

**THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF PERIPHERAL AREAS: CULTURAL  
& CREATIVE BASED POLICIES AND ACTIONS**

AUTHOR: Francesco Mutignani

KEYWORDS: Peripheral areas, Cultural and Creative Industry, Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurship, Cultural and Creative based policies and actions

SSD: SECS-P/08

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This research starts from the personal passion for *Peripheral Areas*, which arises from living in a territory that enjoys / suffers the same characteristics we will examine. This is also an opportunity to develop the topic, already treated with a master's degree thesis, in a more inclusive and international perspective.

The amount of research on this topic confirm that it is not a hollow topic, but it is instead becoming dominant in political agendas and in academic research. Moreover, the already precarious situation of these peripheral territories has been further shaken by the recent pandemic, but in addition to documenting the economic and social damage it has caused, it is interesting to study how, in relation to the city, peripheral areas are seen even more as a safer and healthier place.

So said, the main objective is to analyse how cultural and creative based policies and action can sustain the economic development of peripheral areas. The remain of this paper is structured as it follows. First, a brief definition of the context of peripheral areas, cultural and creatie top-down policies and bottom-up action will be offered. Second, the research objectives are addressed. Third, the research methodology is presented. Finally, the expected results of the research are outlined.

**2. STATE OF THE ART**

**2.1. Peripheral areas: definitions, problems and development potential**

*Peripheral areas* is a very broad term with a large variety of meanings. We can find many articles and research talking about *peripheral*, *rural*, *inner*, *marginal*, *remote*, and so on, *areas* that analyse the same aspects and the same problems of territories distant,

in a geographically, economically and sociologically point of view, from *urban centres*, pulsing core of modern times since long time. That said, the terminology seems to not affect the topic or to change research focus and so it is indifferently used. The literature however discusses the topic whit different levels of detail, therefore an analytical review is needed to find common criteria to all researches carried out.

In this introduction to the research project, we can provide to illustrate some previous results from my master's thesis on this topic<sup>1</sup>, focused on the Italian government strategy to support the development of *Inland areas*. In the dissertation, the analysis has been carried out considering *Inland areas* as described by the SNAI: those territories significantly distant from the basic services<sup>2</sup> offer centres, rich of important natural and cultural resources and highly diversified by nature and by results of centuries-old human settlement processes<sup>3</sup>. The main element used for the definition by the former Minister for Territorial Cohesion Fabrizio Barca, the main responsible of SNAI, is undoubtedly physical distance from urban centre: the more time is needed to reach the city, the more the area is considered "remote". Barca then proceeded in the description exposing the development potential of Inland areas, resuming it with the term "*unused territorial capital*". We could name it the "key factors folder", because is by acting on this set that rural development would be possible. These elements are:

- *Artistical and historical heritage;*
- *Semi-natural systems;*
- *Safeguard of land and local communities;*
- *Know-how and craftsmanship.*

We found these aspects, and others more, also in the theoretical analysis presented by Edwin Ardener<sup>4</sup>, who gets deeper into the topic from a sociological point of view, ending that "not all purely geographical peripheries are in this condition, and it is not

---

<sup>1</sup> Mutignani, F. (2019), Master thesis: "*The relaunch of Italian inland areas through cultural and creative entrepreneurship. The case of the Fourth Inner Area of Montefeltro and Alto Metauro*". University of Urbino.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. education, health and mobility.

<sup>3</sup> Barca, F., Casavola, P., & Lucatelli, S. (2014), *Strategia nazionale per le aree interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance*. Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico, Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica, Unità di Valutazione degli Investimenti Pubblici.

