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The principal investigator of this study, Branka Loncaric, created this article as part of the MA program Master of Arts in Arts Management at the Utrecht School of Arts, Netherlands.

Cross-sector partnership and creative collaboration. A case study

A study by [Branka Loncaric](#)

Abstract

The aim of this article is to address the importance of cross-sector collaboration, especially within the creative industry sector. It discusses collaboration as the joint work of people on an equivalent foundation in the outset, development and revision of a project in which each individual carries full responsibility for its outcome (Downie, Eshkar, Kalser; 2012). Cross-sector collaboration, the paradox of collaboration and how public has an impact on the collaboration are also central themes.

The article contains the results of a research that was conducted in two Amsterdam-based art factories. Its aim was to explore their best practices in order to create an advisory report for the management of art factories. Along the research process the particular aspect of collaboration among the management and the tenants of these art factories became very prevalent.

The research was based on questionnaires for the tenants, as well as several interviews with them. By the end, the results could be based on 150 questionnaire responses in total. Along with this practice-based research, the process included desk research on creative cities with a focus on Amsterdam.

Art factories are affordable working spaces for artists and creatives, placed mainly in old buildings that are not used for its original purpose anymore. For instance, the first art factory of the study is placed in the former building of the Academic Centre for Dentistry, and the second in the former Shell Laboratories in the north Amsterdam. There are approximately 80 art factories based in Amsterdam. As they are financed by the municipality their purpose is also to raise the value of the buildings and transform them into working spaces.

The main intention for establishing art factories is to provide affordable working spaces for a 'super-creative core' and 'creative professionals'. According to Florida (2012) scientists, engineers, university professors, writers, artists, entertainers, actors, designers, architects, actors, designers, researchers and opinion makers belong to the super-creative core because their creative work consists of new forms and is widely useful and applicable; they are problem solvers but also problem finders (p. 38). On the other hand, creative professionals not only work in high-tech and financial services but also in the legal and health care professions and businesses (p. 39).



As the research results showed, there is much more potential for creative collaboration in the art factories than is used by now. The reasons and questions for further discussion are presented in paper you can download below, as well as a conclusion that offers a solution for creating common and safe ground for collaboration.

Keywords: art factories, creative industry, cross-sectional collaboration, management, innovation, intermediation

Introduction

The shift from lone genius to the power of collective has shaped the way of thinking and perceiving patterns and behavior not only in today's business world, but also in the creative industry. This paper takes a closer look the specific topic of collaboration that occurred during the research about Amsterdam-based art factories. Even though art factories can be perceived as a fertile ground for collaboration, career development and networking platform, this isn't always the case in practice. The ideas and intentions of the tenants, as well as the intentions of the management do not always meet the expectations, when it comes to the mutual collaboration. It is often the case that art factories have tenants from various disciplines, such as, artists, innovators, writers, musicians, and some of them have very clear ideas about the profile of their tenants. Furthermore, the topic of possible collaboration is dual-sided; if the art factory has professionals from various branches, how can collaboration happen and bring out new innovative ideas? On the other hand, if the tenants are professionals with similar jobs and mindset, will that make the collaboration easier?

The value is in the eye of the beholder

The new research by Rosanna Smith and George Newmann (2014): 'When multiple creators are worse than one: the bias toward single authors in the evaluation of art', shows that people perceive the work of art less valuable if it is a result of collaboration. While artists are usually less keen to collaborate, creative professionals clearly understand that collaboration can bring multiple useful ideas.

Collaboration is an 'issue' artists are facing because their artistic value is in a fragile position as soon as the word 'entrepreneurship' is mentioned. The public makes great impact on how particular artist are valued or how a design studio is appreciated. The paradox is that collaboration is not equally valued in both art and creative industry. Moreover, Smith and Newmann are discussing three interesting results on how the public values affect collaboration. First findings show that the number of authors is inversely proportional to the value of their work; if the number of authors rises, the value drops. The second finding explains that the first finding occurs because peop-



le tend to value quality in the way of separating the amount of effort made by each author rather than total amount of effort. The third finding shows that people tend to value a specific author more than collaborative work (Newmann, Smith, 2014). It seems that the only successful and accepted form of artistic collaboration was Dadaism, while creative sector is successfully using ‘business Dadaism’ in creating new solutions and generating profit.

