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## CREATIVE SPACES WHERE CULTURES MEET BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore the concept of creative spaces where cultures meet. The empirical material subjected to analysis consists of the results of interviews conducted with cultural managers. The qualitative analysis is extended by a sociological approach based on literature criticism and the analytical-synthetic method. The main question posed is how creativity is experienced by cultural managers who organize cultural events in specific spaces related to the concept of multicultural dialogue. Creativity is considered both as a subjective property and as a social construct that is context-dependent. The paper argues that norms and values influence the experience of urban creativity and that creative endeavors can influence the social and economic development of a city. The paper explores the relationship between culture and creativity in space and assesses its creative potential. In particular, the results may help to shape theoretical consensus on the function of creativity at intercultural meeting points in the process of social change.

**Keywords:** creative spaces where cultures meet, urban creativity, urban imagination, social change

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<sup>1</sup> The study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the Disciplinary Ethics Committee of the Institute of Sociological Sciences of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (protocol code 07/DKE/NS/2020).

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of creativity has firmly entered the vocabulary used by social researchers to describe the surrounding world. Societies, economies, enterprises, academic studies, specialized trainings, education for children seem to be creative. This property is to influence social development, especially in areas of urban agglomerations, where it does not follow a rectilinear trajectory.<sup>2</sup> It is the product of a wide range of environmental factors. Adaptability, entrepreneurship, specific culture and social identity related to it, and axionormative order are all combined by researchers in the practice of analysis in the concept of creativity.<sup>3</sup> It seems to be a common belief that low urban development indicators in different countries have their source in multifaceted connections of these factors.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, the creativity factor is often indicated as the main effective determinant of innovative and sustainable urban development. It is most often operationalized by means of different conceptual tools, such as creative class, creative industries, creative city.<sup>5</sup> This unspecified creativity is seen as an element of social change. Research on creativity exceeds more and more often the borders of particular scientific disciplines, which have been formed over the years. However, it is still possible to find new levels of exploration of this phenomenon. In this paper, I propose to discuss a new analytical category for the study of this phenomenon, which seems to be underestimated in social research: creative spaces for meeting different cultures in cities. There is certainly a lack of empirical work devoted to creative spaces for cultural encounters.<sup>6</sup>

The theoretical part of this paper discusses the concept of creativity and a meeting of cultures in different theoretical perspectives. In the empirical section, results of in-depth interviews with cultural managers have been presented and subsequently analyzed, identifying common characteristics in understanding and interpreting the proposed analytic notion of creative spaces where cultures meet. By relying on a qualitative approach, this study serves as an example of how this empirical method can be used to explore niche phenomena.

The paper is structured as follows: section 1 outlines the theoretical backgrounds of creativity and meetings of cultures, section 2 provides an overview of the methodology

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<sup>2</sup> A.M. Pavelea, B. Neamțu, P. Nijkamp, K. Kourtit, "Is the Creative Class a Game Changer in Cities? A Socioeconomic Study on Romania", *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 11 (2021), 5807.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. Betlej, *Spoleczeństwo sieciowe – potencjaly zmian i ambiwalentne efekty*, Lublin 2020.

<sup>4</sup> L. Andres, C. Chapain, "The Integration of Cultural and Creative Industries into Local and Regional Development Strategies in Birmingham and Marseille: Towards an Inclusive and Collaborative Governance?", *Regional Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2013), pp. 161-182; F. Bandarin, J. Hosagrahar, A.F. Sailer, "Why Development Needs Culture", *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2011), pp. 15-25.

<sup>5</sup> A. Ciacci, E. Ivaldi, R.A. González-Relaño, "Partially Non-Compensatory Method to Measure the Smart and Sustainable Level of Italian Municipalities", *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2021), 435.

<sup>6</sup> T. Kačerauskas, "Technologies in Creative Economy and Creative Society", *Technological and Economic Development of the Economy*, vol. 21, no. 6 (2015), pp. 855-868.

used, while section 3 highlights the research findings. These findings are discussed in relation to recent scientific contributions. Finally, the conclusion in section 4 answers the research question and lists theoretical implications.

