OneThreeOne, Bedford Street: Creativity and Art Spaces

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*"The building provides a visible base
to do the things that we care about,
and it provides a headquarters for
all of these good ideas that can come out."*
-Geoff Kirkwood

Abstract

In this essay, 1) we explored the concept of creativity and 2) reflected on how art spaces can influence the creative outcomes of individuals. By reclaiming and transforming spaces, individuals can create their own art spaces to rethink the arts. To do so, we define creativity through a music artist's perspective and compare it with other concepts. We concluded that creativity is a polysemic notion. Its use is not the prerogative of one discipline but moves between disciplines, people's experiences, and socio-historical contexts. The ideas about creative thinking that emerged in the middle of the last century still retain a surprising relevance related to the development of current studies on the subject. This essay is part of an ongoing research project on creative processes in the arts (music).

Keywords: *Creativity, Art, Music, Spaces*.

Resumen

En este ensayo, exploramos el concepto de creatividad y reflexionamos acerca de cómo los espacios artísticos pueden influir en los resultados creativos de los individuos. Los individuos, al recuperar y transformar sus espacios, pueden crear sus propios espacios artísticos para repensar las artes, para ello definimos la creatividad desde la perspectiva de un artista (músico) y la comparamos con otros conceptos propuestos. Como hallazgos preliminares encontramos que la creatividad es una noción polisémica, su

uso no es prerrogativa de una disciplina, sino que se mueve entre ellas, en las experiencias de las personas y en los contextos socioculturales específicos. Asimismo, las ideas sobre el pensamiento creativo expresadas en el siglo pasado aún conservan una actualidad sorprendente con respecto al desarrollo de los estudios actuales sobre el tema. Este ensayo es parte de una investigación en curso sobre los procesos creativos en las artes (música).

Palabras clave: *Creatividad, Arte, Música, Espacio.*

Introduction

For artists and scientists, creativity can be shaped by their environment, dynamics, constraints, and life experiences. In the psychological space, Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010 affirm: "What makes a person or product creative is the flair of originality constrained by usefulness, and the benefit of usefulness constrained by originality" (p. 481). These constraints do not limit the creativity to make it possible.

In 1959, Mills, a sociologist, argued with unusual relevance that we should think like strangers, pointing out that we should "step back" from the familiar habits of our daily lives and see them as something new. Although he does not speak of creativity, he uses sociological imagination instead, "the ability to move from one perspective to another... It is the ability to move from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate characteristics of the human being and to see the relationships between the two things." (Mills, 2004, p. 27).

Hence, creativity implies knowledge of sorts and is used to come up with new combinations in a knowledge field. It requires space to move, explore, construct, destroy, rebuild, and reimagine countless possibilities. There must be a sense of play, a dance with ideas, and even a child-like approach to create.

In this context, creativity should be considered a confluence space between science, industry, art, technology, and the public spheres: State, community, and private. What is typical between this confluence is the human capacity to permanently re-elaborate the data it receives and build new versions of the world from them. The new humanities and art are now at that confluence, and innovation does not stop (Brandt & Eagleman, 2022).

Carayannis & Campbell (2015) introduce the so-called Quadruple or Quintuple Helix innovation systems, which are sensitive to the roles played by the arts and artistic research in innovation. In this sense, the arts constitute essential elements for both national and international innovation systems. It is not only about economic activities. It is about thinking about new models of economic growth or development linked to democracy, the quality of growth, and, in addition, creative design or creative design processes that lead to the democratization of the economy, society, and knowledge. Thus, the arts can be understood as multidimensional areas, not only aesthetic but as an expression

of the production, creation, application, and use of artistic knowledge. Research and innovation based on the arts connect with other disciplines and add inter- and transdisciplinary research modes and novel and inclusive knowledge construction networks.

Creativity and the configuration of spaces for its development is a topic that has been stated but occupies few references in research. Recent economic constraints have forced the closure of establishments dedicated to promoting and creating the arts and have caused artists to rethink their modes of production, creation, and application of artistic knowledge. In music, art spaces are necessary to provide creative outlets, inspiration, and a sense of 'home' to the thousands of 'Oliver Twists' in search of stability and maybe even legacy. These spaces are both physical, intellectual and even multisensorial.

