# Value, Work and Flexibility: Identifying Cultural Producers

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## Introduction: The work and value of the cultural producers.

"Or come to find that loving is labour,
Labour's life and life's forever".
"Biomusicology" by
Ted Leo And The Pharmacists

The development of culture has not contradicted Adorno and Horkheimer when in 1947, wrote their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997), and argued about the progressive industrialisation of culture, but what they failed to prognosticate was that far from loosing strength, the introduction of culture in an industrial economy has invigorated and multiplied the fields in which representations of culture(s) can be found. At the same time this evolution has managed to challenge Benjamin´s idea of art (culture) loosing it's aura as a consequence of the mechanical reproduction of the cultural objects (Benjamin, 1999), culture still provides a differential quality to the objects blessed by the concept. But authenticity and aura are barely useful terms if what we want to do is understand and research the semi-symbiotic relations between culture and economy in the contemporary western world. Along this paper my intention is to dive into the culture field to try to understand how it works economically, how do people who work in the field respond to its needs and how this is translated into different production processes.

To do this we first need to identify the complex interactions that between objects, institutions and producers are constantly being produced. I believe that by understanding the degrees of interaction between these three elements we can start to see the emergence of a peculiar and atypical economic structure. Buildings can shape the ways objects function and these objects will open channels that will be followed by cultural workers, and the constant combination of these three elements will open up a field defined by its constant process of becoming. This dynamic and innovative field will allow innovation and experimentation which will not only be perceived in the objects produced by the creative sector but will also modify the structures of production themselves; this experimentation will constantly affect the nature of the culture worker. These are going to be pushed out of their traditional roles and categories into a realm of new ways of "creative" production; these producers will need to be able to work in a series of different economic and geographic contexts if they are willing to survive in the culture production field. This will be one of the reasons why they will fall into a mobile and dynamic set of flows that will in their interaction configure the cultural arena. The intensification of the

productions and circulation of cultural objects has forced the cultural producers[1] to redefine their roles and attitudes in order to be able to work in the cultural sphere of production. This sphere is a space in which most of the different practices developed in it are constantly in a process of redefinition and becoming, in which the rigidities of practice have long been forgotten, to put in McRobbie's (2002) words, culture work has become "permanently transitional". This situation of constant contingency and of mutations is one of the reasons why the functioning of the culture production system has not been addressed that often from an economic point of view. This also is one of the reasons why it is difficult to set up a programmatic agenda to identify the characteristics of this economic sphere and identify the different work practices that it promotes. This economy relies on a series of ever-changing institutions, economic flows, legal policies, politics and last but not least, workers. During this first piece of writing (or chapter) my aim is to determine what reasons have helped to propitiate the multifunctional aspects of the cultural worker. I want to see how artists, musicians or performers have come to be de-embedded international cultural producers, and what qualities define the nature of their work. To do this I will talk about the culture producer's labour conditions, economic sustainability and regimes of flexibility, trying to define a frame in which to grasp the contingent but never less interesting situation of these (not always recognised as) workers. Doing so I will conclude the first part of this research; this will constitute the first of three chapters in which I will try to decipher the functioning of the economy that surrounds culture. The second part of this research will focus on a cultural object, specifically a work of video art which constitutes an intangible source of culture/income. I will argue that this piece of art brings into question a big amount of questions related to authorship, value and intellectual property. The "thingness" of a piece of video art work, will depend on local policies and property laws that it will face when shifting from one museum to another, from one country to another. I will finish examining the nature of the new spaces where culture is being produced by examining the functioning of cultural districts, digging into a long Italian tradition of these small scale cultural production clusters. I will pin it down analysing place that is still to be, the "22@ Space" in Barcelona, an old industrial site which is currently being transformed into a "culture and new media development cluster". In words of the city's mayor, it is going to be "Europe's Silicon Valley". As the place is still in the process of being developed I will focus on a building to be, on the peculiarities of a cultural district still imagined.

Doing so I hope one can start to perceive the space where culture is produced and how this occurs. I will argue that only combining these there elements (workers, cultural objects and spaces) one can start to understand a field which is structurally in a process of becoming and

[1] From now on I am going to use the term "cultural producer" as a concept to talk about a number of jobs one can find related to the culture world such as visual artists, musicians, performers, writers and a long string of jobs which only share in common their "creative qualities". This term has been broadly analysed in places as Producta1 (YProductions, 2004). One could also argue that cultural producers are those who work in "creative industries", Creative London has stated that there currently are 13 creative occupations that range from "advertising; architecture; the art and antiques market; crafts; design; designer fashion; film and video; interactive leisure software; music; the performing arts; publishing; software and computer services; and television and radio" as written in their 2002 report "Creative London's Core Bussiness". http://www.creativelondon.org.uk/server.php?show=nav.009004001.

which its tangibility is still to be defined. I hope that by combining these three elements I can reify a complex but stunning sector of contemporary production.