## 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1.1. Creativity Studies

Creativity is researched in many theoretical fields, including behavioral psychology, artificial intelligence, philosophy, history, economics, and sociology. In everyday language, creativity is most often associated with a creative attitude, a mental process causing the emergence of new ideas, concepts, original solutions. Intuitively simple phenomenon of creativity is actually a very complex process. Unlike many other phenomena, there is no single universally recognized definition of creativity in science. Creativity mediates the discernment of new possibilities, the discovery of previously unknown perspectives, and further facilitates the solution of complex problems. Three most popular ways of analyzing creativity have emerged in the literature: micro, meso and global. Referring to this classification, we can point to the subject division of research:

**Individual** – creativity is most often defined as an attribute of an individual capable of using their imagination and other dispositional qualities to achieve important goals. Moreover, it is claimed that creativity is the privilege of only selected individuals, social groups, economic systems, societies.<sup>7</sup> In the literature, we find notions of creative individuals, but also creative class, interpreted as a broader collective possessing these special attributes which brings about social changes due to its efforts that activate creative potentials.<sup>8</sup> There is a rich literature on conceptualization, operationalization, application, and implementation of creativity in urban practice.<sup>9</sup> This perspective addresses the role of individuals in the creative sector,<sup>10</sup> and their unique characteristics.<sup>11</sup> Research at this level refers also to individuals aggregated or organized into larger structures, such as groups of artists or the so-called creative class.<sup>12</sup>

**City or region** – it is worth noting that the popularized sociocultural view of relating creativity to the characteristics of human individuals was very quickly extended to

<sup>7</sup> C. Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, London 2000; C. Landry, *Creative Cities*, London 2007.

<sup>8</sup> H. D'Orville, "The Relationship Between Sustainability and Creativity", *CADMUS*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2021), pp. 65-73.

<sup>9</sup> E. Glaeser, K. Kourtit, P. Nijkamp (eds.), *Urban Empires*, New York 2020.

<sup>10</sup> D. Hesmondhalgh, S. Baker, *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*, New York 2011.

<sup>11</sup> C. Henry (ed.), *Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries: An International Perspective*, Cheltenham 2007.

<sup>12</sup> R. Florida, "The Economic Geography of Talent", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 92, no. 4 (2002), pp. 743-755.

social collectives, sectors, cities, regions, and others. This curious relationship between the creativity of individuals and attractive spaces has given much inspiration for research. Thus, if urban development may contribute to stimulating and evoking this creativity among artists, residents, and entrepreneurs, spatial planning should be based on the premise that the right spatial environment should be created.<sup>13</sup> Specific places can both attract and generate this creativity. According to Richard Florida, places attractive for creative people are characterized by four specific locational advantages: tolerance, talent, technology, and territorial assets.<sup>14</sup> This stream of creative sector research has emerged as a separate subject of research, along with its original theories, such as the concept of the creative city<sup>15</sup> or the creative region.<sup>16</sup>

**Economy** – this standard refers to the macro level in economic research and to the study of the creative sector in relation to the economy as a whole, both on a national and global scale.<sup>17</sup> In a broader sense, creativity is recognized today as an important tool for business development and simultaneously as a new paradigm of the market economy. Technological progress in the 21st century has drawn the attention of researchers to the importance of knowledge, creativity, and talent in economic development. In economic debates, terms of creative economy based on creativity and intellectual capital as elementary factors of production began to appear. The function of such an economy is to be not only a growing contribution to gross domestic product, but above all to stimulate innovation. The creative economy also has a cultural value. It is seen as a stimulator of activating the potential of culture, its resources, and their effective use in economic development. More and more often, one hears about the development of creative sector. The term ‘cultural industries’ appeared first in Anglo-Saxon literature. At the beginning of the present century, however, there was a shift in preferences of the creative sector research and nowadays the more established concept seems to be creative industries. A broader discussion of this shift can be found in Cunningham (2002) and Garnham (2005).<sup>18</sup>

**Industry or set of industries** – at this level, research looks at a single industry, e.g., film, music or video games, a group of industries (e.g. audiovisual industries) or the entire creative sector.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> L. Wenjuan, “The Role of Trust and Risk in Citizens’ E-Government Services Adoption: A Perspective of the Extended UTAUT Model”, *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 14 (2021), 7671.

<sup>14</sup> R. Florida, “The Economic Geography of Talent”, pp. 743-755.

<sup>15</sup> C. Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit...*; C. Landry, F. Bianchini, *The Creative City*, London 1995.

<sup>16</sup> P. Cooke, D. Schwartz (eds.), *Creative Regions: Technology, Culture and Knowledge Entrepreneurship*, London 2007.

<sup>17</sup> B. Fesel, M. Söndermann, *Culture and Creative Industries in Germany*, Bonn 2007.

<sup>18</sup> S. Cunningham, “From Cultural to Creative Industries: Theory, Industry and Policy Implications”, *Quarterly Journal of Media Research and Resources*, vol. 102 (2002), pp. 54-65; N. Garnham, “From Cultural to Creative Industries: An Analysis of The Implications of The ‘Creative Industries’ Approach to Arts and Media Policy Making in The United Kingdom”, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2005), pp. 5-29.

