Cultural and creative collaborative spaces in the revitalization of urban neighborhoods

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, our cities have been facing profound challenges arising from technological innovations and the intensification of global dynamics. In particular, the transition to a service economy and the increase in flexible forms of work; the emergence of cognitive-cultural capitalism (Scott 2008) due to the importance of knowledge, creativity, and innovation; impose new questions and rethink urban governance.

Since the 1980s, governments have actively promoted the integration of cultural and urban policies into regeneration programs to promote local identity and distinctiveness, enhance the competitiveness and socio-economic development of territories. Over time, urban renewal strategies - supported by local authorities, private investors and/or public-private partnerships - have integrated not only the rehabilitation of deactivated spaces for socio-cultural activities but increasingly to focus on the potential of creative industries as levers for the renewal of disadvantaged or neglected areas.

In addition, there is a growing interest in the people who work in this cultural and creative area as a catalyst for change and innovation. Many of them value lifestyles that provide work-life balance with paid work with non-profit activities. They also seek collaborative spaces (incubators, coworking, fab labs, maker spaces, etc.) that provide flexible and inspiring work experiences, sharing knowledge and leisure opportunities and business.

These collaborative spaces, with different characteristics, which have been installed in various cities, tend to bring new users, behaviors, and investments. Many studies refer to their ability to contribute to the improvement of public space, (re)vitalization of socioeconomic activities, heritage conservation, as well as community empowerment and well-being. However, they can also promote art washing, real estate speculation, and gentrification processes and other problems.

Thus, this working paper is part of ongoing research that tries to identify and understand these dynamics used in the regeneration of the territories through the creation of cultural and creative spaces of collaboration and co-creation as innovative ecosystems which are mobilized and shaped by the complex intertwining relations of production, social life, and the urban environment.

After reviewing some of the main issues discussed in the literature, we purpose a methodological approach and some illustrative case studies that will be explored in the research and that can contribute for a better understanding of the complexity of these urban trends.

KEYWORDS: urban regeneration; cultural and creative activities; collaboration spaces; community.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we have been discussing the transformations that technological innovations and intensifying global flows of people, information, capital and goods have produced in our increasingly urbanized societies. Cities and regions are facing changes that are shaping the nature of cultural and socioeconomic relations as a consequence of:

- the decline of traditional industries and the transition to a knowledge-based system of production and services;

- the disappearance of Fordist capitalism and the emergence of cognitive-cultural capitalism (Scott, 2008) as a result of the growing importance of knowledge and creativity inputs and continuum innovation;

- the emergence of more flexible and hybrid forms of work, life and leisure;

- the reformulation and rescaling of urban governance involved in new forms of power and politics.

Since the 1980s, many governments have implemented culture-led regeneration programs to promote the socioeconomic renewal of disadvantaged or neglected areas to increase the livability of their communities and the competitiveness of their cities or regions. Over time, these urban strategies increasingly focus on the cultural and creative industries and their multiplier effects on other sectors and policy areas.

The attraction of people involved in cultural and creative activities has been central in urban regeneration strategies, inspired by the informal displacement of artists and creative communities, documented since the 1960s, to degraded or abandoned areas of the city, in search of more affordable and versatile spaces to work and live (e.g. Boschma & Fritsch, 2009; Florida, 2002, 2005; Griffiths, 1999; Higgs & Cunningham, 2008; A. Markusen, 2006; Ann Markusen & King, 2003). Turned into "bohemian enclaves", these neighborhoods have become very attractive " to "well-heeled" and investors (Currid, 2009, p. 368). As a result, urban planners began to emphasize the ability of newcomers to act as catalysts for innovation and change, the restoration of public spaces, the creation of jobs, and the socio-economic improvement of the places where they settled.

More, the cultural and creative spaces formed by them –such as incubators, coworking spaces, colabs, fablabs, makerspaces, craft ateliers, etc.– have gained a growing popularity as innovative ecosystems with the new socio-economic trends that emerged in recent years and that drive the search for new models based on sustainable and collaborative principles, open innovation, voluntary and

shared provision of resources, among others.