<sup>4</sup> Ardener, E. (2012), "Remote areas" Some theoretical considerations. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 2(1), 519-533.

restricted to peripheries”. A good panoramic is presented by Maria Giulia Pezzi and Giulia Urso<sup>5</sup>, who expose the topic from Anthropological, Geographical and Sociological approaches. They expose in a clear way the process that still is creating marginalization from cities, that are “*still interpreted as the carriages of development*”. Regarding purely economic analysis, we can refer to specific macroeconomic policies of individual countries and those of the wider European address. An example of the first ones is the SNAI we have just cited, and its annual reports; instead, for arguments at continental level, we can refer to ESPON<sup>6</sup>, Eurostat<sup>7</sup>, ENRD<sup>8</sup> and other European institutional publications.

## **2.2. The Cultural & Creative Entrepreneurship and its Industry**

Examined the context of work and compared few case studies, we can proceed to analyse the microeconomic aspects, i.e. try to investigate how cultural and creative entrepreneurship and industry can contribute to development of Peripheral areas, especially in time of crisis. The first step is undoubtedly the definition of Cultural and Creative entrepreneurship by the analysis of the literature. This topic has already been studied in the previous thesis work<sup>9</sup>, firstly arguing the Cultural aspect and the Creative aspect in two different moments and then merging the conclusions in a common definition. In that study, definitions and arguments of international nature have already been considered; the most important is indeed Spilling contribution, who argued the concept of *cultural-economic entrepreneur*: “*this kind of entrepreneurship is aimed at developing business or institution based on cultural concept, and mainly based on commercial or at least non-profit economic principles*”<sup>10</sup>. Thus, according to Spilling, the culture is both means and aim of the activity and it is used to facilitate the restructuring and economic vitalization of an area, changing people’s perspectives and their attitudes and behaviour. This reasoning fully meets our need in rural areas

---

<sup>5</sup> Pezzi, M. G., & Urso, G. (2016). Peripheral areas: conceptualizations and policies. Introduction and editorial note. *Italian Journal of Planning Practice*, 6(1), 1-19.

<sup>6</sup> ESPON (2017), “Inner Peripheries: National Territories Facing Challenges of Access to Basic Services of General Interest | ESPON.” <https://www.espon.eu/inner-peripheries>.

<sup>7</sup> Eurostat (2017), Eurostat regional yearbook 2017 edition. Eurostat Statistical Books.

<sup>8</sup> ENRD - European Network of Rural Development (2017), Summary Report. ENRD Workshop. Social Hubs in Rural Europe. Responding to demographic change and promoting social inclusion.

<sup>9</sup> Mutignani, F. (2019), *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Spilling O. R. (1991), Entrepreneurship in a cultural perspective. *Entrepreneurship & regional development*, 3 (1), 33-48.

development perspective because Culture is treated as *reference for local development, potential for creativity and determinant factor for many activities*. Another important contribution to the research has come from Lampel e Germain<sup>11</sup> who state that Creativity, defined by Treccani<sup>12</sup> as “*capability to create with intellect and fantasy*”, is the fundamental characteristic of post-industrial economy, because it includes *organizational flexibility, the use of advanced technologies, process innovations and a great use of people talent*. This last one aspect confirms what Florida<sup>13</sup> states about *Creative Class*, i.e. those people, workers, who make a large use of creativity in their activities. It is composed of scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and architects, and also includes "people in design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or creative content"<sup>14</sup>. In my previous work, we concluded that from the single point of view of Cultural & Creative entrepreneurship, the Creativity feeds the Cultural know-how of the entrepreneur and vice versa, with an inseparable circular relation that is reflected on final outputs of his activity. At this aspect, the entrepreneur associates the useful tools and economics knowledge, as well as other teammates with their personal Cultural and Creative attitudes.

Explained the Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurship, what is its weight on the economy? The answer comes from the study of the Cultural and Creative Industry, defined by UNESCO as “*those sectors of organized activity that have as their main objective the production or reproduction, the promotion, distribution or commercialization of goods, services and activities of content derived from cultural, artistic or heritage origins*”<sup>15</sup>. From this notion we can learn what Klausen<sup>16</sup> affirms about the presence of culture in the economy, i.e. Culture is an “*aspect*” present into all sectors and not only a “*sector*”, thus is configured as value added for each service or physical output we can imagine. A good analysis of the impact of Culture and Creative

---

<sup>11</sup> Lampel, J., Germain, O. (2016), Creative industries as hubs of new organizational and business practices. *Journal of Business Research*, 69, 2327-2333.

