

Spinning the Threads

Hybrid Organisations as Creative Intermediaries Negotiating Public, Private and Cultural Values!



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INTRODUCTION

Whereas idealistically ‘culture & economy’ and ‘public & private’ are spheres driven by diverging values, practically they are interdependent and thus need to collaborate. This research claims that the blurring boundaries between culture & economy and public & private are institutionalised in so-called hybrid organisations as creative intermediaries. The challenging complexity of these organisations’ working environments brought forth the motivation for investigating how these organisations manage to negotiate public, private and cultural values.

Many European cities, dominated for centuries by the textile industry, had to find a new economic ‘raison d’être’ after textile manufacturing had been transferred to low wage countries. Considering the strong role of creative industries’ symbolic qualities and their innovative potential for urban economic regeneration, this comparative research conducts case studies in two European former textile cities which nowadays support fashion design as part of their regeneration strategy: Huddersfield, UK and Mönchengladbach, Germany.

Two organisations stand out to play an essential role in these cities’ regeneration stories: Huddersfield’s ‘Textile Centre of Excellence’ (TCoE) and Mönchengladbach’s economic development corporation ‘WFMG’. As *creative intermediaries* these organisations combine cultural and economic values, providing business support and network activities for fashion designers. They further act as a voice for the local creative scene and minimise thresholds between public authorities, textile business men, educational institutions and creative fashion designers. As *hybrid organisations*, they also negotiate public and private values by combining public and private financial sources, stakeholders and identities. Moreover, their task to support creative industries has become of public and private concern.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: In the subsequent three sections the main concepts framing the theoretical background - creative intermediaries, hybrid organisations and organisational culture - are discussed. Then, after

explaining the methodological approach, the paper continues introducing the case studies. Further, the deductively obtained results are demonstrated by addressing the cases’ functioning as creative intermediaries and hybrid organisations. The paper finally highlights the inductively gained insights about the management of hybridity followed by the concluding section.

CREATIVE INTERMEDIARIES MEDIATING CULTURE & ECONOMY

Whereas culture and economy have long been considered mutually exclusive, nowadays their reciprocal relationship is widely acknowledged (MKW, 2001). Culture and creativity were associated with artistic freedom, intuition and aesthetic values concerned with the creation of ideas and symbols. These values were considered opposing economic values related to rationality, efficiency and calculation. Engaged in replicating ideas and products to reach economies of scale, economy was connected to the generation of money.

In a postmodern ‘symbolic economy’ and ‘knowledge society’ the innovative potential of creativity and the symbolic qualities of culture are considered essential for competing in a globalised world (e.g. Castells 1996; Drucker 2003; Zukin 1995). Hence, creative and cultural industries have become a substantial commercial sector. Not only do they generate and spread ‘symbolic products’ and services, but they also have a strong role in building ‘bridges’ to bind globalised mobile forces, such as people, money and knowledge to localities (e.g. Castells 1996; Wynne & O’Connor 1996; Verwijnen 1999; Hitters & Richards 2002). Moreover, creative industries represent a new model of work: they are able to comply with the demands of volatile, consumer driven markets and to adapt flexibly and innovatively to ever changing technological transformations (e.g. Lash & Urry 1994; O’Connor 2007).

To benefit from their economic potential, creative entrepreneurs need to be connected to urban development policies. Nevertheless, entrepreneurial thinking and skills are still new to creative artists, while business people and

politicians lack practical insights into the artists' way of doing business (Söndermann et al., 2009). This is where the *creative intermediary* comes into play: to minimise thresholds and create networks between economic, political and creative protagonists, these agencies support creative workers in becoming viable entrepreneurs (Swenden, 2007). As such, they mediate between economy and culture representing a *hybrid organ* between these spheres.

Processes described as 'economisation of culture' (e.g. Bianchini & Parkinson 1993; Eikenberry & Kluver 2004; Fritzgibbon & Kelly 1997; Klein 2005; Mommaas 2000) and 'culturalisation of economy' (Embley 1992; Landry 2000; Florida 2002; Mommaas 2000, 2004; Wöllert 1997) underline the attempt to link elements of economy and culture. In practice however, art academics and creative workers are often unfamiliar with business and management skills. Only by means of successfully supporting the creative entrepreneurs, understanding and communicating their peculiarities, it is possible to benefit from them.

Creative intermediaries are an economic (not cultural) policy instrument. Like the 'Creative City' according to Landry (2000), they are learning institutions embedded into the location. Principally, they provide business support and networking activities to local creative industries (Swenden, 2007). In detail, this entails:

- The creation of networks between creative entrepreneurs themselves, between creative workers and other economic sectors, public authorities and educational institutions increasing mutual trust and comprehension
- Appreciation of the cultural non-profit dimension 'art for art's sake'
- Functioning as a voice for the local creative milieu
- Introducing creative workers to business skills; connecting them to financial sources
- Provision of common marketing activities for creative entrepreneurs and their activities
- Creators of enthusiasm promoting an urban lifestyle and cultural entrepreneurship

Given the complexity of the organisational environment in which culture functions as an

economic motor, *creative intermediaries* are rendered a *hybrid agency* between the spheres' values. The concept of creative intermediaries is concerned with the hybridity between economy and culture. Nevertheless, cultural and creative industries do not only inherit economic and cultural values. Due to their increased economic relevance, they have also become substantial part of the political debate. Consequently, cultural producers find themselves in 'capillary interrelationships' with the economic and public spheres (Weckerle & Söndermann, 2003). The next section discusses the second concept of *hybrid organisations* mediating between public and private values.

HYBRID ORGANISATIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC & PRIVATE

Primarily debated in political science, the concept of *hybrid organisations* is concerned with the public and private dichotomy. *Hybrid organisations* are defined as those enterprises that are market-oriented and common good mission-centred (Karré & Cardoso, 2005). They work in a blurred space between traditional for-profit and non-profit enterprises, simultaneously fulfilling public duties and commercial market activities.

