



smath

Smart atmospheres of social and financial innovation
for innovative clustering of creative industries in MED area

Deliverable 3.3.1

“Creative Nests”: Elaboration of a portfolio of services and a management model



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	3
Index of Figures.....	5
Index of Tables.....	5
1. Introduction.....	6
2. State of the art of mechanisms to activate cultural and creative hybridization.....	6
2.1. Cluster.....	7
2.2. District.....	8
2.3. Incubator.....	10
2.4. Accelerator.....	12
2.5. Fab Lab.....	13
2.6. Coworking spaces.....	15
2.7. Hub.....	16
2.8. Platform.....	17
3. The notion of “Smart Atmospheres”	18
3.1. Contextualizing <i>Nests</i> : the Creative Atmosphere.....	19
3.2. Creative <i>Nests</i> as <i>Ba</i> : spaces of knowledge transformation.....	21
3.3. Four Typologies of <i>Ba</i>	22
3.3.1. Originating <i>Ba</i>	23
3.3.2. Dialoguing <i>Ba</i>	23
3.3.3. Systemizing <i>Ba</i>	24
3.3.4. Exercising <i>Ba</i>	24
4. The Creative Nests.....	24

4.1. What is a Creative Nest?.....	25
4.2. The Nest as a practice.....	26
4.3. The nest as a metaphor.....	27
4.4. The nest as a mechanism enabling social innovation.....	28
5. A portfolio of services for Creative Nests.....	29
5.1. Intelligence.....	29
5.2. Dissemination.....	30
5.3. Scouting.....	30
5.4. Matching.....	31
6. A management model for Creative Nests.....	31
7. Towards an implementation of Creative Nests.....	35
7.1. Phases for implementing a Creative Nest.....	36
7.1.1. Preparation: setting up the stage.....	36
7.1.2. Activation: kickstarting the interactions.....	37
7.1.3. Mediation: fuelling the dialogue.....	37
7.2. Value proposition for a Nest: what's innit for the participants?.....	38
7.3. Challenges and opportunities.....	39
8. Conclusion.....	40
9. References.....	41

Index of Figures

Figure 1. The Creative Atmosphere framework (Santagata & Bertacchini, 2011).....	3
Figure 2. Collocation of the Nest within the network of local systems of cultural production (our elaboration from Santagata & Bertacchini, 2012)....	3
Figure 3. Ba as shared context in motion (Nonaka et al. 2000).....	3
Figure 4. Four typologies of Ba (Nonaka et al. 2000).....	3
Figure 5. Processes of hybridization in Creative Nests.....	3
Figure 6. The Nest's main activities and phases: an alchemical process.....	3
Figure 7. Classification of Creative sectors (WBS, 2008).....	3
Figure 8. Concentric model of Creative Nest participants, from Cultural Cores to Creative Industries.....	3
Figure 9. Phases for implementation of Creative Nests.....	3

Index of Tables

Table 1. Key communication messages for Creative Nest engagement.....	3
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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to develop a methodology for the design and implementation of Creative Nests, new flexible processes of social innovation equipped with the capabilities to assist the Creative Industries in engineering innovative ideas from the artistic core of Cultural engines. The report starts with a review of existing concepts to hybridise the cultural and creative domains (Chapter 2). It then approaches the theoretical framework of Creative Atmosphere – from which the notion of Smart Atmosphere derives – created by scholars Walter Santagata & Enrico Bertacchini, and the model of *Ba* as a key insight towards the sustainment of processes of collaboration between the two worlds (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, the model for a Creative Nest is described in detail. Particular attention is paid to the set of activities that the Nest engages in (Ch. 5), and to the processes which regulate the interaction of all participants in a Nest (Ch. 6). Finally, Chapter 7 closes the document, providing a set of guidelines and recommendations to plan the implementation of the Creative Nests in the local and regional contexts.

2. State of the art of mechanisms to activate cultural and creative hybridization

Based on the overall objective of creating “smart atmospheres”, this section reviews the concepts and instruments that have been proposed and adopted by policy makers and local actors at different levels and within projects concerning the hybridization of the domains of culture and business. In order to start reasoning on the methodological aspects of the *Nest*, its main features and functioning aspects, this section provides the

horizon of literature and practices we are looking at when speaking of *Nests*, and therefore situates our contribution within the existing debate.

All introduced over the last two decades, these terms – cluster, district, incubator, accelerator, fablab, coworking spaces, hub, platform – correspond to slightly different phenomena or, more precisely, to slightly different spatial configuration, functions, working models.

Even though we assume that a *Nest* is not a hub, neither a cluster or an accelerator, a transversal reading and analysis of these concepts and functions is highly encouraged in order to build up the *Nest* methodology. The *Nest* does not correspond to a hub, but it presents some characteristics whether of hubs and of incubators etc. We then suggest to review and investigate even further into these concepts, in order to define which elements and functions must be kept and which must be excluded in the process of designing and planning the *Nest*.

2.1. Cluster

The idea of “cluster” was born in the late 1970s, and adapted to CIs by economic geography twenty years later. Between 1998 and 2000, Michael Porter defined it as a dense group of geographically proximate firms operating in a specific field, deeply interconnected between themselves and with all associated institutions (universities, research centres, business associations) and actors (specialised suppliers, service providers, connected firms from related industries) (Porter, 1998). The main characteristics of a cluster are the relatively close proximity of the involved firms, and its strong embeddedness in the local context, hence its dependency on local society, culture and politics. As for cultural clusters, they have been analysed by 3 main studies (Valentino, 2001; Santagata, 2002; Sacco & Pedrini, 2003). They can be present at urban, local or regional level, and tie together producers of cultural and creative goods and services that usually complement each other.

There is nothing inherently new about the concept of clustering: small enterprises operating in the same industry have been grouping together in the same areas for thousands of years in order to reap the benefits. Agglomeration, in fact, allows firms to reduce transportation costs for intermediary goods, and fosters a market of employees with specific and specialized skills. The most important benefit, though, is the “*knowledge spill-over*” that is supposed to happen when new ideas and technologies circulate through interaction and are thus successfully applied elsewhere. As explained by the NESTA report in 2010, the constant interactions and connections represent the difference between simple agglomeration and clustering.

Following this description of the phenomenon, the many policies generated through the years have adopted the conviction that, once established, clusters can grow independently, and that the continuous interactions within the cluster and with external firms are bound to happen spontaneously. Some clusters, like the ones dedicated to innovation, are defined as a “Petri dish” (Armstrong), offering an environment rich of interesting opportunities where new ventures can be placed in order to let them germinate and flourish. This belief has generated some critics (Musterd et al., 2007) concerning the possibility of building a generic cluster model and, most of all, the sense of creating through top-down policies what seems to be the fruit of spontaneous interactions between innovative individuals and companies, if not the result of sheer coincidence.

2.2. District

The concept of “district” was used in *Principles of Economics* (Marshall, 1890) to indicate the local concentration of a large number of SMEs with similar characteristics. As noted by some studies (Santagata, 2001) what is now widely used as a sustainable tool for economic growth was considered by Marshall as a thing of the past, destined to vanish after the rise of big corporations.