<sup>12</sup> Treccani (2019). *Creatività*. Vocabolario online. <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/creativita/>

<sup>13</sup> Florida, R. (2002), *The rise of Creative Class*. New York, Basic Books.

<sup>14</sup> Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Perseus Book Group

<sup>15</sup> UNESCO. What do we mean by Cultural and Creative Industries? Section for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, document no. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Klausen, A. M. (1997), *Kunstsociologi*. Oslo, Gyldendal.

Industry is provided by Symbola Foundation<sup>17</sup> in its annual report about this topic for the Italian scenario. The pre-pandemic situation presented the Cultural and Creative Production System growing and performing the 5.7% of Italian PIL, i.e. over 90mld €; more than 44% of this wealth was generated by non-cultural sectors, manufacturer and services, which employs over 630,000 culture's professionals, such us designers, communicators, director and so on; the whole System employed more than one and a half million people, that is 5.9% of Italian workers. In the last two years, affected as we now by Covid-19, the sector has been affected, at international level, by large budget cuts from the government, ranging from 5 to 20%. Further, the measures to containment of the pandemic have compromised the performance of most activities; according to UNESCO<sup>18</sup> at the beginning of October 2020, only 37% of world heritage sites had completely re-opened. For a more exhaustive review and to underline the pandemic effects, a comparative analysis of European data trends, will be settled, referring to publications like Symbola Foundation<sup>19</sup> report, UNESCO<sup>20</sup> bulletins and UNWTO<sup>21</sup> database.

### **2.3. Micro-cosmos: Cultural and Creative actions for Peripheral Areas**

At this point we can get straight to the main objective of this research, i.e. the application of Culture and Creativity to Peripheral areas development with bottom-up action. The aim of this part of the research is to investigate how much Cultural and Creative bottom-up actions are effective on development of wealth in Peripheral areas context and what are the common features among them. We already have some evidence in past years of this “experiments”: Spilling<sup>22</sup> itself cover this topic with the case of *Melbu*, a small community in Vesterlånd, Norway, that has a long tradition of manufacturing and fishing trade and reinvented itself with cultural actions in order to face the crisis of the sector. These actions included the restoring of several older houses for community purposes, the creation of a regional museum and a park for cultural

---

<sup>17</sup> Fondazione Symbola, Unioncamere (2020). *Io sono Cultura 2020: L'Italia della qualità e della bellezza sfida la crisi*. I quaderni di Symbola.

<sup>18</sup> Kern, P. (2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Cultural and Creative Sector. *Report for the Council of Europe*.

<sup>19</sup> Fondazione Symbola, Unioncamere (2020), *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/culture-covid-19-impact-and-response-tracker>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.unwto.org/international-tourism-and-covid-19>

<sup>22</sup> Spilling O. R. (1991), *op. cit.*

activities, various cultural events under the heading of *Summer Melbu*, and others. All these actions got their fruits in a long-term period, resumable in more incoming tourists, a more stimulating environment for new business and more attractive for highly qualified workers.

In the Italian scenario, this kind of actions are recommended by the SNAI itself, in the second step of the approach; in fact, after setting up the development of basic services for citizenship, bottom-up local development projects can be started, focusing on cornerstones we cited at the beginning: environmental sustainability, natural and heritage capital enhancement, removable energy, know-how and craftsmanship. Expected results are growth of occupation, population and used territorial capital, then the development of quality life, monitoring by tools like income's growth, social cohesion, social costs reduction, artistical and heritage capital restoring and manutention. An example of these development projects is *Apennines's asylums – The creativity dwellings in the upper Marche region*, ideated by the first pilot test area of Marche Region named *Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano*. The term *asylum* stands for organizational asset and it is implemented for five different directions:

- 1- *Culture, arts and creativity*
- 2- *Education, training and innovation*
- 3- *Care and wellness*
- 4- *Tourism and incoming*
- 5- *Agriculture and landscape*

Several interactions and contamination exist between these assets, which give shape to a complex but functional development organism focused on territory.