Just like economy and culture, the public and private sectors are acknowledged to be driven by different values. Whereas the public is associated with values such as welfare, social justice, hierarchy, continuity and legality, values prevailing in the private sphere are related to innovation, effectiveness, private profit interests, productivity and competition.

Departmentalising the public and private sphere is nevertheless criticised as an oversimplification of reality as practically these domains blur (Rainey, 1997). This becomes apparent by an increased engagement of public organisations in projects and tasks on the market place. Moreover, private entrepreneurs show an increased interest in potentially profitable public services as for instance in privatised public transport, education or security in public spaces.

Although hybrids are not a new phenomenon, scientific research on the implications of hybridity on the organisations themselves is

scarce (Karré et al., 2008). A lack of empirical research on this type of organisation still leaves open questions such as: How does hybridity influence the internal and external identity of the organisation? Which specific organisational processes are needed in hybrid organisations to assure public values while performing innovatively and productively? To answer this, one needs to analyse *how* exactly these organisations manage hybridity.

Hybridity in this respect is understood as the combination of different *cultural orientations* resulting from multiple external relations (In't Veld, 2005). Cultural orientation is defined as:

'The pattern of beliefs, values and learned ways that have developed during the course of an organisation's history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangements and the behaviour of its members' (Brown, 1998, p. 8).

Hybrid organisations rely on multiple external relations and thus manage to combine different *cultural orientations* (Karré & Cardoso, 2005). In this process of searching and creating an individual identity, the key term of *organisational culture* comes into play.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Within each organisation its unique *organisational culture* influences the way that actions are coordinated (Weick, 1995). *Organisational culture* is a system of shared meanings and values (Robbins 2003; Mullins 2001). As such, it distinguishes an organisation from others, provides a sense of identity to its members and influences how external stakeholders perceive the organisation (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). Organisational culture evolves due to the need to adapt internal processes to the external environment to survive and adjust to new circumstances (Schein, 2004). Ultimately, it is a control mechanism guiding employees in their behaviour and attitude (Moorhead & Griffin 2003; Robbins 2003). Therefore, the research availed itself of the concept organisational culture developed in management studies in order to reveal the main research question

'How do hybrid organisations as creative intermediaries manage to negotiate public, private and cultural values?'

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The following sections present the results of the qualitative case studies with two cases. The data is gathered by desk research, participant observation and semi-structured face-to-face interviews and connected by data triangulation. Based on the theoretical framework, indicators are derived from the three main concepts: creative intermediaries, hybrid organisations and organisational culture. These indicators are operationalised in a check list for desk research and an interview guide for the field research. In Huddersfield a total of eleven respondents are interviewed, including three employees of the TCoE, a fashion designer, a university fashion course leader, a private member and five civil servants. In Mönchengladbach, ten interviews took place with three employees and a private member of the WFMG, two fashion designers, a public partner, the dean of the university's textile department and two civil servants. Interviews deviated from fifteen to 140 minutes and took place from March till June 2009. Whereas sub-questions posed to answer the main research question are answered deductively, the solution to the main question is inferred inductively.

FROM FACTORY TO FASHION: TWO CASE STUDIES

Many European Cities emerged from and were dominated for centuries by the textile industry. In the decades following World War II, however, textile manufacturing was transferred to low wage countries leaving behind unemployment and abandoned industrial sites. These economic changes entailed significant difficulties for local authorities in finding a new economic 'raison d'être' (van Boom & Mommaas, 2009). Consequently, these cities had to find new strategies for economic and social regeneration. Would it not be logical to focus on textile traditions, as the vernacular qualities of local culture are considered a powerful means to differentiate and thus attract investment and talent? Would supporting textile research and

development not be a congruent answer to the imperatives of a 'knowledge economy' requiring 'flexible specialisation' in order to sustain one's position regarding innovations? Is focussing on fashion design not a smart strategy to rebrand textile regions by means of the symbolic values of fashion garments? And if so, who takes over these tasks in a world, where public and private spheres become mixed and cultural and economic values blur?

In the textile cities of Huddersfield (UK) and Mönchengladbach (Germany) the respective tasks are taken over by two *'hybrid organisations as creative intermediaries'*: the 'Textile Centre of Excellence' in Huddersfield and the economic development cooperation in Mönchengladbach (WFMG). They serve as empirical examples to analyse how such organisations 'spin the threads' between public, private and cultural spheres explaining how they manage tensions combining different organisational cultures in order to support fashion design in former textile cities.

Huddersfield's Textile Centre of Excellence

The 'Huddersfield and District Textile Training Company Co Ltd.' was established in 1976. In a shared approach by local textile manufacture companies, this company aimed at professional, equitable and high-quality training (TCoE, 2009). Since 1999 the organisation is succeeded by the multifunctional Textile Centre of Excellence. It is a multi-functional centre providing textile and clothing production, testing facilities, training and support services for all business sectors, multi-media conferencing facilities and a business incubator space for fashion designers. It manages projects on behalf of the Learning & Skills Council, Yorkshire Forward and similar agencies. The TCoE is a non-profit organisation owned by its members, primarily textile manufacturing companies in West Yorkshire, but also from Scotland. It generates finances via membership fees, commercial trainings and services, public funding (granted by local, regional, national and international public bodies) and also via renting out facilities, conferencing and catering. The TCoE depends to a considerable extend on public funding.