To collaborate or not to collaborate – business Dadaism

Collaborators are people who work together on an equivalent foundation, in the over-all outset, development and revision of the project. Each individual carries full responsibility for the outcome of the project (Downie, Eshkar, Kalser; 2012). Nowadays, many active entrepreneurs and speakers are emphasizing the importance of collaboration as a key behavioral pattern for revitalizing global economy. For instance Canadian business executive, Don Tapscott states:

‘Collaboration is important not just because it’s a better way to learn. The spirit of collaboration is penetrating every institution and all of our lives. So learning to collaborate is part of equipping yourself for effectiveness, problem solving, innovation and life-long learning in an ever-changing networked economy.’

If the benefits of collaboration are almost common knowledge, the question is why collaboration works better in theory than in practice. Before answering that question it is important to explain different types of collaboration, such as natural, rules-based, skills-based, creative, creative and complex, creative and massively complex (Abele, n.d.). The natural collaboration is happening in everyday life, almost like the evolutionary survival instinct, while rules-based collaboration is the upgraded version of natural collaboration, for example, in traffic rules. Moreover, skill-based collaboration is based on a group supporting one individual. On the other hand, creative collaborations require the complexity of thinking and going beyond solely skills (Abele, n.d.). The creative types of collaboration are the ones that bring added values to problem solving in order to find solutions. As they get more complex, they become cross-sector collaborations, which involve various different disciplines.

After understanding the different types of collaboration, it is important to go back to the paradox of collaboration, more specifically to the question why collaboration is difficult to maintain or create. The answer lays in simple responds such as human nature. It is difficult to get multiple collaborators into a collaborative state for multiple reasons, for instance: the fear of an idea being stolen, the fear that weaknesses will be more visible, the domination of individuals or the fear of a hidden agenda (Abele, n.d.). Also collaboration

can be an excuse for laziness. The listed reasons can overshadow the knowledge about its benefits. These preventive obstacles are not only the reason of unsuccessful collaboration, also the inability to find a common language can be one of the largest problems that became visible through the research interviews. This communication problem is often mentioned in conversations with creative professionals, especially if the subject of the conversation is the creative core.

‘...maybe because artists are more focused on their own thing you know...they are in their own little world...in their own little space...When people knock on the door it’s always first like. ‘What do you want?’ You know...it’s like you are bothering them... And here is like ‘oh...sharing, oh you have an interesting questionnaire let’s see what it says and maybe I can contribute to what you are doing’. There is more contribution to each other’s ideas and work here.’ (interview, 2014)

Creative spill-over

During the research it became apparent that communication and vision and business ethics vary even within the same sector, which implies that cross-sector collaboration is one of the most complex and difficult collaborations to establish. According to Bingham and Sharpe (2008), cross-sector collaboration is: ‘linking or sharing of information; goodwill and good intentions; resources; activities; and power of capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly what could not be achieved by organization in the sector separately.’ (p.56). Furthermore, cross-sector collaboration often results with spill-over, which in the creative industry means sharing of knowledge and ideas that leads towards innovation. Furthermore, cross-collaboration, cross-innovation and spill-over are three tightly connected phenomena. The study by the German Institute for Innovation and Technology (2014) explains how cross-innovation can be established through: ‘transfer of knowledge and solutions by identifying and communicating analogies between industries or through promotion of cross-industry collaboration.’ In order to truly establish transformative collaboration systems on the macro level, thinking beyond the borders of sectors should be a common state of mind. Simon Mainwaring, American brand consultant, shares his vision on collaboration as a transformative force for creating prosperous society by stating: ‘We need to develop and disseminate an entirely new paradigm and practice of collaboration that supersedes the philanthropies and private enterprises for decades and replace it with networks of partnerships working together to create a globally prosperous society.’

A good example of cross-sector collaboration between art and science is the Belgian artist Frederik De Wilde, who is currently collaborating with NASA. His simple question of how you can make something blacker than black? led



him to a technological research combined with art. The results take form in carbon nano tubes that De Wilde transforms into sculptures. He as an individual always had the interest in science and technology, hence, his individual cross-collaborative/ cross-industry focus came naturally, because he understands the ‘languages of the both worlds’. De Wilde is one of few that easily maneuvers through multiple disciplines by himself. However his example can be taken as proof of a successful merge between creative and technical mind.