The attention to these new cultural and creative spaces is also associated with:

- expansion of new work arrangements, especially self-employment (OECD, 2016), with the growth of subcontracting and outsourcing services, but also unemployment or precarious work;

- the emergence of a new class of workers in knowledge industries and cultural and creative activities;

- the verification of new life attitudes in younger generations, apparently enthusiastic about flexible and autonomous work experiences, and which pursue the balance between working life and the involvement in non-profit cultural and social activities (Deloitte, 2018).

In the meantime, benefiting from the expansion of digital technologies, various cultural and creative spaces were created around the world, under different models, objectives and spatial scales of intervention. Our interest is particularly centered on the analysis of *cultural and creative collaborative spaces*, i.e. "spaces where groups of people collaboratively promote and manage a mix of creative initiatives in the fields of art and culture, economy and production, social services and urban regeneration" (Franqueira, 2009, p. 35). More than the hard infrastructure, they support "networking, business development and community engagement within the creative, cultural and tech sectors" (Dovey et al., 2016).

In general, these spaces located in renewed and converted places offering shared work and/or factory spaces while organize a variety of activities for different types of users such as events, training, networking sessions, ateliers or residences, etc. Some places are privately owned, with or without institutional support, while others are run by public institutions (e.g. universities, municipalities, libraries, etc.). The most common ambition is to build a dynamic community with a propensity to promote collaborative, open and flexible environments that foster creativity, knowledge transfer and project partnerships (see, for example, Gerdenitsch, Scheel, Andorfer, & Korunka, 2016; Moriset, 2013; Waters-Lynch & Potts, 2017). Moreover, many of these co-creative places promote the engagement of their members in social practices, co-producing services for the community aiming to empower them, namely through artist education and co-creation and design-led methodologies. Besides, artists and creative also frequently explore, reinterpret and expose the territorial capital of place – local identity and histories, collective goods and spaces, relational links, communities' characteristics, etc. enriching their works. "They are natural place-makers who, in the course of making a living, assume a range of civic and entrepreneurial roles that require both collaboration and self-reliance" (Stern & Seifert, 2008).

The discussion about collaborative cultural and creative spaces goes beyond internal processes to discuss the impacts that these dynamics have on neighborhoods, public spaces and the territory. Several studies underline that these dynamics, which bring new users, behaviors, and investments, can contribute to the improvement of public space, heritage conservation, neighborhood socioeco-

nomic revitalization, as well as the empowerment and well-being of local communities. Otherwise, other authors also warn that these can induce, for example, art washing, real estate speculation, and gentrification processes.

Our previous research has also pointed out that although those spaces have flourished in the context of large cities, principally in their central areas, however, they have been spreading to peripheral areas and small cities eager to attract these creative and enterprising. In this sense, it is important to look at the evolution of these dynamics, not only at the level of the big cities but also to develop a comparative analysis with what is happening in other contexts.

This paper is part of ongoing research that seeks to identify and improve understanding about the dynamics around the creation of cultural and creative collaborative spaces in different territories (from large metropolis to peripheral and small urban centers). These projects are mobilized and shaped by complex intertwining relations of production, social life, and the territorial environment. We are particularly interested in those projects which have direct impacts on the territories but especially on the communities where they are located. We aim to discuss the different issues implicated in these processes, for example, the degree of interaction and involvement with residents, companies, and institutions.

MAPPING CULTURAL AND CREATIVE COLLABORATIVE SPACES METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Considering Henri Lefebvre theory, this research aims to integrate how the co-creative spaces are organized and used socially; the way that physical space was conceived and changed over time; and the images and meanings associated to experience and appropriation of the space. In Lefebvre's book "Critique of Everyday Life" (Lefebvre 1991, translation of "Critique de la vie quotidienne" 1947), he considers three dimensions of social space: 1) the perceived space – the material spaces of daily life where social production and reproduction occurs; 2) the conceived space – the discourses, signs, and meanings of space that are socially constructed; and 3) the lived space – the material dimension of social life combined with the symbolic experience (Martin & Miller, 2003).

Hence, taking into account these interrelated dimensions. we want to reflect especially about these new spatial and organizational forms, the interactions and practices inside them and surrounding context; the representations of space/community conceived by users, residents, planners, politicians, and others; and the representational space lived through its associated images and symbols (see also Costa & Lopes, 2013). In the analysis of these dimensions, it is used a set of qualitative data collection methods (see table 1 below).