## 1. Does it pay to be a cultural producer?

Hooker/waitress/model/actress
Oh, just go nameless
"Celebrity Skin" by Hole

I will start my research analysing the nature and developments suffered by the cultural producers, the mutations of their roles and relevance to the economy of culture. How did terms such as "prosumer", "culturepreneur","startist" or "culture-broker[2]" come into being, trying to understand what pushes cultural producers to constantly change their roles and activities. These changes do not constitute an issue in themselves, what can result problematic is the growing need to be a bit of every one of the jobs referred to, knowing that sometimes this will not be enough to stabilize a regular income in the culture production sphere. This combination of different activities is common place in the culture world, we do not need to stretch our mind that far to find relevant culture producers taking on a number of different jobs ranging form curatorial tasks, product marketing combined with teaching and producing their own work. In his text "The third way" the writer and researcher Simon Ford (2003) analyses his sources of income, he does not find it that easy,

> "Up until a year ago I was firmly located in the public sector with a salaried job at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. However, I resigned from that post at the end of 2001 and since then I've been surviving on a variety of odd-jobs. For the first ten months I worked part-time as an assistant editor at Mute magazine, which is funded through a combination of private investment, state subsidy, and sales through subscriptions and advertising. Over the course of the year I received a commission to produce a bibliography on British art for the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, a state-funded museum in Germany, and an essay on sculpture for the Henry Moore Foundation, a registered charity based in Leeds. I also received some royalties from a book I wrote in 1999 and received an advance on a book to be published this May, both published by private companies. And finally I've received a small income from giving papers at conferences, such as this one. So, with all these elements in mind, I would describe my economy, as a mixed economy. I'm flexible in that I solicit and accept money from both the public and private sector". (Ford, 2003)

[2] These fictional identities have been proposed by Davies & Ford 1999 in their paper "Art Futures" as possible future labour identities.

This is just one example among many in which the need to combine different kinds of jobs becomes almost compulsory in order to guarantee the cultural producer's subsistence. This can be one of the reasons why the cultural production arena has become a place where experimentation and innovation comes not from a need to maximize production but as an effort to sustain one's career. In these lines I will argue that the lack of a clear source of funding and the ever-changing nature of the economic flows that feed the production system will cause this need for mutation and contingent adaptation to the economic and social contexts. In a research put forward by the AAVC (visual artists from Catalonia association) in 2004, we find these quite shocking statistics when trying to analyse the different types of economic flows that constitute a visual artist regular income[3], over 400 interviewed artists, only 1% considered that their artistic practice constituted 90% or more of their regular income. On the other side of this scale, a massive 46% replied that the profits gained from their artistic activity only constituted a 10% or less of their regular income. This means that in a 80% of cases, the incomes provided by their artistic practice represent less than a 50% of their regular income. This is no doubt something worrying, but it helps to understand why artists have started to diversify their practices. Here we should also add that the part of their income generated by their artistic practices is by no means a homogenous amount and if often comes from different sources. In the same survey we find that in the previous two years to the survey, at least 31% of the artists have realized a project publicly funded. On the other hand a 46.5% of artists have been commissioned to do a project funded by the private sector. So we can see that the combination of public/private sources of income is crucial in order to gain a degree of stability[4], here we should add another source which only applies to visual artists, that generated by the galleries which sell their works. This usually represents a small source of funding, and as we can see in the survey 21.3% of artists never sell their works through art galleries and only a 6% sell their works on a regular basis. On this we must remark that the 72.6% of artists who work with private art galleries do not have any kind of exclusivity pact signed with their galleries, from this we can see how weak the ties between the art and market sectors can be.

Only 31.8% of artists can spend between 21-30h a week working directly on their artistic practices. We can conclude that they must spend rest of their time working on a number of different activities in order to maintain their artistic practice. This is a clear indicator that by no means can we identify the cultural producer with one single job or practice. One could also argue that this survey has been conducted in a small and specific region[5], but we can compare these figures with some extracted from a similar survey conducted by the Arts Council in

[3] AAVC.2002 La Situació dels Artistes Visuals (The Visual Artist's Situation). www.aavc.net

[4] One interesting issue to analyse is the links established between public funding and local politics, how these sources of funding change depending on the nature of the party in power. This can constitute a real problem and the Keynesian "arm's length" cultural politics do not solve it completely, but altogether this is a different issue.