In collaboration with Geoff Kirkwood, a Northeast England artist, DJ, and producer known in this essay, 1) we explored the concept of creativity and 2) reflected on how art spaces can influence the creative outcomes of individuals. By reclaiming and transforming spaces, individuals can create their own art spaces to rethink the arts. To do so, we define creativity through a music artist's perspective and compare it with other proposed concepts. This essay is part of an ongoing research project on creative processes in the arts (music).

Defining creativity

As suggested by Bashwiner (et al., 2020), "Creativity is a massively complex construct, requiring the mastery of basic materials, the capacity to recombine them in novel ways, and the drive to do so" (p. 1), for recombine them, there should be an understanding that this does not take place anywhere, but where these materials and knowledge can coexist, and "can be thought of and occupied in several ways, whether it be from the disciplines or daily life" (De Gunther, 2018, p. 32).

Brand, Hendy & Harrison (2015) defined creativity as something "that its understanding is totally subjective, dependent on individual experience, shared knowledge, and relevance within its demographic context. (...) It is how cultures and society can positively progress" (p. 80). Given this circumstance, it is in this context that one constructs their own spaces to create. Zioga (et al., 2020) agreed that creativity can be defined as a process combining skills and knowledge to produce ideas or solutions. On the other hand, Griffith (2021) argued that creativity is a human attribute that can be learned, perfected, and even developed with practice and time. Overall, it is known as the ability to produce novelty for a purpose in a field. It is where innovation takes shape (Bisadi, Mozaffar & Bagher, 2012). For others, creativity is not as complex as it may seem. Creativity comes down to "being able to do the things [they] want [to do], so it's just making cool [stuff]. That's all, (...) that's the term [they] come back to" (G. Kirkwood, personal communication, December 4, 2023).

Aside from the practice, organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) define creativity

as "a vehicle of identity, values and meaning" (2024). In any case, identities and values are constructed and shared by communities. These are formed by traditions that, in turn, provide meaning to our lives. It is here where one begins to shape their own space to create. However, Chacón-López & Maeso-Broncano (2018) have argued that "environments are often not fully conducive to the use of creativity" (p. 2).

If creativity is subjective and depends to a certain extent on its context, individuals, in this case artists, can create or reimagine an environment into a creative one and can also be limited creatively by their space. In line with UNESCO's view that "culture and creativity are the heartbeat of our societies" (2023, p. 2), we agree that individuals should promote their art and create their own art spaces in their communities.

Tracing art spaces

Nomadic practices have been shared by hunters, gatherers, and communities that sought a sense of identity and survival in different spaces. In today's globalized scenario, these practices are shared by digital nomads, in networks, those who work remotely without an actual office space, and some music artists. The latter often move from their hometown to their country's capital or even other countries in search of broader opportunities and exposure. Nonetheless, the overwhelming amount of DJs and artists that relocate with the same purpose makes it difficult for them to 'achieve success' or even recognition by audiences or their peers.

The notion of 'making it' as an artist in a bigger space continues to lose meaning. Countries, cities, and spaces have never had any guarantees for success but rather label warnings and cautionary tales. At the beginning of the year, the United Kingdom's (UK) Music Venue Trust (MVT) reported that more than 60 venues closed their doors permanently due to rising bills (BBC, 2024). The closure of music spaces from local to iconic staples such as Berlin's Watergate will probably continue into the next few years. But in this sense, there is a need to rethink and advocate for local and small art spaces within the artists' communities.

Rethinking spaces for the arts can be understood as those "that [house], shelter and [project the arts]: the public square; that puts the singularity of a subject in contact with the work and interaction with other subjects" (De Gunther, 2018, p. 28). Therefore, art can be highly recognized elsewhere without being the capital, but rather, in small cities, the periphery can also be a center. Back then, spaces like this did not offer creatives an outlet. There, "it wasn't seen as a kind of an obvious route for people who grew up in the kind of working-class environment [to have] music lessons" (G. Kirkwood, personal communication, December 4, 2023).

In those spaces, there needed to be a disruptor or an outlier to reclaim them and make them into creative spaces. Such an outlier can appear as a rugby player turned high school drama teacher. Those who come from the big cities

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37

quickly realize that even if nothing artistic is happening in those small spaces, and even faced with "an uphill battle, [one can] put on a series of musicals [with a cast of rugby players]" (G. Kirkwood, personal communication, December 4, 2023).

Suddenly, reclaiming and transforming spaces into art gives an outlet to the creatives in a rugby team, provides new outlooks on what a future career in the arts could look like, and possibly changes a person's life altogether. With this clarity, an uneventful space can be reimagined into an art space, where creativity can flow and be abundant for others to absorb, use, generate more creativity, and become it.

