Article

Creative Hubs and Intercultural Dialogue—Towards a New Socio-Economic Narrative

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Abstract: This paper argues that creative hubs are enablers and curators of intercultural dialogue. Building upon an internationally funded project bringing together creative hubs from Turkey, Greece, Serbia and the UK, research was carried out through a survey analysis across these four countries with 98 creative hubs and four workshops in co-working spaces (involving 29 creative hub experts). Based on the data collected, this paper suggests a new framework for understanding intercultural dialogue in creative hubs through their spatial and cultural attributes, as well as through their levels of activity. The findings support the argument for a shift from an economic to a socio-economic narrative around creative hubs.

Keywords: intercultural dialogue; creative hubs; intercultural communication; creative industries

1. Introduction

In the last decade, we have seen the emergence of so-called creative hubs as a concept for bringing creatives together. Creative hubs have seen investment from both public and private stakeholders, which resulted in them developing in cities across the world (Pratt, 2021 [1]). The British Council estimates that creative hubs host the activities of upwards of 1.2 million creatives word-wide (see https://creativeeconomy.britishcouncil.org/projects/hubs/ accessed on 20 June 2022). Creative hubs are often used in practice and research as synonyms for co-working spaces that host mostly micro companies, SMEs and freelancers from the creative industries. However, a creative hub is also described more broadly as a *curated* space: a convenor, providing support for networking, business development and community engagement (Matheson and Easson, 2015 [2]; Gill, Pratt and Virani, 2019 [3]). The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (see NESTA: The value of creative hubs, in Creative Economy & Culture, 16 August 2018.) highlights that creative hubs "house creative practitioners and businesses" which ignite "networks that bring people together".

These definitions pin down, on the one hand, the importance of geographic location, which includes both physical and virtual spaces and on the other hand, the organisation and a set of aims and activities through the management of these spaces that take place, which jointly constitute what a creative hub is. The economic benefits of such hubs—also described as entrepreneurial spaces and clusters—are often discussed in academic literature (Porter, 2011 [4]) and policy documents (and are the reason for the increasing interest expressed through investments and policy initiatives).

We argue in this paper that the value of creative hubs, which we identify as managed spaces for diverse creatives, permeates their organisation, activities and objectives beyond

the often discussed and researched economic benefits. So far, the socio-cultural benefits that creative hubs can contribute to are often overlooked and less understood. We focus in this paper specifically on one specific socio-cultural value to close this research gap: the creation of intercultural dialogue in creative hubs. According to the Council of Europe, intercultural dialogue "is an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other's global perception" (see Council of Europe: The concept of intercultural dialogue: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/concept_EN.asp accessed on 28 October 2022). Other organisations, which include, for example, UNESCO and the British Council, have also developed their own definitions and highlight the need for intercultural dialogue to advance peace, reconciliation and democracy (Holmes, 2014 [5]).

Taking the importance of intercultural dialogue in our society and for policymakers as given, the question arises: What role can creative hubs play in creating intercultural dialogue? Research has already recognised the potential of creative hubs to act as natural venues for intercultural dialogue, creating positive engagement across cultural groups to strengthen social cohesion (De Leede and Kraijenbrink, 2014 [6]). The nature of creative hubs also highlights the clear links to intercultural dialogue, namely by bringing diverse people together in the same places. However, there is a lack of structured research in this regard.

The aim of this paper is to close this gap and provide structured documentation and analysis of potential linkages between creative hubs' functioning and opportunities for intercultural dialogue to broaden our understanding of the value that creative hubs generate. This paper builds upon an internationally funded project. The 18-month project had the goal of forming a network of creative hubs across the European Union and the Republic of Turkey to foster creative exploration and collaboration that contributes to building a more cohesive, open and connected civil society. The research for this paper took place within the project and utilised the network of participating partners (more information can be found in the acknowledgement at the end of the paper). In bringing together creative hubs from Turkey, Greece, Serbia and the UK, our research is based on desk research, a survey of 98 creative hubs and in-depth data gathered through workshops in the four countries that participated in the project. The goal of this paper is to operationalise intercultural dialogue as a functioning value created by creative hubs and investigate the opportunities and barriers cultural hub managers face in this context.

1.1. The Role of Creative Hubs in Creating Intercultural Dialogue: Towards a New Framework

As discussed above, the focus of research on creative hubs has been on economic growth, while the wider social impacts of creative hubs—like much non-economic activity—tend to be undervalued (Gill et al., 2019 [3]). There are three main reasons for this. First, hubs and clusters are often framed as catalysts for establishing local comparative economic advantages (Komorowski, 2017 [7]). In recent years the narrative of regional economic advantages (Porter, 2011 [4]) through creative industries has been prominent in policy discourse. Second, the determinants and outcomes of these comparative economic advantages are also reasonably well understood (Komorowski and Fodor, 2020 [8]). Economic advantages are often seen as more easily measurable, and they have been subjects of previous analyses (Weisbrich and Owens, 2016 [9]). Creative hubs are predominantly businesses with their own performance indicators and financial goals, and therefore reporting on such measures is common. Third, because societal and cultural benefits are less tangible (Komorowski, Lupu, Pepper and Lewis, 2021 [10]), they are often seen as more elusive, escaping analytical attention, and are therefore often overlooked.

