

Towards a Creative Society: Embracing the Diversity of Creativity

In the idea of a Creative Society, creativity and creative attitudes are embraced and championed as central driving forces of a socially responsible performance. Creativity is not only an issue for a specific Creative Class, but it belongs to everyone in the whole society. The goal of the creative society is to ensure living standards in an era of heightened global competition. Furthermore, a balance should be sought between economic growth and the everyday welfare of people.



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RENEWED INTEREST TOWARDS CREATIVITY

Creativity has been a major driving force of societies in the course of history. Issues of creativity have played a vital role in human evolution throughout history. Creativity has been a universal source and a critical driver of prosperity and progress amongst societies. In the current era of globalisation, creativity is receiving renewed interest.

In the search for new sources of economic growth, an acute need has emerged for other kinds of knowledge and property in addition to techno-economic knowledge, which has been the competitive edge of Western societies by far. Current globalisation trends are causing a shift in the international division of labour. In Finland, as in most industrialised countries, a significant share of value-added and labour-intensive production activity is shifting abroad. If growth is to be sustained, production structures will have to shift towards higher value-added production. A major potential source of growth has been reported¹ to be in the area of *Creative Industries*.

But what is creativity? Creativity is the quality of being creative. The adjective *creative* is defined as:

1. having the quality or power of creating.
2. resulting from originality of thought, expression, etc.: *creative writing*.
3. originative; productive.²

As seen as an action of making something new and unique, inventing and originating, creativity is a central factor that may help in gaining a competitive edge in the struggle for excellence. Convention is the enemy of creativity. One has to take risks in order to be unconventional.

Creativity cannot be forced. Innovation is interaction between human beings. It could be seen as a conversation where surprising conclusions become a starting point for new conversations. "*The best conversations are never over*", as Charles Leadbeater³ has stated. That describes the nature and force of creativity, namely that creativity is a two way process or exchange. It requires effort by the receiver to respect and recognise the creative idea.

SOME ASPECTS OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The term Creative Industries is an oxymoron, a self-contradiction, consisting of two words that seem inconsistent with each other. The noun *industry* refers to productive activity and manufacturing, both of which have a flavour of replication, while the adjective *creative* refers to originality and uniqueness. To be precise, the verb *create* means among other things:

1. to cause to come into being, as something unique that would not naturally evolve or that is not made by ordinary processes: *God created Eve from one of Adam's ribs.*
2. to evolve from one's own thought or imagination, as a work of art, an invention, etc.⁴

According to John Howkins⁵, the core industries of the worldwide Creative Economy in 1999 by market size were R&D, publishing, software, TV and radio, design, music, film, toys and games, advertising, architecture, performing arts, crafts, video games, fashion, and art. The intellectual property of these industries is in the form of patents, copyrights, trademarks and proprietary designs⁶. Intellectual property rights issues urgently need to be clarified within the growing creative industries sector.

There are slight differences in the definitions of Creative Industries depending on the party defining the term. The UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sport defines Creative Industries in the following way:

"We define the creative industries as those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. This includes advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, television and radio."

A network of creative practitioners called Creative Clusters (UK) defines Creative Industries as follows:

*"Cultural Industries are based on individuals with creative arts skills, in alliance with managers and technologists, making marketable products, and whose economic value lies in their cultural (or 'intellectual') properties. The Creative Industries include: Advertising, Architecture, Crafts and designer furniture, Fashion clothing, Film, video and other audiovisual production, Graphic design, Educational and leisure software, Live and recorded music, Performing arts and entertainments, Television, radio and internet broadcasting, Visual arts and antiques, Writing and publishing."*⁸

Independently from the various definitions, industries related to culture, art and design, entertainment, advertising, broadcasting, and the R&D industries form the invident core of the so-called Creative Industries. In contrast to the cultural industries, creative industries also include new areas such as entertainment industries. The fuzzy concept of Creative Industries has to be seen to include industries where creativity is directly embodied in the core of the business.

QUESTIONING THE MAINSTREAM LINE OF THOUGHT

But what is a non-creative industry? Can a business be vital without being creative? Are there creative companies and non-creative companies? Of course, there are innovative companies and non-innovative companies, but the non-innovative ones do not survive. It is justified to refuse to believe that the world is divided into creative and non-creative parts across branches of business or industry. Is not a steel factory or a paper factory creative?