Direct parallels between modern forms of participation in creativity and ancient practices are not hard to find. The relatively counter-cultural movement of contemporary dance music has forebears in more mainstream traditions, as referenced by DJ, author, and mystic Andrew Weatherall:

"There's a Greek ritual, and it involved taking ergot, which is where LSD comes from. Ergot soup, basically. Going in a room full of smoke and colored lights. And this was about 3,000 BC. And then you have the Catholic Church and the thurible – the incense and smoke as the light shines through the brightly colored windows. It's all about transcendence. I suppose it's about secular transcendence. And heresy. It's Gnosticism. Direct contact with the divine without the middle man" (Hole & Corner Magazine, 2012)

Reimagining Creative Spaces: Onethreeone / Are you affiliated?
An example of one of these reclaimed spaces are two institutions that are quickly gaining recognition locally and internationally in the music scene: Onethreeone and Are You Affiliated? The first consists of a long-term project by artist Geoff Kirkwood that will house affordable workspaces for creatives in North Shields, England. This Victorian-era building, built in 1874, will provide a more solidified sense of artistic community in the region.

This way of thinking, of turning the place you call home into a creative space, is being cemented by international acts that are starting to notice the urgency of going back to club life instead of festival season, of creating spaces in zip codes rather than taking up plots for only a weekend. Yet, long-term projects can seem unthinkable for artists in the fast-paced music industry, but for some, they are the following steps to solidifying their craft, their roots and creating a "very visible base to do the things [one cares] about [in their space], [and providing] a headquarters for all [the] good ideas that can come out (...) for all of the other bigger stuff" (G. Kirkwood, personal communication, December 4, 2023). All of this is through a building, a space to create.

OneThreeOne will "let people come and do cool [stuff]. But that's what it comes down to, you don't have to intellectualize it any more than that" (G. Kirkwood, personal communication, December 4, 2023). In the case of Are You Affiliated? Paul Woolford, also known as Special Request, and Kirkwood

38

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established the social club in North Shields in early May of this year. Since its opening, the club has caught the attention of artists such as Scotland's Ewan McVicar, Oliver Dene Jones (Skream) from the UK, Romania's Gerd Janson, and Caribou from Canada, among others.

To live and create art in the same space can seem difficult if there are 'established' spaces in which to succeed as an artist. However, reimagining spaces pushes creatives to go beyond a capital and find a place in a small coastal town. Rethinking art spaces involves rethinking intentions, legacy, and priorities in life. By reimagining spaces, De Gunther (2018) suggests that "we create differentiated [ones]: the one in which we are living and how we think it" (p. 29). These art spaces are "cosmetically [ornamented by the district] (...), and it assists those who want to share [them] with its diversity, from an inclusive us" (p. 31).

Conclusion

Exploring the relationship between creativity and artistic spaces for music such as Onethreeone and Are You Affiliated? is a way of approaching thinking about creativity as a development that involves not only the creative process of musical creation and production but also the creation of the conditions of possibility that make it possible.

It is also an indicator that shows how global generations have changed, and so has their positioning on the meanings of "success" or "triumph." Turning the periphery into the center is a way of appropriating and redefining the artistic space, collectivizing it, and making it our own under their rules.

Expressions with a hint of irony such as: "Those who come from big cities quickly realize that, even if nothing artistic happens in these small spaces and even when facing "an uphill battle, [you can] put on a series of musicals [with a cast of rugby players]," show the possibilities of creative appropriation of spaces and recognition by the community.

This exploration reveals that creativity is a polysemic notion. Its use is not the prerogative of one discipline but moves between disciplines, people's experiences, and socio-historical contexts. The ideas about creative thinking that emerged in the middle of the last century still retain a surprising relevance related to the development of current studies on the subject.

Creativity is, therefore, inherent to human life, regardless of the study forms. In addition, it involves, through innovation, the different socio-cultural, economic, and political spheres of society, expanding its transformative potential.

We can now point out that creativity weaves together the human capacity to combine ideas in the most unusual ways possible. It is a desire. Furthermore, it is an individual and collective (community) experience contextualized and susceptible to learning. In other words, it is about doing what you want, and it is possible to do it in a community inclined to do so.

Creativity beats, but it must be kept beating by creating the conditions of possibility for it. This example shows the options of continuing to investigate the relationship between creativity and imagined spaces. There is still much to be said.

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41