To the best of our knowledge, a systematic taxonomy of creative hubs' operations regarding socio-cultural value creation (and, more specifically, intercultural dialogue) is nonexistent in the relevant literature. Moreover, the measurement and operationalisation of socio-cultural values, specifically intercultural dialogue, is difficult. This is still the case even though the notion of intercultural dialogue has received a great deal of scholarly

attention since the Council of Europe published its White Paper 2008 on the topic. To date, more than 10,000 academic articles have been published on intercultural dialogue and its various applications and manifestations (Elias and Mansouri, 2020 [11]).

In this literature, intercultural dialogue is, for example, described as a regular and interpersonal practice that takes place subconsciously (Kecskes, 2014 [12]). Other scholars referred to intercultural dialogue as a "desire" to understand others with whom communication opportunities are rare (Kudo, Volet and Whitsed, 2019 [13]). Overall, we find that the definition of intercultural dialogue varies by field and application and that the understanding of intercultural dialogue is often vague and therefore doesn't always enable operationalisation for research. However, to understand the impact of creative hubs on intercultural dialogue, we need to understand how these two concepts are interlinked in an operationalisable way. Therefore, we investigated the literature to create these links and develop a new framework for investigation.

1.2. Literature Review

Based on the literature, we argue that within creative hubs, processes occur which ultimately produce services and practices that can facilitate intercultural dialogue. Scholars have focussed, for example, on the challenges of intercultural dialogue (e.g., Kondrateva, Sabirova and Plotnikova, 2018 [14]). This can include cultural barriers (Vlajcic, Marzi, Caputo and Dabic, 2018 [15]; Liu and Kramer, 2019 [16]), linguistic barriers (Risager and Tranekjaer, 2019 [17]) and other socio-economic barriers (Lähdesmäki and Koistinen, 2021 [18]). The practical steps highlighted by many scholars that enable individuals, as well as private and public organisations, to overcome these barriers and to prepare for them imply that intercultural dialogue can also be developed and steered (Pikhart, 2019 [19]). As highlighted above, creative hubs are managed and curated spaces. We, therefore, see how such management of creative hubs can steer intercultural dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue has often been emphasised within the context of definable and interlinked spaces. Research has already highlighted the issues that arise from cultural differences in well-delineable geographical spaces (Liou and Lan, 2018 [20]). In this context, creative hubs can be seen to be open for—and to create—an inclusive space for creatives involving culturally (and potentially geographically) distant individuals and ideas. Also, Wood and Landry (2007, [21]) argue that one way to foster intercultural dialogue is the creation of "shared spaces", which may be thought of as what we define here as creative hubs. The main added value of such "shared spaces" resides in giving the individual the ability to detach from elements of their own cultural pathways to create output that transcends tangible or intangible barriers.

Florida (2019, [22]) argued that for creative cities to emerge (a similar phenomenon as creative hubs but on a larger scale), talent, technology and tolerance are required. Tolerance can be understood as the convergence in ideas and workflows across the artificial divides between individuals and organisations. Achieving this requires intercultural dialogue to also be thought of as a methodology for fostering constructive and positive interaction at the service of a set of common goals. This is applicable both internationally and locally (Modood, 2018 [23]) and therefore shows how creative hubs can steer and apply this as a methodology.

In addition, within the context of creative industries, the notion of intercultural dialogue can be seen as a definable phenomenon (Harvey and Bradley, 2021 [24]). The digitisation of processes and ease of travel (despite the recent COVID-19-related obstacles) have meant that the creative industries have undergone unprecedented internationalisation (Burhanuddin and Beddu, 2020 [25]), creating potentially rich possibilities for intercultural dialogue. However, the local aspect of intercultural dialogue is as important as its international reach because variations in creative processes may be caused not just by distance but also by differences in vocational interests, age, health differences, sexual orientation, religion and social standing (see UNESCO, 2022, available online at https://en.unesco.org/interculturaldialogue/ accessed on 10 May 2022).

The promotion of social inclusion, the enhancement of local identities, the establishment of social relationships and the formation of communities are essential to intercultural dialogue. Creativity and location can thus facilitate such dialogue, and the final outputs or production spill-overs from creative processes can help bridge cultural gaps (Roodhouse, 2006 [26]).

Gill, Pratt and Virani (2019, [3]) have highlighted that creative hubs are not merely spaces for co-locating creatives. They also serve as places where collaboration, community, inclusion and the countering of precarious creative labour can occur. In this way, creative hubs serve as conveners, offering space and support for networking, business development, freelancer support and community engagement within the creative industries (see the British Council's Creative Hubkit, available online at https://creativeconomy. britishcouncil.org/blog/15/06/28/creative-hubkit-made-hubs-emerging-hubs/ accessed on 10 May 2022).