According to the local authorities' 'Kirklees Council Culture and Leisure Services', fashion design is an important issue for Huddersfield and therefore included in their definition of creative industries. However, local fashion designers are not satisfied with the public efforts for fashion design start-ups. Also in this respect, the TCoE deserves special mention: it provides Design Incubators for young fashion entrepreneurs and organises the Yorkshire Fashion Week. In June 2009 this show took place for the first time. It is a collaborative event showcasing the collections of the region's universities' and colleges' final year students. At the end the winning collections are demonstrated in a gala event. The TCoE houses one of the four leading fashion incubator spaces in the UK (Skillfast, 2009). Addressing the needs of designers and local manufacturers, the centre developed a customised 300 sqm design studio to accommodate textile and fashion design start-ups. Partners of the project are local textile and clothing companies, aiding in the selection of the graduates and mentoring them with their expertise. Business Link and the Chamber of Commerce provide business support to the designers. Next to the workspace, the designers have access to the facilities of the TCoE for developing, sampling, testing and marketing. A fashion designer accentuates that the possibility to use the looms and the connections to textile manufacturers are of utmost importance to them. This is due to the fact that fashion designers tend to have difficulties finding possibilities for their small batch productions and small quantities of needed cloths. She explains *'it is a laboratory here for ideas, you can experiment and see whether your ideas work out'*.

The director promotes the potential future of fashion design as a successor for the traditional textile production: *'Yorkshire already has an enviable history of textile production, but we believe it also has an enviable future in fashion design'* (Macbeth, quoted in Zientek, 2008). The centre is acknowledged an indispensable institution by

- public authorities as a crucial support in their creative industry strategy and in counteracting brain drain known as a local key player and

knowledge hub for textile education, research and development

- the university for enhancing their reputation and linking their graduates to business
- local textile manufacturers to increase their reputation and
- fashion designers for their business support and working space

Mönchengladbach's economic development corporation WFMG

The WFMG is a local business development corporation. It emerged from a public economic development department in 1997. Nowadays, it is a private limited company, 49 percent privately and 51 percent publicly owned. The WFMG promotes economic development in Mönchengladbach. It aims at the creation of networks and is responsible for marketing Mönchengladbach's real estate.

The textile sector is one of the three main clusters strategically supported by the WFMG. In January 2009, the WFMG's IT & Media cluster was renamed to 'IT & Creative Industries' to institutionalise the increased importance attached to creative industries for economic restructuring. Although clothing and fashion has already been part of the WFMG's tasks beforehand, now a stronger focus is put on the support of young fashion design start-ups.

Together with the University of Mönchengladbach the WFMG organises the Textile and Clothing Days 'MG ZIEHT AN', one of the most important events for education in the textile and clothing sector. In 2009 the biannual recruitment and innovation fair has been organised for the sixth time and is said to be the biggest textile offspring fair in Germany counting more than 6,500 visitors. Local organisations as for example Alberto, van Laack, gardeur, Willy Schmitz, but also other companies such as adidas, FALKE, GORE, ESPRIT or Marc O'Polo represent their company and career opportunities. An employee of GORE claims: *'for us this is a platform to get in contact with a lot of students in a short period of time and directly match them with our vacancies'* (WFMG, 2009b). The fair is further established as an innovation interchange forum between economy and academia (HS

Niederrhein, 2009). This year a 'young design' sector has been added in order to enhance the identification of young people with the textile economy (WFMG, 2009a). An employee accentuates the importance of the event: *'The established enterprises need these young topics. The textile industry has image problems as a technical textile is not necessarily sexy, but you need to combine it with young topics'*. Including fashion designers is a means to emphasise that it is an important part of the entire textile chain:

'Innovations need an impulse and therefore the branch depends on qualified offspring to detect, develop and implement trends. Important elements are therefore the young designers. With their ideas positive effects for the entire branch are created' (WFMG, 2009b).

Additionally, the WFMG promoted the creation of a creative centre in the city, the 'V16'. This is an 852 sqm historic premise with a central location in Mönchengladbach. It is planned to be temporarily used as a business location for creative entrepreneurs. The premise does not only aim at fashion designers in particular, but at all local creative sectors. The premise is currently vacant. The private organisation 'raumaufzeit GmbH', specialised in the management of temporary premises for creative industries, rents the real estate from a public agency and then temporarily sublets the thirty-three units to creative entrepreneurs. The WFMG supports the idea in order to create possibilities for the creative scene fostering urban creative networks and think-tanks (Press Conference V16, 2009). In the long term the idea is to increase the image of the city and the industry's creativity (WFMG, 2009).

Spinning the threads

Both cities, Huddersfield and Mönchengladbach, root in the textile industry prospering during the Industrial Revolution but suffered from the economy's transfer to low-cost countries. The textile economy still plays a crucial role as innovative enterprises survived and local universities are renowned for educating textile engineering and fashion design. The remaining small and medium sized companies

specialised and develop high-end products. Fashion design in both cities is considered an important symbolic means to promote the area and local manufacturers' products, but is not sufficiently supported yet. The WFMG and TCoE support fashion designer as well as local manufacturers by realising research projects, strengthening and initiating networks between businesses, academia, the public sector and fashion designers. Considered as indispensable organisations, the TCoE and WFMG 'spin the threads' by mediating public, private and creative spheres and linking resources and ideas for common purpose.

TCoE & WFMG AS HYBRID ORGANISATIONS

Professionals of a hybrid organisation might not even consider themselves to be hybrid, because they manage to function as an entity (Brandesen et al., 2005). Hybrid organisations might find themselves in an 'open process of search for an identity, beyond the traditional offers of being a clear-cut public service, private enterprise or third sector organisation' (Evers & Laville, 2004, p.246). This is also the case for both organisations investigated. Interestingly, they both explicitly claim to be merely private (TCoE) or merely public (WFMG). Implicitly, however, both cases identify with the other sector as well. This inconsistency will be analysed subsequently.

The TCoE's director clearly states: *'We are industry. We are not a publicly funded body. We are not part of the local government or the development agency. We are a private company'*. On the contrary, a selection of metaphors has been used by interviewees highlighting the indirect identification as hybrid. An employee for instance states that, although she considers the TCoE a private organisation, it represents an *interface* between public and private. The director explains that the organisation is comparable to a *conjugate* of all different organisations they interact with. He explains that these organisations all have different shapes of connection to them:

'It is like a mobile phone and you have one charger that fits. We have a lot of

different plugs to plug into different things. [...] and you have to know what shapes their connector in order to get in'.

