

COOPERATE

THE CREATIVE NORMAL

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Introduction

Man becomes conscious of himself and his humanity only in society and only by the collective action of the whole society.

Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876)

Giep Hagoort

Cooperation is not the issue.

Cooperation is the DNA of the cultural and creative sectors. Without cooperation no movie will be produced, no performance will be shown, no festival can be organized. Art managers and cultural entrepreneurs know how important it is to balance between the interests of their own cultural firms and the collective goals of their external environment, partnerships included (Hagoort, 2000; Schramme, 2009; Kolsteeg 2014). In general, cooperation as a societal movement has strong historical roots: from the African and Indian tribes to the collective ways farmers' co-ops organized their own production and distribution chains in the nineteenth century. And in 1871 on a political level the Parisians organized their city on a collective-democratic way what is called the *Paris Commune*.

The issue now is how creative cooperation can contribute to a global world valued by the force of creativity, the essence of sustainability, the dynamics of technology and the spirit of the human factor.

Indeed: heavy words in complex times.

In the confusing second decade of the 21st century - with its radical attacks in cities as London, Paris, Istanbul, Madrid, Brussels, Nice, new refugees streams from conflicting areas all over the world - and a powerful digital overwhelming technocomplex, new and meaningful inspiration has to be created. Based on a 50.000 years history, much inspiration can be found in imagination on a cooperative way. This new Creative Normal will fuel the society in its innovation needs to transform our society into a togetherness on social, cultural and economic levels. This creative cooperation is for sure not a top-down approach, nor a pure bottom-up approach, it is an interactive way to combine all kinds of knowledge and experiences from different stakeholders, and with the involvement of common people within the context of the creative economy (Unctad, 2008, 2010).

The Utrecht Conference and an essay

In October 2014 ERTNAM and its partners organized a conference in Utrecht, with the main goal to strengthen the cooperative ways of working, in the city and its region. The conference with over a hundred participants has demonstrated a strong consciousness on the need to develop new knowledge on cooperative ways of working. We did not talk about *The Creative Normal* as such, but all topics discussed seemed to be connected to this new standard (www.ucoorepare.eu). It was very special that all kinds of organizations did participate in that conference: universities, training centres, cultural organizations, creative firms, cultural institutes and corporate organizations. The conference was supported by the City of Utrecht, the Province of Utrecht and the Dutch Rabobank, a cooperative bank with its headquarters in Utrecht. As conceptual framework the participants used a model, designed by Smit and Geurts (Smit, 2014). Their partnership model focuses on sustainable value creation, based on four dimensions: Future proof, Mutuality, Environmental proof en Global interconnectivity. One of the concrete results of the conference was the establishing of a digital platform to stimulate cooperative ways of working with publications, an agenda and an archive (ucooperate.eu).

In my essay *Cultural Entrepreneurship of the 21st Century* - with the Utrecht conference and my keynotes from the conferences on cultural entrepreneurship in Duluth, Brussels and Rio de Janeiro in mind - I discussed this apparent search for a new approach on the way we organize the cultural and creative sectors (Hagoort, 2015). From the mid-seventies of the last century, educators and researchers paid attention to the way cultural organizations, like theatres, museums, concert halls, galleries among others, can be organized according to general guidelines. The purpose was to professionalize the management of the individual art organizations (Hagoort, 2000). Researchers on general management and strategy, like Ansoff, Drucker, Mintzberg, Porter, Prahalad among others, formed a stimulus to develop own standards for the cultural and creative sectors (Byrnes, 1993; Hagoort, 2000; Varbanova, 2012; Dragicevic Sestic, 2005; Schramme et al, 2011).

In that essay I concluded that art management and cultural entrepreneurship are accepted academic knowledge domains. But the world is changing, not only in Europe, but also on the other continents that has his impact on the cultural and creative sectors (Schramme, Kooyman, Hagoort, 2014). My final conclusion was – and still is – that after its period of formulating general standards on the micro level, the management within the cultural and creative sectors has to contribute to the benefit on the macro level, this will say to the well-being of the planet and its global population. The vehicle to reach such a level is creative cooperation included the Do It Yourself/Do It Together (DIT/DIY) movement (Hagoort, 2014) within the sharing economy, what I signposted as the next step for cultural entrepreneurship.