1.3. The New Framework

This overview of the literature linking creative hubs to intercultural dialogue shows the clear dependencies of these two concepts. More concretely, as creative hubs are spaces that bring creatives together, we focus in regard to intercultural dialogue on the opportunities that arise when diverse people come together. Based on this, we identify core aspects that many of these studies share (and that also emerged as themes from the data gathered in this study), which we operationalised to create a new framework for understanding intercultural dialogue in creative hubs. We identified three core levels:

1. The spatial level includes the micro, meso and macro embeddedness of the creative hubs. On this level, creative hubs enable intercultural dialogue, i.e., the opportunity for diverse people to come together on a

    a. icro-level (in the hub and among its participants),
    b. meso-level (in the immediate vicinity of the hub, for example, at the municipal level) and
    c. macro-level (cross-border collaboration, partnerships with other hubs).

2. The cultural level describes the cultural diversity of the people that come together in creative hubs. There are potentially three major groups connected by creative hubs:

    a. people from different countries,
    b. people with different work backgrounds and skills and
    c. minority or disadvantaged groups.

3. The action level shows the functions and activities within and of creative hubs that create diverse cultural encounters and outcomes to enable intercultural dialogue. This involves (see also Skrefsrud, 2016 [27]):

    a. encounters,
    b. forms of communication,
    c. discourse and
    d. approaches to training and learning (the distinction is derived from the elaborations of Thor-André Skrefsrud in his book *The intercultural dialogue* (2016)).

We argue that each of these levels carries primordial significance in placing various creative hubs on various paths in terms of abilities and incentives to host, foster and implement intercultural dialogue in the creative process. Shortcomings in these domains may also point to a specific action that has the potential to be taken from the side of the creative hub.

Because of these opportunities, this framework was applied in this study and to the data gathered in an attempt to identify the extent (quantity and quality) of intercultural dialogue that is enabled through creative hubs. Each level of this framework is further outlined and defined with data and insights below. This framework allows for the development of an approach to understanding—and advancing/measuring—the socio-cultural impacts of creative hubs.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The Data Collection Process

The geographical scope of the study was defined based on an internationally funded project bringing together creative hubs from Turkey, Greece, Serbia and the UK (see also above). This paper builds its insights on both quantitative and qualitative research data from the countries and the creative hubs (and their networks) that participated in the project. The project allowed the researchers access to various creative hubs and support in the research process through the participating partners and creative hubs. Further, investigating four countries with significant differences across them in terms of the development of creative industries and policy support (see more on this below) allows us to extract more universal results on how creative hubs and intercultural dialogue interact. While a cross-country comparison of results may yield valuable insights, our aim in this research was primarily to identify significant patterns that remain consistent across varying creative hub landscapes. Consequently, the results are more likely generalisable to other geographical regions.

The study objects were identified based on our definition given above and their roles in the functioning of creative hubs: members, managers and stakeholders of creative hubs (defined as managed spaces bringing creatives together). We used the British Council's definition of creative hubs, as also present in Matheson and Easson (2015, [2]) and in Gill, Pratt and Virani (2019, [3]), which includes clusters, co-working spaces, studios, creative centres, networks, online platforms, or alternative places and organisations that support and develop local creative businesses and individuals. This definition was introduced to the respondents and workshop participants to delineate what constitutes a creative hub. Due to the nature of the creative hubs participating in the project, in-depth data was gathered from co-working spaces for creatives. It should be noted that the differences among creative hubs mean that they have divergent aims when it comes to cultural and societal value creation. However, our findings suggest a clear comparability of the responses.

The research process based on the geographical scope and the defined study objects included two stages: (1) a survey and (2) workshops.

1. Between August and September 2019, a comprehensive online survey was conducted to gather insights from over 400 creative hub members, managers and local private and public stakeholders in four countries. The survey participants were identified through thorough desk research and an extensive network of contacts. A total of 98 organisations that met the criteria for creative hubs were included in the data collection process. The validity of both the creative hubs and the respondents interviewed has been checked by identifying the respondents as stakeholders of the hubs (managers, members, or active stakeholders) and by cross-checking the websites of the creative hubs. We asked all survey participants the same set of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. After identifying the hub, the location and the sector of activity, we established its basic attributes in relation to intercultural dialogue. In most of our questions, we have not made it explicit to the participants that we are measuring aspects of intercultural dialogue to avoid introducing various types of response biases. We constructed the questions with the three-pillar framework in mind (related to spatial, cultural and action-level attributes). Each question yielded information that is useful on its own (for instance, on the cultural diversity of hub members), but it still fits into one of the three domains regarding intercultural dialogue. For more information on this mapping, please consult Section 2.3 below. We asked our respondents about the approach of the creative hub to intercultural dialogue (and whether promoting it was an explicit aim within the hub) and their attitudes towards and perceptions of intercultural dialogue.

2. The survey data was enriched with qualitative material from four workshops. In October 2019, we invited 29 experts to workshops in four different creative hubs (based on the expressions of interest from hubs studied in the project and located in one of the four countries of interest). The two-hour workshop involved creative

hub managers, members, academics and local private and public stakeholders who were identified by the organisers based on their professional networks. The workshop was held in co-working spaces of creative hubs. A participatory action research (PAR) approach was used to facilitate discussions and generate new ideas. PAR is a research approach that emphasises participation and action, seeking to understand the world by collaboratively changing it and emphasising collective inquiry and experimentation based on experience and social history. The workshop discussion was guided by a framework and informed by the survey findings. The semi-structured format allowed participants to freely express their thoughts and ideas, which were recorded, coded and later analysed for the research.