<sup>19</sup> K. Stachowiak, “Problemy metodologiczne badania sektora kreatywnego”, *Rozwój Regionalny i Polityka Regionalna*, vol. 30 (2015), pp. 9-46.

**Enterprise** – research includes the specific issues of functioning of companies or other entities of the creative sector, their efficiency, goods produced and demand for them, cost analysis, etc.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the diversity of conceptual approaches and empirical research, it is important to note that science lacks standard techniques for measuring creativity. It is extremely difficult to place creativity in a single global theoretical convention. Numerous uncertainties arise. The concepts of creativity do not constitute a uniform theoretical construct. This is a particularly interesting issue due to the criticism of the mentioned approaches, for example, the concept of creative class.<sup>21</sup> This approach seems to be questioned nowadays for various reasons. Controversies arise, among others, around its operational definition, urban conditions such as the history and cultural offer of the city, long-term benefits for the local economy. These approaches invoke the names of creative cities, culture, specific properties of cultural sectors. Theoretical analysis leads to the conclusion that the creative urban space seems to be a natural context for creative encounters of cultures that promote dialogue between them. However, this problem has not been directly addressed in the previous research or analyzed on theoretical grounds sufficiently.

## 1.2. Meetings of Cultures in Urban Spaces

The issue of the meeting of cultures in urban spaces is another important theoretical ground of this study. It is rooted in many diverse analytical perspectives. We can consider the question of the importance of multiculturalism for the development of creative class, creative industries, creative economy. The influence of space on the development of creativity interpreted in such a way would also be interesting. There is no doubt that culture defines social actions and is probably the most powerful behavior-shaping force. But is the power of diversity rooted in the process of creating a space where everyone can contribute? Or would it be a more valid strategy to look for sources of creativity in the specific attributes of the space? In other words, which is more important: the meeting or the place? Or are they two integral elements of creative spaces for the meeting of cultures? This question serves as an introduction to the empirical research, providing also a starting point for the conceptual justifications of the concept under discussion.

Cultural encounters are linked to the politics of recognition and strategies for transforming dominant patterns of decoding communication and perceptions of 'others' considered different, excluded, dangerous, not respected, not understood by the majority. Issues of identity and culture have implications for political power and economic structures.<sup>22</sup> The creative coexistence of many cultures requires appropriate tools,

<sup>20</sup> R.E. Caves, *Creative Industries: Contracts Between Art and Commerce*, Cambridge 2000.

<sup>21</sup> R. Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, New York–London 2005; R. Florida, *The Rise of The Creative Class: And How It Is Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*, New York 2002.

<sup>22</sup> M. Rembierz, "Źródła i dylematy tożsamości. Filozofia wobec pytań o treść tożsamości i sens egzystencji", in J. Mizińska, H. Rarot (eds.), *Tożsamość człowieka wobec życia i śmierci*, "Colloquia Communia", vol. 2, no. 69 (1999), pp. 16-39.

media, and above all, space conducive to intercultural communication, building cultural awareness, and creating a shared urban mind.<sup>23</sup> The meeting of cultures is a theoretically well-established concept, often referred to in scientific studies.<sup>24</sup> However, its precise definition raises numerous methodological controversies. By its very nature, culture is a complex, multidimensional entity. Theoretical reflection on the phenomenon of multiculturalism requires referring to many analytical perspectives. Its phenomenon may be interpreted as a process of assimilation of surplus. The category of excess is understood as the opposite of the norm in the analysis of specific cultural systems, therefore it is sometimes valued negatively.<sup>25</sup> Some theorists develop the idea of cultural freedom from domination. This argumentation is embedded in the civic republican tradition.<sup>26</sup> The communitarian interpretation of multiculturalism grows out of the communitarian critique of liberalism. Liberals give primacy to individual rights over collective goods and embrace ontological holism. The argument for a politics of identity recognition and development in dialogue with others rests on this claim. The integrity of cultures is a political and economic issue because cultures play an important role in the creation of social identity and human agency.<sup>27</sup> The most influential liberal theory of multiculturalism was developed by Will Kymlicka, who integrated liberal values of autonomy and equality with values of cultural belonging as an important factor in stable personal autonomy.<sup>28</sup>

In the literature, we also find other interpretations of multiculturalism as an effect of the growing need for cultural complementarity.<sup>29</sup> Undoubtedly, multiculturalism assumes the need to integrate various cultures, i.e., dominant, minority, and satellite cultures occurring in a particular space. The process of integration of various cultures is not uniform. The social construction of space is based on spatial-utilitarian forms. They perform specific functions in the process of production, consumption, creation of relations and social interaction.<sup>30</sup> The space of symbolism is as important as the space of communication, consumption or social exchange. Spatial arrangements become places where social relations are established. The way urban space is perceived and evaluated is related to the dominance of certain cultural categories.

