

Session 3A: Sustainable Cities, Heritage and Creativity

3A-b: The Contribution of Creativity to Sustainable Development

Creativity has been absent from the sustainable development agenda despite its importance in fostering entrepreneurship and resilience, building capabilities and improving well-being, developing the freedom of expression and dialogue, and providing substantial economic growth and jobs. Following the presentation of the UNESCO-UNDP Creative Economy Report Special Edition 2013 the panellists will discuss the impact of the creative sector at the local level, as well as entry points and arguments fostering the inclusion of creativity and the creative sector in the sustainable development debate.

Background Note¹

The Contribution of Creativity to Human Development

Through various global initiatives over the past decade, the international community has progressively recognized the transformative power of investing in creativity and is now arguing for more *forward-looking human development approaches*, in particular in the framework of the post-2015 UN sustainable development agenda.

However, there is still work to be done in fully understanding what creativity means for development and what could be the main elements that could contribute to these so-called forward-looking development approaches.

It is important to recognize that there is no single or universal understanding of creativity. Instead, it is a concept that is open to multiple interpretations, perhaps more today than ever before. Even in the domain of psychology, where creativity has been most widely studied, there is little agreement as to its nature or whether it is an attribute of people or a process.

As a starting point for this reflection on the contribution of creativity to development, UNESCO's Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 offers the following interpretation:

Creativity is understood as the human capacity, through imagination or invention, to produce something new and original in order to solve problems. It is a unique and renewable resource. Creativity enables individuals to expand their abilities and develop their full potential. In today's global, knowledge-based societies, creative assets are generating new forms of revenue and employment that are spurring growth, in

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particular among youth. Releasing diverse sources of inspiration and innovation, creativity contributes to building open, inclusive and pluralistic societies. As a multi-faceted human resource that involves processes, environments, persons and products, creativity can inspire positive transformative change for future generations. Creativity, embracing cultural expression and the transformative power of innovation, can contribute to finding imaginative and better development outcomes.²

This working definition emphasizing the vital role of creativity as a motor for *both inclusive economic and social development* is based on recent international legal instruments³ adopted by UNESCO Member States, and it underlines the same core values as those adopted for the post-2015 UN development agenda: human rights, equality and sustainability. It thus offers a framework upon which to build.

From the point of view of economic development, it has been argued that the transformation of creativity as a raw material into assets or goods offers new forms of revenue and employment opportunities. Creativity is also considered to be a cornerstone that develops, holds together and sustains vibrant economies, while at the same time building knowledge-based societies, stimulating innovation and bringing about technological change.

UN reports have established that there is a sizable and strong economic sector based upon creative activities, concluding that this *creative economy* is not only one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy as a whole, but that it is also a transformative one that provides feasible development options⁴. Data have been produced demonstrating that the global market value of the creative economy is approximately US\$1.6 trillion.⁵ National studies on the economic impact of the creative sector are on the rise, most recently in the Global South. For example, in Tunisia, 300,000 craft workers produce 3.8 percent of the country's annual GDP;⁶ in Burkina Faso, the creative sector contributes 2 per cent to national GDP, and studies show that there is a huge potential for growth;⁷ in Ecuador, private and formal cultural activities represent almost 4.7 percent;⁸ in Bosnia, this figure is 5.7 percent,⁹

² Cf. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002200/220031e.pdf>

³ Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005); Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003); Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).

⁴ UNDP-UNCTAD (2010) Creative Economy Report: A Feasible Development Option, United Nations.

⁵ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2008), Global Entertainment and Media Outlook.

⁶ UNESCO World Report: Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue (2009).

⁷ Ministry of Culture and Tourism study of the impact of the culture sector on social and economic development in Burkina Faso that was supported by the UNESCO International Fund for Cultural Diversity (2012).

⁸ Censo Económico de Ecuador de 2010, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo (INEC). For methodology and calculations, see UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators.

and it is 3.4 percent¹⁰ in Colombia. However, such figures are only the tip of the iceberg of what could be a much larger contribution made by the creative sector to national economies should investments be made in infrastructure and in institutional and human capacities.

Beyond the economic impact of the culture sector in the strict sense, it has also been recognized that the transformative power of creativity generates social benefits such as diversity, inclusiveness, tolerance and community participation that are essential for development. Indeed, cultural practices and the assets and expressions resulting from creativity are key vehicles for the creation, transmission and reinterpretation of the values, aptitudes and convictions through which individuals and communities express the meanings they give to their lives and their own development.

Thus, it has been argued that when *human and social* forms of creativity are nurtured, they improve individual and collective well-being and self-esteem, augment social capital, create bonds and the sense of cooperation, support the dynamics of pluralism and empower people to negotiate modernity. Such energy is renewable, and it not only drives action but is also replenished and increased by it for the betterment of lives, families and communities.¹¹

However, the social and more intangible development implications of creativity need more analytical attention, as they are still too often misunderstood and are generally ignored in measurement exercises. At the same time, qualitative evidence is emerging from ongoing studies of the impact of investing in human and social forms of creativity supported through the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, for example, along with the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators and the MDG-F Thematic Window on Culture and Development.

Human forms of creativity, in particular artistic creativity, need to be nurtured and promoted. In a recent United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council report, Farida Shaheed recognizes that artistic expression and creativity are the cornerstones of the functioning of democratic societies. In the report, she singles out laws and regulations restricting artistic freedom, as well as economic and financial issues, which have a significant negative impact on cultural, social and economic development. These include reduced public-sector support, the restriction of livelihood options through piracy, etc., and the “market censorship” imposed by

⁹ National Accounts-Gross Domestic Product, Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Office of Statistics of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Statistical Institute of Republika Srpska. Methodology and calculations: UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators.

¹⁰ The National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia (DANE). Methodology and calculations: UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators.

¹¹ De Beukelaer, C., *Pioneering Minds Worldwide: On the Entrepreneurial Principles of the Cultural and Creative Industries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

corporate consolidation that reduces the diversity of funding sources and both the artistic autonomy and the space available for creative production.¹²

For its part, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) calls upon governments to introduce new systems of governance that promote artistic creativity, whatever the means and technologies used¹³. It puts forward the idea that systems of governance for creativity in relation to development are dependent upon several factors, such as:

- the political will and the level of priority given to the creative sector by the public authorities and society in general;
- the engagement of civil society and professional operators;
- the availability of human and financial resources in the sector;
- the capacities of public institutions and stakeholders in formulating relevant strategies and policies;
- the availability of information and data that can contribute to facilitating informed and transparent governance.

The Convention also encourages international cooperation for development that is aimed at providing support for creative work and facilitating the mobility of artists from the developing world and the balanced flow of cultural goods and services, especially from the Global South.

In summary, the role of creativity in development is many-faceted. The UNESCO-UNDP Creative Economy Report, Special Edition 2013 that is under preparation puts forward the idea that placing the emphasis on imagining, innovating, and communicating, both individual and collective, rather than on investment returns and economic outputs alone, leads to the recognition of an “economy of creativity” that generates a panoply of human development goods, renewable resources and processes across society as a whole.

¹² Shaheed, F., *The Right to Freedom of Artistic Expression and Creativity*. United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 2012.

¹³ Article 4 of the 2005 Convention defines cultural expressions as those that result from the creativity of individuals, groups and societies and that have cultural content (the latter is defined as have an artistic dimension alongside symbolic meaning and cultural values).