Data from the survey and workshops were analysed using an inductive approach to identify the main opportunities, challenges and best practices for creating intercultural dialogue in creative hubs. Desk research was also conducted to complement the data gathered from the survey and workshops.

2.2. Background: The Creative Hub Landscapes in Turkey, Greece, Serbia and the UK

In order to give background information about the study findings, we first outline the creative hub landscapes in the four studied countries, Greece, Serbia, the UK and Turkey (see Table 1 below). The insights presented are based on desk research, survey findings and workshops. While we do not attempt to compare the countries (see above), having insights about the background of each country enables the reader to frame the findings below more meaningfully.

Table 1. Overview of the differences in the four analysed countries (Sources and notes: for GDP numbers, please consult https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/compare-countries/ (accessed on 30 November 2019). Our data show that in advanced economies, creative workers such as scientists, technologists, artists, cultural creatives, media workers and knowledge-based professionals, make up between a third to over forty per cent of the workforce. Further information can be found at http://martinprosperity.org/media/Global-Creativity-Index-2015.pdf (accessed on 30 November 2019). The Creativity Index is a comprehensive gauge of advanced economic growth and sustainable prosperity based on the "3Ts of economic development": talent, technology and tolerance. It assesses and ranks 139 countries globally on each of these dimensions, as well as on our overall measure of creativity and prosperity).

	Contribution of Creative Industries to GDP	Number of Surveyed Creative Hubs	Creative Hubs Investigated in-Depth in Workshops	Creative Hub Landscape
UK	4.2%	29	Rabble Studio (https://rabble.studio/ accessed on 30 December 2021)	Developed
Serbia	7.1%	14	Nova Iskra (https://novaiskra.com/en/ accessed on 30 December 2021)	Growing
Greece	1.4%	10	BIOS (http://www.romantso.gr/ accessed on 30 December 2021)	Emerging
Turkey	2.7%	45	ATÖLYE (https://www.atolye.io/en/home/ accessed on 30 December 2021)	Growing

2.2.1. Turkey

Over the past decade, Turkey's creative hub scene has flourished following a period of strong economic growth. As a G20 economy, Turkey ranks seventh among developing nations for its export of creative goods (see https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ditcted2018d3_en.pdf accessed on 30 December 2021). In 2017, the British Council and ATÖLYE mapped out 100 creative hubs in Istanbul alone, including virtual hubs, co-working spaces, research centres, maker spaces, incubation centres, technoparks and a living lab. Creative industries generate roughly 2.7% of Turkey's GDP (Demir 2022, [28]).

The year 2010 marked a significant shift in discussions surrounding creative hubs in Turkey, with a growing focus on development programs (see https://graphcommons.com/

graphs/21cc69ad-86d7-489d-99ac524a3aeb15b8?auto=true accessed on 30 December 2021). Istanbul was named the European Capital of Culture that year. Although private organisations typically sponsor and fund creative hubs in Turkey, the government now supports them through various programmes, including the Competitive Sectors Programme, the Startup Support and Organisation Programme, Startup Funding and Access to Capital, and the Startup Globalisation Support. Turkish universities are also establishing their own creative hubs, such as Mersin University's Young Entrepreneurship Center. This platform connects companies, angel investors and professionals to collaborate on innovative projects (see https://www.girisimlimani.org/ accessed on 30 December 2021).

Our survey identified 45 creative hubs in Turkey, providing a snapshot of the overall scene. Around 50 per cent of surveyed hubs were in Istanbul, with 20 per cent in Izmir and 10 per cent in Ankara. The majority of hubs had between 10–50 members and fewer than 15 full-time employees. However, large and very large creative hubs were also present in Turkey. Given the recent establishment of most creative hubs and political support, the Turkish creative hub landscape is still expanding.

2.2.2. Greece

The creative and cultural industries in Greece made up 1.4 per cent of GDP in 2014, a figure close to the more established economic sectors like construction and food and beverage. The Attica region, which is home to Athens, has seen a rise in creative hubs (see https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/en/greece-today/why-greece/humancapital accessed on 30 December 2021). However, in comparison to other nations, the number of hubs that match our definition is still limited. The Greek Ministry of Culture is a significant proponent of the creative and cultural industries, but private foundations like the Onassis Foundation, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Hellenic Foundation for Culture and foreign foundations provide most of the funding.

Our survey uncovered ten creative hubs, with the majority being in Athens. We also discovered hubs in Thessaloniki and Mytilini. Most of the hubs in our study depend on private funding or earned income, and only a handful receive public funding. This indicates that the creative hub landscape in Greece is still modest and growing, with most employing fewer than 20 people and representing no more than 100 members.

2.2.3. Serbia

The development of local creative and cultural industries has been facilitated by a focus on European integration. These industries contribute 7.1 per cent to Serbia's GDP and consist of over 30,000 registered companies that employ more than 115,000 individuals (see https://www.srbija.gov.rs/tekst/en/130164/creative-industries.php accessed on 30 December 2021). The idea of creative industries is a new concept in Serbian policymaking. In 2018, the establishment of a program named Serbia Creates and a Creative Industries Council was the latest attempt to make the cultural and creative industries a genuine policy priority. A study by Serbia Creates in 2019 revealed an increase in the number of co-working and co-living spaces, startup centres, creative hubs and cultural stations throughout Serbia, offering conducive environments for creatives from various fields to collaborate (see https://issuu.com/kreativnaekonomija/docs/creative_industries_serbia_2017 accessed on 30 December 2021). The study identified 30 creative hubs, with the majority located in Belgrade.