In the second case under investigation, the director of the WFMG emphasises the symbiosis of private and public. He refers however to the organisational structure and contents and not to identity:

'Due to the purpose of our work and the organisational form we are leaned closely on the private sector. The organisation is managed like a private organisation. There are no differences only that we are a loss-making business and not profit oriented. We have the targets to stay within the budget [...]. We are managed 100 percent like a private limited company. We are also a municipal enterprise. Therefore, we have a symbiosis. We work hand in hand here. We are a classic public-private-partnership model, with regard to our organisational structure and our content'.

This statement underlines the hybridity of the organisation: on the one hand, they are privately managed, constitute a legal private form and are *pro economy*. On the other hand, their operational costs are taken over by the municipality. The director identifies the WFMG as a municipal enterprise because *'economic development is a communal task'* and *'we are the public authorities'*. Likewise, an employee explains:

'I do identify with the public authorities, they are my employer. But, a city only functions with a healthy economy. Ultimately we are a municipal enterprise; we execute a voluntary communal task which we organise very close to the economy'.

To complete the confusion, he adds: *'We are a public-private-partnership; we are both, public and private'*. Hence, the identities represented by the employees turn out to be inconsistent. Interestingly enough, both organisations explicitly identify with those sectors that originally constituted their 'founding fathers', the TCoE with the private and the WFMG with the public. This goes in line with Robbins (2003) who claims that the founding fathers, history and tradition influence the organisational culture and, thus, its identity. Moreover, the WFMG and

TCoE identify with the sector that has important financial influence: the WFMG's operating costs are generally paid by the public. The TCoE is highly dependent upon the private sector in terms of membership fees but, more so, due to their percentage of revenue through commercial business.

TCoE & WFMG AS CREATIVE INTERMEDIARIES

The following subchapters highlight how the TCoE and WFMG are related to the characteristics of *creative intermediaries*.

Urban Economic (not Cultural) Policy Tool

Both organisations are not primarily, but additionally involved in creative industries and fashion designers. Nevertheless, both consider it crucial to take the creative workers on board of their strategy. Both cases are economically focussed and thus instruments for economic development rather than cultural and artistic self-realisation.

Given its history and private legal status, the TCoE is not a policy tool per se. In light of the public funding it receives for the technical textiles programme and for multiple educational services, however, it evolved into an executor of economic policy strategies. The incubator spaces exemplify the intent to create a commercial basis for creative fashion designers to contribute with their micro businesses to the local economy. As such, the centre also intends to counteract brain drain. An employee states:

'We are trying to encourage designer to come to the region and study at our universities. After graduating they should give something back to the region by setting up their business here'.

The support of creative industries is also not the primary function of the WFMG. According to the director, Mönchengladbach has the potential to develop the creative sector and thus needs an increased coordination of the creative entrepreneurs in order to reach these *'promising long term effects'*. Hence, in 2009 the 'IT & Media' cluster has been enlarged to 'IT & Creative Industries' to comply with this task.

This is said to be the *'institutionalisation of the idea that culture and economy are not mutually exclusive'*. The WFMG is measured by economic numbers such as sold properties, business settlements and jobs created. Therefore, the focus clearly is to create location factors for the larger companies and build infrastructures such as motorway hubs or IT-infrastructure. However, the employees are aware of the need to position Mönchengladbach as an attractive and young city:

'In times when cities tend to become uniform we have to redefine ourselves. I think that creative industries also generate business, as new target groups come to the city and we render the city young and attractive. With projects like 'raumaufzeit' we influence these parameters'.

Appreciation of the Non-profit Cultural Sector

A creative industries strategy calls for an appreciation of both economic and cultural dimensions (O'Connor, 2006, quoted in Swenden, 2007). Therefore, creative intermediaries should also understand the non-profit dimension of cultural and creative production.

In Mönchengladbach, the respective project manager is sympathetic to the 'art for art's sake' dimension of cultural production. He states:

'It is still very important that we have a cultural department in the city dealing with the artists and cultural agents whereas we are more focussed on the economic side. There are however parts of culture that must not be exploited for economic purposes and are eligible only for their own cultural purpose'.

He claims that a selection of the projects are merely culture related, others economy related, but the WFMG works exactly at the *'interface, especially the creative economy, that is part of both'*. In order to ensure profitable intercommunication, the WFMG works closely together with the municipal cultural department.

In Huddersfield the situation is different. No cooperation acting similar to the one in Mönchengladbach between the cultural department and the TCoE has been mentioned. Additionally, a fashion designer reveals that the

Design Incubator lacks the possibility to creatively build the workspace. With this, she refers to the fact that the Design Incubators need to stay *tidy and clean*.

Business Support and Marketing

One function of the creative intermediaries is to render creative workers viable businesses. In Mönchengladbach, the ‘Starter Centre’ of the Chamber of Commerce supports business start-ups from all sectors. All creative start-up businesses with specific requests receive counselling of the WFMG. The Creative Industry manager’s philosophy is to:

‘Realise the creatives’ ideas and improve the framework conditions for their business environment. We encourage and support them with this because many creative workers do not have advanced commercial skills. The creative output has to be generated self responsibly by them’.

Such framework conditions are, for example, the creation of model contracts for the settlement by creative industries on the Waldhausernerstreet in the city centre. The WFMG assists creative entrepreneurs with press releases and own advertising channels. A fashion designer mentions the advantages:

‘They reported about me in the magazine, which is like marketing for me for which I do not have to pay. This means they do not invest money in me, but they encourage and push me forward with these things’.

Likewise, the TCoE provides consultancy and business support for fashion designers. One of the main strategies behind the Design Incubators is to render the creative potential of fashion designers into commercially viable businesses. A designer emphasises that the mentoring from local textile entrepreneurs as well as the expertise and connections of the TCoE next door are of important use to her to grasp the essentials of the business world.

