Art, Creativity and Innovation in the Textile sector in the Mediterranean regions*

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Abstract

The growth of relationships between artistic sector and organisations has started to attract attention from researchers last decade (Barry and Meisiek (2010), Berthoin Antal (2009), Berthoin Antal, Taylor, and Ladkin (2013), Styhre and Eriksson (2008), Taylor and Ladkin (2009)). World is changing very fast and with it the way to understand businesses and organisations. The competence and the pressure from competitors, the globalisation, the problems in the natural environment and a long list are some of the reasons why organisations are considering alternatives to add value to their business and improve their internal organization.

Artistic interventions in organizations are carried on with high expectations of positive outcomes. These interventions can contribute to such strategic and operational factors as productivity, efficiency and reputation, finding high evidence of values-added.

When people discover new ways of seeing and doing things in an artistic intervention, they probably activate the will to act and participate in change and generate new ideas. This usually occurs because arts are associated to creativity. So, bringing employees into contact with the arts should develop their creativity and, as consequence, their generation of new ideas.

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Cultural and artistic resources can contribute significantly to competitiveness and to the quality of working life. Moreover, more and more frequently, organizations are solving old problems by connecting artistic skills and processes to workplace issues (Bartelme 2005). Bringing people, processes, and products from the artistic sector into the workplace in organizations helps to stimulate new ways of thinking and acting, as well as challenges established mindsets and develops new skills.

Interactions between the world of the arts and other worlds, especially business, are multiplying. Organizations of all sizes and all sectors in Europe have tried artistic interventions. First, the report by Berthoin Antal (2011) and, afterwards, the paper by Berthoin Antal (2012) tell us about experiences about seven artistic intervention residency programs in five European countries: France, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. However, few studies have been explicitly designed to be evaluated and, as consequence, little is known about what can be learned from the experiences.

This multiple relationship between arts, culture, creativity and economy is what we are going to treat and analyse in this paper. This will be done by exploring new forms of collaboration between artists and creatives and the textile and clothing industry in five regions of the Mediterranean area. That is, we will explore and evaluate the artistic interventions in different textile organisations in the MED regions.

The Textile and Clothing sector (T&C) is characterised by its relevance in the industrial production fabric of the Mediterranean regions. The current economic crisis and the globalisation, which awakes the fierce pressure of competitors, are creating pressures on companies of all sizes. In the specific case of the T&C sector, this faces important challenges due to the changes that the globalization of the economy and the digitalization of the productive processes are provoking in its value chain. Issues such as corporate offshoring, international competition, environmental sustainability, innovation demands or networking are on the strategic agenda of the European Textile and Clothing sector.

This paper aims to generate evidence on how cultural and creative organizations can promote innovation dynamics in the T&C sector in the Mediterranean regions. The project in which this research is framed, CreativeWear, promotes five pilot initiatives with diverse thematic hubs in five different areas of the Mediterranean: Ljubljana (social hub), Prato (heritage hub), Palermo (Crowd hub), Athens (art hub) and Valencia (technological hub). In Slovenia a co-working physical space will be used, which will be identified following the development of a local community. In Prato, the Creative Business Hub will be hosted by the Prato Textile Museum, while the Prato City library and spaces of local textile companies will also be used in the process. Palermo’s hub is based on the development and operation of a Crowd-funding platform for cultural actions, which will initiate proposals from the T&C sector and will seek creative support. The Athens Hub will try to utilise different physical spaces, generating a network of spaces (“the city as a cluster”). And, finally, in Valencia, the Creative high-tech-lab in textile will be hosted in AITEX facilities.
In order to evaluate the short-, mid- and long-term effects of these interventions, we are going to use the Theory of Change as methodology. This methodology is designed for evaluation of complexity. It emerges the implicit theory in a specific problem and connects background with actions at short, mid and long term changes or impacts.

This proposal presents three levels of impact indicators (micro, meso and macro), covering the different levels of impact generated by cultural and artistic interventions. In addition, given the complexity of quantification of cultural transformations (diversity of impacts, long-term effects, evolutionary character), the proposal is contextualized from the point of view of the economic analysis of public policies, with the purpose of making operational both medium and long term this type of artistic intervention strategies.

The benefits from the artistic interventions may well spill over beyond the boundaries of the organization. For this reason, policymakers must boost the synergies between artistic and industrial sectors with programs, policies and funding; as well as by creating opportunities to experience artistic interventions in their own organizations.

**Keywords:** culture, creativity, innovation, smart regional development, textile sector, MED regions