Dimensions	Description	Methods
Material dimension	Natural and built space and the way that it influences and shapes the activities and functions that occur in it	- fieldwork using ethnographic methods (such as direct observation and photo documentation) - analysis of plans, maps, etc. - Interviews - Mental maps
The living dimension	the way the space is experienced and appropriated by its diverse users (residents, workers, artists, visitants, etc.)	
the symbolic dimension	the way it is perceived and represented and how it conditions the experiences and appropriations	

Table 1 Dimensions and methods of analysis. By Author

So, the research started with the exploratory mapping of different cases to better define a typology and then to develop an in-depth case study research to understanding of these places, how they work, the motivations and drivers behind their implementation, how they are organized, which kind of activities they develop and their impact in their surroundings, etc. Furthermore, it is also important to understand how these projects are an expression of glocalization tendencies as means of "the simultaneity – the co-presence – of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies" (Robertson 1995). Many of these are part of more or less formalized networks and different scales where their visitors or members are involved.

In the selection and analysis of case studies we decide to have in consideration the following dimensions (see table 2).

Dimensions	Descriptions
Model	Profit
	Mon-profit
	Mix model
Governance	Association
	Cooperative
	Public-private partnership
	Private owns
	Public ownership
Funding	Private funds
	Grants
	Loans
	Membership
	Tenancies
	Government funding
	Shops
Services	Incubation
	Office workplaces
	Fabric
	Ateliers
	Residences
	Gallery
Location	Inner city
	Peripheral
	Rural area

Regular activities	Training
	Cultural events
	Networking events
	Open days
	Social projects
Main focus	Cultural and creative industries entrepreneurship
	Social innovation
	Cultural development
Main operators	Remote workers
	Artists
	Freelancers
	Startups
	Small business
Community Outreach	Vocational placements for young people
	Free training and workshops for community
	Hosting community events and meetings
	Open days

Table 2 Description of the main dimensions of analysis. By Author

The case studies selected briefly present subsequently correspond to a range of models and geographical locations where we are developing our empirical research. The option for a case study methodology stems from the interest in more interpretive approaches to urban phenomena (Bennett, 2004; Gerring, 2007; Tomaz, 2013) through thick narratives (Geertz, 1973).

A. FABLAB LISBOA

It is a laboratory of digital manufacture and prototyping developed by the municipality of Lisbon in the reconverted Mercado do Forno do Tijolo, in Anjos neighborhood, as part of a broader the City strategy in favor of innovation and entrepreneurship. It aims to support the creativity and development of each person who wants to develop its own project or to build collaborative projects with oth-

er "makers", not only through access to equipment (such as laser and vinyl cutter machines, 3D printer, small milling machine, hot wire cutter, etc.) but also providing forms for knowledge exchange, for instance, with the organization of workshops or support links with other production facilities, startups, local universities and schools.

More, as stated by the City Hall "The FabLab Lisboa is thought to function as a 'think-tank' where designers, developers, students, and other actors gather to develop projects for the local community" (http://www.comvort.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Dr-Carvalho-LISBON_Economy-Innovation-Entrepreneurship.pdf.pdf).

Fablab has promoted partnerships for social inclusion and employment in the field of cultural and creative industries, for example, with the Mouraria Innovation Center. It has been part of the dynamics that have gradually come to change the neighborhood of Arroios, that increasingly assumes itself as a pole of cultural attraction.

B. HANGAR - ARTISTIC RESEARCH CENTER

This independent center for artistic research, located in Graça neighborhood, in Lisbon is run by the non-profit cultural association called XEREM of artists and curators. It includes a center of exhibitions, artistic residencies, and artistic studies. It is also a center of education, talks, and conversations that stimulate the experimentation, research, and reflection artistic practices. HANGAR aims to encourage artistic interaction and exploration of the urban environment and contact with the community and comprehensive artistic context. Besides, it develops international artistic residencies, network exchanges of artists, and other cultural actors. It consists of the creation of a platform for cooperation between artists and various sectors and public and private institutions for artistic, cultural, local and international development.

It will launch a coworking space for artists, researchers, freelancers professionals and independent cultural projects with an analogic photographic studio and other equipment.

It has the support of several strategic partnerships include the City Hall Local Partnerships BipZip program (a municipality program which supports local partnerships and/or interventions in so-called "priority intervention" areas or neighborhoods pointed out as highly vulnerable areas).

