

UpStart – Creative Industries through Design for Social Innovation, Heritage and Management

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ABSTRACT

The project Up Start - Creative Industries is an initiative of the Aga Khan Foundation in partnership with the University of Évora and promoted by the Portugal Social Innovation program, focusing a particular synergy based in the areas of design for social innovation, heritage, and management. Its main objective is the development of an alternative economic model of socio-cultural innovation and creative practices with disadvantaged citizens. It aims to increase the participants income and improve the living conditions of the communities involved, namely migrant populations from the Lisbon metropolitan area, through the identification and mapping of techniques, arts and crafts developed by migrants from their cultural heritage.

Keywords: Social design, Co-design, Creative conservation, Cultural entrepreneurship, Heritage brand

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Among underprivileged people, the migrants and refugees are communities especially exposed to the setbacks of socio-economic exclusion. In Portugal, immigration became notorious from the 1970s, with the independence of the Portuguese overseas territories in Africa. After the entrance of Portugal into the European Economic Community in 1986, other immigrant vacancies arose mainly from Brazil and Asia in the 80s. Then, at the turn of the 20th Century, they came from Eastern Europe, namely from Ukraine, Moldavia e Russia (Peixoto, 2010).

The origin of immigrants in Portugal is much diversified. Recent data indicate that most immigrants are concentrated in the Metropolitan area of Lisbon and have been absorbed by the service sector (Delgado et al., 2014). The main reasons why people immigrate to Portugal are associated with finding better living conditions, social and cultural issues, human rights, wars, and lack of religious freedom (IFDEP, 2014). Social integration, especially getting a job, is not easy for many people. In these cases, entrepreneurship

can be a solution, where the context of the host communities own their resources, and available opportunities play an essential role (Oliveira, 2006). According to the same author, the own resources of migrants are age, family, experience, knowledge of languages, ethnic opportunities associated with the immigration flow, where the cultural factors emerge. In that scope, it is not difficult to anticipate that cultural and creative industries is a sector exceptionally well-positioned to host entrepreneurial initiatives of immigrants. However, cultural and creative industries are not easy to define. OECD refers that these industries include visual arts, performing arts, heritage, films, videos, games, music, publishing and print, advertising, design, and architecture.

In 2020, 70,406 companies were operating in cultural and creative industries, and 141.2 thousand people were employed. In 2019, these industries generated a Turnover of 6,945,154 thousand euros, and a Gross Value Added of 2,507,687 thousand euros. In that year, staff remunerations attained 1,098,745 thousand euros, and the productivity was 21.1 thousand euros. Although cultural and creative industries have grown between 2016 and 2019, and 2020, they represent, on average, a small percentage of the non-financial industries. Cultural and creative industries represent 5% of the nonfinancial industries, only 2.7% of the employment, 1.7% of Turnover, 2.4% of Gross Value Added, and 2.3% of Staff remunerations. Productivity has been growing, but it is still 85.4% of the total average productivity (INE, 2020).

Even though cultural and creative industries' weight on the nonfinancial industries is small, its sustainable growth is promising. Given this framework, culture and creativity with migrants and refugees can promote wellbeing and dismantle structural barriers to integration. Cultural and creative industries are based on cultural values and diversity, creativity, skills, and talent, generating innovation and creating economic and social value (Gustafson and Lazzaro, 2021). They can contribute to the quality of life of migrants and citizens in general through the interplay of several factors, such as local governance, social inclusion, community involvement, and the creation of networks. Generally, cultural and creative industries are carried out in flexible environments where the participation of people in different cultural activities raises an increased tendency to change mindsets, which can be important for value creation processes.

The socio-economic contributions of cultural and creative industries also bring important drivers for innovation in other sectors (Gustafson and Lazzaro, 2021). Therefore, there is a positive relationship between cultural and creative industries and the social integration of migrants and refugees. Initiatives targeting cultural integration through intercultural dialogue tend to shift perspectives and perceptions that people have of migrants and refugees. Many of these initiatives, namely those targeted at young people, significantly impact language acquisition. Arts and culture have a therapeutic role, which can lead to positive outcomes and improve the wellbeing and integration of migrants. A diversified cultural environment can have positive indirect impacts and induced effects, increasing the economic opportunities for migrants and refugees (McGregor and Ragab, 2016).

TRADITION AND CREATIVITY TO INCLUDE

Cultural heritage is a central element of how societies represent themselves, both about their origins and characteristics and their visions for the future, delineating boundaries of belonging and defining who stays inside and outside of them (ROSE, 2021). Based on this assumption, besides the creation of economic sustainability, the UpStart project also aims to promote the societal integration of immigrants, namely through the valorization of their cultural heritage, so that their social identities may not be a factor of exclusion in places of destination, as is often the case, but, on the contrary, of inclusion. It proposes to do so by regulating its action according to the principles recommended by the Faro Convention (2005), of the Council of Europe, on the value of cultural heritage for societies.