An industrial district, much like a cluster, benefits from the free circulation of ideas and people, the reduction in unit costs, and the fact that, once established, customers will be willing to travel there from afar to find a specific product or service. Cultural districts exploit the cultural link to the local community to generate goods and services with both economic and cultural value. Inside the broader category, four different but sometimes complementary models can be identified (Santagata, 2002; 2006):

Industrial cultural districts are the result of the embeddedness of small enterprises in a context with particular social and cultural conditions. For this phenomenon to emerge, several elements are deemed necessary: a profound trust and continuous interactions between the SMEs and the local community; the opportunity to obtain significant increases in returns to scale and returns to scope; a local source of financing willing to back the activities of the district together with public support; an open mindset to national and international relations; a high rate of birth of new firms and, most of all, the willingness to grow together as one entity. If effective, the activities of the district will create human and material resources tailored to the specificity of the local industry (*atelier effect*), and accelerate the rate of birth of new products and innovation.

Institutional cultural districts usually identify the restricted area of production of a given product or service, recognised by an institution through the allocation of property rights and/or trademarks. In these areas, the production process is hence strongly connected to the local *savoir-vivre*, and to all the elements of the local culture that maintain the process alive through the years.

Museum cultural districts are the result of a public policy, and revolve around a museum and its connections to the local artistic community. In this case, grouping together represents an opportunity to increase the total amount of visitors, thus increasing the demand for hotels, restaurants and other connected activities, while also spreading the money flow to cultural services, crafts and design-based activities involved in the network.

Metropolitan cultural districts include performing arts, museums, producers of culture-based goods and related services located in a metropolitan setting. While museum cultural districts are usually located in the historical part of a city, and build their strength on the importance of the preserved heritage, this category exploits the ability to generate new cultural content.

Just like in a cluster, the mere presence in spatial proximity of many SMEs is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of a district. What truly matters is the interdependency of the firms, that constitutes what Marshall calls the “industrial atmosphere”, created by all the favours, exchanges and contacts that happen more or less formally during the everyday life of the firms.

2.3. Incubator

The first “incubator” detected by literature is the Batavia Industrial Center, born in 1959 in New York. A building of considerable dimensions left empty after the bankruptcy of a big corporation was split between various tenants, who later decided to share the fee for business coaching. Between the 1960s and the 1970s, incubators entered government policies as a fire-proof tool to revitalise the economy after the failure of big firms, reaching their moment of maximum fame in the 90s(Hackett & Dilts, 2004).

The National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) defines the incubator as a support process that helps «start-ups and fledgling companies» (Dempwolf et Al., 2014) with resources and services to reach financial and managerial stability by the end of the program. Recruited companies cross many different industries, and usually stay in the incubator for a period of time that varies between 1 and 5 years, until they reach maturity.

The main components of an incubator can be cut down to four (Bergek & Normann, 2008): shared office space at favourable conditions for the length of the program; a number of shared support services in order to reduce

costs; professional business coaching and training (accounting, legal matters, business development advice, financial assistance); an internal and external network and/or institutional mediation.

Art incubators (Grodach, 2011) usually provide both assistance and display space, working at the same time as a source of commissions and a safety net. Results show that few of their activities translates into financial results, and that the majority is not able to bring artists to the actual market, failing to connect them with other sectors and industries. Moreover, the few that do succeed seem to focus exclusively on design and digital technologies, ignoring the artistic core of CIs.

So far, much of the focus has been on the benefits brought forth by incubators, such as the increase in economic development and the stimulation of new technologies and research. Still, two main problems remain: the nature of the incubator and the definition and evaluation of its performance.

The mere term “incubator” brings to mind the idea of something sickly, weak and in urgent need of care. It refers to an aseptic machinery that keeps alive something that would not survive in the outside world, and constantly monitors its (slow) progress. The main rule of incubators is that accepted companies should be “weak but promising”. Their case must be appealing, but they are usually doomed to fail because of lacking resources, be they financial, material or intangible. The incubation program takes them in to try and increase their chances of surviving their formative years, hoping they’ll be strong enough once they are forced to leave.

As for the definition of performance and outcome evaluation, many models (Campbell & Allen, 1987; Allen & McCluskey, 1990; Phillips, 2002) have been elaborated through the years, without reaching a consensus. The literature has provided a long list of indicators to measure the success of both incubators (occupancy, number of jobs created, number of graduated firms, number of discontinued projects, entity of the network, participation of investors, number of trade relationships between tenants) and incubates

(number of jobs, revenues, number of patents and applications, number of new products, strategic alliances).

The results show incubators are extremely effective tools to attract businesses in a certain area, but experience severe difficulties maintaining the jobs and companies running in the long period. More importantly, all the indicators focus on measuring data without relating them to the processual aspect of the program, thus ignoring the relation between results and the way the whole process is organised and managed.

2.4. Accelerator

Another model that is sometimes used as a synonym for incubator is that of the “accelerator”. Just like the former, it consists of a program aimed at helping new ventures bring their idea to the market. The similarities between the two categories have led to some inconsistency, therefore the NBIA decided to clarify the main differences (Dempwolf et al., 2014). Incubators are usually non-profit programs that span many different sectors, last at least a year and act simply as a broker between incubates and investors. Accelerators are often privately funded (although a study conducted by NESTA shows accelerators in EU have adapted the American model to government-funded programs), focused on technology and oriented towards profit. The duration of the organised bootcamps is usually much shorter, spanning from 1 to 3 months, and the program directly provides “seed funding” in exchange for a small percentage of future profits.

Although both provide mentoring, training workshops and opportunities for networking, accelerators do not normally offer office space, even though they usually set a meeting space or some remote form of contact. The program culminates with a demo day, absent in incubators, during which the start-ups can present their beta programs to investors. Acceleration programs can be differentiated between university accelerators, innovation

accelerators and social accelerators. The last category is used for non-profit start-ups and requires some adaptation of the business model to fit the nature of public goods.

Even though they are widely used by both private and public organizations in the EU, the effectiveness of accelerators has yet to be proved by hard data. Due to their private nature, most of the existing ones are not bound to disclose information about their performance. Therefore, what we know about the survival and success rate of the involved firms is not enough to justify support policies at any level.

2.5. Fab Lab

The term “Fab Lab” stands for Fabrication Laboratory. The first example was born at the beginning of the century from the course *“How To Make (Almost) Anything”*, held by professor Neil Gershenfeld at the MIT’s Center for Bits and Atoms (CBA). The over 350 labs we can count today (Gadjanski, 2015) are a (slightly) more organised version of the first local lab, structured in a global network that spans over 40 countries. The coordinator role is detained by the Fab Foundation at MIT, but it mainly consists in providing services that local labs cannot access or afford on their own.

Fab Labs can be described as workshops that provide to a large public the tools, the technology and the instructions to realise their own products, fit to solve their own problems (Stacey, 2014; Posch et al., 2010; Gadjanski, 2015). They are open to many different categories of users: students can find a place to deepen their understanding of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) free from the practices and structures of traditional schooling; members of the local community may find the tools and materials to solve local problems overlooked by institutions; small entrepreneurs might find the opportunity to work on their prototypes, getting them ready for the market (Stacey, 2014).

The main values of the model are: collaboration, decentralization, participation and democratization (Gershenfeld, 2008). While creators detain property rights, in fact, the goal of Fab Labs is to share as much of the process as possible with the other members and the whole network. Project and ideas developed inside one lab might be picked up again by another across the world and adapted to local needs. The real impact of Fab Labs on society is exactly the result of the collaborations and innovations shared inside the network.

As far as measuring this impact, though, data seems to be insufficient. Even though the phenomenon has rapidly spread through both developed and developing countries, it is still in the early stages, hence it is not possible to properly assess its impact (Mikhak et al., 2002). From the existing literature three main problems seems to emerge: the first is connected to the loose governance model adopted by the MIT. Some studies (Stacey, 2014) are concerned about its ability to balance the uniformity of the model with the uniqueness of each local lab, and about how this might impede the full exploitation of the benefits generated by collaboration. Others (Gadjanski, 2015) claim the need of a bigger effort in the promotion and regulation of Fab Labs' activities, coupled with a stronger networking activity.