In the debates about my essay I elaborated the historical line of the development of general management in a more concrete way. In the sixties and seventies of the last century, management theory as mentioned above was focused on the individual position of the organization. According to Porter (1990), competition was the leading principle. Other issues connected to this principle were *quality management, top down planning, competence-management and growth strategies for profit and turnover*. In the eighties and nineties the digital revolution related to globalisation emphasizes the room for clustering (Porter, 1990), networking and internalisation of the strategies (Castells, 1998). But that is in the first decades of the 21st century almost all history. The key issue is now, how a digital and physical connected world of organizations, on their road to sustainability (www.iso.org), can create added value for the society, with the help of strategic partnerships. An early bird about this new strategic partnering can be found in a great study, done by Doz and Hamel (1998). Their message: *The failure of an alliance in the new world will be caused by internal shortcomings and not because of the alliance itself*. So be fit now to create partnering, they advice.

In recent times, more than 25 years later, partnerships will have hybrid and eclectic forms and even independent (free-lance) workers can form the middle ground of these 'co-organizations' as I call it. We have to realize that even humanoids (human robots) will be an active part of our collaborative system (Hagoort, 2012; HBR, 2015). Vision development, how to coordinate horizontally such co-organizations, will be a challenge for the art management knowledge institutes in the near future.

Follow up

Stimulated by the success of the Utrecht conference in 2014 and Impressed by the public interest in my essay, I discussed within *ERTNAM* (www.ertnam.eu) and *Cartesius Museum* (www.cartesiusmuseum.org) the possibility of a collective follow up. I asked the members of the networks to participate in a collaborative creative writing process, with as main goal to bring personal experiences, own cases and research on cooperation together with as background the society in transition.

Sixteen writers did their homework and the fruits of their efforts can be found in this book on *The Creative Normal* on cooperative ways of working.

We decided to distinguish two principle approaches. One part (I) strongly oriented on personal initiatives and research safaris. and a second part (II) with a more general approach on cooperation, with the help of analysis and reflections.

This book starts with a contribution of *Thera Jonker*, managing director of HKU Expertise Centre for Education, that enlightens the articles that follow. She makes clear that creative cooperation has a strong personal engagement that gets meaning in cooperation with the other. Difficult questions about Why from the outside world are not so difficult to answer if you reflect on your own (international) experiences as *Thera Jonker* did.

Part I State of the Art; Numerous Initiatives and Experiences

This first part will help the reader as practitioner, teacher or researcher to find his or her own way in the area of creative cooperation.

The reader will experience the personal knowledge development on cooperative ways of working and sometimes merging as *Astrid Vrolijk - de Mooij*, director of a multifunctional cultural organization, discussed in her article about public libraries and its partners.

Connectivity with the help of the artistic values has been explained by *Bart van Rosmalen*, professor Art and Professional Development HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, to understand the other and yourself. Knowing more about the position of artists within local sustainable processes, PhD-researcher *Harm van den Heiligenberg* observes some interventions in the middle ground. He suggested to do further research on the artistic dimensions and local sustainable experiments in this context. *Erik Uitenbogaard*, initiator of the Cartesius Museum, experienced new cooperative working practices for the creative professionals within the city as working place. Their creative attitude is unique and can contribute to innovative collaborations. To see how cooperation works within a local culture political environment, *Peter Westenberg*, being a former alderman for culture, puts his experiences on paper to open the debate on how common cities can stimulate a collaborative climate. In the same way *Karel Janssen*, a project manager of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, formulated his initial experiences in establishing cooperation with a Chinese institute. His information will help other project managers that might have a same assignment in the near future. How to process information from a personal, international network can be read in the article of *Gerardo Neugovsen* in which he explains how a masterplan for the creative industries can be designed in the context of an underdeveloped policy area. At the end of this part *Giep Hagoort* and *Nelly van der Geest* discuss the way a co-creation lab on partnership can improve the practice of the involved participants. They personally observe differences in learning attitudes which are important for the productivity of interactive ways of knowledge creation on partnering.