[5] Catalonia represents one of Spain's strongest economies.

Canada in May 2005[6]. We read that in 2001 “artist’s average earnings were $ 23.500 (…) an earnings gap of 26% compared to the overall labour force average”. The survey follows with “three quarters of 500-plus occupations tracked by statistics Canada have average earnings higher than artists”, this levels the artists income to those in sectors such as “medical secretaries or delivery drivers”. These numbers can be compared (and matched) with those of the “Study of the Socio-Economic Conditions of Theatre Practitioners in Ireland[7]” which show clearly that the average earnings for theatre practitioners in Ireland is 513 pounds a week, these wages are below of those earned by civil servants, industrial workers or motor traders and only slightly above those earned by accommodation and catering workers and those living on the minimum wages. One wonders how can the “Creative London Agency” through their “London Creative Sector-2004 update” paper claim “Economically London’s creative industries are one of the fastest growing sectors of the city: generating 21 billion pounds annually, employing more than 500.000 Londoners”. From the figures described above one can assume that all these new jobs generated in the creative sector will share the same degree of precariousness as the ones that have been previously established, not a great incentive in my view. The other conclusion we can extract from these figures is that the production process has been perverted and the labour force and money invested by the cultural producers is being redirected and its profits created elsewhere.

Another remarkable thing to be discussed is that in all these surveys there is no mention to a possible gender gap. In the report put forward by the AAVC we see that a 70.7% of visual artists are men. At the same time women are pushed away from spaces of high visibility, we can see that only 20% of women access places of visibility or relevance in the art world. But what is more frightening is that there are only 22.7% female visual artists over 70 years old, compared to the 33,8% under 30 years old. This is a clear indicator of the lack of help and support given to women when trying to conciliate personal and labour life. Seeing the study carried out in Ireland we can see a similar situation, when we see “a fall off of female practitioners over the age of 40” and continue arguing that this “reflects a lack of character roles for female actors over 40”. From all these numbers we can get a clear picture of how complicated, heterogeneous, and weak the economic structures that support the art system can be. This weakness can be also one of the reasons why the cultural producer has felt the need to diversify his or her roles and work structures[8]. This will imply that from now we should stop thinking about rigid and monolithic categories if we want to understand the nature of cultural work[9]. These changes do not always imply a strive for profesionalization, what I will argue in this chapter is that the economy of culture has introduced these lacks to an extent that now are intrinsic to its mode of production, and these have now become part of the economy’s structure. This is one of the reasons that

[6] Canada Council for the Arts, 2005.
[7] Research conducted by Hibernian Consulting for the Arts Council in Ireland, 2005.
[8] The research carried out in Ireland shows how 76% of theatre practitioners had worked in different fields such as tv, drama, commercials and other kinds of jobs just to generate a regular income.
[9] One could read this line as a suggestion for reading the cultural production sphere as a space for constant becoming.

push me to think of this sector as depending on a semi-formal economy, in which a combination of formal and informal economic traditions are combined in order to keep the production system working. Only by combining these two structures such an atomised and fragmented work areas one can understand the perpetuation of these deficiencies.

## Culture and Informality

At this point I want to put forward a thesis, if we are to identify the nature of the economy that surrounds culture, I believe that we should envisage it as a mixed economy, or as I will argue a semi-formal economy. I use the term semi-formal consciously because I do think that the economy of culture does share many traits and structures one can find in informal economies (as described by Natozky 2004, Benton 1990, Mingione 1988, Hart,1973) but on the other hand it has ways of recognition and in some cases economic structures that place a great part of its activity in the formal sphere of economy. This unorthodox composition is one of the reasons of the exceptionality (Lazzarato, 2004) that characterises cultural work and the ways economy relates to it.

I would like to analyse three common traits that we can find both in the culture production sphere and in informal economies, by exploring these similarities I want to introduce a degree of complexity that I hope can help useful to understand the nature of the "exceptionality" of this economy system. The first characteristic I will introduce is the fact that culture producers are defined by a great degree of flexibility in their practices (Vishmidt, 2004, Ruido, 2004, Holmes, 2002), the same occurs and is one of the most relevant traits of the informal economies (Benton, 1990)[10]. Another feature of the culture production sphere has to do with how much it relies on affective and personal networks to develop (Granovetter, 1992, Hardt, 2002), this is also a common trait shared by spaces or countries which rely heavily on the informal economy to sustain its formal economies, this has been precisely described by the anthropologist Keith Hart (Hart, 1973). The last point I'm interested in developing is the amount of non-paid work[11] that takes place both in the culture sphere and in informal economies.