One should be wary of the idea of separating industries by general attributes like their creativeness. To play with the idea, what would happen if the paper and steel industries started

to call themselves “*The Wise Industries*”, in reference to their long existence? A large number of industries would be excluded from this creative or wise classification merely due to the branch they represent. Is there any point in using the term Creative Industries?

A much better way to describe various industries would be to use old-fashioned, common, clear terms like *Cultural Industries*, Entertainment Industries, and Service Industries. Naturally, cultural branches also have the intention to heighten their status. But a much better way would be to speak about cultural industries, cultural capital and cultural knowledge.

Finnish cultural identity and awareness have been intensive throughout history. The wars experienced just some generations ago and special relationships with neighbouring nations have strongly formed the self-image and identity of the Finns. The cultural heritage and creative capital of the population is recognisably high in Finland.

CLARIFYING THE CONTEXT OF CREATIVITY

Creativity has just entered the world of economics. Creativity and its contexts are very rich, and the rhetoric surrounding it is very general and loose. The borders are fuzzy: are the people behind the business creative, or are the products or the production activity itself creative?

When speaking about creativity, some issues in reference to the context used should be clarified⁹:

- 1) Which society and economic system are we talking about? The context of industries and the knowledge base in continents and countries differ widely.
- 2) Which hierarchical level with respect to industries and businesses are we referring to?
 - a) Macro-level; global actors (like the Sony Corporation)
 - b) Meso-level; national and international actors (like the French film industry)
 - c) Micro-level; regional and local actors and innovation centres; urban regions and metropolitan areas (like New York, London, and Helsinki)
- 3) What do creative industries comprise? For example design, which is definitely a part of the culture in Finland, and a creative industry, is not culture according to the definition by UNESCO.
- 4) Are we talking about production or a specific product?
 - a) What kind of productive act is it? Is the production or action itself creative?
 - b) What is there to be produced? Are the products of creative actions creative?

In the era of globalisation, creativity has been linked to the international competitiveness of continents, nations, regions, cities, societies, businesses and individuals. This is a fruitful starting point for investigating issues of creativity at the practical level and finding the best practices and policies for daily use. There is still much to discuss about the concept of creativity, like its values, attitudes, influences – and much beyond.

ABOUT THE RISE OF THE CREATIVE CLASS

Can a professional perform his work without being creative? How does a high-school teacher, a policeman or a fireman survive a working day without being creative? Creativity is a part of their everyday work, even though they do not belong to the *Creative Class*, nor are their branches they work in included in the definition of Creative Industries. Actually, is it not so that every actor in our society needs creativity to be an active member of it?

According to Richard Florida’s definition of the Creative Class, “*The distinguishing characteristic of the Creative Class is that the members engage in work whose function is to create meaningful new forms*”.¹⁰ Florida’s Creative Class consists of two components. The *Super-*

Creative Core engages fully in the creative process. It is their job to do so. The Super-Creative Core of the creative class includes “*scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, as well as the thought leadership of modern society: non-fiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts and other opinion-makers*”¹¹.

Beyond the Super-Creative Core are, according to Florida, “*creative professionals*”. These typically have a high degree of formal education and a high level of human capital. “*What they are required to do regularly is think on their own*”, states Florida. Creative professionals work “*in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health care professions, and business management*”.¹²

The other classes in Florida’s definition, the other “social groupings”, as he writes, are the Service Class, the Working Class and Agriculture. According to him, the growth of the Service Class is largely a response to the demands of the Creative Economy. Florida writes: “*Members of the creative class, because they are well compensated and work long and unpredictable hours, require a growing pool of low-end service workers to take care of them and do their chores.*”¹³

I argue that Florida’s line of thought is far too elitist. It segregates the population into the Creative Class or the Non-Creative Class by their profession or their branch of industry. Every member of our society is creative. Of course there have always been and will always be the top of every branch; top painters, top film directors, top designers, top managers, etc., who are the masters of creative action, the real elite¹⁴. But an approach where creativity is attainable by everyone is much more healthy and realistic.