Methods

This practice-based research on the topic of art factories primarily utilized an induction approach, which serves to gain a better understanding of the nature of the problem (Saunders, 2012). The research employed mixed methods as it took use of both quantitative and qualitative data, which are necessary for answering the main question and sub questions. ‘In this way, the priority of weight given to either quantitative or qualitative research may vary, so that one methodology has a dominant role, while other plays supporting role, depending on the purpose of the research project.’ (Saunders, 2012, p.168) Here are used the advisory report for Dutch art factory managers, the interviews and questionnaires with tenants were conducted, but also interviews with managers of certain art factories. The research strategy achieves triangulation by different sources in order to make the research valid and reliable. The particular method of triangulation uses qualitative and quantitative methods, such as interviews and surveys. For the literature, mostly secondary literature sources were used, but also primary data (reports, company reports).

Results

The quantitative part of the research (150 questioners) showed many interesting results. The questions were divided into four categories: general questions, reasons for joining, collaboration and personal information. The questions on the collaboration included the aspects such as:

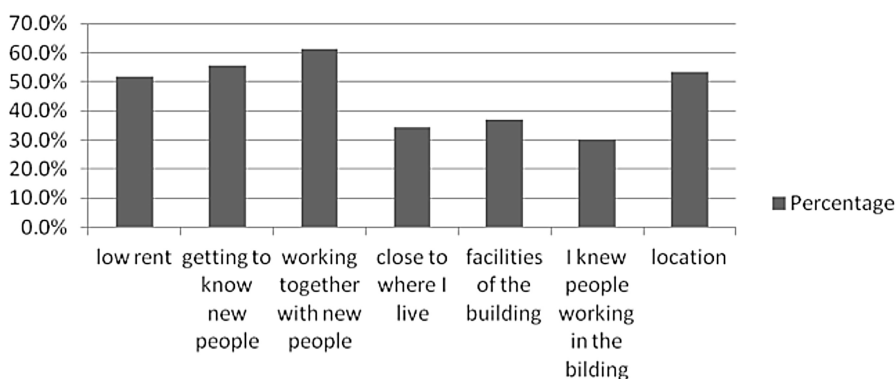
- Collaboration with people outside the own company
- Frequency and kind of collaboration between tenants of the same art factory
- Frequency and kind of help by the art factories in establishing collaborations outside of the own art factory

Results indicated that tenants collaborate with other professionals outside their company mostly ‘from time to time’. If they do, 70% of the time it is based on helping others. One of the most interesting results was about the collaboration between the tenants of art factories, their motivation for collaboration and what they imply.



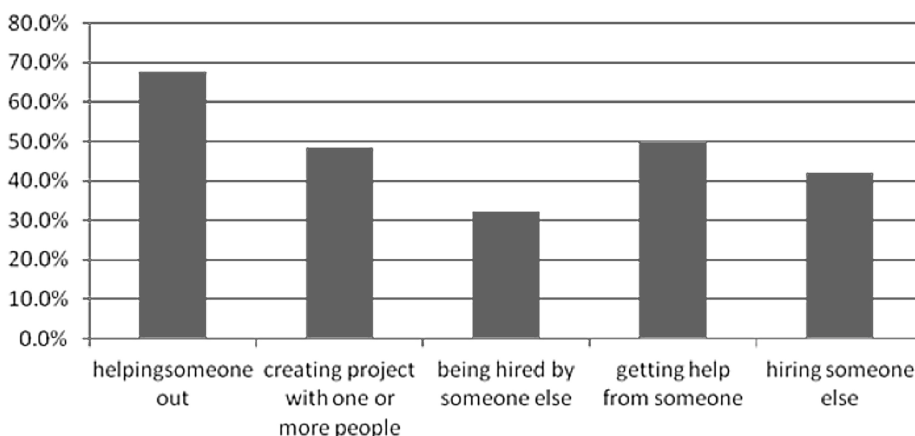
The results of collaboration between the management of art factories and the tenants will be presented and explained along with the following charts that illustrate the quantitative results. The prior question about the reasons for renting a working space in the art factory showed that the majority of renters want to work with new people.