By analysing culture and its economy from this perspective I am interested in exposing to what extent and degree this semi-formality has become a structural and not contingent trait of the functioning of this economic system, on the other hand I will suggest that far from being a way of operating in third world countries or places where economies are not fully developed, informality is a core element of one of the most developed western economies and production systems, the culture production sphere. Keith Hart has argued elsewhere (Hart, 2005) that this combination of formal and informal economies has been always a reality, he argues that it "gives the impression that the two (formal and informal economies) are located in different

[10] Here it is obvious that one could argue that flexibility is now a common trait that most work practices share, I will try to during this paper I will try to show how the cultural production sphere is constantly producing more sophisticated and integrated forms of labour flexibility.

[11] Voluntary work or work that never gets paid it has also been conceptualized as free labour.

places, like agriculture and manufacturing, whereas both the bureaucracy and its antithesis contain the formal/informal dialectic". This paradoxical situation has been a reality a along the industrial economy, as Hart claims "the informal sector' has become recognized as a universal feature of the modern economy". The Anthropologist Massimiliano Mollona has also written about the coexistence of these two modes of production (Mollona 2005), in his paper "Gifts of Labour" he detects how a part of the workers in a steel company based in Sheffield combine their formal works with a number of informal activities such as "fitting the machines for several firms in the area", they also "trade alcohol" or "sell broken machines to local trade dealers". What I want to do along this paper is describe how this way of operating which we usually associate to third world countries or deprived areas, is a structural characteristic for one of the worlds most cherished economies, the creative sector could not exist without this combination of formal and informal activities. But there is one obvious difference, the amount of recognition and possible incomes one can achieve inside the culture sector are far distant to those achievable in the areas previously mentioned, that is one of the reasons why I will define it as a semi-formal economy.

Flexibility.

The dominance of flexibility in the work place seems to be a condition imposed all around the world. The process that has driven production from fordist (rigid and repetitive work conditions) to a post-fordist (flexible and information based work) mode of production has been well documented by a large number of scholars from a wide range of disciplines ( Virno 2003, Lazzarato 1999, Lash and Urry 1994, Harvey 1989). I will not dig in into this tradition, I just want to point out how the regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey 1989) has found in the cultural production sphere a perfect ground were to implement its transformations. Some authors suggest that culture has provided a ground in which the experimentation with new work regimes has been possible and some of this experimental models have been later on put into practice in industrial regimes[12]. Flexibility has always been a characteristic of the cultural tradition, in popular imaginary we can trace a great number of images in which one can find artists working day and night, musicians playing gigs for hours non-stop, or mad architects working for days until they finish their gigantic masterworks. We now see how this "trait" has been endorsed as a quality and as Marina Vishmidt has put it "flexibility once deemed to the artists as constitutive exception to the law of value is now valorised as a universally desirable attribute in neo-liberal policy statements"(Vishmidt, 2005).

Being flexible is now a positively valorised tribute, but this can raise a question worth discussing, is the work and output produced under these flexible conditions equally valorised? Or on the opposite, has the outcome of flexible labour started to be de-valuated? I still don't have a clear answer but I do believe this is something worth analysing. Cultural producers have

[12] See Laurence Rassel analysing how the project based production system so frequently used in the culture sphere has been now applied by Volkswagen in its production sites in Maria Ruido´s documentary "Real Time" 2003.