Moreover, the term seems to be perceived as “interchangeable” with many other forms of community-based work environments, from the more general “*coworking space*” and “*innovation lab*”, to the more focused on digital productions like “*hackerspace*”, “*makerspace*” and “*techshop*” (Cavalcanti, 2013). This information highlights how blurred the lines between different models and spaces truly are once translated into real, existing activities.

Finally, the analysis of the first years of life of Fab Labs (Mikhak et al., 2002) have shown that the fundamental element, especially at the starting point, is the physical presence of someone familiar with the inner working of the lab, who can guide the users and teach them how to interact between themselves and with the machinery.

2.6. Coworking spaces

“Coworking spaces” are shared work settings rented on a daily, weekly or monthly basis where users can work individually in the company of others. Frequented mainly by freelancers and self-entrepreneurs, they were born with “*The Spiral Muse*”, founded in 2005 in San Francisco, and rapidly multiplied: the last survey counted almost 2.500 spaces in the many “creative cities” of the world (Gandini, 2015). Just like clustering and agglomeration, the concept is not entirely new (Uda, 2013): similar experiences were born in the artistic field, with the French *Cafés Littéraires* or Andy Warhol’s *Factory*, and have now expanded themselves to all fields of the so-called “knowledge economy”.

Various studies (Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015; Moriset, 2013; Bouncken and Reuschl, 2016) have identified a series of causes for the re-emergence of this phenomenon. The main one seems to be the need to find a solution to the structural changes in the labour market during the recession. Richard Florida’s “*creative class*” (Florida, 2002) failed to regenerate western economy, and ended up exacerbating the existing inequalities and class divisions, “condemning” freelancers to precarious positions, multiple jobs and low wages. Coworking spaces seem to fit with the flexibility of these new forms of employment.

Another reason stemming from the nature of freelance work is the necessity to make up for the lack of social contact and escape boredom, while at the same time receiving recognition by people working in similar fields. Lastly, coworking spaces are a more cost-effective solution if compared with the expense of renting one’s own office space.

So far, the literature seems to have accepted the phenomenon as inevitable and inevitably positive (Gandini, 2015) without considering the lack of data on certain aspects, and the evidence supplied by the few facts available. While the attempts at measuring the real empowerment of the workers have been virtually non-existent, the *2nd Coworking Survey* conducted by *Deskmag* in 2011 showed that 60% of coworking spaces were not profitable,

and the remaining 40% was made up by the bigger spaces, leaving the majority struggling (Bouncken and Reuschl, 2016). The buzz created around this phenomenon might additionally lead to another “bubble”, just like the one created by Florida, should the building expectation be disappointed once more (Gandini, 2015).

Furthermore, the observation of coworkers motivation (Spinuzzi, 2012; Gandini, 2015, Bouncken and Reuschl, 2016) has rendered evident that their main goal in accessing these spaces is that of entertaining social relations, not simply for their personal pleasure, but in order to achieve a reputation and obtain an economic return. In a field in which value is defined by the number and quality of contacts, interactions with individuals from linked sectors can be a crucial factor for success.

Nevertheless, data on relations inside coworking spaces is extremely limited (Bouncken and Reuschl, 2016): some simply note how, even though people work in the same space, interactions do not happen automatically (Uda, 2013). Just a few focus their attention on the role of the host (Spinuzzi, 2012; Merkel, 2015) as an intermediary, nurturing figure, or even a curator of the relationships inside the space.

2.7. Hub

The “hub” is probably the term with the broader sense. The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as «The central or main part of something, where there is most activity» or «The place where things happen and decisions are taken». As such, hubs can take many different forms, from collaborative spaces to incubators, and present several sub-types (Toivonen and Friederici, 2015).

We can distinguish creative hubs, like the ones involved in the project led by the British Council and co-funded by the EU (www.creativehubs.eu); cultural hubs, revolving around museums and galleries as in the study by ArtFund; innovation hubs, promoted by the European Institute of Innovation and

Technology and dedicated to the development of innovative products and services.

A typical hub is described as a space with «wooden furniture, large desks, brick walls, white boards, a foosball table, at least some artwork, shared kitchen spaces, a coffee bar, meeting rooms, and bean bags» (Toivonen and Friederici, 2015). What a hub actually should be, though, is something that brings people together, building collaborative communities formed by heterogeneous members. It should also encourage the sharing of clashing ideas and skill sets in order to generate innovation and foster creativity (Reddington; Toivonen and Friederici, 2015).

Just like with the other models, the literature tends to ignore the role of the relational element in the functioning process of the hub. Insights on the activities and the people that use the space are sparse, and usually come from the inside, through the reflections of directors and workers (Reddington).

2.8. Platform

In colloquial speech, a “platform” is usually meant as «a raised level surface on which people or things can stand» (Oxford Dictionary); in business, it is a model that facilitates interactions and exchanges between interdependent groups in order to create value (Moazed, 2016). Nowadays, platforms are mostly exclusively digital, and are thought of as the basic element of the “sharing economy”, which consists of making profits by sharing under-utilised assets (Chandler, 2016).

The nature of these assets ranges from payment services to material products, including also social networks, investments, gaming and software development. What all these different activities have in common is the matchmaking. A platform builds networks of users and resources accessible on demand. Its strength is not in the production value chain, but in the

connections it is able to create, and subsequently transform in transactions for its users (Moazed, 2016).

The model is still in constant evolution, though the first problems have already emerged. The regulation of the platforms is still a grey area, and the future development of the technology and the way it will be used are a pressing cause of concern (Kenney and Zysman, 2016).

3. The notion of “Smart Atmospheres”

The aim of this section is to observe and analyse the *Nest* from a twofold perspective: the *Nest*'s relational dimension within existing local contexts of cultural production, and its role in fostering knowledge transformation as key factor for the generation of Creative Atmospheres. The first subsection contextualizes the *Nest* in the theoretical model of Creative Atmosphere developed by Walter Santagata & Enrico Bertacchini (2011, 2012). The *Nest* is here interpreted – from our elaboration – as enhancer of relationships and multiplier of connections/nodes collocated in the network of local systems of cultural production. The second subsection situates the *Nest* model within the studies of knowledge management in organizations. The *Nest* is therefore associated with the theoretical model of *Ba* (Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Nonaka et al. 2000), a shared space (physical, virtual or mental) for emerging relations that serves as a foundation for knowledge creation.

3.1. Contextualizing *Nests*: the Creative Atmosphere

The *Nest* is a physical and symbolic place where a creative atmosphere can be activated and generated. Defined as the *dynamic product of the*

relations of private and public actors involved in the local system of cultural production (Santagata & Bertacchini, 2011) the creative atmosphere is represented as a four-level framework (fig. 1):

1. the creative atmosphere as the highest level;
2. the Local systems of cultural production;
3. Cultural Factories;
4. Value-enhancing services.

