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## **CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM OF CREATIVE PLACE: CREATIVE CLASS, CREATIVE NETWORKS AND PARTICIPATION IN CULTURE**

**ABSTRACT:** The scope of this paper is to conceptualise a data-based research framework for the role of creative networks in cultural exchange. Participation in culture measured as audience per 1000 residents and expenditures on culture-related activities were analysed in relation to such territorial assets as accessibility to creative infrastructure, the economic status of residents, the governance networks of civil society, and cultural capital. The results indicate how accessibility, governance networks, and cultural capital contribute to participation measured via audience indicators while a low poverty rate has explanatory value with respect to expenditures on culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Creative places, participation in culture, cultural ecosystems.

### **Theoretical background**

In recent decades many cities faced the challenge of redefining their identities towards a new set of values that could be delivered to their residents. Creativity, sustainability, innovation, and networked governance emerged as key themes in thinking about the city of the future. The concept of a creative city (Yencken, 1988) evoked the value of urban policies fostering creativity as a factor underpinning the positive reception of a place among residents. Florida's creative class concept (2002) seemed to offer a rewarding framework for urban politicians in their attempts

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to gain a new perspective on city development. Manufacturers were to be replaced by communities of artists. Coal and steel were to be replaced by ideas. Currently, 116 cities participate in the UNESCO network of Creative Cities that was created in 2004 (UNESCO, 2016). Creativity became one of the most popular threads in branding strategies of many places to such an extent that anything could fall into the category “creative.” It might well be a *signum temporis* of a world-spread narcissist culture that flourishes not only at the individual, but also at the institutional level. Academic investigation should offer an insight into phenomena that exist behind concepts of a creative city and creative class and their mutual relations to pay more attention to participation in the creative realm by place residents.

The scope of this paper is to conceptualise data-based research framework for the role of creative networks in cultural exchange. By considering the concept of creative cities through focusing on the creative class and creative industries we tend to omit the role of users in creative place making. While Florida’s creative class concept includes professions well beyond bohemia, Throsby proposes a concentric circle model of cultural industries that is much more concise. Representatives of literature, music, performative arts and visual arts constitute core creative arts, while core cultural industries comprise the film and theatre industry, museums, art galleries, libraries and related institutions (Throsby, 2008). The core creative arts circle represents the cultural capital of the city, while the core cultural industries circle in fact refers to cultural infrastructure. Both can be considered as crucial assets for the development of a creative place. Mackiewicz, Michorowska, and Śliwka describe connections between three types of actors in a triple sector model of creative activity, i.e. (1) public sector cultural services such as theatres, opera houses, museums, libraries etc., (2) non-profit creative actors such as NGOs active in the field of culture, and (3) business related to arts (Mackiewicz, Michorowska, and Śliwka, 2009). Taking into account the spatial perspective – creative activities occupy and recreate specific habitats – Alcamo et al. proposes a concept of cultural ecosystem services, which are “non-material benefits people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation, and aesthetic experiences” (Alcamo et al., 2003). In this context, studying audiences and factors that positively

influence participation in culture is equivalent to studying the livability and vitality of a creative place.

Several factors attract scholarly attention as potential predictors of consumer behaviours in the cultural market. The socio-cultural background at the individual level as a fundament for cultural capital retains a dominant position since Bourdieu and Passerson observed patterns of cultural and social reproduction (Bourdieu, Passerson, 1977; Tzanakis, 2011). Bourdieu points out that the stratification of patterns of cultural consumption refers not only to artefacts and intangible outputs of human artistic engagement, but also to the use of language, and patterns of behaviour in social situations depending on the socio-cultural background of a person involved.

The consumption of culture can be considered as satisfying higher levels in Maslow's pyramid of human needs (i.e. social and self-actualisation needs) after physiological and safety needs have been met. A marketing perspective offers an insight into criteria that should be met for a person to participate in market exchange. Cost and convenience are among the basics that should be considered within a strategic perspective of a cultural institution (Kay, Wong, Polonsky, 2009). Recently, there have been growing considerations for spatial dimension in public policy – territorial differences in access opportunities to public services including culture are evident in spite of regional development strategies aimed at the reduction of socioeconomic disparities across subnational territorial units. How to improve public access to places where creative activities occur and eradicate barriers of entry for individuals, notwithstanding their economic, social, ethnic, or religious status are frequently asked questions by public policy practitioners in the area of culture (Laaksonen, 2010). From an organisational perspective, Bonet and Donato analyse modes of management in the cultural sector and place emphasis on the role of cross-sectoral networks in the delivery of culture for an audience in times of economic austerity (Bonet and Donato, 2011). Mixed strategic management model in the arts stresses the importance of civil society and third sector organisations as opposed to models of governmental support and market delivery (Varbanova, 2013). From the perspective of new public governance, institutional networks in public policy create opportunities for politicians, public managers, and institutional stakeholders representing civil society thanks to synergistic use