Part II Sliding Panels; Analysis and Reflection

The second part can be characterized by a certain distance between the writer and his or her subject. For instance, by processing more than average academic sources and the necessity to formulate new frameworks in a fast changing academic world and professional practice. The academic panels are changing as well.

It's all about trust. *Johan Kolsteeg*, researcher at the Groningen University, explains this important value in the cooperation between creative and non-creative firms. But he warns: governmental innovation policy can hinder this relationship if the government has only an interest in economic output. *Annick Schramme* (Antwerp University) and *Ian W. King* (University of the Arts London), both professor in the field of cultural

management, present a critical overview of the existing literature on collaboration. In most of the cases the information is too general and needs a translation into art practices. And what about mergers between cultural organizations? Try a less complicated pooling strategy, they suggest. Artists and creative people are working in special environments, like art factories. The soft infrastructure on the collaborative aspects as networking and network learning is underdeveloped as researcher, teacher and practitioner *Vera de Jong* finds out with the help of a new conceptual framework. How to combine the creative industries with city development in social weak areas? To answer this question *Rene Kooyman*, expert in the field of city planning and owner of *Ars Nova*, reports on his research of the European project *CURE (Creative Urban Renewal)*. The first step is knowing the creative sectors in detail. The next step: formulate concrete indicators to measure the creative urban development. Cooperation and networking are part of these indicators. For this project a special conceptual framework *Creative Zone Innovator (CZI)* has been developed.

Cooperation to innovate products and services has a long history. What do we know about the starting processes of innovation? *Davey Schreurs*, innovation consultant, explores the fuzziness of these processes en translate this 'empty phase' to a collaborative environment. Cooperation will be more successful if there is a mutual understanding of the 'State of Fuzziness'.

And what about education?

Vera de Jong and *Paul van Amerom*, lectures and researchers at the *HKU University of the Arts Utrecht*, plead for a real future proof art education in which students play an active role as candidate researchers. A special students project on conditions for successful creative collaborations has been made. They also pay attention to a challenging learning environment with for instance real time projects.

The phasing of a partnership can be seen as a seasonable process from Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. *Nelly van der Geest*, in this context lecturer and consultant at the *HKU University of the Arts Utrecht*, elaborated training exercises for each season to sharpen the growth and development process of strategic partnering. The phase of Spring can be found in her article.

Encore

In a special additional part of this book three appendices complete *The Creative Normal*.

First an interview with theatre maker and artistic entrepreneur *Maureen Baas*. She and her partner became owner of an old, abandoned Catholic church, and transform this building into a multifunctional *Metaal Kathedraal (Metal Cathedral)*. Maureen is a persevering artist and has to partner in order to survive. How does she manage that? A voice we cannot miss in *The Creative Normal*.

The second is a report on the policy of the *Province of Utrecht* concerning crossovers. The province likes to stimulate crossovers between the cultural sector and other sectors,

to challenge the creative, innovative approach of societal issues. In this appendix *Annelies van der Horst*, consultant, enlightens the specific research on the success factors of these crossovers.

A third impulse comes from a dialogue with Astrid Elburg, trainer, teacher, speaker and consultant. In her work she emphasizes the importance of compassion: to believe in the partners involved, which creates a productive, collaborative climate. *Granting* is in her eyes also important: to support your partners in their own development.

The Creative Normal

In June 2016, during the writing process a special two days seminar has been organized to reflect on the results so far, supported by *HKU University of the Arts Utrecht* and the *Province of Utrecht*. Each of the present writers discusses his or her statement on creative cooperation. The first day was focused on the professional functioning within the complexity of a partnership. The second day was oriented on crossovers between creative organizations and artists en other sectors.