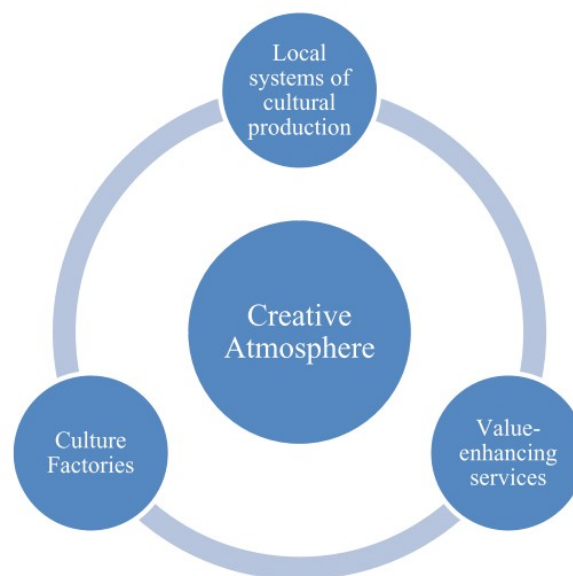


Figure 1. The Creative Atmosphere framework (Santagata & Bertacchini, 2011)

In the model, local cultural factories (places of production of goods and services representing local ‘excellences’, such as leading firms of fashion and design, theatres, museums and cultural heritage sites etc) and value enhancing services (those activities assuring the sustainability of cultural factories’ production, from the more traditional arts & crafts to audiovisual, technological and communication services etc) when connected by links of economic and social nature, they activate the local systems of cultural production. The systems are therefore composed by interdependent

networks of different institutional and economic forces operating within a single local chain, but also of those operating between different local chains of the cultural and creative macro-sector. Local systems form the structure over which quality and intense relations, namely, the creative atmosphere, may be generated and nurtured. Within the network of local systems, the *Nest* is an agent operating as enhancer of relations and multiplier of nodes, therefore an activator of creative atmosphere (fig. 2).

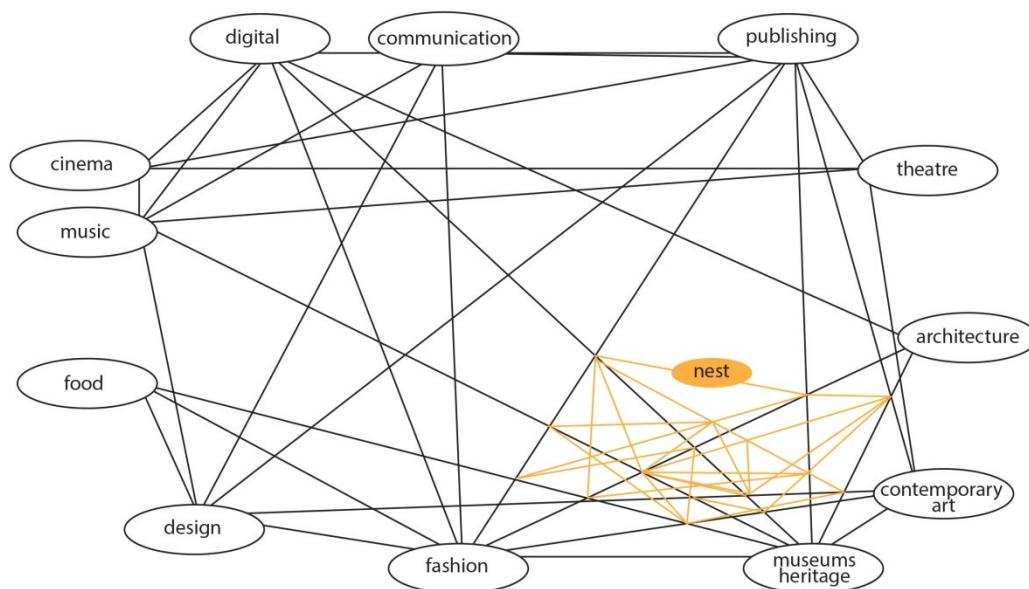


Figure 2. Collocation of the Nest within the network of local systems of cultural production (our elaboration from Santagata & Bertacchini, 2012)

3.2. Creative *Nests* as *Ba*: spaces of knowledge transformation

The process of knowledge transformation is a key factor for the generation of creative atmosphere, as a result of an intense flow of ideas, information, know-how, capabilities within a community, made possible by the constant interaction and intense exchange among individuals. In particular, scholars

investigating the geography of creative economy (cfr. P. Hall, G. Törnqvist) recognize three fundamental elements for the generation of creative atmospheres and milieu:

- the intense interaction and the exchange of information between people,
- the accumulation of knowledge, skills and know-how in specific activities,
- the creative capacity of individuals and organizations to use both interaction and knowledge as resources.

Knowledge is therefore continuously shared among the interacting subjects, collectively generated and utilized. Focusing on the *Nest* as the physical and symbolical place able to activate a knowledge transformation process through interaction, we propose an association between the model of *Nest* with the theoretical model of *Ba*, developed in the 90s by Japanese scholar Ikujiro Nonaka - placing the *Nest* within the studies on knowledge creation in organization.

If knowledge creation is a dynamic human process where key elements are a shared context to be created and the interaction among individuals or between individuals and their environments, *Ba* (fig. 3) provides this context and can be defined as a shared space (physical, virtual or mental) for emerging relations that serves as a foundation for knowledge creation (Nonaka & Konno 1998).

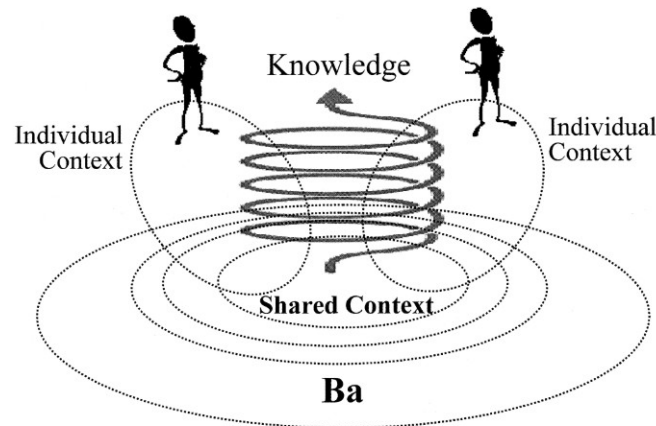


Figure 3. Ba as shared context in motion (Nonaka et al. 2000)

3.3. Four Typologies of Ba

As explained in fig. 4, four typologies of *Ba* are defined by two dimensional criteria of interaction:

- the type of interaction (that can be individual or collective),
- the typology of media utilized in the interaction (that can be face-to-face contact or can happen through virtual media).

Each typology corresponds to a different phase in the SECI process, namely, the process of knowledge transformation (Socialization; Externalization; Combination; Internalization).

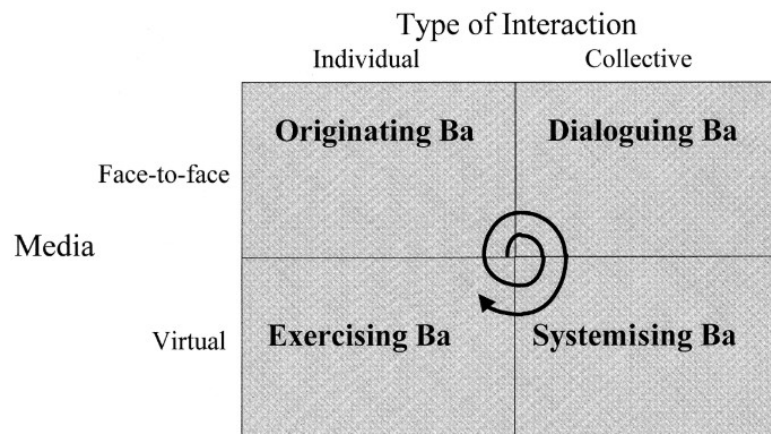


Figure 4. Four typologies of Ba (Nonaka et al. 2000)

3.3.1. Originating Ba

Defined by individuals and face-to-face interactions. It offers a context for Socialization, that can occur also in informal social meeting, outside the workplace boundaries. It is a place where individuals share experiences, feelings, emotions and mental models. It is an existential place, where an individual transcends the boundary between self and others, by sympathizing or empathizing with others. From the originating *Ba* emerge care, love, trust and commitment, which form the basis for knowledge conversion among individuals.