of resources in cross-sectoral collaboration (delivering more with less, taking advantage of relational rent, sharing and merging capacities), and at the same time increase access to public and socially desirable goods for citizens, irrespective of their socio-cultural background (Vigoda, 2002).

To sum up, the cultural ecosystem of a creative place should be considered as a network wherein core creative class representatives use and transform assets within core creative industry infrastructure to provide place residents with non-material benefits (Alcamo et al, 2003). Civil society organisations and audience members with strong ties towards creative class representatives act as institutional and individual intermediaries in those networks by providing a general audience with more opportunities for participation in culture.

### **Study design**

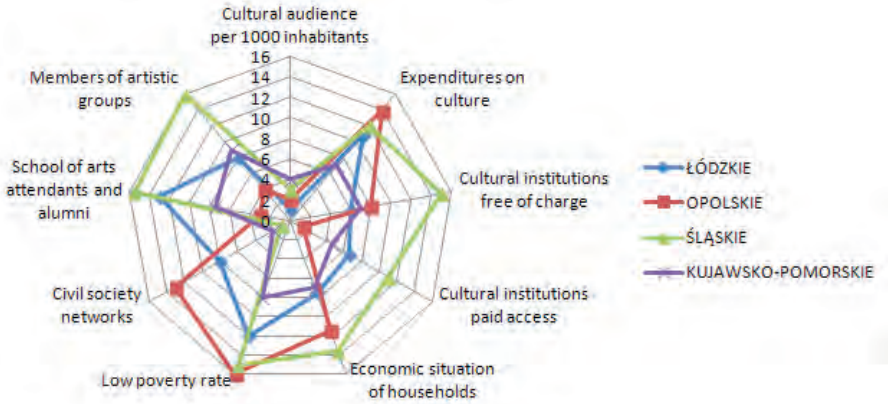
The objective of the study was to analyse relationships between participation in culture and selected constituents of a cultural ecosystem. Variables related to the accessibility of culture (convenience dimension in marketing) were defined by the number of cultural institutions located in a specific area. Institutions taken into consideration comprised institutions of culture: the so-called Houses of Culture and their branches, theatres and institutions of music, cinemas, and museums. Variables related to the affordability of culture (cost dimension in marketing) were composed of regional disposable income per capita, households perceived economic well-being – subjective assessment on a 5-degree scale, and relative poverty rate. Number of active non-governmental organisations per 1000 inhabitants constituted a variable related to institutional creative network intermediaries, while the cultural capital variable related to individual creative network intermediaries were: number of attendants at schools of the arts (primary and secondary level), number of members of artistic groups, number of students and graduates at schools of the arts; third level education. Participation in culture was measured by two variables: – (1) audience in events organised by institutions of culture, theatres, institutions of music, permanent cinemas and visitors in museums per 1000 citizens and (2) expenditures on culture – in PLN per capita. All data was gathered at the regional level, but

in fact they reflect the situation in the regional capital city when it comes to the inclusion of high profile cultural institutions in the accessibility variable, as well as third level education in the cultural capital variable. It can be considered as a clustering effect in the cultural/creative industry that Van Der Borg and Russo discussed (Van Der Borg, Russo, 2005). Data was recorded by ranks to smooth differences in scales and tackle normality problem. Data related to relative poverty rate was inverted so that the higher rank reflected the lower poverty rate in the group of analysed regions. The analysis reflects the situation in all Polish regions and presents a preliminary study of factors that contribute to the participation in culture at the sub-national level. The research design consisted of (1) profiling regions based on statistical data, (2) carrying out analysis of variance and (3) performing interpretation with the support of quantitative data retrieved in a series of focus group interviews with residents.