Other two interesting case studies are treated by Pagano, Petrucci and Bocconcelli<sup>23</sup> in their research paper about *passion-driven* entrepreneurship: RATATÀ and ARIA festivals that take place in Marche Region, respectively in Macerata and Fano, two medium-sized cities that have felt the effect of the financial crisis. These two festivals born from the passion of organizers, who started from just an idea and, by involving the municipality and local actors, reached the goal becoming a fixed appointment of their

---

<sup>23</sup> Pagano, A., Petrucci, F., & Bocconcelli, R. (2020). Passion-driven entrepreneurship in small and medium-sized towns: empirical evidence from Italy. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*.

cities and a reference for other initiatives, as well as creating income for many supporting actors.

From these reported case studies emerge how much important is the bottom-up participation at local activities and the instauration of a network that allows to share competences and vision on the Peripheral areas development topic. This aspect is clearly exposed by Biondi, Demartini et al.<sup>24</sup> in their analysis. This could be considered as the anteroom for the creation of a cultural and creative cluster, topic examined by Chapain and sagot-Douvaroux<sup>25</sup> in their literature review focused on the evolution of the concept.

### **3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Given the above description of the state of the art on Peripheral areas and Cultural and Creative policies and actions, this research aims to analyse how cultural and creative based policies and action can sustain the economic development of peripheral areas.

Notably, the objective of this research project is threefold.

Firstly, we aim act analysing at the international level, and in particular at European level, if and how policies based on cultural and creative sector have been implemented in order to push the development of Peripheral areas.

Secondly, to investigate how cultural and creative entrepreneurship and industry can contribute to development of Peripheral areas, especially in time of crisis.

Finally, we aim to investigate how much Cultural and Creative bottom-up actions are effective on development the socio-economics context in Peripheral areas and to discover which are the common features among the analysed case studies.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

In the relation of the first objective question, the methodology will use both quantitative and qualitative analysis tools. The study will make extensive use of the existing

---

<sup>24</sup> Biondi, L., Demartini, P., Marchegiani, L., Marchiori, M., & Piber, M. (2020). Understanding orchestrated participatory cultural initiatives: Mapping the dynamics of governance and participation. *Cities*, 96, 102459.

<sup>25</sup> Chapain, C., Sagot-Douvaroux, D., (2018): Cultural and creative clusters – a systematic literature review and a renewed research agenda, *Urban Research & Practice*, DOI: 10.1080/17535069.2018.1545141

literature on Peripheral areas subject, with particular regard to publications by government agencies, in order to get the macro approach perspective.

A comparative analysis will be settled both for definitions of Peripheral areas characteristics and for Cultural and Creative Sector performances among European countries. In the relation of the second objective, a qualitative and quantitative methodology will be used to compare the performances of Cultural and Creative sector among different Peripheral areas and countries among Europe.

Finally, for the last objective, a qualitative methodology based on multiple case studies will be used, with interview, data analysis and research on the field.

The results collected will be then elaborated and discussed to formulate the conclusions.

## **5. EXPECTED RESULTS**

The main expected result is to draw managerial implication that could be useful for both entrepreneurs and institutions acting in Peripheral areas and aiming to contributing to development. We expect to find a great correlation among different countries, at least between Mediterranean areas (the *Latin* world) on one hand and between Baltic and North Sea areas (the *Anglo-Saxon* world) on the other.

Second, we expect to find an increasingly weight of culture on economics trends, more prominent in north Europe nations. Regarding the distribution of this wealth, we expect to find its polarization around great cities and capitals, but also its patchy growth in Peripheral areas as a result of local development policies.