Fashion designers in the TCoE’s Design Incubators are supported in terms of marketing activities as well. They have the possibility to post a link on the centre’s website. More importantly, the Design Incubators are always

mentioned in TCoE’s representations. Visitors to the centre are shown around the design workshops and introduced to the designers. Moreover, the designers’ products, together with the apprentices’ H@tch (handmade at Textile Centre Huddersfield) garments are presented in the reception area and conferencing facilities of the centre. This provides *‘a direct sales point to loads of people coming to the conferences’*.

Networks

‘By resourcing and developing networks - simultaneously social and professional - cultural entrepreneurs safeguard existing initiatives, clients and projects while opening up the possibility for the forging of new cultural and economic opportunities - social ties in many ways drive the productive potential of the culture’ (Banks et al., 2000, p. 460).

This implies that creating networks for creative entrepreneurs should be one of the tasks of the creative intermediaries. Both cases appear to be extremely active in network activities. They do so not only for creative entrepreneurs but also for the entire city or region.

The TCoE promotes networks and unusual encounters for fashion designers. On the one hand, fashion designers are connected to each other in the Design Incubators, but also to other creative entrepreneurs and fashion students for generating *cross-over-effects*. On the other hand, the centre fosters cooperations between local textile entrepreneurs and fashion designers. Additionally, events such as the Yorkshire Fashion Week connect private, public, academic and creative protagonists.

In Mönchengladbach, the creative industries project manager is aware of the creative entrepreneurs’ strong internal dynamics. Therefore, his approach is to stimulate bottom-up movements and provide moral and administrative support rather than investing significant top-down financial investment. For instance, the manager supported the organisers of a local creative market with administrative and marketing activities. The idea behind this is to bring together local creative workers from

different creative sectors (design, photo, music, film, literature).

A fashion designer in Mönchengladbach highlights that rather than fostering competitive hostility towards each other, the creative workers commence uniting their resources: *'We now sit all together in the same boat. I realise the value of swapping ideas'*. Besides strengthening networks between creative workers, the WFMG also connects them to local entrepreneurs and to local politicians. A fashion designer explains that she was introduced to the mayor during the 'MG ZIEHT AN' with the result that: *'He knows me now. He realised that we are important for the city and will spread this message'*.

The WFMG further organises strategic cluster sector projects. These aim at creating synergies, cooperation and communication for economic development and dynamic markets. An example of such a project is the network 'teXellence Niederrhein- region of textile competence' set up in 2007 by thirteen companies and institutions in the lower Rhine region. It is an initiative to strengthen the textile network of the region and develop its internal workings and external reputation. A private entrepreneur states *'we alone would not have been able to do that'*. As private business men tend to work isolated from each other, it becomes an important task for hybrid organisations to connect and create networks.

Creation of Production Space

In order to professionally execute their creative production, creative entrepreneurs need production space. Fashion designers need looms, sewing machines, storage- and show-rooms. For reasons of professionalism production should not happen 'in their front rooms'. By means of the Design Incubators the TCoE provides perfect working places including the necessary technology and machinery.

The WFMG also provides cheap space for the creative businesses in the V16. Except for sales purposes this is however not necessarily valuable for fashion designers.

Promoter of Urban Life Style

The TCoE and the Design Incubators are located in the outskirts of Huddersfield. Therefore, the centre does not directly promote an urban lifestyle with its activities and projects. Formerly, the TCoE was involved in a regional project supporting also those local fashion designers not working in the Design Incubators. These designers then also used the looms and additional services. As such, the centre had wider implications.

In Mönchengladbach, as a reaction to the quest for more diversified inner city's retail possibilities (IHK 2009) the stimulation of *'soft factors like urban culture, sociality, quality of life, attractive public spaces, gastronomy, inspiration and culture'* shall create the infrastructure needed for creative industries. The objective is *'that Mönchengladbach develops as a vital and urban city within the next five years'*. This promotion of urban lifestyle also has cultural and social implications. Local creative markets create a familiar atmosphere rendering inhabitants proud of their community. The *creation of Mönchengladbach's cityscape* is considered to be a task of the WFMG. An example is a vacancy management project for temporary use of premises in the derelict inner city Waldhausernerstreet. The purpose is to encourage fashion designers and other creative entrepreneurs to set up show rooms and businesses in this historic area.

Creator of Enthusiasm

This spirit of optimism spread by creative intermediaries is neither restricted to single geographical areas nor to economic sectors of the cities. Both cases investigated are considered as *enthusiasts*, as *motors* and as *catalysts*. In Huddersfield a fashion designer claims that *'without this organisation neither the Yorkshire Fashion Week nor the Fashion Incubators nor the textile networks would exist'*. Also, a TCoE's employee confirms this notion: *'I think this area would be a lot poorer if this particular centre did not exist'*. Participant observations during the Yorkshire Fashion Week received similar feedback: politicians, textile entrepreneurs and

young designers appeared inspired and enthusiastic regarding the progress of the textile sector.

‘Mönchengladbach is often put in a negative light and also perceived as such. Our mission is to create positive impulses to change that.’ These positive impulses are intended to be created by means of future-oriented projects and stimulating positive media coverage. Moreover, the WFMG tries to present itself as an open and flexible organisation. As such, the employees convey a feeling that *everything is possible* and encourage diverse urban agents to contribute to the development of the city. The MG ZIEHT AN is said to be a means to create enthusiasm in the area. A private member praises the effort hinting at the symbolic value of the event:

‘These are all things helping us to become known. I am not sure, whether this has direct financial implication, but this takes time. The crucial thing is to show that we [the textile industry] are not written off yet. This event is full of young people’.

In a broader sense the MG ZIEHT AN is also a means to create a positive light on the city’s efforts, which aims at to create pride for the locals. The WFMG does not consider itself to directly profit from the fair, but regard their engagement as being their job as *‘by this we create positive impulses and more dynamism for the economy’*. Furthermore, they are associated with a *‘driving motor for positivism, tilting over the negative image of the city’*.