3.3.2. Dialoguing Ba

Defined by collective and face-to-face interactions. It is the place where individuals' mental models and skills are shared, converted into common terms, and articulated into explicit knowledge (Externalization). Individuals' tacit knowledge is shared and articulated through dialogues amongst participants. It is more consciously constructed than originating *Ba*.

3.3.3. Systemizing *Ba*

Defined by collective and virtual interactions. It offers a context for the conversion of explicit knowledge into more complex and systematic sets of explicit knowledge (Combination). In this vein, resulting explicit knowledge can be easily transmitted and spread to a large number of people through different technological and digital media.

3.3.4. Exercising *Ba*

Defined by individual and virtual interactions. It offers a context for Internalization, that means for individuals to embody explicit knowledge (communicated through the mentioned media) into new tacit knowledge.

4. The Creative Nests

For decades, culture and creativity have been considered good sources for local development, especially in connection with de-industrialization and urban revitalisation (see Banks and Connor 2017 or Berg and Hassink 2014). The creative industries, the argument goes, are generators of economic value and potential for competitive growth, and become magnets for talents that can bring social innovation and quality of life to the cities and regions which are able to attract them.

In terms of public support to culture and creativity, standard approaches have focused on providing a differing mix of four major resources: physical spaces, digital spaces, financial resources, and specialized training. Reliable measures of outcome are not yet available, but research has been conducted on the internal functioning of cultural and creative economy, and actual practices and processes have become an object of attention.

The picture emerging from these analyses emphasises the insight that, although related, culture and creativity are actually different. More specifically, the core of culture is made of Art, the range of activities of human expression in pursuit of beauty and emotion; whereas Creativity is a more versatile and pervasive human capability to generate a new concept, discourse or artefact. In this, sense, we can hypothesise that it is the hybridisation of Art (as the core of culture) with Creativity (as practical ingenuity) which becomes instrumental in providing a market orientation to these artistically-infused cultural products.

If this hybridisation is what makes the difference in terms of success of the creative industries, we can therefore re-imagine the relationship between art and creative industries. A Smart Atmosphere, activated and sustained by a Creative Nest, can be such a way.

4.1. What is a Creative Nest?

Creative Nests are local service providers able to meet creative and cultural operators' needs and expectations and realize their potential in terms of economic growth and social innovation. The Nest is a generator and curator of human and professional encounters between the cultural core and the business domain. It is a physical and symbolic place, where a creative atmosphere can be activated and generated.

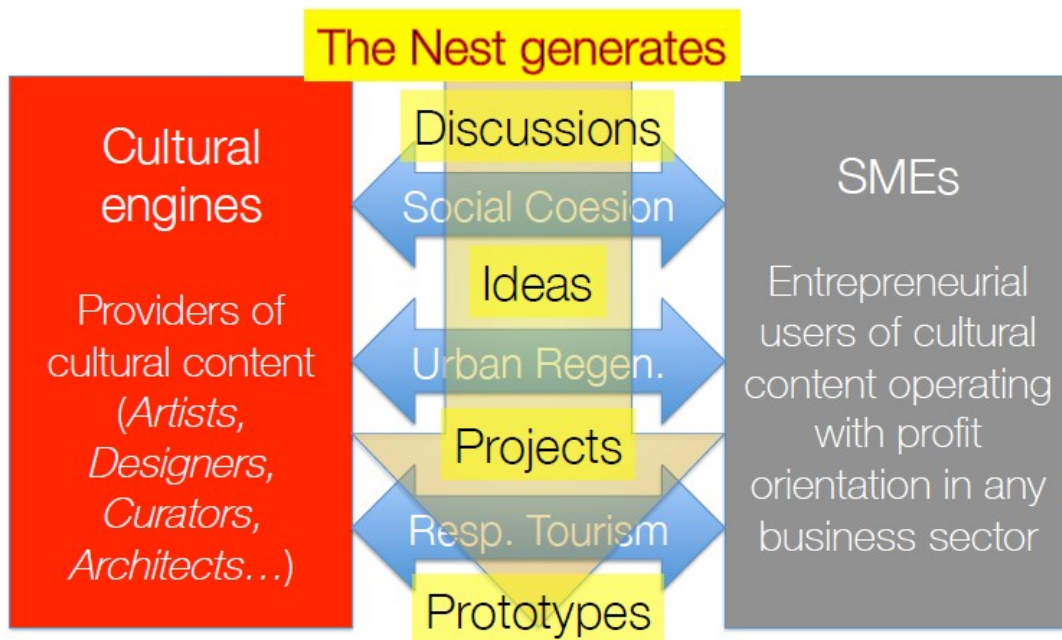


Figure 5. Processes of hybridization in Creative Nests

As seen above in Figure 5, Creative Nests link cultural producers (“engines”) and creative entrepreneurs (“SMEs”). Cultural engines, as major culture-producing entities and institutions, aggregate and potentiate art production and valorisation, and are major elements of sustaining a smart atmosphere, as introduced in the aforementioned model of the creative atmosphere (Santagata and Bertacchini 2011). In a Nest, value is created through the interaction of the domains of culture and business, and flows from early discussions, to tentative ideas, to emerging projects, and finally to implemented prototypes which serve as demonstrators of the likely success of the hybrid idea in real market conditions.

4.2. The Nest as a practice

The Nest is an experimental process of hybridization of the domains of arts and creativity, infused by the smart atmosphere. Being “smart” implies not only having information and knowledge but also making sure that such

intangible assets produce actual result. The concept of the Creative Nest applies these basic ideas to Cultural and Creative economy.

Marshall, the inventor of the notion of “district” or “cluster”, explained its success with the widespread knowledge and information that are in the air”, or “the special atmosphere that gives the various advantages to the firms gathered together in a particular area” (A. Marshall, 1873/79). Similarly, the notion of a Smart Atmosphere refers to the intense exchange of information between artists and business, giving rise to innovative combinations of artistic ideas and business opportunities in specific activities. Thus, the Smart Atmosphere can be understood as the mechanism which enables the capacity to effectively mobilize the two above resources. In this light, Creative Nests are seen as the agents which activate, nurture and sustain these Smart Atmospheres.

Even though culture/art and creativity may sound close in theory, in practice they are not. The notion of the Creative Nest capitalizes on the potential value of bringing together these two worlds to generate a new, specific spirit of collaboration between culture and Creativity. A functioning Nest thrives on expanded and intensified mutual knowledge and cross-fertilization. Through a highly focused, experimental and iterative development of practice-based models and tools, a richer collaboration is fostered between the two aggregates of cultural engines (producers of culture) and value enhancing services (marketers of culture). In sum, the Creative Nest is the physical and symbolic space in which a Smart Atmosphere generates positive societal spillovers.

4.3. The nest as a metaphor

The Creative Nest is neither a Hub nor an Incubator. It mobilizes the concept of the Nest, a structure built by animals to grow and nurture fragile offspring into maturity, as a metaphor to define its features. The Nest is a welcoming, safe, but challenging space, where everything can be said but conversations

are sometimes difficult or complex. It is human-made, artisanal, experimental: it resists the temptations of mass-production and franchise-style “copy-and-paste” replication. The Nest is as flexible as resilient: a temporary, reversible, movable place.