Our survey experts reported on 14 creative hubs in Serbia. Sixty per cent of the hubs we surveyed are located in the capital city, Belgrade, with others located in Nis, Pozarevac, Novi Sad and Zajecar. Our survey results indicate that financing is sourced from approximately 50 per cent private and 50 per cent public sources. Most of the creative hubs we studied have small membership numbers (up to 50 members), but there are a few with over 100 members. Overall, we believe that the creative hub landscape in Serbia is expanding based on these findings.

2.2.4. The UK

Ranked as the fourth top exporter of creative goods globally, the UK is one of the most developed countries in terms of creative sectors. It is also among the top importers of cultural goods and services. The creative industries in the UK contributed 4.2% of the GDP in 2016 (see https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/rd-inthe-creative-industries/ accessed on 30 December 2021). The country has several centres for creative production, with Cardiff being one of the largest media centres in the UK, with over 600 firms (see https://clwstwr.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/Clwstwr%20Creative%20Industries%20Report%20No%202%20the%20media%20sector%20in%20the%20Cardiff%20Capital%20Region%20-driving%20economic%20growth%20through%20audiovisual%20activities.pdf accessed on 30 December 2021).

Creative hubs are well-established throughout the country, with hundreds of examples of different types, structures, financial plans and staff sizes. The creative industries receive support at various governmental levels, including local, regional, national and the UK levels. According to a study by the British Council, most UK cities now host a thriving number of creative hubs (see http://project.creativehubs.net/wpcontent/uploads/2016/12/HubsReport.pdf accessed on 30 December 2021). Our survey comprised experts from 29 creative hubs in the UK, providing insights into the landscape. While these hubs represent only a small snapshot of the number of creative hubs in the UK, they show a wide range of sizes, from creative hubs with more than 1000 members to different organisations and financial models. These findings indicate that the creative hub landscape in the UK is diverse and well-established, with a long history of public and private support.

2.2.5. Understanding the Background: Creative Hubs and Intercultural Dialogue in the Four Countries Studied

As observed above, we discovered that each country experiences distinct types of economic and social progress and responds differently to cultural and economic changes. Nonetheless, urbanisation, the effects of digitisation and the decreasing role of heavy industries are transforming local economies in all four countries. Political challenges such as Brexit, COVID-19, military conflicts and immigration-related changes also pose a range of challenges. The "refugee crisis" in 2015, which occurred following the unrest in the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war, had an impact on our four partner nations. Turkey, for instance, is home to almost four million refugees and asylum seekers, making it the largest refugee population worldwide (see http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2544 for more details accessed on 30 September 2021.). In 2019, almost 40,000 people entered Greece (see https://quillette.com/2019/09/13/greece-tensions-rise-again-asmigrant-crisis-escalates/ accessed on 15 September 2021). As a result, intercultural communication is critical in all four countries.

In addition, creativity is closely linked to a nation's economic development, competitiveness and prosperity, and the creative and cultural industries have become increasingly important for local economies in all four countries. The creative industries are expanding in all four countries and are increasingly recognised as a crucial component of their local economies. Creative hubs have been established and are acknowledged as critical drivers for the growth of local creative industries. However, we discovered that each country has a distinct level of development in terms of its creative hub landscape, taking into account differences in socio-economic status (refer to Table 1).

2.3. Mapping between the Data from the Survey and Our Analysis

In order to understand how the results in the next section have been compiled, it is important to put the questions of our survey into context and to conceptualise a link between the answers that the respondents have given and the three pillars of our theoretical framework. First, we list the questions, and in Table 2 below, we summarise the statistics of the answers that we have received. The underlying raw data (completely anonymized and GDPR-compliant), which was used to generate this table is included as Supplementary Material to this paper.

Table 2. Summary statistics of the answers to key survey questions for our research.

Question	Possible Answers	Breakdown of Answers
How culturally diverse are the creative hub members, in your opinion (compared to the local demographics)?	Not diverse Quite diverse Relatively diverse Slightly diverse Very diverse	8.33% 26.19% 27.38% 19.05% 19.05%
Does your hub organise international events?	Yes/No, % of yes:	44.45%
Does your hub organise business internationalisation events?	Yes/No, % of yes:	25%
Does your hub provide translation services?	Yes/No, % of yes:	6.17%
Does your hub organise local events with diverse groups?	Yes/No, % of yes:	61.7%
To the best of your knowledge, what kind of groups of a different cultural background did your activities target to support?	Local target groups (e.g., minorities, including immigrants, religious groups) International groups	60% 40%
Do you meet with people from different cultures through the creative hub (e.g., through events of the hub or business contacts established through the hub)?	Always Never Regularly Sometimes Usually	21.43% 2.38% 13.10% 41.67% 21.43%
To the best of your knowledge, does the creative hub actively state goals in relation to supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue?	No Yes, in its mission statement Yes, through admission strategies Yes, by a behavioural conduct statement Yes, by other means	24.39% 39.50% 8.53% 17.07% 10.97%
Does the hub offer or has offered training or workshops that create competencies for intercultural dialogue?	Cooperation skills Language skills No Other	30.86% 8.64% 46.91% 13.58%
How operationally intense are your international connections to each of your partners?	Strong (regular collaboration) Good (occasional collaboration) Light (one-off collaborations)	39.6% 25.6% 34.8%