Favorable circumstances in which different cultures coexist and interact more intensively can lead to a situation called 'meeting.' The factors shaping this situation include

<sup>23</sup> N. Gondek, "Methodological Foundations of the Language of Metaphysics", *Philosophija. Sociologija*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2020), pp. 242-249.

<sup>24</sup> B. Skarga, *Tożsamość i różnica. Eseje metafizyczne*, Kraków 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Z. Bauman, "Excess: An Obituary", *Parallax*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2001), pp. 85-91.

<sup>26</sup> F. Lovett, *A General Theory of Domination and Justice*, Oxford 2010.

<sup>27</sup> J. Tischner, *Thinking According to Values*, Kraków 1993.

<sup>28</sup> W. Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford 1991; W. Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada*, Oxford 1998.

<sup>29</sup> T. Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, New Jersey 2000.

<sup>30</sup> B. Jałowiecki, *Spoleczna przestrzeń metropolii*, Warszawa 2000; B. Jałowiecki, *Spoleczne wytwarzanie przestrzeni*, Warszawa 1988.

the commitment and reciprocity of both parties, the search for a common language and common values, and a persistent dialogue with an increasing or (in moments of crisis) decreasing degree of openness, understanding, acceptance, and also criticism of one's own position. The result of the meeting of cultures should be a polemic, which is an attempt both to present and consider different arguments, conducted with the intention to determine differences as well as similarities and common elements.

In the literature, we also find many references to the categories of social distance and borderland, interpreted as socio-cultural phenomena and spaces of symbolic culture. Borderlands are places where various groups of people meet, characterized by different cultural traditions, diverse value systems, different languages or dialects. The essence of the places where cultures meet consists therefore in the contact, meetings, dialogue, and mutual penetration of different cultures in the immediate vicinity. This area is felt as 'being in suspension,' 'stretched between' physical and mental, imaginary territories.

So can the conventional space of multifaceted cultural interactions become a source of creativity? The traditional assumption is that creativity is embodied in intrinsic properties of places, such as novelty and uniqueness (e.g. Frank Barron<sup>31</sup>; Morris J. Stein<sup>32</sup>). The problem with this line of argument is that these properties are, at least to some extent, context-dependent. Indeed, many researchers argue that there are no objective criteria for assessing creativity. There is no theoretical consensus on defining creative urban spaces, so how could creative spaces of cultural meetings be defined? It seems that this study should analyze the social context of experiencing a city as creative. The social context can be extended to include the events held in the selected spaces. Indeed, the experience of creativity of spaces where cultures meet seems to refer to normative criteria.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design

The analyses presented here are based on the results of semi-structured individual in-depth interviews (IDI) conducted among cultural managers in Lublin in November 2020. The sample size was 10 respondents. The snowball technique was used to select the managers. Individual interviews lasted on average from 30 to 45 minutes. Purposive sampling was used. Data saturation was identified at the seventh interview when 90% of the target codes were reached.<sup>33</sup> More interviews would not have contributed signifi-

<sup>31</sup> F. Barron, "The Disposition Toward Originality", *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, vol. 51, no. 3 (1955), pp. 478-485.

<sup>32</sup> M.J. Stein, *Stimulating Creativity*, New York 1974.

<sup>33</sup> P. Fusch, L.N. Lawrence, "Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research", *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 20, no. 9 (2015), pp. 1408-1416; C. Geertz, "Dense Description – Towards an Interpretative Theory of Culture", in M. Kempny, E. Nowicka (eds.), *Culture Research: Elements of the Anthropological Theory*, Warsaw 2003.

cantly to the analysis of the research problem. The sample size was taken as not being a limitation of the research objectives.

An important element of the research was the place where it was conducted. Lublin is a city situated in a cross-border area of Polish, Jewish, and Ukrainian cultures.<sup>34</sup> It is often referred to as a city on the borderline of many cultures and the meeting of cultures. It is the largest city in eastern Poland, situated on the ancient trade route that connected the Greek colonies on the Black Sea with Western Europe and the Baltic Sea.<sup>35</sup> The uniqueness of the city is also evidenced by its universities.<sup>36</sup> The meeting of cultures and socialization into multiculturalism have been inscribed as priorities in many of its strategic documents. Numerous historical traumas, ever present in the symbolism of the city's architecture (the German Majdanek Concentration Camp; the Lublin Castle, which served as a Stalinist prison) are permanently inscribed in the city's identity. The cultural landscape of the city is the result of the influence of many historical, social, political, economic, and cultural processes. The process of interpenetration of the regional folk culture with oscillating cultures testifies to the specificity of the city. Urban spaces function as social theatres that provoke specific roles.