C. BUINHO, FABLAB AND CREATIVE RESIDENCY

Buinho is a nonprofit cultural organization created in 2015 in the historic town of Messejana, Southern Portugal, with the intention of be an inspiring place for creativity, collaboration, and innovation. It is the first MIT certified fablab for the Southern region of Alentejo and one of the first Portuguese rural fablabs. It comprises a collaborative creative studio, fablab and maker space (equipped with

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workstations, laser cutter, 3D printers, CNC's, vinyl cutters, etc.) to support the experimentation of artists, designers, engineers, researchers, and entrepreneurs.

It develops a creative residency program with private accommodation and shared work-spaces for creatives and researchers from different backgrounds (painting, drawing, sculpture, new media, design, writer, curators, among others). The residencies are process-based, allowing visiting artists to develop projects in a unique work ambiance and the immersion in the quotidian of this rural town of Alentejo region, a community with a strong sense of identity and rich heritage.

They also coordinated the Playground program focused on social design projects, which enables the artists in residence to engage in with the residents. Most activities are dedicated to children and young people, however also provides new activities, equipment and space renovations to a set of local institutions and informal groups. Recently in collaboration with the local municipality, the Buinho team is working with residents and the local community in plastic recycling projects linked to

art projects, learning, and social sharing.

E. GREAT GOOD PLACE

This project starts with the development of collaborative design methodologies, through the activation of physical spaces, but also the improving of an environment of sharing ideas, resources, skills, knowledge, etc. The Great Good Place is the third project developed in Portugal by the developers of the Colab methodology that originated a research group called Silo, which focused on the future issues of the work. It is a "participatory learning approach to collaboration and Komuhn (read: common) - the bossless team designing and building ideas towards impacting the world in a positive way" (http://www.dinamo10.net/in/comunidad/pedro-reis). The implementation of a pilot project made it possible to explore this concept in a building requalified by the municipality of Óbidos, which gave them the facilities. The space intends to activate a community in a low-density rural region through informal incubation of projects to enhance or improve business, enterprise, and product development. They are currently developing a new participatory design project in Peniche, Portugal - a small coastal community. The project began by detecting unused spaces where they could start prototyping some reactivation and requalification projects, for example, a coworking space, an open makerspace, a library of things, marketplace, etc. and the establishment of various partnerships. The main objective is to create a community of active participants that contribute positively to the territory.

F. UNDERGROUND VILLAGE LISBON

The Underground Village Lisbon opened in 2014, in addition to the coworking space is a hub for creativity and culture that marks the landscape of Lisbon. The Village Underground concept, a co-

working space, was created by Tom Foxcroft in London in 2007 as a way to bring friends together to reduce work expenses. After having occupied a space in the London version, Mariana Duarte Silva wanted to bring the concept to Portugal. Built on the grounds of Carris Museum in Alcântara, it brings together several container workspaces and a restaurant on an old Carris bus that follows the principle of reuse of equipment. Feature an event room with concerts, theater, and exhibition of new talent, a recording studio, which is chosen by many musicians to make artistic residences and record, and has transformed into an open gallery of street art. Since the start, many people have been involved in the arts and creative industries, such as theater or music, who have settled here. Today, 40 people workers there permanently, divided between small companies and freelancers, being 60% Portuguese and 40% foreign.

It presents a regular cultural program, with more than 30 pieces of national and foreign artists. Besides, on Fridays, from 6 pm, there are happy hours, with free admission.

FINAL THOUGHTS

A literature review was carried out to identify a set of key issues for the analysis of these dynamics which reveals the complexity of the phenomenon and the necessity to proceed to more accurate research. Then, as part of the exploratory phase of the ongoing research, it is presented a set of case studies that have distinct features and locations and emerge from different socio-economic contexts with distinct implications to the territories. This exploratory phase aims to point some important issues to a better understanding of the complexity of the phenomena, although not provide yet conclusive results. In this intention, field investigations are being carried out through direct observation, semi-directive interviews, and ethnographic data fulfillment.

All these projects under observation have, or aim to have, a transforming role in the territories and in community daily lives. This potential is recognized by public authorities and other institutions that support more and more this kind of space, aware of the changes that artists and creatives can bring. However, the real and long-term impacts of the cultural and creative collaborative projects have to be examined more deeply and in order to understand if the results arise from their particular features or from the context in which they intervene.

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