The metaphor is important as it focuses attention on a key aspect of the nest: it is not a fixed methodology but a way of operating. In a Smart Atmosphere, the focus is placed on substance over form, looking at actual processes and practices. The work of artists is presented to business as a valuable service, and artists learn to see business as clients.

4.4. The nest as a mechanism enabling social innovation

In the Creative Nest, social innovation is seen as the trigger to develop innovative social ties between “artists” and “industries”.

By funnelling the processes of cultural-creative hybridization towards areas such as social cohesion, responsible tourism and urban regeneration, the initial dialogue and early exploratory ideas and concepts of collaboration can be focused towards the implementation of concrete projects tackling specific societal challenges with positive externalities.

This is accomplished in an open-ended, iterative process, including activities such as co-creation, action-research, audience development, organizational strengthening, and financial sustainability. Aided by a sequence of Nest-enabled events, creative-cultural teams work out the possible configurations of the constituent elements of their project, and contrast these with the realities, challenges and opportunities afforded by their local context.

5. A portfolio of services for Creative Nests

To serve their function, Nests engage in a number of activities. These are represented as an iteration of interrelated processes in the diagram below (fig 6):

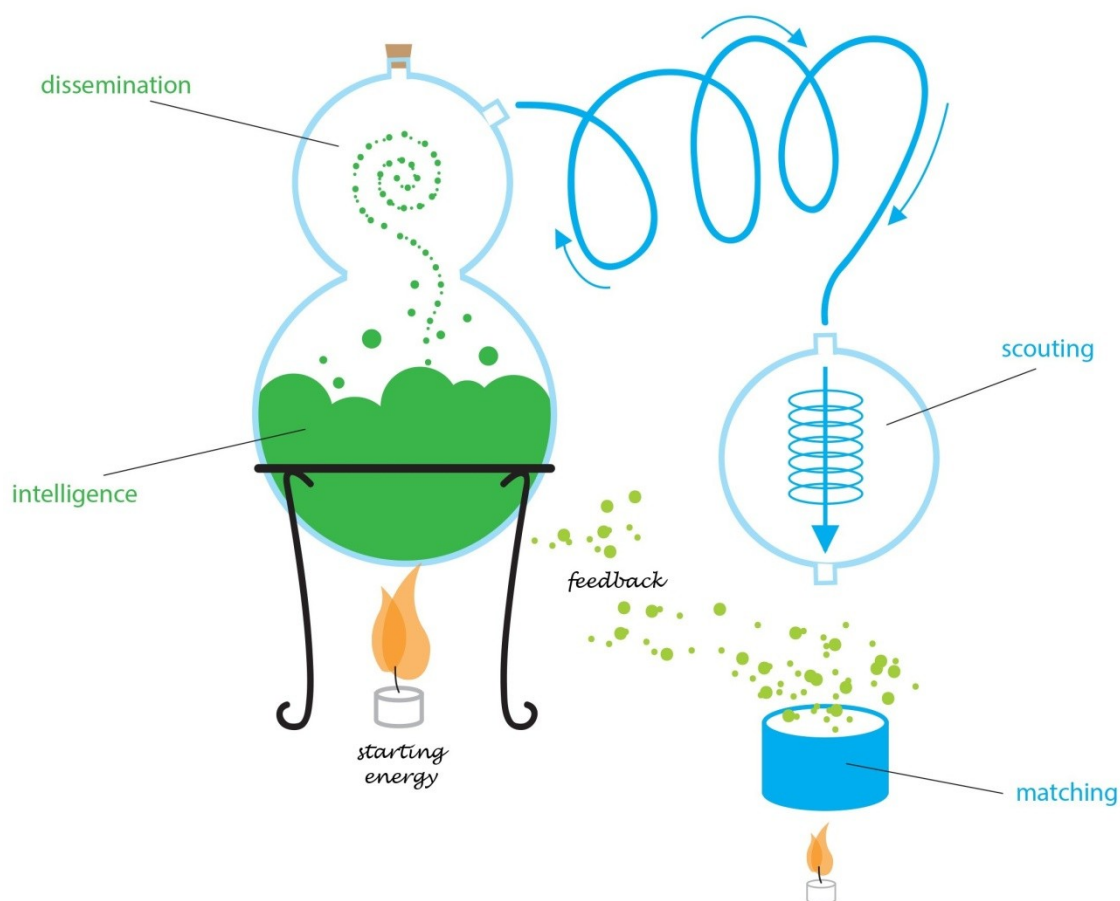


Figure 6. The Nest's main activities and phases: an alchemical process

5.1. Intelligence

The primary and constant activity of a Nest is a work of intelligence, that means the creation of a knowledge base of local (city/region) resources. Agents and professionals of the sector can support this phase. Activities include:

- visiting art fairs/exhibitions/business organizations/ art schools/art studios,

- meeting and speaking to artists and entrepreneurs, being aware of the state of the art of the local context and identifying potential, interesting subjects to involve,
- in particular, mapping the art schools & fine arts academies with a peculiar orientation to the world of industrial production and technologies; artists who collaborate with entrepreneurs and firms; SMEs and firms which are more sensitive to the world of art (also by means of traditional forms of art sponsorship and support), and so forth.

5.2. Dissemination

Creating dissemination events and other occasions of aggregation and socialization is also another permanent activity of the Nest. World cafes, laboratories, workshops, brainstorming sessions within vibrant and meaningful places such as cultural sites, museums, SMEs etc. are also occasions to attract interesting and potential subjects.

Note: SMATH activities of dissemination and aggregation such as world café, workshop and labs organized in meaningful places like SMEs or cultural heritage sites are all specific nest activities. In other words, acting as ‘test benches’, they represent, on a larger scale, the type of service that working and established Nests will offer in the future.

5.3. Scouting

With the constant work of intelligence and dissemination, emerging and interesting subjects are identified and attracted. Training workshops and other more structured working activities can be organized to start reflecting on potential synergies.

5.4. Matching

The subjects identified in the phase of scouting are now connected and matched. Collaborative projects are developed (i.e. through artists residencies within firms), with the Nest offering services of intermediation through active coaching and assistance.

6. A management model for Creative Nests

By management model we refer to the formal and informal rules which regulate the interaction of all participants within a Creative Nest. Its ultimate goal is to sustain and preserve the Smart Atmosphere.

As such, the Nest is a set of services and value/knowledge flows within a living community of practice, not a fixed structure with official roles and boards. This focuses the attention on the fundamental importance of human/professional skills in this construct: the Nest can be a large team within an incubator, research centre, school or public administration, or just a single person. Its role is not one of directing, but of facilitating: it takes the lead in structuring the process, and involves other entities to generate synergies in the framework of the nest.

There's no need to invent a new office or building to *function* as a Creative Nest. A Nest can be nested in or around the structure of several kinds of entities and institutions. It can be very formalized, incorporated into an entity with a set legal documents regulating its operations, or function as an informal community engaging its participants in a set of diffuse practices, relying in tacit knowledge and the social and cultural capital of its members to operate.

Therefore, no specific governance model should be prescribed or adhered to, but rather an open collaboration model in which the value of the human relationship and sharing of knowledge is prized and promoted. The

behaviour of each participant towards the community of other participants in the Nest should be infused by ethics and transparency, to generate the level of mutual trust required to generate a true Smart Atmosphere.