## 2.2. The Research Problem

The main research problem undertaken in the paper was defined by the following main questions: How do cultural managers perceive creative spaces for the meeting of cultures? Do they feel the differences between creative urban spaces in general and creative spaces suitable for the meeting of cultures? Is creativity a property inherent in every space? What criteria do they use to select spaces for events defined as encounters of cultures? The remaining research questions addressed broader issues and were not used in the analyses described in this paper.

## 2.3. Research Method

Primary data collection and research are based on the qualitative research method. It aims to provide rich descriptions of the selected phenomenon, such as the way of experiencing the creativity of the spaces where cultures meet, and the way of defining problems related to the idea of urban creativity by cultural managers organizing cultural events in the city. The qualitative orientation of the research seems to be the most suitable to explore the sensitive problems from the managers' point of view. The experience of creativity of the cultural meeting space was analyzed through a social approach. Light should be shed on the interaction between individuality and the city interpreted as a relational unit.

<sup>34</sup> B. Butsenko, "Three L.", in *Book of Cultural Eastern Partnership*, vol. 1, Lublin 2011.

<sup>35</sup> M. Denys, *Lublin między wojnami. Opowieść o życiu miasta 1918-1939*, Łódź 2010.

<sup>36</sup> S. Musterd, O. Gritsai, "The Creative Knowledge City in Europe: Structural Conditions and Urban Policy Strategies for Competitive Cities", *European Urban and Regional Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2012), pp. 343-359.



## 2.4. Data Analysis

The analysis is based on a critique of the literature and the analytic-synthetic method. Causal thinking has been replaced by the introduction of idealistic ontological solutions, such as referring to the categories of imagined boundaries of experiencing creativity, reading the city, and mediating values in perceiving and evaluating the creativity of space. The autotelic study allowed for a better understanding of the phenomenon of experiencing creativity in the context of planning creative city architecture by referring to an important normative criterion.

## 2.5. Research Limitations

The research method has some limitations. The qualitative approach does not lead to a holistic and systemic view of the problem. Broader generalizations or comparisons cannot be made based on them. However, this is the best method to study the selected problem. They examine the world seen from the perspective of another person in all its dimensions, including the more elusive ones. Humanistic orientation brings an interesting perspective to the analysis of creativity at the crossroads of cultures.

# 3. RESEARCH RESULTS

## 3.1. Results and Discussion

The results of the research will be presented in the order of the questions posed to cultural managers, and discussed in the context of the problems undertaken in the theoretical part of the paper. It transpires that not every urban space is creative by nature. There are places that have a negative influence on us, that do not stimulate our activity. Negative evaluation was connected with the way some places are perceived as neglected, faultily designed in terms of architecture, unfriendly to the disabled, seniors, as well as families. The respondents have also stressed the fact that historical places connected with social traumas remain painful and induce silence and contemplation, rather than activity, action or change.

*Some spaces are uniquely artistic. The stories and legends associated with them become like a scenography tool. They are subject of narrative processing, taking on new mental forms.*

*Not every space is creative. There are spaces that make people lose energy and block their creativity. Sometimes we would like to break this impasse, but we just can't. Certain values, symbols, the past, it's all functioning somewhere in our heads and in certain places we are just not able to create anything new. It's as if the traumas of the past live in some parallel reality and constantly feed on our fears. After all, the younger generations don't remember the times of the war [World War II] or what was happening right afterwards, and yet, by entering certain spaces, they are also subjected to this invisible control. Even artists are not always able to withstand this symbolic ballast.*

However, it is extremely interesting that the respondents pointed to the creative potential of certain spaces as a resource that can be triggered by appropriate stimulation, such as appropriate space arrangement, revitalization, or modernization through the implementation of new communication technologies.

*Any space can have the right details to enhance our creativity, such as simple flowers in the office. The tool, the attributes build the creativity of the space.*

In every city, there are spaces with creativity inherently inscribed in them. It is in them that we are able to convey specific content effectively. The property identified as the creativity of urban spaces appears to be communicative openness, which is perceived as attractive.

