



**Extended abstract**

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

**Title:** Co-creation for enhancing entrepreneurship, social and cultural integration in countryside cultural landscapes

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**Abstract:**

According to the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000), the landscape, as a reflection of European identity and diversity, is our living natural and cultural heritage, be it ordinary or outstanding, urban or rural, on land or in water. Article 1 of the Convention, establishes that “‘landscape’ means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. Each party undertakes: “to recognise landscapes in law as an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity” (Article 5). And, going further, the Council of Europe (2018:31) stresses that the landscape “is the result of an overall approach to the interaction between natural and human factors, between people and their territory, between past, present and future”.

Taking in mind this concept, we wonder why some European countryside landscapes do not develop creative sector policies for enhancing local long-term industries but they normally tend to focus on tourism development.

Moreover, cultural industries are giving many employment opportunities to young Europeans. New generations are more attracted by new healthier lifestyles and they give more value to countryside opportunities, while fully respecting the identity of the cultural landscapes. The cultural and creative sectors (CCIs) are some of Europe’s most dynamic sectors; they are estimated to generate about 4.2 % of total EU GDP. Employment in the CCIs at EU level increased from 2.5 % in 2008 to 2.9 % in 2014, cultural and creative industries are highly attractive for young people and absorb them easily: the CCIs employed more 15-29-year-olds than any other economic sector (European Commission, 2016). On the other hand, there are around 723 programs in the EU related to Art, Design & Media (<https://www.study.eu>).



In some cases, some public initiatives have tried to create co-manage processes for landscapes management (<https://www.europarc.org>), but even with the participation of other stakeholders a top-down basis do not succeed engaging people. We have observed this problem when implementing some urban strategies such as in the cases of the Port area of Liverpool, the Cabanyal neighbourhood in Valencia or the Rambla promenade in Barcelona. However, in the last years, working with communities is more successful from a Community Participatory-Based Research (CBR), where local communities ask for solutions to their problems to public administrations and researchers. That is, and according to Koster et al (2012), moving from research on, to research with and for communities.

When managing countryside cultural landscapes, we identify seven dimensions that need improvement in order to change problems into opportunities through a better integrated and creative landscape management:

1. Creative hubs: the majority of the creative hubs have been promoted in urban areas and focused on ICT, although they are able to explore and develop new collaborative business models based on creative crafts that have survived more in the countryside of the cities. From the creativehub network (<https://www.creativehubs.eu/network/>), we can observe that only two out of 200 creative hubs are in a countryside area. However, it has been confirmed that rural areas in close proximity to urban areas are often dynamic local economies (Eurostat, 2017:252).
2. Identity: many arts&crafts disappear if the next generations do not access to this knowledge, but countryside areas do not have access to start-ups initiatives and, even if sometimes not so far from their urban administrations, they are areas promoted just such as tourism attractions or very focused on agriculture industry. Therefore, creative industries based on their intangible heritage could be enhanced in these areas (Rowe, 2014), through a co-management model to foster innovation, helping locals to work on traditional and new products without losing their authenticity.
3. Ecological: tourism activities, factories and urban waste, reduce the local flora and fauna and contaminate water and soil of landscapes. New management models can coordinate public, private and local actors to work on a circular economy model, enhancing the development of new products and services that give ecological value, using renewable materials and energy according to the sustainable developing goals (United Nations, 2015).
4. Planning discoordination: normally, different local authorities should coordinate the landscape planning and also, in many occasions, part of these landscapes are under the umbrella of a National Park regulation. Moreover, although the participation of stakeholders has been promoted, this has not been followed by co-creation or co-management processes. Some global or European initiatives for sharing good practices already exist but the complex of many different administrative levels make difficult to work just in a best practices level. These areas need another administrative level, the citizens themselves, that could be present in the process not only for planning but also for assessing and continuous improving. In the EU, we have around 91,000 authorities at local level (municipalities), 1,150-1,324 local intermediary level organisations (districts, counties), around 371 regions and 28 national governments.



5. New generations diaspora but next to the city: youngers change rural areas to urban ones. According to Eurostat (2017:38), there is an urban–rural split, with the majority of urban regions continuing to report population growth, while the number of residents in many peripheral, rural and post-industrial regions declines (in general, less people of working age). However, at the same time, the share of people living in city centres declined at a relatively rapid pace because they search a more (affordable) space, in suburbia, towns, or the countryside (Eurostat, 2017:253).
6. On the other hand, women have been out of the countryside economy for many years although they have played an important role in the rural works and, moreover, they are key actors to transmit the immaterial heritage from one generation to another. On average, women play a smaller role in the labour force of predominantly rural regions than in the whole economy (Eurostat, 2016). Male employment rates in 2016 were higher than female rates in the EU, both in urban and rural areas (Eurostat 2017:95 and 263).
7. Material heritage in danger: some cultural buildings located in the countryside such as farmhouses, barns, small factories, etc. could be restored to have new uses and preserve them.

Therefore, a way to put all these dimensions together through public policies could be to enhance creative hubs in countryside areas adapting a specific strategy to these kind of environment, giving participation to all the stakeholders. Because of the particular environmental value of these areas, new sustainable and creative products and services could be co-developed in these creative hubs. They could be created transforming some existing initiatives or creating new hubs, revitalizing specific landscapes by means of creative activities. This strategy should provide an integrated process that public and private actors could apply to revitalize and create economic activity in cultural countryside landscapes, based on a value chain collaborative model. This strategy should be created with the participation of all the stakeholders in a bottom-up making-decision basis that could help to the success of the process. Creative hubs will be a way to link innovative services to immaterial heritage, giving relevant presence to arts&crafts products.

Creative sectors in the urban areas are nowadays more focused on ICT, whereas rural ones have still a great potential based on their immaterial heritage, producing arts&crafts unique products, gastronomy, etc. better engaging the local population and specially youngers and women who suffer more unemployment rates.

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