

# Collaborative spaces for Universities and Cultural and Creative Industries



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Beyond their intrinsic value, the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) have been recognised in recent decades as important catalysts of valuable socio-economic transformations. As such, they are increasingly acquiring a central role in territorial development policies. However, CCIs operate in a changing environment. While this offers new opportunities, it also poses challenges that often prevent CCIs from realising their full potential and the positive impact they could have on society as a whole is limited.

Therefore, the **Creativity World Forum 2024** to be held next April in the three Basque country capitals will be an exceptional forum to reflect upon the challenges faced by the CCIs. It will also be a platform to explore models of governance and innovation for the cultural and creative ecosystem that would allow the currently insufficiently exploited potential of the CCIs to be taken advantage of. In this framework, one of the four thematic areas that have been chosen for this forum is the role of education and research in CCIs.

As a pre-doctoral researcher at Orkestra - the Basque Institute of Competitiveness (Deusto Foundation), an organisation that focusses on studying competitiveness and territorial development, we have been researching the economic impact of CCIs on society for three years now. My position has allowed me to reflect on this issue in terms of the role that universities should play in promoting CCIs to favour territorial development.

Over the last two decades, the reflection and debate on the role of universities in innovation, economic growth, social change and, in short, territorial development, has expanded significantly. Indeed, policy demands on universities to actively collaborate with non-academic partners to address regional and societal issues can be seen in various European initiatives such as the Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) and the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) programmes.

Therefore, in addition to the two main missions and activities of universities (teaching and research), there is a growing political and social demand for the idea that territorial development should be a university's third main mission and activity. To this end, it is vitally important for the university to get involved, interact, and engage with other agents in society to co-generate knowledge that contributes to addressing the challenges faced by the territories.

In academia, several authors argue that cooperation between universities and CCIs has the potential to stimulate innovation and territorial development; CCIs are an integral part of a globalised knowledge economy that depends on a constant supply of creativity, knowledge, and skills so it can innovate and/or maintain regional competitive advantages. However, the proactive participation of universities in territorial development processes faces important challenges. It is therefore worth reflecting on the role of universities in the development of CCIs, understanding that both are actors in a Regional Innovation System (RIS).

Although there is no fully accepted definition of an RIS, as Philip Cooke indicated, an RIS is formed by two subsystems of actors involved in interactive learning: a subsystem of knowledge generation or regional support infrastructure (which includes universities), and a subsystem of knowledge exploitation or a regional production structure (mostly formed by companies, such as the CCIs in this case). Actors within an RIS must have common objectives, a shared cognitive vision of reality, and an established formal or informal network of relationships to communicate or exchange information effectively.

If they are to favour territorial development, it is therefore vital that knowledge exchanges and collaborative processes between the two subsystems take place on an ongoing basis. This knowledge and the learning derived from an RIS are characterised by their adherence to the territory, by being locally inserted or embedded there. Another

feature is that the knowledge is distributed among different actors within the RIS. This adherence of knowledge to the territory is essentially explained by the fact that, contrary to the assumptions of neoclassical economics, knowledge, unlike information, is not fully codifiable or explicit.

On the contrary, knowledge also has an important component of a tacit nature. It is embedded in people's skills and in an organisation's routines and procedures, but also in the environment in itself, or even in the relationships that connect different enterprises to each other and to the wider institutional context. Therefore, tacit knowledge can only be transmitted between people themselves or when there is a direct relationship or coexistence between actors who share certain issues that serve to generate trust and create a common ground to transmit knowledge. All this means that proximity, both physical and cognitive<sup>1</sup>, is key to producing, transmitting and sharing tacit knowledge.

In the case of CCIs, tacit knowledge is even more relevant than in other sectors. This is due to the highly intangible, creative, and subjective nature of these industries, meaning knowledge cannot always be explicitly expressed. **New forms of knowledge creation, transmission, socialisation and exploitation between universities and industry are therefore needed in the field of CCIs.**

In this sense, authors such as Abigail Gilmore and Roberta Comunian have researched and written extensively on this subject. They propose creating common spaces between universities and industry

to make knowledge exchange possible, such as the **"Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy"** in the United Kingdom or **"KSIgune"** in the Basque Country. They argue that these spaces can be created through the organic relationship between the two parties or they can be fostered through public policies.

Therefore, it is important to provide these spaces with directionality and intentionality for them to be truly transformative and valuable for both parties. **In many spheres there is still a belief that knowledge within the academic world can be directly injected into industry. However, common goals and objectives must be established between the university and the CCIs for the knowledge generated to be relevant and have a real impact.**

These common spaces or areas for dialogue have to start from the recognition that there are different types of knowledge; all of which are equally valid and necessary to co-generate sustainable solutions for CCIs and to respond to the challenges of the territory in general.

<sup>1</sup> Defined as the extent to which actors in the knowledge exchange process share common language or vocabulary.

Moreover, it is also important to consider and recognise power relations in these spaces. While universities are large structures with access to knowledge and funding, CCIs are often small organisations and self-employed individuals with limited financial resources and infrastructure. This must be taken into consideration to ensure all parties participate equally in the knowledge generation process.

On the other hand, this new paradigm implies that universities need to change the systems they use to evaluate people, as they tend to focus almost exclusively on assessing their performance in research and teaching. Instead, **they could evolve towards a system that incentivises this kind of collaboration and recognises the time, effort and results devoted to building university-industry relationships and to developing the skills and capacity to establish such networks.**

With these lines, I have simply tried to open a new window of reflection on the challenge implied by the so-called “third mission” and the territorial role of the university in relation to the Cultural and Creative Industries. I hope to have the opportunity to further explore this issue during the **Creativity World Forum 2024**, an issue that lies at the intersection between two of the Forum’s focus points, education and governance of the CCI ecosystem.

## Orkestra

Basque Institute of Competitiveness (Deusto Foundation)

Orkestra is an initiative for the study of competitiveness and territorial development with three objectives: to contribute to improving the competitiveness of the Basque Country, to promote the improvement of citizens’ well-being and to generate knowledge on regional competitiveness.

Through the collaboration agreement signed in 2021 between Orkestra and the Department of Culture and Language Policy of the Basque Government, the work carried out over the years has focused on the analysis of the economic dimension of CCIs and their integration into the industrial fabric of the Basque Country, as a source of information to help create public policies to promote them.

This article is part of the series **Education in the Cultural and Creative Industries** created by KSIgune - Higher Education and Research Cluster for CCIs in the Basque Country, in the framework of the Creativity World Forum 2024. The experts, authors of the articles, have participated in the thematic area “Education in CCIs” coordinated by KSIgune.

The complete series is available at [www.ksigune.eus](http://www.ksigune.eus)