betancour 2007)

The crucial question is how can local, national or supranational authorities and institutions develop/provide a framework that will enable such initiatives. It is clear that SCS cannot be (re) produced centrally; they cannot be sustainable if they do not have a strong bottom-up component. On the other hand it is also clear that SCS alone cannot deal with the growing inequality and the exclusionary dynamics affecting more and more people. We have to acknowledge that the activity and effects of such locally embedded initiatives have a quite limited scope and cannot in any case replace the welfare policies provided by the state and institutions. The answer might be in promoting and working on the appropriate balance between regulations and support on the one hand and open space for creativity on the other.

References

- Betancour, A. 2007, "A framework for action" in *KRAX: creative practices and civic participation in urban regeneration*, downloaded from <http://www.generalizedempowerment.org/conference.html>
- Bianchini, F. 2001, *Access to culture, cultural democracy and citizenship*, published by: Banlieues d'Europe – Observatoire des politiques culturelles – Séminaire de Strasbourg
- Binns, L. 2005, "Capitalising on Culture: An Evaluation of Culture Urban Regeneration Policy", *The Futures Academy*, Faculty of the Built Environment, DIT, Ireland, <http://www.thefuturesacademy.ie/node/68>
- Creative Europe Report. On Governance and Management of Artistic Creativity in Europe*, www.creativeeurope.info/home.html
- Florida, R. 2002, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books
- Friedmann, J. 1994, *Cultural identity and global process*, London: Sage
- García, B. 2004, Cultural policy and urban regeneration in Western European cities: lessons from experience, prospects for the future, in *Local Economy*, Volume 19, Number 4, pp. 313-4
- KEA European Affairs, 2006, *The Economy of Culture in Europe*, Report to the European Commission, p.187, http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/sources_info/studies/economy_en.html.
- Kulonpalo J. 2007, "Creating A Creative City? Critical Perspective on the Creative City Discourse", *Research and Activism: 4th Urban Studies Days*, Estonian Academy of Arts
- Leye M. and Janssens I. 2004, In search of culture: Towards a well-reasoned Utopia?, *City*, vol. 8, no. 2, 288-294
- Moulaert, F. et al. 2005, "Towards Alternative Model(s) of Local Development", *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 11, 1969-1990
- Miles, M. 2004, "New cultural identities: redevelopment or regeneration?", presentation in Bergen, 30th November 2004, downloaded from http://www3.bergen.kommune.no/planavdelingen/Malcom_Miles.pdf
- Nussbaumer, J. and Moulaert, F. 2004, "Integrated area development and social innovation in European cities: a cultural view", *City* vol.8, no2, p254-256
- Peck, J. 2005, "Struggling with the creative class", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29:4, pp. 740-770
- Pisters I. 2007, «Counting by Numbers/ Learning by Doing: Inclusion and Innovation in social artistic Environments», Katarsis Paper
- Puype D. 2004, « Arts and culture as experimental spaces in the city, the case of Ghent », *City*, vol. 8, no. 2, 295-301

Saez, J. 2000, The Interrelation Of Art, Culture And Social Affairs, Paper From The 3rd Delphi Encounters: "The New Social Function Of Culture And Cultural Heritage", Council Of Europe, Strasbourg [Doc. Ref.Cdcc/Delphes(2000)2]

Sharp, J., Pollock, V. and Paddison, R. 2005, "Just art for a just city: Public Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Regeneration", *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5/6, 1001-1023

Simonsen, K. 1997, "Modernity, community or a diversity of ways of life: a discussion of urban everyday life", in O. Kalltrop, I. Elander, O. Ericsson, M. Franzen (eds) *Cities in transformation – Transformation in Cities. Social and symbolic change of urban space*, Avebury, Aldershot, pp. 162-183

ANNEX

Table 1: Dimensions of arts & culture in relation to social innovation

	Outcome	Role of arts & culture
Arts & culture as social innovation	<p>Innovation in its own right:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovative practices & processes ▪ Identity building/ confirming ▪ Symbolic expressions ▪ Production of knowledge ▪ New/reconfigured social relations → empowerment? 	<p>Understood as an underlying transversal field (active or inactive) in all dimensions of social life:</p> <p>As (social) practice; as situated use of resources; as a medium for building and exchanging meanings about identity and social relations.</p>
Social innovation through arts & culture	<p>Outcomes focused on the results in different existential fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labour market and social economy ▪ Education and training ▪ Housing and neighbourhood ▪ Health and environment ▪ Governance and democracy 	<p>Understood as a platform/ a tool that enables social innovation in other fields</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instrumental use of culture and art in communicative-educational processes ▪ A medium for participation ▪ Job creating

Table 2. Factual information on Katarsis Users and cases

	Organisational form:	Activity- relation with arts and culture	Territorial range:	Duration:
Arsis, Greece	NGO / social workers and volunteers	For the support of the youth facing difficulties. Therapeutical and socialising art methods	Local bases in five Greek cities and one in Albania	Expanding activities since 1992
Pedestrians, UK	NGO / loose network, volunteer directors board, professionals and volunteers	Supporting emerging urban art forms/ addressed to young people/ social intervention projects	Local base in Leicester, Network	Since 1998
Freire centre, Austria	Research centre	Reflection on the role of developmental politics	Vienna	Since 2001
Olinda, Milano	Social Enterprise: Social cooperative and Voluntary association	Reform to the mental care methods, cultural and social space for the city	Local base in Milan	Open and expanding activities since 1994 (mental reform)
Promo Cymru, UK	Co-operative and Social Enterprise Agency	Development of young people through artistic, cultural and media production and activities.		It has a tradition of more then 30 years, recently developed a new branding
Afip, France	NGO	Supporting young graduates from ethnic minorities to access the labour market	Paris	
Laurens-Stiftung, Hamburg	NGO	Working against exclusion at various levels, supporting socially and economically sustainable development	Hamburg	Since 1986
SMAK, Belgium	Municipal Museum of Contemporary art in Ghent	Developing social art projects	Ghent	
City mined, Brussels, London, Barcelona	Multi-local NGO	Developing and supporting local art interventions and projects	Multi-base: Brussels, London, Barcelona	Since 1997
Ateneu Popular de Nou Barris, Barcelona	Cultural non-governmental organisation	Enable creativity and promote artistic training	Local base	Since 1977, new form 1994
Montemor-o-novo	Municipal agencies	Implementation of a local developmetal strategy based on culture and arts.	Alentejo, Portugal	Since 1974
Casa Joao Cidade	Private institution of social solidarity	Building alternative socio-therapeutic communities for people with mental deficiency.	Alentejo, Portugal	Since 2007
Kypseli Market	Grassroots/ informal collective	Creating open cultural and political space for the neighbourhood	Athens	Since 2006
Critical Mass	Grassroots/ international network	Creative mobilisation for public awareness on the use of the bicycle	Network	