

EU platform on artistic practitioners and creative industries,
Brussels meeting on 5 September 2008.

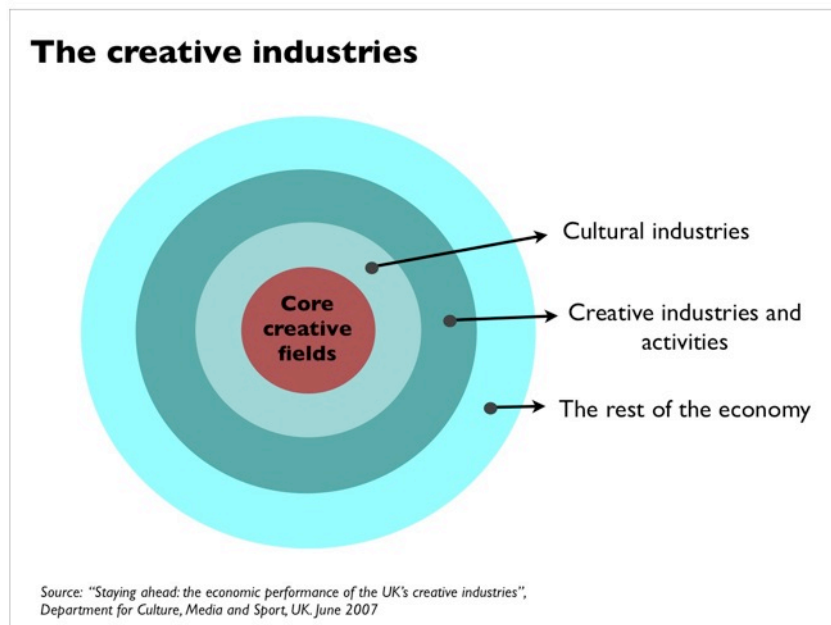
Comments on paper "Artists, arts operators and the 'creative industries' debate" by Yudhishtir Raj Isar.

By Lotta Lekvall, Encatc/Nätverkstan

The two questions presented in the interesting paper by Raj Isar, are really four questions that needs four different answers or unpacking:

- 1) How is individual artistic practice a basic resource for the new "cognitive-cultural" economy?
- 2) How can public policy maximize this potential?
- 3) How do the forces of the creative industries impact both positively and negatively on individual artistic practice?
- 4) What is the role of public policy?

The first question can very well be explained by the model put forward by the Work Foundation (UK) in the "Staying ahead" paper, a model the explains the economic relation of artists, creative industries and the rest of the economy.



I think this model explains how the artistic practice is a resource for the rest of the economy. The core consists of public funded art and artists, without this there will be no creative industries. The difficult issue is: How do you go from the creative core to the cultural or creative industries?

For the public policy to maximize the potential of artistic practice you need to do two things: trust the fact that there are specific conditions in which the artistic practice is working and let the local context be the base for deciding what actions to take. The conditions differ for artists and artistic practice depending on where you live; in the city or on the countryside, in a metropolitan or a small city, in the centre of a city or a suburb. It differs if you live in Göteborg or Paris, in Krakow or Barcelona. The specific local conditions have to be taken into account in planning for actions and activities. The one's who best know this, are the artists in the local area.

On the question on how the forces of creative industries impact positively and negatively on the individual artist, there are no general answers. Each artistic form has it's own specific conditions. The situation for poets differs from the situation for musicians, the situation for dancers from visual artists. Each art form need to be discussed and solutions put forward that take into account these specific conditions. It's also a question of how creative industries are discussed on policy level. Politicians and policymakers can't only focus on one entity, mainly creative industries. You have to find solutions for both the creative core or public funded art and the creative industries. There are two units on this scale. For the artists it is always a question of artistic integrity. This needs also be addressed and taken seriously.

The role of public policy should be to take actions on several levels. It should be actions on policy level, design models and methods specifically addressed to the cultural field, and set up programmes of activities. This could be done by a) empirical studies and mapping of the sector, b) a translation-work between different areas such as business field and cultural field, which consist of mutual respect and for mutual benefits, c) put forward methods and tools specifically for the artistic field and d) activities performed by the sector itself.

Five key issues

1. Translators and intermediaries

There is a need for translators that can work in between the artistic practice and the cultural industries, between cultural and business. Intermediaries that can translate between different worlds.

2. Education

The possibility to do further education is necessary. It should be a wide variety of short and long-term educational possibilities, lifelong learning and skills-based training.

3. **Incubators**

Incubators should be put up to give artists the opportunity to start and build small-scale businesses. These incubators should be designed with the specific conditions of the artistic field in mind. Many artists have their own business, very few live on it. Many companies are not aiming to grow and earn economic profit; they want to be able to live on their artistic work. Many artists are multiple-jobbers. "Cultural businesses help cultural businesses" should be the key.

4. **Meeting places and laboratories**

Interesting meeting places and think tanks with crossover knowledge and experiences from all different areas should be set up. The networks in Europe are important for this. More is needed, also places set up by the artists themselves.

5. **Organisational- and business development**

Business area is full of possibilities of business development, very few of these have ever worked with cultural organisations and know very little of their situation. Possibilities should be set up with specific knowledge of evaluation, organisational- and business development within the artistic field.

Several of these areas are already done by organisations around Europe. But it's not enough. More efforts of this kind are needed, this together with better access to funding would be interesting.