The entities to be engaged in the Creative Nest can be very varied, and in determining membership diversity is a quality in itself. As already mentioned, the domains of culture (with art at its core) and creativity (often with a strong market orientation) are closely related but different. However, in most definitions of the Creative industries, these are grouped together in a single level, usually with several subclassifications but no hierarchy – such as the one used by Collins and Cunningham, and reproduced in Figure 7 below:

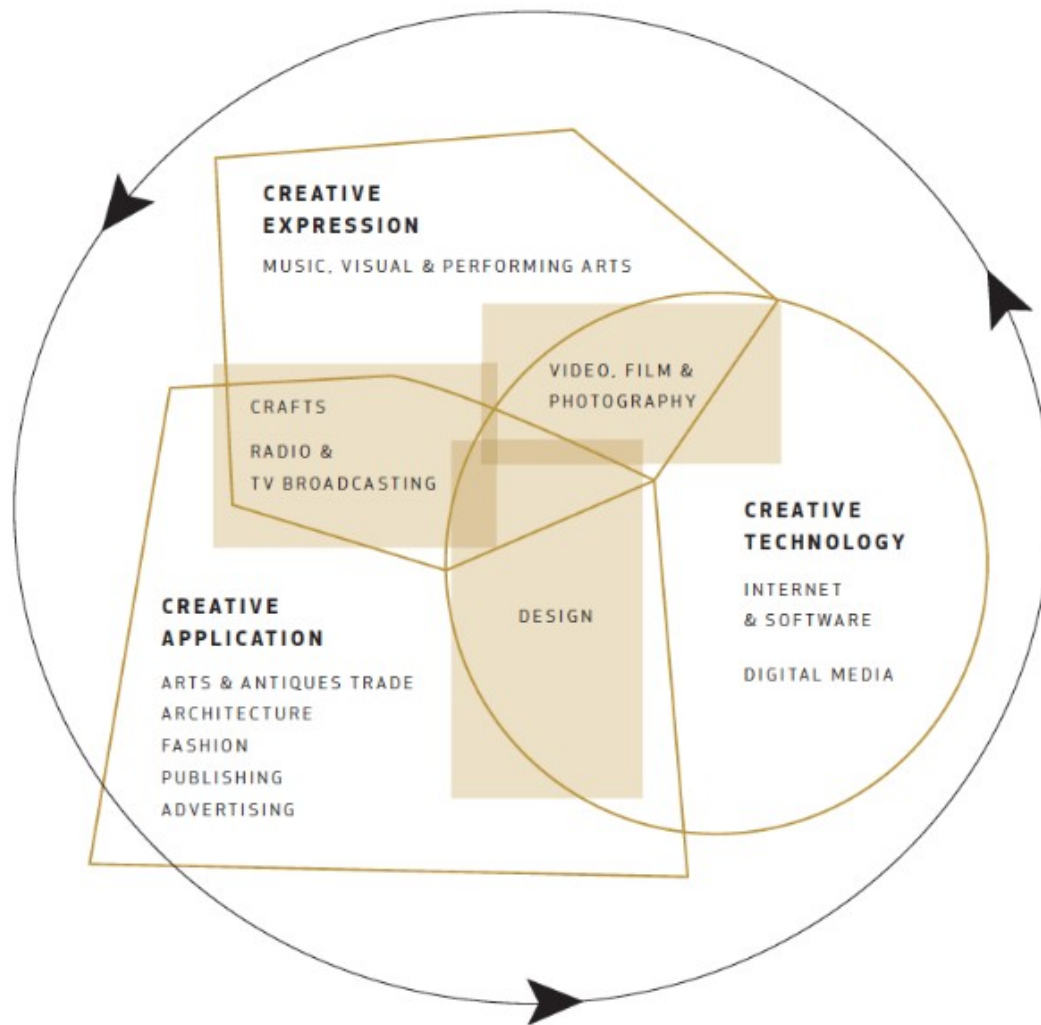


Figure 7. Classification of Creative sectors (WBS, 2008)

The categories above can be further described to include the following:

1. Creative Application – covers industries which develop products or services primarily for the purpose of selling. Their existence is dependent upon market demand. The industries in this category are: Art/Antiques trade; Architecture; Fashion; Publishing; Advertising; and Crafts.
2. Creative Expression – covers products that may not primarily be driven by commercial considerations. These products are typically

defined as ‘art for its own sake’ and are developed for audiences and consumers with an expressive story in mind. The industries in this category are: Music, visual and performing arts; Video, film and imaging (photography); and Radio and TV broadcasting.

3. Creative Technology – includes creative industries which rely most on technology and digital media. The industries in this category are: Internet and software; Digital media (gaming and animation); and Design (graphic design and web design).

In the conceptual framework informing the Creative Nest model, a hierarchy is introduced in this enumeration of the creative sectors of the economy, and these are in fact arranged in concentric circles (fig 7). The position of these cultural occupations is determined by their distance from the cultural core: thus, the artistic exploration at the core, market-oriented creativity at the outer layers:

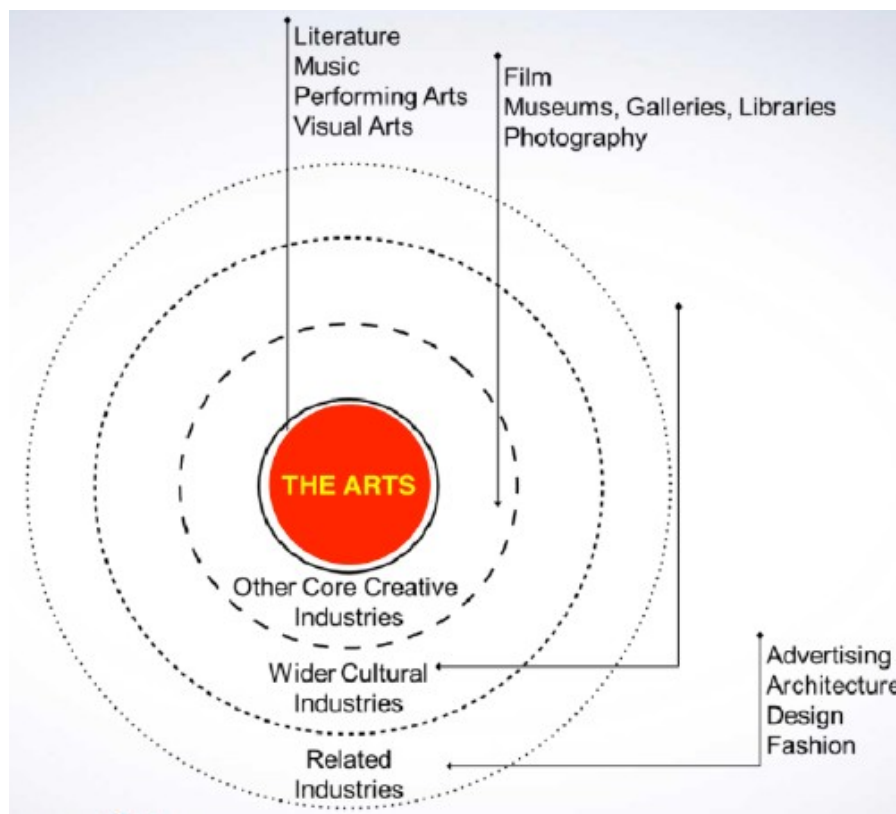


Figure 8. Concentric model of Creative Nest participants, from Cultural Cores to Creative Industries

7. Towards an implementation of Creative Nests

The Creative Nest, laid down in detail in the previous sections, represents a novel approach to connecting art (as the core of culture) with business (as the market orientation of applied creativity). This blueprint is to be implemented in a methodical and systematic manner across all SMATH pilots, to allow for comparisons across regions, and to build a common ground and shared vision for the creation of a joint Mediterranean Nest which articulates the cooperation across all SMATH Nests. This section provides a few tips and guidelines for such implementation.