possibly inherited this capacity for flexibility from their own bohemian tradition which now has been normalized and reinserted into their current practices. In this sense I believe it is interesting to introduce Blim's views on the development of small scale industrial activities in the Marche region, in Italy (Blim, 1992). He argues that the process of industrial decentralization helped to move form a factory based and centralized production system to a much more flexible production system closer to the artisan production model (Blim 1992: 90). When using the term artisan he talks about a production system that has the "risk of intermittent employment and the costs of their benefits"(Blim 1992: 93). Artisans need to cope with all the uncertainties and contingencies that occur in a very vulnerable economic sector, that is why they have developed very firm systems of self-control, self-regulation codes and degrees of work flexibility never seen before in industrialised economies, all of this has been perfectly formulated by Murray when he defines it as the "artisan paradigm of self exploitation[13]" (Murray 1988:265). So in a sense what Blim argues is that traditional production has got closer to a lightly regulated production system in which flexibility is a key factor to ensure productivity and benefits. Introducing the anomalous production system that maintains the artisans into the industrial sphere we see how there is a move to normalize an informal production system. We see how traditional sites such as national televisions, theatres or even opera houses are undergoing transformations that will lead them to operate under much more flexible production systems, there is a trend that pushes workers into freelance or temporal work positions, now it is these workers who will have to accept the risks this kind of situations encompass[14]. I do believe that flexibility is now a structural element that configures culture production and defines its mode of production. This implies that we are not talking about a contingency to be overcome, but a condition that will have long time consequences in the ways culture is going to be produced. This fact is what makes it similar to the degrees of flexibility that one can detect in informal economies (Narotzky 2004b).

There is also another aspect of flexibility we need to consider, the introduction of new tools that are used in culture production seem to be designed to push this flexibility further, stretching its own boundaries. Among these tools we see machines such as laptop computers which are helping to introduce a new category of flexibility: mobility. As we see in Holmes (2002) cultural workers do not only need to become flexible in their work schedules but also need to be flexible enough to be able to work in a great number of geographical spaces. These days we are all getting used to seeing people working with their laptops in trains, cafes and other public spaces, integrating work into the leisure-public spheres, this could be understood as an extension of the

[13] Self exploitation will be an important issue to have in mind, Standing has written some very interesting remarks on the illnesses and warns us about some of the consequences of flexibility and self-exploitation ""there is ample anecdotal evidence that those in flexible labour statuses are relatively prone to suffer from stress, and particularly in the case of the so called "teleworkers" and other outworkers, from the corrosive effects of social isolation. (...) They can also expect to suffer from creeping self-exploitation, losing touch with social reality as they struggle against some unknown but deeply imagined norm of effort and performance" (Standing:2002: 49)

[14] See The Guardian Sunday November 13, 2005 article Opera downsizes as Italy's divas go on hunger strike. The media has also been challenged in France by a string of protests carried out by the "Intermittents du Spectacle" collective, as seen in Le Monde Diplomatique, May 2004. http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2004/05/SCARPETTA/11184

cultural workplace to all those spaces in which cultural producers inhabit (Standing, 2002). In the several researches we have analysed before we have detected the need cultural producers have to work both in the public and privates spheres, in this sense laptop computers are the best tools to make this transition possible, the public-private dichotomy can no longer be understood as such, cultural producers integrate these two categories in one, the extended workplace[15]. Talking about the ways in which computer programmers and hackers work, Shäfer (2004) argues that "computer networks and the availability of software (…) extend the culture industry into the user's living room" (2000:200). This could be read as an invasion of privacy by work, but Shäfer likes to read it in much more positive terms, he claims that this accessibility to software and easy distribution of work has helped to liberate "an enormous output of creativity". So wee first see how workers are going into the public space labouring with their laptops and later see corporations invading the private space of our homes, this generates a constant cycle of extended production. What is obvious is that tools such as laptop computers have helped to introduce unknown levels of flexibility into the working regimes of the cultural producers. This does not only imply that cultural workers will develop creative tasks in a great number of spaces, but helped by Wifi networks a cultural producer can work in any part of the world, and just needs to find the right spot in which to network his computer. This trans-national cultural worker will have to adapt to a great number of contexts, and be able to work in a number of different countries under political and social[16] regimes different to her own. I will later work more on the creation and nature of these international circulation channels and the ways in which cultural objects circulate, but I think that it is extremely relevant to understand the degrees of personal flexibility needed to deal with these production processes which occur in such distant geographical contexts[17]. I will conclude saying that this freedom has helped to extend work to all the corners of the globe, and transactional cultural producers will follow certain flows and get to this different pockets of work, so it becomes obvious one should start to understand these economic and work channels if she wants to fully grasp the functioning of cultural production and its economy. But we need to acknowledge how flexibility works disembbeding workers from their contexts and allows them to work in this global workplace. We also need to consider the fact that the introduction of work into a whole new spectre of activities and spaces has devaluated the price of this work, possibly this has to do with the fact that in many cases this flexible work is no longer acknowledged or perceived as such, new mechanisms of valorisation should be deployed if we really want to re-valorise and understand cultural work in its full extension.