Box Refugees and cooperation

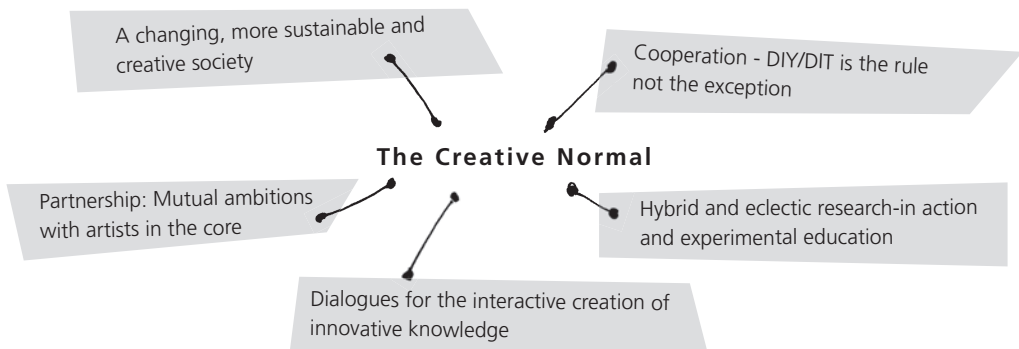
On occasion of the seminar in June we invited some representatives of the refugees from Syria. In Autumn 2015, the City of Utrecht hosted more than 500 refugees in a special area near the centre of the city. After a few months a camp has been established with a minimum of comfort and privacy. One of the representatives, Rami Ramou, shared his experiences on cooperation with Dutch volunteers. Rami Ramou is a very active volunteer. He made contacts with mosks, churches, civil initiatives like Come & Eat, and is interviewed by radio and television about his story as refugee, together with his young daughter of six.

He worked together with ucooperate.eu to form a 'No Table of Art' to stimulate DIY/DIT cultural activities. He exposed the participants his cooperative experiences:

- He did not have bad experiences because of his refugees status. He saw terrible images on television about the negative contacts with refugees, but that was not the case in Utrecht. Opposite to that: from the early beginning he had very friendly contacts with the people in Utrecht.
- Negative images in the media about refugees create an aggressive atmosphere in the country in general. It is difficult to correct that bottom up, even with the help of volunteer organizations.
- On cooperation there are two sides: With the Dutch people which was helpful, and internal within the refugee-camp. Because of the variety of backgrounds, flee-experiences, and different cultures cooperation is not easy and that has to be understood by the Dutch volunteers.
- Students play an important role by establishing contacts and informal networks. These students form a bridge to contact universities and schools.
- Active refugees can help Dutch people to help refugees. These active refugees have the adequate information about the living conditions of refugees.
- Show cooperative results offline and online. Refugees are well experienced in digital communication (Facebook). Bring active people together with the help of the social media.
- Avoid top down activities for refugees. Ask refugees what they want and work together to realise activities.

With the help of the contributions of the participants of this seminar and with the creative products of the writers in mind *The Creative Normal* on cooperation can be formulated as follows (as summarized in the picture below):

- cooperative ways of working take place in the context of a changing, more sustainable and creative society;
- cooperation including DIY/DIT inside and outside the own sectors is the rule and not an exception;
- the individual organization will do a step back to give priority on the challenge to realize collective ambitions of its partnerships with artists and creative people in the core;
- hybrid and eclectic research-in-action and experimental education are needed to improve the dynamics of collaborative practices;
- dialogues between practitioners, artists, educators, researchers, students, business people and policy makers are essential for the interactive creation of new knowledge.



This *Creative Normal* also needs a Strategic Research Agenda to produce new knowledge according to the educational and professional needs.

Such an agenda has not been formulated in this book. But for sure, a lot of cornerstones for such an agenda can be found in the articles of the writers of Part I and Part II on cooperative ways of working. As an appendix of this introduction the reader will find a landscape of these cornerstones, derived from the articles in this book.

The central conclusion of the Utrecht conference in 2014 was: *Cooperate or Die!*.

The future research agenda can have a more engaged title:

Creative cooperation for a sustainable global connectivity, nearby and faraway!

Giep Hagoort