The serious issue here is that separating the population into groupings according to *general attributes*, such as the creative ones and the non-creative ones, could not by any means be done on the basis of profession or industry. For example, it would be absurd if doctors and nurses were to start calling themselves “*The Caring Class*”. Then, other professions, industries as well as individuals would be excluded from being caring. That simply would not make any sense.

The dichotomy between ‘the creative person’ and the ‘the non-creative or average person’ is by no means fruitful. Without being especially egalitarian, we can say that creativity at a certain level belongs to everyone¹⁵. Many parents, for example, have been through times of extreme creativity in making the everyday life of their children pleasant and comfortable given modest conditions, or even dangerous environments. The creativity of everyday life has to be cherished.

Understandingly, people have a human need to separate, define and legitimate their own position and role in a group or in society. But it should not be allowed to happen at the cost of other people and commonly recognised cultural values. Everyone wants to be part of the creative world.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CREATIVITY

The alliance of the aims of Creative Industries is paradoxical: to maximize business profits while enriching the culture of people. What is the responsibility of the manager or the employee these days? What is the responsibility of an employee, or an artist or a researcher towards his or her society?

Some decades ago, the owner of a factory was the man with the status, power, and responsibility over his business and its employees. He cared about the welfare, housing, health and the education of his employees. The solid

relationship was based on mutual trust, respect and loyalty. There would be much to learn and apply to the working culture of today.

It is interesting to see how the economic growth of Creative Industries will be investigated further. Evidently, Creative Industries have a big role in facilitating the materials, and providing access to the sources of culture and knowledge, for educating and cultivating people. How do Creative Industries ethically carry the challenge and social responsibility in facilitating, and also controlling, cultural experiences of large amounts of populations globally? At an individual level, are the products of the Creative Industries taking a large share of our time and investments as consumers away from traditional cultural activities? For example, are computer games reducing time for reading books, and are CDs and MP3s replacing our attendance at concerts?

THE RISE OF THE CREATIVE SOCIETY

Finland has all the possibilities to head a group of the most creative welfare societies of the world. Before that, though, the idea of the Creative Economy has to permeate the whole realm of economics and society. Energy should be directed at embracing and tolerating the diversity of creativity.

The Creative Economy should include every active member of our societies at every level of professional activity. Creativity does not belong to the Creative Industries or to the Creative Class only. It enriches and develops actions in every area of business, public and private life.

Inevitably, there are different levels of creativity. Some of us belong to the aristocracy of creativity. Still, there are many people who do not have the possibility to apply their creative talents at a satisfying level in everyday working life. There is a huge potential for furthering the common good, both measured in economic

terms and in the quality of life, by encouraging people to apply their creative powers in everyday working life.

This point has started to be recognized in private business, but in the public sector there remains a lot to do. Both in the private and public sector, boosting creativity is in the end a challenge for management practices and politics.

A challenging and caring atmosphere allows creativity to flourish; it nurtures diversity and individual processes. It is an environment based on trust where people can truly be themselves. In that kind of environment, a human being can also truly enjoy his work, which can be seen in the fruits of his or her work.

Honesty and trust are necessary parts of creativity as they are of business. Trust allows one to act, interact and converse with confidence, while being able to take risks and create.

Creativity is also, at the organisational level, an issue pertaining not only to one special group of people. Managing creativity in an organisation means openness to new ideas. In an organisation, everyone can be creative. Teamwork is vital and belongs to the highly cherished actions of a creative organisation. The significance of influence over control has been strongly emphasized.¹⁶ Business has to be predictable, but there still should be a window for change, surprise and play.

Creativity in interaction with others is essential, as it nurtures human well-being, job satisfaction and quality of life as well as promotes general productivity. Today, in the global, highly competitive economy,¹⁷ employees often do not feel well, are stressed and at times depressed. Applying diverse creativity might be a way to break this arguably vicious circle.

Finland, as a highly creative country, has all the potential for realising the dream of a model Creative Society. Why has that not been realised yet? It seems to be Finland's lack of tolerance for values not yet engrained in the culture¹⁸.