[15] For a good insight on the public-private disintegration see Keneth Galbratih's "The Economy of Innocent Fraud", in which he argues that the relation between the American government and the weapon development corporations have completely eroded the limits of the public-private sectors, which he sees as euphemisms.

[16] Psycho-Social as Holmes has put it. Holmes 2002

[17] Another issue to be analysed could be how much difficult this work becomes once a cultural worker has reached certain age or in the case of women, still lack tools to help reconcile the work and family lives. With this I am not willing to introduce a Keneysian notion of security into the discussion but willing to point out how relevant the gender gap still is to this discussion.

Networks and affects.

Another aspect that I consider crucial to understand the peculiarities of the culture production system is how the relations among the different actors have become as important as culture production itself. As we will see, one can not understand how this economy works without grasping the close, overlapping and in cases extremely complex set of relationships that are constantly being forged among cultural producers. The degree of what Hardt (2004) calls "affective labour" is overwhelming, although little has been written about it and it is not easy to find figures or literature on this aspect of this particular mode of production[18]. The need to look for different ways of collaboration and network with other agents is usually a common practice in informal economies (Narotzky, 2004, Sik, 1988) and has been broadly studied, what has not been made explicit yet is the degrees of connectedness and the importance that this type of collaborations have in the field that we are currently studying. Seeing the research carried out by the Visual Artists Association from Catalonia, we see a very timid approach to this issue, we can read that 52,5% of the artists aged 45 or under have helped out or collaborated with other artist's projects during the year. This degree of interaction seems to be higher if the nature of the activities carried out has a technological aspect, in the case of the video art production, artists collaborate in the 73.70% of cases and in multimedia projects people usually work in a collaborative manner in a 69.40% of occasions.

These numbers just indicate shyly the degree of perceived interactivity, that is, formal cases of interactivity, but nothing has yet been said about the implicit need to interact and collaborate with other agents in order to insure one's stability and career, stating it more precisely, no one has yet measured the degree of co-dependency among cultural producers.

I do believe that somehow this dependency seems logic, in a field in which most of the practitioners hold al least two jobs or productive activities to support their income, the need for a dense network that can sustain one's career and help to distribute the inherent risk attached to such a fragile economy seems fully justified. At the same time a broad list of contacts can ensure access to spaces (and works) difficult to attain and get into other ways. Some authors have written a somehow romantic account of this necessity of collaboration and interdependency among producers (Piore & Sabel, 1986), some see this capacity for networking slightly more cynically, as in the case of culture analysts Anthony Davies and Simon Ford who in their premonitory article "Art Futures" prognosticate that in a near future "culturepreneurs" will "trade access to social networks"( Davies & Ford, 1999), they sustain not without pessimism that the access to different kinds of networks will be one of the cultural producers (or

[18] I have a great deal of first hand information in this sense, and I do believe that this issue could be the base for an interesting ethnography. Analysing the amount of occasions and frequency of the interactions among cultural agents can help to give a real picture of the degree of interdependency among them. I myself have discussed the issue with some artists or collectives, I was as surprised as they were of the amount of times they interacted with each other. The case of the Barcelona based curatorial collective "Creatures" is somehow illuminating, it appears that not only they continued to work together in a number of times after dissolving the collective but the posts they currently hold (as private art gallery managers or curators) have come through the influence of the network. At the same time, most of the artists with which they currently work with, where introduced to them whilst still being part of the Creatures collective, the density of their interactions is overwhelming.

culturepreneurs) main assets, this opens up the discussion in two different directions, one concerned with connectedness and another centred on dependency.

The way in which networks and relations shape a given economic space has been studied from a variety of disciplines, each of them draws a different set of conclusions about the consequences of this dependence among different actors. I'm interested in introducing two different approaches which I will argue can be complementary if our aim is to understand the role of personal relations in the cultural production sphere. On one hand we find network theory developed by people like Castells, Stark or Granovetter which have analysed and theorised how the relations among different social actors work, on the other hand we find anthropologists like Hart or Goddard which have analysed the economic consequences and ways the economy operates in places where the reliance among actors is a characteristic trait. Both approaches drive to different conclusions, so let me explore them in detail before seeing how they can work to analyse the work done by cultural producers.