### **Regional profiles**

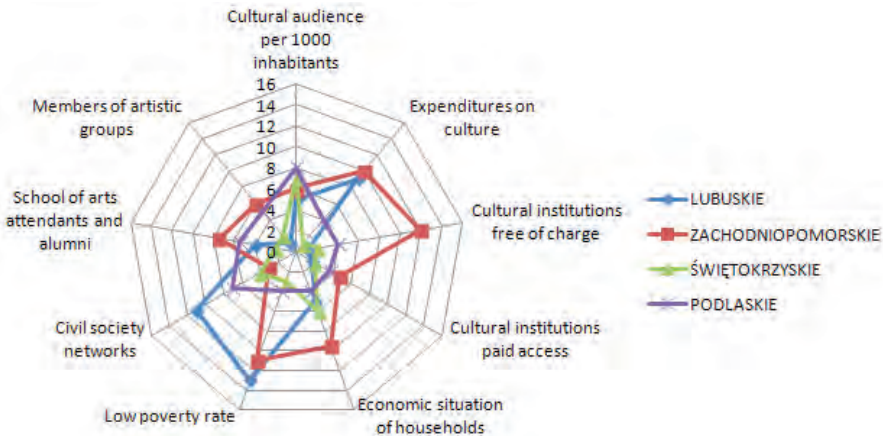
In order to profile the regions according to the level of participation in culture, the data was discretised by equal frequencies into four intervals. This procedure retrieved four groups of regions differentiated by the number of participants in culture. Figures 1–4 depict regional profiles depending on the size of cultural audience per 1000 inhabitants. Low participation in culture was observed in Łódzkie, Opolskie, Śląskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie. Despite small cultural audience, Łódzkie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie had the most balanced profiles while taking into account the rest of variables. Śląskie with high membership in artistic groups and many schools of the arts attendees and alumni, good accessibility and good economic conditions should present good opportunities for participation in culture, nonetheless data place this region in infrequent users group. Opolskie shows consistency in good economic standing of households and high expenditures on culture, while there are few museums, theatres, cinemas, and institutions of music relative to other regions (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1.** Low participation in culture – regional profiles<sup>1</sup>



Low average participation in culture was observed in regions such as: Lubuskie, Zachodniopomorskie, Świętokrzyskie, and Podlaskie. In this group profiles of Świętokrzyskie and Podlaskie are more consistent than those of Lubuskie and Zachodniopomorskie. In Lubuskie, the low poverty rate and medium high expenditures on culture coexist with intensive civil society activity, but the number of cultural institutions offering paid and unpaid access to culture is very low. Paid cultural infrastructure in Zachodniopomorskie also remains at a low level, as do civil society networks (Fig. 2).

**Fig. 2.** Low average participation in culture – regional profiles

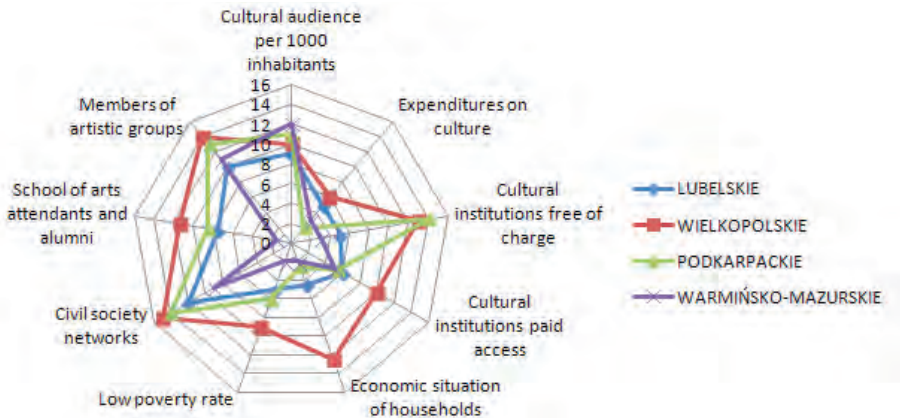


<sup>1</sup> Source for figures 1–4: own research based on data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland.