*Being in places like this, we feel that the words we speak are going to the right audience, that someone is listening to us. Everyone who is in that space becomes our audience. We intuitively sense that we are in a special place. Let's take street artists as an example. They usually perform in similar urban spaces, subconsciously seeming to choose places that help them play their roles and reach a wider audience.*

The abovementioned cases reflect the spectrum of spaces diversity as discussed by Florida and Landry, among others. In this respect, a focus on culture and communication can be observed when monitoring the perspective of the content communicated to the chosen audience, which is in line with the findings of Marek Rembierz.<sup>37</sup> In creative urban spaces, creators, local activists as well as residents can express their independence and freedom and promote their ideas. While the distribution of creative spaces overlaps with public spaces, the study discussed here confirms the ideas outlined by Zygmunt Bauman and Will Kymlicka.

*These are certainly public spaces where our message will always find an audience.*

*Our presence in creative spaces allows us to read certain messages that are addressed to the audience.*

Some places are perceived as having a particular creative potential in this sense. In the literature, we see these findings confirmed in the descriptions of the field of activity of the creative class, or in the analysis of the potentials of creative industries in selected cities (Florida; Caves).

Let us, then, move to the question of creative spaces for the meeting of cultures. What properties can be attributed to these places and do they differ from general creative urban spaces? Respondents strongly emphasized the uniqueness of creative urban spaces for the encounter of cultures. Not every space, even if considered creative in the colloquial sense, will be appropriate for a constructive meeting of cultures. This will only be possible in conditions that allow 'going beyond the norm.' The uniqueness of such spaces will be proved by the social context. Creative spaces where cultures meet are understood primarily as places where specific cultural events are organized.

*Creative spaces are areas where various festivals, meetings, cultural events are organized. The Old Town is one of such places. These are open spaces, without barriers.*

<sup>37</sup> M. Rembierz, "Odkrywanie tożsamości żydowskiej w cieniu Holocaustu a dziedzictwo polskiej wielokulturowości – wyzwania dla edukacji i dialogu międzykulturowego", *Edukacja Międzykulturowa*, vol. 3 (2014), pp. 39-99.

Encounters of cultures should be organized in open structures that encourage the audience to enter into relationships, play specific roles, experience values and ambivalent emotions. These spaces are not mere meeting places, but they rather resemble an active configuration of relationships that intensifies the experience of co-presence of other cultures by symbolically expanding mental intercultural boundaries. Creative spaces of cultural encounter are malleable, prone to reorganize their classical structure and change the interpretive matrices of the city's past, present, and future. Physical presence in them intensifies the experience of time and space, physically and sensually. These spaces are imbued with values and possess a unique identity. This context becomes a source of inspiration and creative power.

*Just because we consider a space to be creative does not mean that it will be suitable to host such a meeting of cultures. The latter are located in a specific social context. For example, the Lublin Castle, which was the site of a terrible massacre of the Polish nation. The place is steeped in very specific symbolism and history. We would not say that it is 'creative' in an ordinary sense. But it is a suitable space for the meeting of cultures, it has this specific creative potential. Sometimes it is very hard to process creatively, but it is meaningful.*

*If we want to convey something about a selected event, such as the Holocaust, through creative spaces, it would be better to do it in a place that has the relevant symbolism. Symbols and values connected with a given place are important. The Old Town will not always be a suitable place for all cultural events. Sometimes it is difficult to go beyond a certain pattern of thinking and behaving. Very often, we are prisoners of the history which occupies our thoughts and does not allow us to move forward.*

The multiplicity of experiences of the creativity of spaces in which the meeting of cultures occurs results from the multicultural character of the environment itself. Cultural events that enable situations of cultural encounters are most often held in or near the city center. These are interesting observations that diverge from the dominant narratives in the literature.<sup>38</sup> In the most widespread interpretations and studies, the borderland is perceived as a territory distant from the center, often associated with the periphery. In research descriptions, the dominant claim is that the borderland is an area located on the spatial periphery of a politically, economically, socially, and culturally organized system. It is relatively independent, and its borders both connect and separate communities. The research results do not correspond with these theoretical findings. In the statements of the respondents, the category of the border and the seasonality of the meeting of cultures was evoked.

*Modern borders are set up with the intention to be crossed, not broken. It seems to me that crossing is a dialogue, while breaking is an act of vandalism. Most cultural events serve precisely this kind of communication, which connects, attracts those who feel excluded.*

*Creative spaces become active seasonally, not permanently. Culture Night, for example. There are times when there are a lot of them, but then they disappear.*

The architecture of the imagined world of creative spaces for cultural encounters

<sup>38</sup> A. Sadowski, "Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne. Kontynuacja i zmiana", *Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne*, vol. 13 (2007).

also seems to need boundaries to emphasize the cultural diversity of the city. The great paradox is that the world of intercultural dialogue could not exist without the category of border. It seems that drawing imaginary lines of demarcation is an expression of a certain mythologizing of the uniqueness of selected places. The borders of creative spaces, however, are not the same as the common dividing lines worked out by the local community.