Reasons for renting (Netherlands)



Next is the question if there is collaboration between the tenants. Results showed that more than 60% of them do not collaborate with each other. The following question was about the type of the collaboration that the tenants manage to establish. The results showed the following:

Type of Collaboration



It is visible that collaboration among tenants implies the highest percentage for helping each other while types of collaboration that are bringing financial gain are scoring lower.



The remaining results are focused on the collaboration between the art factory management and the tenants. According to the interviews, management has a certain vision of collaboration with its tenants, mostly in terms of mutual marketing, or the management is helping the companies or creative professionals to establish business collaboration. The results showed that more than 70% of the tenants have never established any form of collaboration through the management of the art factory. On the other hand, more than 80% of the tenants mention the art factory in which they work only through personal conversation.

Discussion

The tenants of the case study art factories tend to collaborate with each other; this is mainly achieved through mutual help and not through business collaboration. Hence, the encouragement of mutual collaboration between the tenants but also between the tenants and the art factory is something that needs to be more developed if the mission and vision of an art factory are to thrive and expanded. On the other hand, tenants do have the feeling of belonging in the community mostly if they have similar aspirations or motivations and if they perceive their working environment as fertile ground for sharing or discussing similar ideas. Moreover, their main motivation for becoming a tenant is to work with new people and not the low rental prices, as might be expected, which implies that motivation is based on social rather than financial preferences.

Cross-sector collaboration projects often demand financial input, but they also generate financial flow. If the motivation of the management is solely collaboration for the sake of collaboration, the business dimension becomes overlooked. But since that is often not the case, the tools or strategies for collaboration should be reevaluated. If a common working space such as an art factory or a creative cluster is one of the most convenient forms of joining creative professionals but collaboration is not yet reaching its full potential, the sector needs to look further into finding forms of inducing collaborative potential between creative professionals. If the example of this research is seen as an indicator of the situation on the macro level, how can translating ideas across the sectors work in order to find a common, trustworthy ground where professionals are put into collaborative mindsets?

Conclusion

The management product of the research resulted in an 'ABC' model, which represents a creative-educational collaborative cluster. Hence, art factories often have a very specific profile, which often means that a narrow spectrum of creative professions is present at the same art factory. This consequently reduces various types of creative collaboration. Furthermore, connecting the creative sector with other sectors such as science, medicine, or finances seems to be an even more complex idea. This is why the clusters should have



educational - collaborative spaces for students and young professionals, where they can combine their ideas as experiments instead of real business projects.

ABC is a technical solution that might yield big results. Block A represents a building intended for the creative core of e.g. painters, musicians, writers, philosophers. It can be called an 'intellectual and artistic Mecca'. Furthermore, as block C would be intended for creative professionals as designers, app developers, architects, graphic designers, it is named a 'Cauldron of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship'. Ultimately block B, created for a merge between the two 'worlds', is a place that can include lecture halls, a theatre, an art gallery, a concept store, restaurant and a bar. These spaces host a full time agenda, with workshops, lectures for students, exhibitions, performances, etc. Block B, 'The Conciliator' is envisioned as the place, where people share ideas, enjoy art and aesthetics and are amazed with the wonders of technology. ABC recalls the most basic processes of learning, namely learning from each other, step by step learning each other's way of thinking, perceiving the world and losing all prejudices. ABC is an idea that can be created in an old building as well as new ones can be created just for the ABC purpose. If an ABC is putted into one building, a division should be made at least by floors or wings of the building, one for the artistic 'chaos' and one for the 'meticulousness' of technology. Yet it should also have a space to merge the two and welcome cross-sector collaboration. The management should be unbiased, its ultimate goal would be to develop an appealing agenda for block B, search for local and international partners and help the 'family' succeed. The ABC model can be upgraded with block D in the later phase with 'the science department', if the ABC proves to be good tool for finding cross-professional language and establishing collaborations.

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About the Author

Branka Loncaric comes from Croatia. She has Bachelor degree in Economics and Management from the Zagreb School of Economics and Management, and a Master degree in Arts and Economics from Utrecht School of Arts, Netherlands. There she discovered the world of art factories and decided to have a closer look on why, how and what management experts and creative professionals work together there. Before, she had been working as a manager of Caffe gallery Lav in Zagreb for some years.

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Utrecht, September 2014.



Imprint

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