In his paper "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness" social theorist Mark Granovetter reformulated Polanyi's notion of "embeddedness" (Granovetter, 1985) and argued that the economy is embedded in the relations created between social actors, if one wants to understand a region's or field's economy, she should start by trying to understand the relations established between the people who inhabited it. This notion is extremely important and a great part of his work has been devoted to determine and understand the nature of these relations and the role these have shaping the economy. All these relations depend on amounts of trust to be effective and trust can not be gained easily. In a more recent paper this author (Granovetter, 2000) analyses the way Silicon Valley came to be what it is (o more exactly, what it was in the year 2000 before the dot com crash). He defines a complex space where a set of companies interact and relate to each other and where we can find a "vast network of weak ties"(2000:220), these "social networks help transmit information and knowledge among different firms and individuals producing knowledge" (2000: 222). This has contributed to the "creating of cross-institutional ties and loosely integrating different institutional nodes" (2000:220) in which we can find combinations and a string of interactions between new tech development companies and venture capital firms. In his view it is this way how "the Valley accomplishes a recombination of knowledge and capital is through spin-offs, which have contributed to the construction of dense social networks of entrepreneurs, inventors, and other institutional actors" (2000:223). His theory based on the strength of social relations generated among the actors involved through series of spin-offs can only be functional is there is a degree of trust among these agents and institutions. This trust works as glue and allows and facilitates the transmission of information and knowledge through the networks, and this will empower the network as a whole and give it its peculiarities and distinctiveness.

On the other side we have some scholars who feel somehow uneasy with this approach to the issue, such as the case of Nartozky who will argue that these networks are always a political entity, where hierarchies are established and where aspects such as class, race or gender have an important role to play. She claims that "access to "social capital" is not evenly distributed in a

region as the community integration discourse would have it. It is not evenly distributed among members of the same family either"(Narotzky, 2004b). This uneven accessibility will be a key factor that will challenge the horizontality of these social networks, and as she shows "Some groups are consistently unable to use a region's social "capital", not because they lack entrepreneurship, but because they lack resources *and* the power to mobilize them"(2004b) this will turn into a great obstacle for the free exchange of knowledge and information, and it will create great differences among the social actors involved in networks. Class can define how one accesses the social field, Narotzky argues this point showing that "social relations of production in agriculture were structured through a series of links of patronage that articulated landowners with large tenants, and the latter with landless worker". She proves how these factors can generate tensions and disconformities in communities, families or among groups of social agents. In the case study she developed she arrives to some interesting conclusions, one of them is how men usually carry the weight of social relations and women end up being subaltern workers who can hardly access these places of information and end up depending on their husbands, brothers, sons etc. to access (social) knowledge. This is not always the case, as Victoria Goddard has shown is her study of the work relations in Naples, in some cases women can become central agents and centralize power and information (Goddard, 1996), but this is not always the case, and nonetheless helps to understand the problems of centrality, dependency and lack of accessibility derived form closed or tightly networked communities. What I would suggest is that the dark side of this connectedness and networked way of functioning is that in some cases it can generate unequal levels of dependence. The lack of autonomy that can be derived form this model can in cases result extremely problematic, specially in the case of cultural producers, who in most cases, and as I have shown, lack real sources of income that could help to ensure certain degrees of independence. On the other hand and as Hart argues, the fact that there is a network that can take on the need for security or labour stability, can cause a lack of investment or improvement in such an area. The obligation to depend and relate to other actors in the scene to survive can be introduced as a structural trait of the field, contributing to perpetuate certain levels of dependency and ultimately, to the instrumentalisation of the actors to whom one may relate. The self-consciousness of this need to be continually forging one's networks can also drive cultural producers to be in constant state of fear and helps to develop "opportunist" states of mind as conceptualised by the Italian Autonomist thinker Paolo Virno in his well know article *"The Ambivalence of Disenchantment"* (Virno, 2003). I do not think this is the best situation to be caught in.

**Non-paid work (conclusion).**

There's nothing on the top
but a bucket and a mop
And an illustrated book about birds.
Plateau by “The Meat Puppets”