First, regarding the spatial level and the various spheres of impact and influence that hubs have on creating and/or fostering intercultural dialogue, we have asked survey questions at three different levels. On the micro-level (i.e., within the hub itself), we were curious to uncover information about the cultural diversity among the member of the hub. To do so, we have asked the following question: *How culturally diverse are the creative hub members, in your opinion (compared to the local demographics)?* This is an important consideration from the get-go, as our theoretical framework stipulates that at the micro-level, creative hubs facilitate the harmonious and productive collaboration between creatives of diverse backgrounds, creating the primordial form of peer-to-peer intercultural dialogue. At the meso-level, i.e., regarding the hub's interactions with its geographic vicinity (neighbourhood or municipal level), we have asked respondents whether they formally organise community events attracting culturally diverse crowds from a local catchment area (broadly defined as a neighbourhood, city, mini-region, etc.). The question that prompted respondents to declare if this is the case was the following: *Does the hub provide services that enable communication in any kind of way with people from other cultures?* On the macro (i.e., interregional or international level), we have asked the following question: *We would like to know how internationally connected the creative hub is and to which countries. Please enter the country and rate the degree of connection to the best of your knowledge.* We have tabulated the answers that were given, which allowed us to understand the degree of interconnectivity of each respondent's creative hub.

The second pillar of our theoretical framework is the cultural level. At this level, we were most interested in the concrete measures and programmes in place to enhance dialogue, cooperation and joint innovation across individuals of hubs separated by vast geographical (and thereby also cultural) and social distances. In order to understand this, we asked our respondents whether they had *strategies and concrete actions in place or taking place*

regularly that directly support or enable intercultural dialogue. As a follow-up to this particular question, we have asked about whom these actions target concretely (international partners, local disadvantaged groups, etc.). We have also inquired about fostering dialogue across various skill sets and levels of education, but we have done so during our workshops and case studies (i.e., not concretely within the context of our survey).

The third pillar of our research is the action level. For this pillar, we were mainly interested in how much of a priority intercultural dialogue is in shaping the practical engagement and the value of creative hubs. In order to discover more about this domain, we have asked our respondents whether they agree that *"The creative hub is a space for intercultural encounter"*. We have also tried to understand what services our respondents offer to link their members to other countries (and thereby to other cultures), which is why we have tried to measure what percentage of the hubs offer internationalisation/translation services. Furthermore, we have also tried to proxy the respondents' commitment to intercultural dialogue and diversity by asking about their mission statements. Finally, we asked creative hubs whether they offer any form of training to foster intercultural communication or collaboration skills.

The summary statistics of the answers to all of these questions above are in Table 2 below.

3. Results: Understanding the Relationship between Cultural Hubs and Intercultural Dialogue

As previously stated, the creative hub landscapes of the four countries under study differ significantly. Nevertheless, our survey results indicate that creative hubs are viewed as platforms and facilitators for intercultural communication to varying degrees across all locations. According to the survey, which involved representatives from 98 creative hubs, 75 per cent of respondents believed that creative hubs contribute to and function as platforms and enablers for intercultural dialogue.

This is the case even though the surveyed creative hubs in our study represent various organisational forms, financing models, sizes and services, as well as aims (as outlined above). However, this underpins our argument that creative hubs are natural convenors and spaces for intercultural dialogue and are experienced this way by a majority of creative hub stakeholders. In order to understand the extent of the impact of creative hubs on enabling and creating intercultural dialogue, the following sections present the findings of the research in more detail, following the above-described framework underpinning three levels for intercultural dialogue in creative hubs:

1. the spatial level, which includes the micro, meso and macro embeddedness of the creative hubs,
2. the cultural level, which describes the cultural diversity of the people linked to the creative hubs and
3. the action level, which shows the functions and activities within and of creative hubs that create diverse cultural encounters and outcomes.

3.1. The Spatial Level

As previously mentioned, creative hubs are characterised by a location (whether physical or digital) and a geographical context (such as a city, neighbourhood or region). Our research demonstrates that the economic and cultural endeavours established within distinct spatial zones of a creative hub generate fresh linkages or strengthen preexisting ones, ultimately fostering intercultural communication.

*   On a micro level (within the hub), the curated space of creative hubs creates the platform for intercultural dialogue within the hub. This usually involves people of different cultural backgrounds who regularly interact within the space. For example, creative hubs often invite culturally diverse groups to events. Members of creative hubs also come from diverse cultural backgrounds: in the survey, nine out of ten creative hubs reported a diverse group of hub members, which means that within the hub itself, encounters with people from different cultural groups are established. One

of the workshop participants stated, for example, that the success of the creative hub is dependent on this diversity: "It is the people, which keep the community alive at our hub. It is important to find the right and diverse talents".