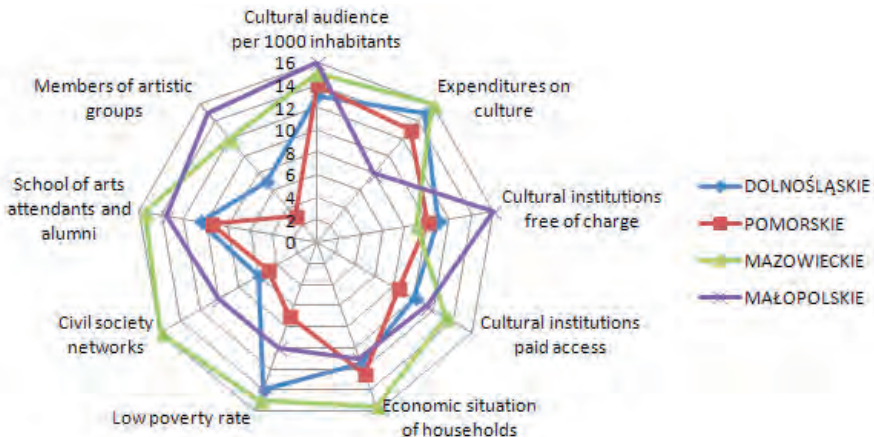


Lubelskie, Wielkopolskie, Podkarpackie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie are regions with high average participation in culture. Podkarpackie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, and Lubelskie profiles indicate some kind of mediating effect of cultural capital and civil society networks on economic factors contributing to consumption of culture. This effect is the most evident for Warmińsko-Mazurskie (Fig. 3).

**Fig. 3.** High average participation in culture – regional profiles



**Fig. 4.** High participation in culture – regional profiles



The residents of the last group of regions – Dolnośląskie, Pomorskie, Mazowieckie, and Małopolskie – are among frequent users of culture. Mazowieckie – a capital region – scores high on all dimensions with the exception of free of charge cultural institutions

and membership in an artistic group. Dolnośląskie and Pomorskie are interesting cases of high participation in culture despite average economic standing of households, average accessibility of cultural infrastructure and loose civil society networks (Fig. 4).

Irregularities observed in profiles of the regions call for qualitative multiple case studies research to explore additional factors contributing to actors' participation in creative networks: both residents as audience members and creative class representatives as carriers of cultural capital. High values on economic status, cultural infrastructure, and cultural capital linked to low participation in culture seem to contribute to a "culture resistant" environment as in the case of Śląskie, which was dominated by the coal mining industry in the past. On the other hand, the poor economic condition and limited access to cultural infrastructure does not prevent residents of Lubelskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie from participation in culture, which would indicate an "idealist" approach. Lubuskie and Opolskie seem to suffer from inadequate cultural infrastructure despite the fair economic status of households and willingness to spend on culture. This could suggest that their creative ecology at infrastructural level is lower than expected. In both cases the regions have strong economic ties to Germany and Wielkopolska and Dolny Śląsk. The pattern to study further here would be of "empty shelves and full pockets."

### **Size of audience and expenditures on culture and their determinants**

In order to assess the contribution of creative ecology to the participation in culture, cultural infrastructure, economic situation of households, activity level of civil society, and cultural capital were analysed as explanatory variables for the size of audiences in cultural institutions and expenditures on culture. Dependant variables comprised: PARTn – ranked participation in culture measured as number of visitors to cultural institutions per 1000 inhabitants, and PARTe – ranked expenditures on culture per capita. Constituents of creative ecology of the region as an independent variable were: INFRAf – ranked number of cultural institutions offering free access for audience, INFRAp – ranked number of cultural institutions charging for access for audience, ECONp – economic situation of households being an average rank of regional GDP per capita and



subjective assessment of economic wellbeing, ECONn – relative poverty rate reversed measure, GOVcs – civil society network measured as a number of active NGOS per 1000 inhabitants, CULTCAPnasc – ranked cultural capital carriers in the nascent stage being an average rank of primary and secondary schools of the arts attendees, students, and graduates from tertiary level schools of the arts, and CULTCAPactive – ranked cultural capital carriers in active stage measured by membership in artistic groups.

The analysis of variance was carried out independently for PARTn and PARTe in XLSTAT. The obtained results are presented in tables 1–6.

**Table 1.** Dependant variable: PARTn computed against model Y=Mean (Y)

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	7	316,695	45.242	15.531	0.000
Error	8	23,305	2.913		
Corrected Total	15	340,000			

Source: own calculations.

**Table 2.** Dependant variable: PARTe computed against model Y=Mean (Y)

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	7	306,599	43.800	10.491	0.002
Error	8	33,401	4.175		
Corrected Total	15	340,000			

Source: own calculations.