As we have seen until now, there are great similarities between informal economies and the ways in which the culture production sphere operates. We have seen how there is a constant need for flexibility and change in order to keep the system operating, but also seen that this flexibility is helping to devaluate the work and outputs produced by these workers. We have also understood the extent and importance that relations, affects and networks have in this production sphere, but also seen how this can become highly problematic if it translates into dependence and the constitution of hierarchies among the producers. The last point which I want to develop here has to do with how a great part of the work carried out in the culture sphere does not always get economically compensated. I will argue that there is no relation between the amounts of work done and the income that culture producers will receive. There is a huge valorisation gap that needs to be challenged. I argue that this is a consequence of a combination of several factors, among them the intangibility of cultural work. Tiziana Terranova has made a great contribution to the understanding of this fact with her book “Network Culture”, specially in the third chapter of the book named “Free Labour[19]” (Terranova, 2004), where she deconstructs and reconsiders the ways in which some areas of contemporary culture production have managed to generate a constant supply of free labour. This cultural activity that is not properly recognized al labour has reduced the production costs for a several corporations[20] and as a consequence, helps to boost their profits. The author defines free labour as “the moment where this knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into productive activities that are pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited” (2004:78), along the chapter she explains how “the digital economy (functions) as a specific mechanism of internal "capture" of larger pools of social and cultural knowledge”(2004:79). To partly elucidate this new feature of production she argues that there has been an expansion of “forms of labour we do not immediately recognize as such: chat, real-life stories, mailing lists, amateur newsletters, and so on”(2004:79). So we are faced with two new problems, on the one hand, we need a redefinition of labour (which Terranova accomplishes along her book), but we also need to reconsider the mechanisms that define value for cultural products, I will go deeper into this on the next chapter when I discuss an immaterial work of art. Terranova is not the only author who talks about the lack of economic compensation for cultural activities, in his article “Sim Capital” Dyer-Whiteford (2003) reminds us of all those agents who contribute actively to the production of video games but who are not recognised (or paid) for their work, kids who test out the games,

[19] This chapter has been previously released as a paper under the same title.
[20] Aol supposes the most flagrant case in a number of corporations which us this model.

"prosumers[21]", composers, or anonymous players who will modify the games and introduce different variations to them.

I do believe that this is a trend that is occurring in a great number (if not in all) of cultural disciplines. If this is added to the lack of regular resources of direct income that we have defined at the beginning of this chapter, we can start to imagine the degrees of precariousness cultural producers must face in their day to day. This is one of the reasons why I have used the term semi-formality to try and frame this peculiar economic system. If we follow Hart's views when he argues that "what makes lifestyle 'formal' is the regularity of its order, a predictable rhythm and sense of control that we often take for granted" (Hart, 2005), we see that there is nothing that makes the cultural production system regular, on the contrary, its need for constant mutation, its dependence on changing economic flows, the flexibility of its practices and the lack of rigidity of its working conditions guarantee that there will be nothing predictable in its way of functioning. But on the other hand we have to admit that the degree of social recognition these practices have and the size of some of the economic flows that shape the field make it difficult to talk of cultural production as if was embedded in an informal economy.

We have talked about how the combination of formal and informal economies seem to be the way forward for a great number of contingent but emerging economies, I suggest that possibly, the culture production sphere is shaped by this tension. In some cases culture is perceived as a non-economic sphere, and structurally, as we have seen along this paper, it lacks the resources and infrastructures that would normalize its economic dimension. Nevertheless this combination seems to work and by no means has stopped the production of cultural commodities. We have also seen how the lack of self valorisation also constitutes a problem, how to determine the value of not only cultural objects but of cultural production activities, is an issue that must be engaged with if we are willing to empower the sector. This is difficult because of the ever-changing nature of cultural work, and as we have seen, the extent of some of the degrees of flexibility imposed on the cultural worker make it difficult to define when she is working or not, when she is producing or consuming, when is she networking or just meeting a friend, when she is playing a game or improving it. On the other side, I would argue that the culture production sphere is a place for experimentation for new modes of production and work models, numerous work regimes that are currently being used in different production fields have been experimented before in the culture production sphere[22], because it can take on board some anomalies without this being that problematic. This is one of the reasons that have lead some authors talk about the "exceptionality" of culture work (Lazzarato, 2004), so we could say that this production sphere does not constitute a new paradigm, but a mixture of several others. All of this could perfectly match a suggestion posed by Hart (2005) when he argues that "governments might adopt a genuinely hands-off approach towards semi-autonomous communities within their jurisdiction", this would favour a combination of formal and informal

[21] Profesional consumers.

[22] Such as working for a length of time defined by a project, putting risks only on the producer, the need to combine different simultaneous projects as a source of income, etc.

economies which seem to be helping smaller economies to develop. This could be one of the reasons why the big amount of tax evasion and informal labour relations have never been properly tackled in the culture sphere. I do think that a flexible legal frame is needed to understand the peculiarities of some of the cultural practices, but I also think that we need to properly recognize the dimensions and extent of the work produced by cultural producers in order to valorise it correctly; this can be a first step towards the redistribution of its benefits among the producers and help to structure some of its economic realities. This can only be achieved understanding the complex and semi-formal peculiarities that shape this field.

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