- On a meso level, the creative hub is embedded in its local surroundings. When the creative hub is a physical space, the hub is integrated into a certain neighbourhood, for example. Digital platforms as creative hubs also tend to have a local focus. Creative hubs are also often located in emerging neighbourhoods because rental space is cheap in these areas. Because these neighbourhoods have different economic and cultural backgrounds, their local embeddedness (which is a key factor here) creates intercultural dialogue. For example, BIOS is a creative hub, which is located in a majority Pakistani neighbourhood in Athens. The creative hub organises local events regularly, inviting the Pakistani community into the hub to interact and meet on a regular basis. The local neighbours use the event spaces of the hub for free. 'Food galleries' are organised where the Pakistani community is invited to offer their food in the hub.

- On a macro level, creative hubs foster collaboration across borders. Action at this level is an essential component of good neighbourliness between states and, therefore, an excellent frame for the development of intercultural relations. Of the creative hubs represented in the survey, 67 per cent reported having international connections. A creative hub may collaborate with other hubs, businesses and contacts in other countries through, for example, common projects, residency programmes and business contacts. As one of the workshop participants stated: "A lot is happening on the international level with creative hubs including international projects, collaborations and exchange between creative hubs from different countries". Overall, we found that the surveyed hubs have connections to 56 different countries. The respondents reported that about 30 per cent of international connections happen on a regular basis.

3.2. The Cultural Level

As illustrated earlier, creative hubs operate within relational, institutional and cultural contexts. The rise of multiculturalism in cities due to globalisation has led to increased cross-cultural connections among urban dwellers, sparking creativity. The innovative nature of these hubs often prioritises the development of new ideas and innovation, embodying the complexities of the diverse identities within a given location.

Our research indicates that international connections and activities are a significant feature of many creative hubs. Nearly half of the hubs surveyed offer international events, with 25 per cent providing services to aid their members' businesses' internationalisation. Such activities facilitate connections between local and international members and other stakeholders or collaborators from different countries. For example, the Connect for Creativity project's art and technology residency program brought together artists from various nations to establish bridges and understanding within and across societies. Twelve participants spent six weeks in a different creative hub in another participating country, a residency program that we discovered is prevalent in creative hubs.

Connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds with varying skill sets is another essential aspect of creative hub activity. Often, these hubs aim to connect creatives with people from technological sectors by providing a shared space for intercultural dialogue that leads to new projects, businesses, products and services. Nova Iskra, a Serbian creative hub, offers different programs and training to match the skillsets of its community. This includes an Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs project that matches various skills, encouraging creative individuals to learn about business approaches.

Our research shows that creative hubs often prioritise a combination of local embeddedness and an ethos of social responsibility, playing a critical role in creating an intercultural dialogue with local minorities or disadvantaged groups. This occurs through minority communities residing in the neighbourhood or focusing on projects and activities that support these groups. Sixty-one per cent of the creative hubs in our survey host local

events for or with culturally diverse groups, while more than half have specific activities that target local groups (e.g., minorities, immigrants, religious groups, etc.). Imece, a social innovation platform established by the creative hub ATÖLYE and Zorlu Holding in Istanbul, exemplifies this approach. The platform brings together individuals and institutions to tackle social challenges, offering an incubation process for social projects, including mentorship, workspace, grants, training, access to the landscape and investor relations to teams providing solutions to social challenges. Since March 2016, imece has supported projects benefiting women, children, parents, people with disabilities and people from different economic backgrounds.

3.3. The Action Level

Previous research has emphasised the importance of community building and serving members within creative hubs. While there are various ways in which creative hubs engage with their members and stakeholders, they primarily focus on enabling encounters between culturally diverse individuals, fostering effective communication, promoting discourse around intercultural dialogue, and offering training to develop intercultural competencies. Our study identified the following actions that creative hubs take to promote intercultural dialogue:

- Enabling encounters between culturally diverse people is crucial to the functioning of most creative hubs. Almost all survey respondents (97 per cent) reported that creative hubs enable them to meet people from different cultures. Many creative hubs also curate their membership through quotas and social events to enable individuals to encounter diverse groups.
- Communication is key for creative hubs to promote intercultural dialogue. Nearly all creative hubs provide information in their national language and English, and some in minority languages. Bilingual communication channels are often used to establish an environment for dialogue. Many hubs offer matchmaking services and support communication by providing translation or internationalisation services. About 30% of creative hubs in the survey offer these forms of activity.
- The discourse around intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and societal goals is often embedded in creative hub activities. Of the creative hubs represented in our survey, 40 per cent have cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as goals in their mission statements. Many creative hubs see themselves as playing an active role in creating positive intercultural dialogue, with 30 per cent of creative hubs in the survey having behavioural conduct statements that members need to follow and 40 per cent specifically mentioning a commitment to supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Rabble Studio, a creative hub in Cardiff, Wales, has a charter in place and provides manuals and policies of the creative hub to its members, stating the hub's values.
- Creative hubs actively shape intercultural dialogue through learning: some 50 per cent of creative hubs in the survey offer courses and training to develop intercultural competencies. This includes courses on languages, cooperation skills, conflict resolution skills and courses on different cultures more generally. Developing such skills has a significant impact on future successful interactions between different cultural groups. Creative hubs can be seen as alternative education institutions, providing a platform for learning and participatory processes to engage different cultural groups within the city and neighbourhood.