Strongly Embedded in Locality

‘The work of the creative intermediary is very bound to the place it operates in’ (Swenden, 2007, p.33). Being locally embedded is crucial for creative intermediaries in order to function as an identity creating link.

Both organisations are embedded in locality, in particular owing to their employees. The TCoE’s director says *‘We fight [for the local textile sector] and we are passionate about what we do’*. He states that only his visions concerning Yorkshire being a successful and innovative textile hub provides him with the energy to keep fighting in his *exhausting job*.

In Mönchengladbach it is highlighted that the staffs are driven by personal motivation and that they generously strive to make a difference in the city. Two fashion designers claim *‘they are authentic, they radiate this inspiring motivation’* and *‘you can tell that they do the work with all their heart and soul’*.

Ultimately, the organisations form a bridge between Castells’ (1996) ‘space of place’ and the ‘space of flows’ because they are so closely linked to the location: by creating authentic local networks and supporting the local entrepreneurs they build a strong link and identification with the region. Due to this, the resident entrepreneurs are less likely to move to lower cost or more attractive areas. Representing a voice for the local economic sector the intermediaries *‘increase the city’s reputation as a whole as an attractive, future oriented and networked textile location’*.

Learning Institution

‘Part of the organisations’ role is to be an intermediary between the ever fast evolving world of the creative industries sector and the much slower process of decision-making by authorities’ (Swenden, 2007, p.41).

Dynamism and experimentation are therefore crucial. Just like a ‘creative city’ (Landry, 2000), creative intermediaries are therefore learning institutions (Swenden, 2007). Both cases amplified their product and service portfolios and lately included the support of fashion design, adapting to the growing importance of this part of the textile production chain in a ‘symbolic economy’ (Zukin, 1995). The WFMG’s teXellence-project and the TCoE’s technical textiles research programme are an answer to the local textile entrepreneurs’ needs to research and innovate in a ‘knowledge-based economy’ (Drucker, 2003).

This section demonstrates by means of projects as well as internal and external opinions on the role of the organisations investigated, *how* they function as *creative intermediaries*. Not all elements are taken on by both cases alike. This might be traced back to the differences in local contexts, their history or *raison d’être*.

Interestingly, the organisations turned out to be not only intermediaries for the creative sector, but also for the local (textile) entrepreneurs of traditional economic sectors.

MANAGING HYBRIDITY

The specific background information in relation to the hybrid organisations is discussed in an earlier section. In the previous part concrete examples of projects and services are demonstrated to explain *how* the organisations manage to function as creative intermediaries juxtaposing the organisations' approaches. From an organisational sciences point of view, this part now demonstrates *how* hybridity in general is *managed*. Repetitive phenomena have been clustered in three categories: external relations, organisational factors and human resources. Interestingly, despite their organisational differences the organisations emphasises equal methods of managing hybridity.

External Relations

Both cases attach great importance to customer orientation. An employee stresses the importance *'to keep your eyes peeled and perking up your ears'* about the needs of the stakeholders. The key according to an employee is:

'Knowing what the client wants and making sure that we deliver what they require.[...] So there is a lot of work for everybody in the centre to make sure that all get to know the individual needs and requirements so that it can be tailored'.

Therefore, the employees are required to spend an increased portion of their working time on understanding the individual demands in order to tailor their products and services. The TCoE's director compares this intent to find compromises to *'herding cats'*. He says:

'You need people that manage the collaborations and cooperative projects. You need to bug them to pull the whole thing together, to manage it, persuade them, put a business case together, and manage logistics and science [...] because they all have different interests it takes a long time to get thing broken'.

To be customer oriented, the stakeholders need to be encouraged to openly formulate problems, ideas and opportunities. Consequently, it is crucial to be accessible and also be perceived as such. It is underlined that the WFMG does not reject anybody:

'everybody approaching us will be listened to. If it is really not our task we will try to pilot the person to the right institution, so we will not disapprove them'.

An external approves the WFMG's openness: *'Where else would you hear somebody saying nowadays: Call me if you have a problem?'* Also, the director of the TCoE depicts

'when somebody comes and wants a room, a meeting or some time, you give it to them; don't even think about it, you let them'.

It is referred to the advantages of bonding and of involving diverse organisations in your business. The TCoE's director states that, to a considerable extend of his working time, he is involved in various bodies and authority groups. He highlights: *'It is important to have political friends'* to become a pressure group. They also gain influential power by becoming *relevant* for their stakeholders. A WFMG employee highlights:

'We are not a 'green table' that means one of the main strengths of the organisation is that we receive feedback immediately from the entrepreneurs and the public authorities. Both sides communicate their needs continuously'.

External partners of both cases highlight the advantages of the *personal touch* of the collaborations and projects. A politician suggests *'the personal touch and the personal commitment that is incredibly important in making sure that we could all come together to have this great event'*.

Creating personal touch is confirmed by the TCoE's director as one of their management strategies:

'We have a lot of meetings here and that is good. Because this is the place where people come and have a cup of coffee'.

A private partner comments that the WFMG does not *'fiddle'* but the business is transparent. Confirming this, the WFMG's director reports to put emphasis on transparency to prevent losing

credibility. Trust and credibility creation is mentioned to be an important factor for the WFMG, particularly because of the disappointment with the performance of the former public economic development department.

An employee states that trust grew out of long lasting relationships, informality but also by means of continuous professional performance. He maintains:

'Projects like 'MG ZIEHT AN' are not possible if nobody knows you yet or has not worked together with you before. They require a certain amount of trust'.

The result is that now the local companies do no longer question whether they should take part in diverse projects or whether their profile at all matches the image of Mönchengladbach. Also, the director of the TCoE is convinced that trust is essential for the functioning of the organisation:

'It's hard work to get money, people need to know and trust you [...] I hope people know that we are pretty honest in what we do. We do not need to screw people financially, we are a not for profit company'.