The Faro Convention understands that heritage is the set of resources inherited from the past that people identify, regardless of the ownership regime, as a reflection and expression of their values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions in permanent evolution (Article 2). On this basis, it recommends respect for the diversity of interpretations. It argues that knowledge of cultural heritage may be a way to facilitate peaceful coexistence, promoting trust and mutual understanding to resolve and prevent conflicts (Article 7). In doing so, the Faro Convention moves closer to comprehending cultural heritage as a sharply political process of meaning-making, with its associated values constantly evolving (Rose, 2021), perceiving it not as the conservation of a particular moment in time but as a dynamic temporal reality. The understanding of cultural heritage as a dynamics reality in time leads, necessarily, to a more flexible and critical conception of what the conservation of the past can be, not limited to the material integrity and open to the possibility of the conservation of meanings, identities, and memories of that past in the present, which may imply the inclusion of transformation and loss as means of conservation. It is possible to achieve this conservation by using individual memories and cultural heritages as a matter of creation or applying artistic craft techniques to new products and materials. In doing so, a personal and cultural heritage is preserved by transforming it through a creative process that retains the essence of its identity and can be called critical or creative conservation.

Heritage conservation can also be a critical or creative intervention or action developed from cultural identity, provided that this is the most effective way to maintain or restore its memory and demonstrate its significance (Loureiro, Triães, Falcão, 2016). It is a creative conservation that is distinguished by not intervening, even critically (Escobar Castrillón, 2016), in a pre-existing physical reality but focusing on maintaining or restoring values, philosophies, socio-cultural practices, and know-how through their use in the creation of new products and activities. In this way, we can rethink the social implications of dealing with the past through individual memories, renegotiate hegemonic visions of the past, including at the personal level, and create socially inclusive narratives through arts and design: *Lowenthal, McLean, and above all, Cosgrove, have defended this option, demanding the possibility of*

greater creative freedom on the part of the conservator, asking for conservation to be more creative, less deferential to canonical ideology, more open to the radical, the iconoclastic, and the invented, free from slavish subordination to a distorting notion of the authentic (Viñas, 2002, pp. 29–30).

HOUSE OF BRANDS

The challenge of designing a global identity for a sector with a high degree of complexity, such as the creative industries, made this action very attractive in its artisanal aspect. The artisanal dimension appears at this stage due to the specific characteristics of each partner, classifying them as the so-called independent brands of their native identity (Olins, 1990), since each case responds directly to its audience, as distinct as the pre-determined namings, by migrant artisans involved in the UpStart program. Its assumption of interaction with the consumer is the survival basis of a product in the market beyond the aesthetic dimension that would be essential in many of the 25 cases presented by the end of 2021. Another of the residual measurements, inevitably, was the attempt to enrich visual literacy, although cultural barriers were an obstacle. As the brands created for the artisans had no connection, the investment was demanding in each case, customizing the study/work in detail. This was one of the factors that most contributed to a very often hidden path during the work methodology. Work phases were established, with weekly meetings (brainstorming style), trying to determine linguistic concepts in each case, with a team of several design students from the University of Évora. This process systematically culminated in results in the semantic field to establish artisan/product relationships. This phase had a conclusive success rate close to 90%.

Kapferer's model (1992) served as inspiration for unfolding these identities, traversing in space clues to define their nuclear and extensive elements or even psychological and physical elements. This author identifies the brand identity from a 6-dimensional prism to demarcate what the brand is. All brands have objective, physical, and subjective personality attributes; they develop themselves in a particular cultural environment, giving them the capacity to relate to consumers. The reflection determines how users perceive brands, generating specific internal feelings - mentalization, that is, the type of relationship the user has with himself when using a particular brand. In this sense, it has become essential to understand the artisan and his art and craft as the potential generator of a brand. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2007) analytically portray how a brand is more than a product. While the product includes characteristics such as its breadth and attributes, it presents its quality/value, uses, and functional benefits. On the other hand, the brand that includes the product reveals characteristics such as the image of the user, country of origin – one of the characteristics most evoked by artisans –, organizational associations, brand personality, its symbol/designs, the brand-customer relationship, self-expression, and emotional benefits.

Finally, the emotional dimension complements the development of brands as a reinforcement of justification and positioning in the market. To do this, the type-designer frequently adapts emotional archetypes in his process to

establish a reason for his identity. Jung (2009) refers that these archetypes are like universal characters that cohabit in our collective unconscious. They are behavior patterns that reveal some of our actions, and, naturally, this is a generator of social connection based on the identification factor. From a corporate visual identity perspective, an archetype is a set of characteristics, values, and intentions that define a brand and what it represents, believes in, and its reason for existence.