Third, we expect to find many examples of good practices on the topic, both bottom-up policies and cultural and creative actions. As for the first expected result, we expect to find similar case studies between the countries of northern Europe and southern Europe, but we do not reject the hypothesis of similar experiences between a state of northern and one of southern Europe.

## **6. REFERENCES**

Ardener, E. (2012), "Remote areas" Some theoretical considerations. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 2(1), 519-533.

Barca, F., Casavola, P., & Lucatelli, S. (2014), *Strategia nazionale per le aree interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance*. Ministero dello Sviluppo



Economico, Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica, Unità di Valutazione degli Investimenti Pubblici.

Biondi, L., Demartini, P., Marchegiani, L., Marchiori, M., & Piber, M. (2020). Understanding orchestrated participatory cultural initiatives: Mapping the dynamics of governance and participation. *Cities*, 96, 102459.

Chapain, C., Sagot-Duvaurox, D., (2018): Cultural and creative clusters – a systematic literature review and a renewed research agenda, *Urban Research & Practice*, DOI: 10.1080/17535069.2018.1545141

ENRD - European Network of Rural Development (2017), Summary Report. ENRD Workshop. Social Hubs in Rural Europe. Responding to demographic change and promoting social inclusion.

ESPON (2017), “Inner Peripheries: National Territories Facing Challenges of Access to Basic Services of General Interest | ESPON.” <https://www.espon.eu/inner-peripheries>.

Eurostat (2017), Eurostat regional yearbook 2017 edition. *Eurostat Statistical Books*.

Florida, R. (2002), The rise of Creative Class. New York, *Basic Books*.

Florida, R. (2002), *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Perseus Book Group.

Fondazione Symbola, Unioncamere (2020), Io sono Cultura 2020: L'Italia della qualità e della bellezza sfida la crisi. *I quaderni di Symbola*.

Kern, P. (2020), The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Cultural and Creative Sector. *Report for the Council of Europe*.

Klausen, A. M. (1997), *Kunstsociologi*. Oslo, Gyldendal.

Lampel, J., Germain, O. (2016), Creative industries as hubs of new organizational and business practices. *Journal of Business Research*, 69, 2327-2333.

Mutignani, F. (2019), Master Thesis: “*The relaunch of Italian inland areas through cultural and creative entrepreneurship. The case of the Fourth Inner Area of Montefeltro and Alto Metauro*”. University of Urbino.

Pagano, A., Petrucci, F., & Bocconcelli, R. (2020), Passion-driven entrepreneurship in small and medium-sized towns: empirical evidence from Italy. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*.

Pezzi, M. G., & Urso, G. (2016), Peripheral areas: conceptualizations and policies. Introduction and editorial note. *Italian Journal of Planning Practice*, 6(1), 1-19.

Spilling O. R. (1991), Entrepreneurship in a cultural perspective. *Entrepreneurship & regional development*, 3 (1), 33-48.

Treccani (2019). Creatività. *Vocabolario online*.  
<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/creativita/>

UNESCO. What do we mean by Cultural and Creative Industries? *Section for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, document no. 11.

<https://en.unesco.org/news/culture-covid-19-impact-and-response-tracker>

<https://www.unwto.org/international-tourism-and-covid-19>

## **7. FEASIBILITY**

As explained in methodology paragraph, at first, an analysis of the existing literature on Peripheral areas will be carried out, as well as Cultural and Creative Industry. The long period of study will be an opportunity for constant monitoring of the performance of the cultural and creative sector, in the light of European Recovery and Resilience Plan.

The case studies will be chosen among already active policies and actions of development in Peripheral areas; the one proposed to represent the Italian scenario would be Urbino Teatro Urbano, a festival organized by CTU Cesare Questa of the University of Urbino, that has expanded its activity on the territory of upper Marche Region in the last two years. The choice of one, or more, European case studies will depend on the affinity with the Italian one and the completeness of those examined. After the analysis on the field, the remaining time will be used to process the collected data and complete the research project.