4. Final Thoughts and Discussion

The aim of this paper was to provide structured documentation and analysis of potential linkages between creative hubs' functioning and opportunities for intercultural dialogue to arise, and to broaden our understanding of the value creative hubs create. We have applied a new framework for analysing the extent of the impact of creative hubs on intercultural dialogue. We have used survey data, practical examples and quotes from

workshops with creative hub experts. These sources of evidence highlight the potential that creative hubs have in this regard, showcasing the direct and implicit effects of creative hubs on intercultural dialogue. The framework enabled us to show these effects on three main levels.

On a spatial level, creative hubs enable members to connect internally in the hub, with its surroundings and internationally. On a cultural level, we found that creative hubs connect three major groups: people from different countries, creators with different professional backgrounds and minorities and disadvantaged groups. Finally, creative hubs create an intercultural dialogue on an action level that takes the form of encounter, communication, discourse and learning/training. Nevertheless, diversity is a necessary condition for intercultural dialogue in these setups. If this precondition exists, intercultural dialogue may develop as an externality, but it may also be nurtured consciously in creative hubs.

Still, while creative industries have been recognised as important for sustainable economic growth, creative hubs are not yet fully recognised more broadly as convenors for socio-cultural impacts. This is why creative hubs are still first and foremost considered economic agents (in practice and in literature). However, as already Gill, Pratt and Virani (2019, [3]) argued: too much emphasis on economic, market-driven value works against the ability of hubs to promote diversity and inclusion.

The impact of creative hubs on socio-cultural values is, therefore, often only implicit and unacknowledged. As shown above, intercultural dialogue is not necessarily the outcome of a premeditated agenda but an externality generated by the core activities and functions of creative hubs. One creative hub manager addressed this point directly, describing the way in which: "Our aim is not to be generally intercultural when doing projects. But these projects have a strong effect on intercultural dialogue, and we should explicitly name this".

This missing understanding of the socio-cultural values of creative hubs is often based on existing institutional silos among public and private institutions. It is often the distinction between cultural and economic policies and goals, we would argue, that has created these silos. This is exemplified by statements from two workshop participants: "Institutional openness is often a problem. When you want to do something, there are no ways to collaborate with public institutions because of procedural limitations, bureaucracy, and their willingness to do new things". "The challenge is how we can bring the different players together. It is a matter of changing mentalities and not only thinking about us but also about others and for the others if needed. We need open-minded stakeholders in our city to create great advice for policy makers and support the efforts of creative hubs".

The concept of 'intercultural dialogue' is, in this sense, also often overlooked by creative hub managers, members and other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the curation needed to create diversity and intercultural dialogue requires resources, and our respondents highlighted the limited funding and resources available to them to create activities and strategies to promote intercultural dialogue. We found that economically driven funding initiatives lack an understanding of—and measurements for—initiatives with a socio-cultural impact. As one workshop participant who manages a creative hub stated: "It is always a question of capacity. There are so many problems and questions that we want to get involved with, but we don't have the time or the track record to justify such activities". Another participant described how: "Money in the past couple of years has always been a challenge to come by and it's quite hard to sell the idea of getting funding to support cultural engagement activity as it sometimes sounds like an amorphous activity and it's also quite hard to measure in terms of jobs etc. It is a challenge to sell that into cash strapped local authorities".

Nonetheless, the newly developed framework in this paper helps create a new understanding of the socio-cultural value of creative hubs. In any case, our aim with it was to provide first insights into a large untapped potential for further engagement in intensified and conscious intercultural dialogue by creative hubs. The findings in this paper, therefore, aim to create new knowledge for creative hubs, hub partners (existing and future), stake-

holders, policymakers and academia and to create a first step into re-framing the narrative of the impact of creative hubs from an economic to a socio-economic one. In other words, we are not suggesting abandoning the well-trodden policy drive towards an appreciation of the economic value of creative hubs but want to stress the need to supplement this with an appreciation and acknowledgement of their socio-cultural value.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that COVID-19 also impacts creative hubs and their ability to create intercultural dialogue. While the data for this paper was gathered preceding the COVID-19 lockdown period, our results also have further implications for future developments and values of creative hubs now after the pandemic. First, due to lockdowns and social distancing measures, creative hubs needed to adapt by moving their activities to online platforms. Second, COVID-19 has disrupted traditional ways of collaborating, with many international partnerships and events being postponed or cancelled. Third, the economic impact of the pandemic has been significant, which in turn might have created further financial difficulties for creative hubs. Fourth, the mental health and well-being of individuals and communities have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, which also includes diverse members of creative hubs. Overall, such developments pose new challenges but also give creative hubs new opportunities for creative intercultural dialogue post-COVID-19. To this end, we recommend further enquiry and understanding around intercultural dialogue—and its relation to diversity and inclusion—in the context of creative hubs and creativity by academia in the future. The purpose of this should be to further strengthen a shared understanding of the wide range of impacts of creative hubs and the creative industries.

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