*I wouldn't entirely agree with the opinion that those neighborhoods commonly considered the worst are not suitable for cultural events. There's a lot going on there, too. Darkness always attracts artists. I can't quite answer the question of how I classify these places. Some places are just perceived and experienced differently. The image of each place changes, some become more fashionable, others less.*

*Yes, we have this tendency to cordon off, to emphasize the uniqueness of certain places because we want to keep them memorable. We want the person entering that space to know that they are in a special place. This helps us communicate better. Of course, this fencing off is often just a simple artistic trick. In practice, we do not put up any barricades. The city is an open space. Everyone can enter and leave wherever and whenever they want.*

The function of these boundaries is not to control, but to preserve memory and articulate the potentiality of change. Creative spaces for the meeting of cultures are agendas for the search for shared humanistic values that will preserve diversity. The implicit boundaries take an open form. Encounters of cultures in the aforementioned literature tended to be based on dialogue and the search for shared, unifying values. My research results show that this social situation, however, is most often combined with the experience of controversy, confrontation, polemic. The creative spaces of the meeting of cultures are supposed to enable the change of relational perspective. These are very often the spaces where controversial cultural events are organized. Education of multiculturalism is connected with the notion of controversiality, non-obviousness, going beyond the usual patterns of thinking, norms, and known artistic procedures.

*They already know it [multiculturalism]. A lot of this has already happened. It is increasingly difficult to attract attention to be controversial. Organized cultural events make people accustomed to multiculturalism. Multiculturalism and this type of controversiality are already canons of culture in Lublin, in a positive sense, of course.*

*Locating events in the urban space is not only about adapting it for specific performances. Art more and more often becomes a tool for revitalization of urban space of Lublin. The Carnival of Magicians, a circus moved to urban space, is an example of the influence of art on the processes of shaping urban imagination.*

In the process of redefining the transformation of urban space into a stage, the open theatre influences the way individual places are experienced. These places are in a way socially construed. The potential of recomposition of spatial relations, their multiplication, implementation of innovative solutions favors the symbolic blurring of boundaries between the sender of the message and the receiver who becomes an actor in the process of change. Historic places of traditional cultural meetings attract viewers owing to their diversity of not only architectural forms, but above all values related to past events.

*During cultural events, particular places start to come alive again. Suddenly a forgotten street turns into a stage for amazing events. Passers-by re-read its history, which inspires and gives food for thought.*

The respondents emphasized the importance of these potential transformations in the process of economic and cultural development of the city. The revitalization of urban spaces in Lublin was very often based on the modification of the functions of particular places and their symbolic representations.

*They are being expanded to include revitalization activities. We see more and more new activities in excluded, isolated neighborhoods. Creativity used to flourish in the center, in the Old Town, but now there is definitely more activity in the neighborhoods.*

*Very active are the city's neighborhood centers, NGOs, when it comes to commissioned activities in community centers, in backyards, in notorious neighborhoods, where previously there was no such activity at all. Art has always had a very important revitalizing function in our city.*

The experience of creativity of spaces of cultural meetings was combined in the research with the concept of social exclusion.<sup>39</sup> The specific way of interpreting this characteristic led to the conviction that many urban spaces are excluded from creativity understood in this way. Not every space is considered suitable for hosting cultural events aimed at intercultural dialogue and stimulating social change. The narrative of the limitations of creative spaces dominated the interviews.

*No, not every space can be considered creative. Some are excluded in this respect. Not every space is suitable for cultural events.*

Events that can provide a creative platform for the meeting of cultures are usually arranged in open urban spaces, turning them into live theatres. The analysis of the contributions leads to the observation that urban creativity is a largely socially construed resource and can therefore be managed. It is interesting to study the process of transformation of creativity rooted in the city tradition into an advertising brand.