In this respect, consistency is mentioned as imperative for their credibility:

'If we say we plan to do something it may take us some time, but we end up doing it.'

Moreover, neutrality and impartiality are an important element for the performance of the hybrid organisations. For example the WFMG's shareholders are not allowed to be involved in their core businesses. In addition, none of the private shareholders are treated preferentially as the reason for WFMG's existence is *'corporate commitment for the city'* and not individual benefit. Also, the TCoE's members believe that by staying neutral it is likely that they will be trusted by the industry. An employee emphasises:

'Hybridity allows us to interface with a lot of people [...] a lot of people come and want to do business with us as they can identify with the institution. They know that all will get the same level of care, whether private or public'.

A WFMG's employee underscores that none of their customers are treated preferentially:

'We do not only service favourites; the projects are open and targeted to support growth of the entire local economy'.

A fashion designer refers to the advantages of the WFMG's neutrality:

'We [the creative workers] are happy that somebody neutral supports us. If the idea [for the creation of the network] would have come from somebody amongst the local creative workers we would have been much more critical about that. And this is somebody from outside to which you have another relationship and that is good, also because we would not have done it ourselves'.

Therefore, she maintains that the creative industries manager has a 'sweeper position', like a football player without any direct adversary. This is underlined by a private member of the TCoE:

'Only somebody like this centre can pull all the different parties together. If we would try it on our own, a lot of companies would not get involved due to rivalry'.

Both organisations are confronted with a lack of clear positioning in their external environment. Multiple tasks, projects, partners and shareholders sometimes lead to public confusion regarding their tasks and status. It is, however, emphasised that a clear positioning is crucial for hybrid organisations. Despite the ability to act like a chameleon sometimes, an employee adverts to the fact that you still have *'to stay a lizard'*. Consequently, the organisation needs to be able to walk the tightrope between adapting to different stakeholders and situations, but still remain true to their core business and values.

Organisational Factors

It has been outlined before that continuous communication with the external stakeholders is considered crucial for the performance of the organisation. This sub-section points out that intensive internal communication is equally important.

Both institutions underscore the advantages of the organisations' small size. Owing to their size the organisations are able to react flexibly to the volatile economic environment and to facilitate short ways of communication. Nevertheless,

negotiations with the public authorities sometimes take such a long time that the *'world has moved on'*. This is accounted to the *'horrible bureaucratic tasks'* that need to be dealt with for instance for public funding processes. A civil servant claims that the municipality has the ultimate decision power for several authorisation processes the WFMG has to pass. He states: *'The WFMG is result oriented; we [the municipality] are prevention oriented'*. With this, he hints at the slow pace in public authorities that stand in competition to the entrepreneurial dynamic and need of rapid reaction. As hybrid organisations are dependent on the public authorities they might be slowed down. A fashion designer compares:

'If you have a cool idea, you can ask them [the WFMG] for help and you can expect an immediate reaction. If you did that in the municipality, you would first have to wait for several months until your idea is discussed in one of the council meetings'.

A civil servant even acknowledges that: *'there are businesses where we put so many obstacles in the way that they lose interest in the idea'*. With regard to creative entrepreneurs he explains that bureaucratic restrictions hinder the public authorities to even deal with them:

'Who are the creative industries? I would need a single contact person for the entire sector. We always have difficulties to compass such a virtual cluster, without a contact person I can write to. I need any form of organisation representing them. Otherwise we have difficulties'.

As outlined, a positive implication of hybridity is the vast amount of information channels and contacts rendering the organisations knowledge hubs. Moreover, it is claimed that combining this diverse information potentially leads to innovative projects. For this, a holistic approach is needed. To realise that, both cases claim to put emphasis on *intensive knowledge management* to facilitate information interchange between the employees. Therefore, regular formal and informal meetings are organised. During these meetings the department or cluster managers inform each other concerning projects, problems and opportunities. Next to that an *open*

door philosophy encourages the employees to come up with *crazy ideas*. The *'visionary manager'* of the TCoE is referred to as a source of inspiration for the employees to *'think out of the box'*.

With regard to the external environment it has been elaborated that hybrid organisations should have a clear guideline to position themselves in their diverse environment. An employee describes the WFMG as a *high context organisation* meaning that it is extremely complex and it takes effort to really understand its essence. Internally however, flexible structures are highly important. Flexible working hours, ways of achieving the set objectives and flexibility for the execution of innovative projects are highly valued by the staff. A director emphasises: *'The employees value not to be jammed into a static corset'*.

Intents are made by both cases to mix organisations or departments, driven by different values, into one space. The TCoE rents out office spaces to 'Business Link' in the incubator spaces. A fashion designer states *'so people in suits have access to the incubators, whereas this was formerly only for the designers'*. Likewise, in the WFMG the 'teXellence' manager and the IT & Creative Industries manager work together in one office. Fashion design is considered to function at the interface between creative industries and the textile sector. By means of this physical closeness a close interchange between the two sectors is expected.

Human Resources

'This is a people-business, therefore the personnel plays a superior role'

Previously it has been outlined that hybrid organisations are predominantly concerned with creating synergies, connections and moderating diverging interests. To perform in this environment, the employees need special skills. They need to be networkers with the ability to think in synergies. For this, it is crucial to be a competent listener. Empathy and comprehension for a broad field of different institutions and people are needed. *'You need to speak the language of the entrepreneurs but also play the*

political game’ explains a director. For this purpose:

‘You need to know what turns the academics on, you need to know what makes them look good and what their motivation is, where they get their money. So you got to have to have a good prejudice about everyone. But I think you do need to understand what their agendas are and then fit your own goals inside’.