7.1. Phases for implementing a Creative Nest

Creative Nests are implemented in three phases:



Figure 9. Phases for implementation of Creative Nests

7.1.1. Preparation: setting up the stage

The preparation phase starts with the decision to implement a local Creative Nest. In this phase, the Nest engages in preliminary fieldwork, contextual research, and networking activities. The first informal contacts are made with key individuals in local institutions, projects and organisations, starting to fulfil its functions of intelligence and scouting, and discreetly engaging in dissemination.

Tasks include listing an initial set of relevant people to be engaged, framing the Nest's implementation within local challenges, opportunities and processes, identifying possible synergies with related projects, and understanding the optimal scope and structure of the Nest's foreseen activities.

7.1.2. Activation: kickstarting the interactions

The activation phase represents the public start of the Nest. This phase represents the moment when the portfolio of services of the Creative Nest is rolled out in full swing, combining the three services already started in the

previous phase with its all-important ecosystem function of matching. The start of the Creative Nest process is communicated publicly, and the first open activities are launched. In this phase, two activities are of central importance: the info day and the world café.

The info day is a large open event of dissemination that presents the Creative Nest framework to a huge audience of potential participants and collaborators. Invited speakers and representatives from public institutions, cultural associations, other organizations take part in the event, connecting the Nest's main objectives to local policies and programs. In sum, the info day is the first appointment where selected artistic-cultural producers (cultural engines) and creative industries/SMEs can meet.

The world café represents the first occasion of true interaction between the artistic-cultural producers and the creative firms and SMEs which constitute the Creative Nest's community of practitioners. At the end of the World Café, synergies are identified, tentative ideas of cultural-creative hybridisation are generated, and the working groups on the selected areas of social innovation (such as social cohesion, urban regeneration, or responsible tourism) are established.

7.1.3. Mediation: fuelling the dialogue

The mediation phase follows up closely on the world café, and engages a committed group of participants from the domains of culture and creativity for a specified period of time, in which initial ideas are expected to bear into fruition and become implemented projects with societal impact and strong prospects for long-term sustainability. The Nest continues providing intelligence and dissemination services, but potentiates its scouting and matching side, especially with an eye to facilitating the development of the hybrid cultural-creative projects it nurtures.

This phase entails a sequence of activities to enhance, sustain and capitalise on the Smart atmosphere which is the defining feature of the Creative Nest. These activities include workshops, study visits, working labs,

seminars, webinars, group discussions, individual mentoring, prototyping, and others, on topics such as co-creation (inspired by frameworks such as design thinking or living labs methodologies), social innovation, organizational strengthening, and financial sustainability. The specific selection, timing and order of the activities should be determined according to the specificities of each Creative Nest.

7.2. Value proposition for a Nest: what's innit for the participants?

The value of being part of a Creative Nest needs to be elaborated and communicated clearly to prospective participants, to engage them initially and keep them interested in Nest activities. Below are several points which make explicit the value that Creative Nests add to the community, formulated in ways which can help in recruiting participants:

Table 1. Key communication messages for Creative Nest engagement

Key value	Creative Nest message
Innovation	<p><i>Add a new project to your existing portfolio!</i></p> <p><i>Disruptive innovation made real in Creative Nests: from rough idea to investor-ready project in a 6-8 month process.</i></p> <p><i>A agile, streamlined process you can combine with your current occupations (your dedication averages half day a week).</i></p>
Collaboration	<p><i>Network with other interesting people like (and unlike!) you.</i></p> <p><i>We help you reach out to creative-cultural professionals to generate a disruptive, radically new project.</i></p> <p><i>Come with us on this journey and gain access to great ideas, places and opportunities, and obtain international exposure for your project.</i></p>

Sustainability	<p><i>Obtain a new source of income via private, public and community investors.</i></p> <p><i>Pitch your project to a wide range of people (public subsidy officers, bank investors, business angels, crowdsourcing platforms, etc) so they can be a part of making your dream real.</i></p> <p><i>You will retain total project control and creative freedom - we don't "own" you in any way or take any "cut" of potential future earnings, we just want to help your ideas achieve a larger impact.</i></p>
Social impact	<p><i>Make the world a better place with your work</i></p> <p><i>It's not all about the money - it's about making something cool together - and making it as sustainable (socially, ecologically, financially) as possible.</i></p>

7.3. Challenges and opportunities

The implementation of a Creative Nest can be a challenging process, fraught with unforeseen difficulties – but then also an exciting journey of discovery, full of serendipitous encounters and unexpected opportunities. For this reason, the best way to manage the implementation of a Creative Nest is to have an open mindset, be flexible with process and procedure, and always keep in mind the overall objectives to be achieved by a Creative Nest. At the onset of the process, a few particularly salient issues deserve to be considered with extra care when planning the rollout of your Creative Nest:

- In some contexts, it may be very advisable to tailor the communication approach of the implementation effort to reach suitable members of the local expat or international community. To such end, you may want to consider producing all major materials in the local language and English as well, and at least one native-speaking English facilitator have available for in situ translations and support in your local Nest.
- Gauging the interest of your proposed Creative Nest for your community is crucial. You need to research with prospective

participants to understand their motivations, their desires and their expectations. Then you need to adjust your process (in terms of specific activities, calendar, and timings) to fit their requirements. Busy startup CEOs will not have as much availability of time than recent graduates or underemployed freelancers, but you might want to adapt your process to allow participation of both. The key is to understand the cost-benefit analysis of potential participants: then optimize their cost, and maximize their benefit.

- The initial call for projects must be regarded as the most critical moment of the project: if the pipeline is not fed enough quality teams and projects at the beginning, it will run out of steam midway. Therefore, extra effort should be spent in preparation phase activities, in particular dissemination and recruiting.
- Communication should accurately convey information, but should be fresh and “sexy”. For example, the public discourse aimed at prospective participants regarding the project should emphasize that SMATH is not made out of “boring, bureaucratic stuff”, it is all about using your brains to create something cool that makes the world a better place.

8. Conclusion

The document has defined the notion of Creative Nests and smart atmospheres in detail, laying down in a structured manner the main constituent elements and underlying philosophy of these proposed novel approaches to the hybridization of the domains of art and business. Creative Nests are local service providers able to meet creative and cultural operators’ needs and expectations and realize their potential in terms of economic growth and social innovation. The notion of Smart Atmospheres refers to the intense exchange of information between artists and business,

giving rise to innovative combinations of artistic ideas and business opportunities in specific activities. In such a scheme, the Creative Nest is the physical and symbolic space in which a Smart Atmosphere generates positive societal spillovers. These concepts, presented throughout the document in detail, have been grounded in an understanding of the state of the art in mechanisms and strategies to foster collaboration between the worlds of culture and creativity.

The initial ideas on services, management and implementation will be further developed and refined in deliverables 3.3.2 and 3.3.3, the “Definition of the Creative Nests’ membership and operation” and the “Preliminary plan to launch national/regional Creative Nests”. In these documents, all the Creative Nests that are envisioned to be launched within the framework of the SMATH project will outline in full detail the specificities of their Creative Nests in terms of the local stakeholders engaged, the trajectory of activities planned, and the expected calendar of implementation.

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