### 3.2. Limitations and Ideas for Further Research

The results of the study should be considered in light of their limitations, which indicate the future direction of the research. The research method chosen makes systematic comparisons between studies conducted in different cities difficult. The conclusions are based on qualitative in-depth interviews. Their aim will never be to generalize, but rather to search for unique factors that shape the urban imagination and influence the individual and social experience of creativity at the crossroads of cultures. The dense descriptions of respondents' viewpoints provoke an interest in sociological perspectives through humanistic inquiry.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. M. Adamczyk, "Factors Influencing the Ways of Organizing Life in Old Age in the Context of Social Exclusion Risk: The Case of Poland", *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2021), pp. 418-430; M. Adamczyk, "Education in Late Adulthood as a Form of Social Participation of Older People", in V. Mensikovs (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conferences of Faculty of Social Sciences of Daugavpils University: Materials of the International Scientific Conference*, Daugavpils Universitātes Akademiskais apgads 'Saulē' 2016, pp. 5-13.

Nevertheless, future research can achieve greater pluralism by interviewing authorities and artists as well. Their point of view can set a new perspective to interpret the phenomenon of creative places where cultures meet. It seems that the socially construed phenomenon of these places influences the process of urban transformation. The process of translating cultural properties into economic effects is still an open question. Future research could provide evidence to support the key hypotheses of creativity theory that urban planning leads to cultural learning and economic growth.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Finally, the methodological and practical implications of considering creativity as a process of recognizing differences and the socially construed phenomenon of experiencing them through potentials activated in the relational dimension become apparent. The broader implications of the research lead to the construction of theories that link rather than separate the social, the material, from what is considered individual, the subjective. The conclusions combine associations related to sociological and economic considerations, both rooted in anthropological insights.

These results confirm the idea that creativity of space considered on a general level does not depend only on the intrinsic properties of the place, but is dependent on many other conditions subject to stimulation. Perception of creativity is related to the interpretation of specific experience, feeling the atmosphere of places, located in a specific time and space. It is dependent on many factors: normative contexts and processes of self-categorization. On the other hand, creative spaces where cultures meet are interpreted in a much broader context. Rootedness in the axionormative dimension is emphasized. This reality is almost saturated with values. Norms influence the perception of the act of meeting cultures in various ways. They can mediate the communication codes of the city, shape urban imagination, break the taboo of excluded spaces, guide creative behavior, and define its manifestations. Creativity is expressed through spaces and the well-recognized symbolism. Spaces for the meeting of cultures are primarily sites for cultural events in the form of open theatre, circus, arranged in open spaces using tools that facilitate their transformation. Transgressing the code requires first understanding it and reading it anew. In this sense, a deviation from normative criteria leads to a meeting between cultures. This relationship is very complex. Creativity has many imaginary boundaries, expressed through the potential of exclusion. Boundaries are established in order to transcend them. The experience of creativity in cultural encounter spaces is in this sense very much linked to action. The performative potential of these spaces forces us to reflect, which in turn triggers actions leading to understanding and change, to openness to other cultures.

The literature is dominated by a quantitative tendency in approaching the issue of the relationship between the creativity of space and economic development within the framework of the creative city model. Numerous studies refer to measurable categories, in a quantitative sense, such as resources, indicators that allow general comparisons of

cities in terms of the level of creativity. This study brings a different context to consider the creativity of spaces where cultures meet. The interviewees argued that not every creative space is suitable to be arranged for organizing a meeting of cultures. What matters is the symbolism of values, the identity of places and their creative potential. This research shows that creativity is a processual quality, has its limits, and is susceptible to stimulation. The way creativity, which seems so subjective in nature, is experienced morphs over time into a form of internalized social pattern. It mediates social change over time. The symbolic shifting of imagined boundaries is a process that has a history, values, facts, myths, power, specificity, and temporal perspective of change.<sup>40</sup>

The creativity of the spaces where cultures meet is interpreted empirically through events held in urban spaces. It is both a unique attribute and a social resource with significant economic potential. Of particular relevance seems to be the frequent lack of understanding of the importance of the ability to socially transcend the norm, to transcend mental boundaries in overcoming symbolic social trauma in marginalized spaces. Changing attitudes towards excluded social spaces may give rise to their social and economic revitalization. In this context, this research provides arguments for the need to support spaces perceived as creative. In the context of the encounter of cultures, this characteristic is seen as an immanent feature of specific spaces. This attribute can trigger specific actions that will result in a change.

The analysis of the city of Lublin shows the importance of a proper spatial policy, including, among others, the revitalization of the places where cultures meet. Experiencing creativity through the prism of forces which cause a change and activate innate creative potentials raises anew questions about subjectivity and social agency. The creativity of the cultural encounter space is activated within the framework of specific social situations. This perspective goes beyond theoretically established ways of interpreting the phenomenon, leading to new theoretical challenges. It provides evidence to argue for the possibility of introducing into the literature the category of creative spaces for meeting of cultures, which opens up an interesting perspective for the study of this phenomenon in the context of increasing cultural diversity of cities.

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