Therefore, it is highlighted that employees in hybrid organisations need to be all-round talents. For this a generalist and multi-faceted educational background is of advantage. A director agrees: *‘I think when you have worked in different environments you can take the best out of it’.*

The staffs need to be open and flexible with the aptitude of moderating in situations of conflict. An employee identifies with a chameleon changing her colour depending on the project and the people she is working with *‘flexibility is really important’.* She claims that it is necessary to function like a convertible car:

‘If we were a type of car, we would probably be one of those where you can change the configuration of the car completely. You can have a picnic table in the back, but you can clear it out completely. I would say that we are that kind of organisation because we can change and adapt to different market conditions’.

Once the employees have understood how their stakeholders function, it is crucial to transmit the information adequately. For this, they need strong communication skills. An employee explains:

‘Fashion designers are very creative. We intend to make sure they are also profit based. It is about how you introduce that to them and make them think about it in a completely different way’.

In order to do so, the employees need to have the ability to *‘pitch whatever it is that you are selling to that person in an appropriate way’.* The product is the same, only the process of selling will be different depending on the focus of the customer. An employee underscores this:

‘You would not sell the same thing to a designer as you would sell to the board of directors’.

In a preceding subchapter it has been demonstrated that hybridity results in multiple and sometimes conflicting requirements. Hence, an employee claims that it is vital to be able to *walk this tightrope* and deal with insecurities and criticism. A director says: *‘You cannot make everybody happy all the time’* and emphasises that they *‘keep doing it because it is the heart of what we are about’.* The WFMG’s director explains that their hybridity is not to be considered a conflict, but the nature of the company. The role of the company is considered a *mediator, moderator, link and mouthpiece.* The purpose of this mediation is to explicate backgrounds to the respective parties and *create mutual appreciation.* An employee says:

‘This is not a conflict for us. There are conflicts to be solved, but this is our mission’.

Enthusiasm, persistency and vision are competences the staff of hybrid organisations should inherit. A director emphasises *‘you have to keep going and never give up.’* In comparison, civil servants are claimed to be unmotivated, and *marking their time,* lacking outcome and success orientation as they tend to be assigned for life by the council and *hard to get rid of.* Whereas the WFMGs employees are also willing to work in the evenings or weekend if necessary at times for special events, the public servants consider it as their legitimate right to *‘drop their pencil Fridays at 12.30h’.*

Promoting the local economy and the attractiveness of the area are mentioned to be tasks of hybrid organisations. In the previous subchapter it is argued that the personnel are strongly embedded to locality. They need to generously believe in the potential of the city. Only then they are able to spread authentic motivation and inspire each other. Evidently, for this task the personnel play an essential role. This drive is also important due to the need to be solution orientated. An employee underlines this assertion:

‘We cannot perform miracles. But, when we are technically at a dead end, we will always try to find a solution’.

CONCLUSION

Regarding the TCoE's and WFMG's organisational similarities the following findings can be summarised: They are both small-scale, non-profit organisations having evolved from the discontentedness of local entrepreneurs and taking over tasks fostering economic development. Both organisations have diversified their portfolio: they take on board substantial research and development projects and support fashion designers. The TCoE and WFMG organise similar projects: Yorkshire Fashion Week compared to MG ZIEHT AN and the Design Incubators compared to V16.

Most prominent however is the similar role both organisations play in their local contexts: They 'spin the threads' between public, private, academic and cultural urban key players and have become key players themselves. Further, they have developed into knowledge hubs and strong voices for the local economic sector including creative fashion designers, disseminating positivism and enthusiasm, functioning as bridges they bind talent and businesses to locality by creating trust and identity. Ultimately, they do not consider hybridity as a conflict but a mission.

Overall, hybrid organisations embody values of the public, private and cultural spheres alike. They take over ways of functioning of public, private and cultural protagonists. For instance, just like the public sphere they attach great importance to neutrality, common good rather than competitive approaches; they avoid discriminatory-approaches and are non-profit driven holding values such as loyalty, transparency and trustworthiness. Hybrid organisations as creative intermediaries resemble private enterprises in their legal structures; they are primarily driven by economic objectives and managed like private enterprises, attaching great importance to customer orientation and professionalism. Additionally, these small-scaled institutions are characterised by flexible organisational structures. Similar to creative entrepreneurs, they generate content (symbolic events, identification, enthusiasm, and trust). They are open to unconventional ideas, encourage innovative approaches and are inspired by the combination of different sectors.

In light of the empirical evidence, there is no substantial support to maintain the claim that culture & economy and the public & private spheres are dichotomous per se. Rather, the spheres depend on each other as culture works as an important economic factor for the stimulation of urban regeneration. *Hybrid organisations as creative intermediaries* here provide the necessary link: They 'spin the threads' between public, private, academic and cultural urban key players. Even though the organisations do not explicitly identify themselves as hybrid, implicitly they embody an inherent hybrid entity.

In answering the main research question '*How do hybrid organisations as creative intermediaries manage to negotiate public, private and cultural values?*' this interdisciplinary research contributes to the existing knowledge landscape in the field of urban studies (creative industries & creative intermediaries), political sciences (hybrid organisations) and management studies (organisational culture) by determining three clusters of phenomena concerning the management of hybridity:

External Relations: By means of extensive networking and bonding with multiple partners, these organisations attach high importance to accessibility, transparency, consistency, neutrality and impartiality. Combining these approaches they add a personal touch and informality in order to create trust. Next to strong customer orientation, a clear positioning of the organisation results essential.

Organisational Factors: Characterised by flexible structures and short ways of communication, these small-scale organisations perform intensive knowledge management and physically combine different departments and tasks in one space.

Human Resources: The employees need to be open, flexible and persistent networker with a multi-faceted background performing a moderating role. Embedded to locality they are enthusiastic and visionary. By means of strong

communication skills they are persuasive and solution oriented whilst able to deal with criticism and insecurities.

As this knowledge is developed inductively and merely based on two case studies, further research on this topic is recommended to amplify this framework, increase the validity of the inferences and grasp the complexity of these organisations' dynamic environment.

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