Finland ranks third in the Euro-Creativity Index, where 14 European countries and the USA are evaluated by the three T's that affect their creativity: Talent, Technology and Tolerance. Finland receives a very high ranking in the Talent and Technology indexes, but the Tolerance index reduces Finland's overall index. Still, Finland stands in the Euro-Creativity Matrix of Leaders, together with Denmark, the USA and Sweden.¹⁹

Himanen²⁰ notes that the assets of the Creative Economy are the Cultural branch, the Welfare branch and Information Technology. Finland could become a true model of a modern creative society. But the creativity shift must not increase social stress and add pressure to be creative. Creativity cannot by definition be the subject matter of efficiency and measurement. Human sciences cannot be applied like the natural sciences.

The stimulation, development and engagement of creativity depends highly on how the economic, cultural, ethical and social health of a society will flourish. A creatively attractive area lures top-practitioners and talents. Furthermore, the input of the creative talents reflects as cumulative growth of creative capital. A positive circle of creative society emerges.²¹

In this article, we stress that in the Finnish context it is more fruitful and healthy to refrain from separating concepts such as Creative Industries and the Creative Class. The focus of thought and conversation should be focused on the subject matter of creativity: creative work, creative processes, creative performances, and creative societies in addition to creativity in general.

A way to widen creativity to cover the whole society is by building creativity chains where every member of society and all the diversities of creativity fit together. In creativity chains, diverse creative thinking, attitudes and performance flourishes. Creativity belongs to everyone, not only to a Creative Class

Creative attitude added to rich cultural knowledge makes a *Contextual Sensitivity* which exists in the very heart of a creative society – and should be highly embraced. Will and talent added to sensitivity make an invincible mixture. Finland has all the ingredients for this development. Willpower is still being searched for. But which direction to take is already clear.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Creativity has risen to become one of the central competitive factors of nations and industries in the current era of globalisation. Whereas technology as a competitive factor affects the products themselves, creativity, as a human attitude, talent and skill, affects the process or way in which production takes place.

As an overall attitude, it depends largely on the general environment and spirit of an organisation and society. It cannot be forced upon human beings, but it can be nurtured and embraced by society.

Embedded in creativity are both external and internal benefits. External benefits can show up as innovative and insightful ideas affecting production. The internal benefits of creativity show up in mental well-being and job satisfaction. This should be delicately nurtured in everyday working situations. Creativity and its spiritual internal benefit belong to everyone. This is a great challenge facing not only professionals in their fields, but for management and policies as well.

To advance the idea of the Creative Society, the cherishing of and concern for creative

attitudes and society's spirit of creativity have to be extended to include all production activities and professions, not only the specific professions that make up the very core of creativity (such as Creative Industries).

The future is made up of human intellectual resources. Shared happiness and welfare would be the highest human goals in the rise and prosperity of a Creative Finnish Society. Intellectual properties, creative capital and other human intellectual capital are the vital raw materials needed for economic growth and survival in the era of global competition. That means a shift from desire to control towards embracing the diversity of creativity.

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Florida and Tinagli, 2004.
- ² Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, 1989.
- ³ Haavisto, 2004, 1.
- ⁴ Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, 1989.
- ⁵ Howkins, 2001, 116.
- ⁶ Florida and Tinagli, 2004, 46.
- ⁷ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2004.
- ⁸ Creativeclusters, UK, 2004.
- ⁹ Haavisto and Korvenmaa, 2004.
- ¹⁰ Florida, 2002, 68.
- ¹¹ Florida, 2002, 68-69.
- ¹² Florida, 2002, 69.
- ¹³ Florida, 2002, 71.
- ¹⁴ The elite of creation would include all Finnish established artists, musicians, composers, etc. – the ones whose talent is widely celebrated and unquestioned; Tove Jansson, Alvar Aalto, Kaija Saariaho, Kaj Franck, just to mention some.
- ¹⁵ Sotamaa, 2004, 4.
- ¹⁶ Haavisto, 2004, 1.
- ¹⁷ Siltala, 2004.
- ¹⁸ Wilenius, 2004, 12.
- ¹⁹ Florida and Tinagli, 2004.
- ²⁰ Himanen, 2004, 9.
- ²¹ Koivunen, 2004, 4.

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