**Table 3.** Type III Sum of Squares analysis (PARTn)

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
INFRAf	1	35.793	35.793	12.287	0.008
INFRAp	1	139.386	139.386	47.848	0.000
ECONp	1	16.703	16.703	5.734	0.044
ECONn	1	4.765	4.765	1.636	0.237
GOVcs	1	28.680	28.680	9.845	0.014
CULTCAPnasc	1	48.914	48.914	16.791	0.003
CULTCAPactive	1	53.985	53.985	18.532	0.003

Source: own calculations.

**Table 4.** Type III Sum of Squares analysis (PARTe)

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
INFRAf	1	0.042	0.042	0.010	0.922
INFRAp	1	14.535	14.535	3.481	0.099
ECONp	1	0.193	0.193	0.046	0.835
ECONn	1	59.125	59.125	14.161	0.006
GOVcs	1	1.021	1.021	0.245	0.634
CULCCAPnasc	1	1.836	1.836	0.440	0.526
CULTCAPactive	1	16.175	16.175	3.874	0.085

Source: own calculations.

**Table 5.** Model parameters PARTn

Source	Value	Standard error	t	Pr >  t	Lower bound (95%)	Upper bound (95%)
Intercept	6.861	1.402	4.895	0.001	3.629	10.093
INFRAf	0.561	0.160	3.505	0.008	0.192	0.931
INFRAp	2.648	0.383	6.917	0.000	1.765	3.531
ECONp	-0.594	0.248	-2.395	0.044	-1.166	-0.022
ECONn	-0.221	0.173	-1.279	0.237	-0.619	0.177
GOVcs	0.317	0.101	3.138	0.014	0.084	0.550
CULCCAPnasc	-1.101	0.269	-4.098	0.003	-1.720	-0.481
CULTCAPactive	-0.791	0.184	-4.305	0.003	-1.215	-0.367

Source: own calculations.

**Table 6.** Model parameters PARTe

Source	Value	Standard error	t	Pr >  t	Lower bound (95%)	Upper bound (95%)
Intercept	1.225	1.678	0.730	0.486	-2.645	5.094
INFRAf	-0.019	0.192	-0.101	0.922	-0.461	0.423
INFRAp	0.855	0.458	1.866	0.099	-0.202	1.912
ECONp	0.064	0.297	0.215	0.835	-0.621	0.749
ECONn	0.777	0.207	3.763	0.006	0.301	1.254
GOVcs	-0.060	0.121	-0.495	0.634	-0.338	0.219
CULCCAPnasc	-0.213	0.322	-0.663	0.526	-0.955	0.528
CULTCAPactive	-0.433	0.220	-1.968	0.085	-0.941	0.074

Source: own calculations.

The results indicate that 93% of the variability of the dependent variable PARTn is explained by the 7 explanatory variables. Given the p-value of the F statistic the information brought by the explanatory variables is significantly better than what a basic mean would bring. Based on the Type III sum of squares, the following variables bring significant information to explain the variability of the dependent variable: INFRAf, INFRAp, ECONp, GOVcs, CULTCAPnasc, CULTCAPactive, while ECONn does not. Among explanatory variables, based on the Type III sum of squares, variable INFRAp is the most influential.

In the case of dependent variable PARTe, 90% of the variability of the dependent variable is explained by the 7 explanatory variables. Given the p-value of the F statistic the information brought by explanatory variables is significantly better than what a basic mean would bring. Based on the Type III sum of squares only one variable brings significant information to explain the variability of the dependent variable that is: ECONn.

According to the results, the size of the audience is mostly determined by the accessibility of infrastructure such as theatres, museums, cinemas, and institutions of music. There is also a significant contribution of cultural capital related variables. The poverty rate does not contribute to changes in the size of audience, while it significantly impacts expenditures on culture.

The adoption of mixed methods of study design called for the interpretation of the model by quantitative data. Quantitative data was retrieved during three group interviews on patterns of participation in fine arts culture, since variables of infrastructure related to this type of cultural consumption. Three main problem areas were covered in the group process:

- patterns of consumption inc. modes of participation (in person, on-line), frequency, reasons (entertainment, education, catharsis);
- projection tests inc. filling in empty dialogues, finishing unfinished sentences, collage: stereotyping of fine art consumption;
- sorting modes of participation based on predetermined dimensions.