CO-DESIGN WITH MIGRANT CITIZENS

The methodology used in the participatory design workshops developed by University of Évora designers/researchers started with several meetings and interviews to learn more about the artistic and intellectual skills of the participants and how they integrate, restore and regenerate their own cultural, social, and economic assets in Portuguese society. Using the traditional arts and knowledge of these communities as a resource for sustainability, it is possible to transform what could be a factor of discrimination, cultural difference, into a factor of integration. The difference becomes diversity.

We consider the group of participants involved as communities created during these specific periods in the context of the participatory design workshops. According to Manzini, these communities are voluntary, insofar as the people who belong to them come together, in meetings, by their own decision, and not by imposition from outside their will (Manzini, 2019, 2). In these communities, as in those produced during the workshops, the individuality of each participant is complemented by the ambition to create something collectively. The relational dimension of these encounters is impregnated with emotions and marked by a collaborative approach between people. As Manzini puts it (2019, 2): “At this moment and in this place, these different networks will intertwine with each other producing a denser fabric of people, places, and things. They express and produce a community.” In this sense, the present investigation uses an empathic approach as a methodology of interaction and co-design. This action based on dialogue, active listening, and sharing of ideas leads to a more ecological society, mutual recognition among its members, and promotes the equity of different cultures and knowledge, contributing to the community sustainability (Gablik 1992, Manzini 2019).

Within the participatory design workshops developed by the University of Évora, two face-to-face workshops have been held to date. In addition to aiming at the participants emancipation through creative thinking, the aim was to foster a broader awareness in the general public of the potential of social art and design. In all these participatory, co-creation projects, it is essential to maintain both artistic experimentation and an educational approach, in which we assume a role as initiators of a specific action, followed by an attitude of observation and moderation of the participants. Without such a relationship, which stimulates interaction, autonomy, and equity, the desired effect of encouraging will and creativity will not be felt. These collective actions become indispensable in building favorable environments to strengthen the integration of migrants and activate their creativity to design and develop products that they can manufacture and sell.

According to Manzini (2019), these collective actions reflect new ways of thinking and acting that are only possible thanks to the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of groups of citizens who, when faced with a particular obstacle, turn challenges into opportunities, creating new solutions (Manzini 2019). These actions aim to abandon the individuality imposed by the dominant culture in favor of collaboration as a methodology for achieving results that benefit both participants and society in general. By impacting the political and institutional sphere, these activities constitute forms of social innovation. This aspect characterizes the UpStart project in general and the two participatory design workshops in particular. The communities produced in this context, and the products that participants can sell, correspond to the social value that the workshops nature and results contain, as well as to the “solution to social problems and the (re)generation of physical and social commons” (Manzini 2019, 10). As Manzini states, “this is precisely what makes this social innovation so interesting: because it is based on collaboration and because it regenerates the commons, social innovation is critical for dominant ideas and practices and what it proposes could constitute concrete steps towards social and environmental sustainability” (2019, 10).

As the workshops are crucial for the implementation of the project, this investment in the design of two introductory workshops has been very positive because it allows the modeling, in a clear and straightforward way, of the whole process, specifying each of its stages and phases, so that the beneficiaries and partners can better understand their role and potential throughout the process. The co-design methodology has several positive consequences - it benefits immigrants in social, cultural, and economic terms and contributes to Portuguese society by developing social awareness about the need for more significant equity.

CONCLUSION

Cultural and creative industries are a good opportunity to integrate underprivileged people, such as migrants and refugees. Despite their low weight in the economy, they can promote the well-being and integration of these citizens. A heritage of traditional knowledge and techniques may not disappear when faced with a new social reality. Applied to creating new products, it can maintain the essence of its identity through an entrepreneurial process that is also a mode of creative conservation. The same happens with individual memories, which can constitute the substance of that same creativity. Thus, the implemented co-design methodology promoted mutual recognition among all workshop participants and the plurality of forms of knowledge and culture through active listening and dialogue.

Within the UpStart project, collaboration, as a collective action, provided the opportunity to enhance the integration of migrants and promote their creativity to develop products that reflect their heritage and a hybrid culture resulting from life experiences between their country of origin and Portugal. This methodology was particularly noticed when creating a brand for each immigrant artisan that joined the project. The great cultural diversity that exists requires a personalized interaction with the artisans to get to know

and understand the life and skills of each one. The interaction process was crucial as a generator of the project brands.

The UpStart – Creative Industries initiative is an alternative form of entrepreneurship and creative preservation of heritage, focusing on the inclusion of migrants and refugees living in Portugal. It is based on the co-design of innovative forms of action, involving different stakeholders and the participants themselves, aiming for sustainable sociocultural development.

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