According to the respondents, participation in fine arts culture requires special preparation – “to go to a theatre you have to keep a date, get extra clothes, afterwards it’s normal that you go to some restaurant to have a nice evening – altogether it takes time and money” [male, average user, medium-sized city]. Participation in fine arts culture depends on what peers and relatives do in their

free time – “especially in small and medium-sized cities it is quite a venture to go to opera, people do not consider it an everyday situation” [female, accidental user, small city]. Participation in fine arts culture intensifies with practice, incentive to become a consumer in a specific area of fine arts culture unfolds a “whole new world” of experience that in order to be fully embraced, it should be supported with process of learning – “as I decided to listen more to jazz and ambient music I observed I should learn more about this particular genre, artists, and theory of music as well” [male, frequent user, large city]. One can approach fine arts culture at a low price but communication about low cost opportunities is inadequate – “for those who really want to be ‘cultural people’ it is not at all that difficult to do it at a low cost” [male, average user, large city]; Statement 2: “but neither I, nor my colleagues even knew about this project ‘theatre tickets for a penny,’ and I bet most folks also didn’t” [female, accidental user, small city]. Participation in fine arts culture is expensive but social media and the Internet make it more accessible. Also, according to the participants boundaries between popular and fine arts culture have become blurred. Projection tests revealed general positive attitude towards fine arts, although rarely supported by real participation. Modes of participation were much richer among those who were networked into creative class through personal or professional experience. Other patterns of participation developed through such channels as hobbies and interests loosely related to culture that somehow are channelled into a specific cultural event such as a special exhibition or festival. The sorting model of types of participation revolved around two dimensions: the sophistication of arts vs. personal effort. Respondents shared a common opinion on the necessity to be “socialized,” “educated,” and “trained into” fine arts. It would indicate that creative networks of cultural institutions, non-governmental organisations, and creative class representatives have a role to play as educators among a general audience in the process of creative place making.

## **Conclusions**

Creative ecology has been recently evoked as a concept that should replace creative economy, for it has the potential to describe intangible benefits that go beyond the economic impact of creative

class on society. The cultural dimension of creative ecology and the participation of residents in fine arts culture were at the heart of the study. The data was analysed at the regional level and their relevance for creative cities is as good as it reflects the dominant impact of capital cities on the values of variables. It is consistent with studies on agglomeration effects and on the role of the metropolis in creating a concentrated demand for specific goods and services including the cultural market.

The results confirm that making creative place requires a clear communication from cultural institutions towards the audience on opportunities to participate in culture. Also, ensuring access to cultural infrastructure remains a core responsibility of creative place managers. New modes of interorganisational governance and collaboration with the third sector are required to build a density of creative networks. From a resident's perspective what matters mostly to participation in culture are: (1) individual economic resources – disposable income, subjective assessment of economic situation (can I afford it?); (2) group of reference resources (are my friends and relatives heavy users of culture?); and (3) tangible resources related to culture – infrastructure of cultural institutions (is there a place to go and grasp some cultural atmosphere and content in my place of living?). From a policymaker's perspective key resources are: (1) the size of the budget devoted to culture – how much can be spent on culture related projects; (2) institutional networks resources – did private and non-profit partners identify who we could collaborate with in the implementation of arts and culture policy; (3) tangible resources related to culture – infrastructure of cultural institutions – what cultural institutions could be kept in our cultural policy portfolio.

Profiling the regions revealed some inconsistencies in the predicted model that could serve as a starting point for further study related to “culture resistant” and “culture enthusiastic” regions. Statistical modelling confirmed the impact of the availability of cultural infrastructure, economic well-being, civil society networks, and cultural capital on the size of the audience in institutions of culture. Household expenditures on culture are influenced only by low levels of the poverty rate. In this context, regional data confirms the impact of economic well-being on participation in culture. In order to increase participation in culture, subnational governments should focus on local development policies, and at the same time support activities undertaken by civil society organisations active

in the area of culture. They should also consider the development of culture-related infrastructure as a key component of creative place making. The question, through which channels individuals with educational and professional background in the arts can stimulate participation in culture beyond their social network requires a separate study. Also, the replication of the model at district and municipal level could provide additional insight into the role of the creative class and creative networks in building an audience among residents.

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