Facilitating Creative Dialogue.
The Role of the Mediating Organization in Enabling the Joint Practices Between Artistic Talents and City or Business Structures

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Abstract
The focus of the study is on mediators. How do mediating organizations facilitate creativity in the city culture? The theoretical context builds on institutional theory and communities of practice approach. The mediators are perceived as acting in the context of intersecting field. The analysis builds on three cases of mediating organizations. Structures, means and roles of the mediators were identified. The results point out the importance of developing new structures as currently the mediating work seems to be too dependent on the individual mediators. The study gives various insights for city officials on how to support and develop creativity with the means of mediators.

Keywords
Mediator work, mediating organization, field, creativity

Aim of the Study

Creativity, as a major force in the competition of cities globally has been found vital (Florida 2002; Florida & Tinagli 2004; Landry 2000). One of the key issues is how to nurture creative and artistic talents inherent in a city and bring them in the city and business sphere of life. The focus of the study is on the mediating organizations, how they facilitate or enable the meeting of talents and structures. The research question is: *How do mediating organizations facilitate creativity in the city culture? What are the roles and the means of mediating organizations to enable the joint practices between artistic/creative talents and city people or business?* The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the various ways of operating in the creative arenas of city and business life. Moreover, the paper aims to discuss the structures and competences in the organizations and their environment that are needed to engage in mediating task.

The theoretical discussion is based on institutional theories. In institutional theories organizations (actors) are perceived to share practices within worlds and fields, the actors share similar values, beliefs and norms (Bourdieu 1984; DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Scott, 1987). Similarly the concept of communities of practice defines a space of shared activity, a community that engages in an activity together (Love and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger and Snyder 2000; Borwn and Duguid 1991, 2000; Cox, 2004). The concepts of field, world and community for practice are used as a theoretical context in which the questions of mediating are elaborated. The concept of (cultural) mediators has been previously used in the context of consumer culture and in management studies (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984; McCracken ,1986; du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus, 1997; von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka 2000; Ahola, Jyrämä and Vaitio, 2004). In management studies, the role of mediators or boundary spanners has been perceived important, for example, von Krogh et al. (2000) present a framework for enabling knowledge creation, and propose introduction of knowledge activists who would actively engage in bringing together various microcommunitities of knowledge and enable them to share knowledge – i.e. act as mediators. Moreover, in the literature on international business, the need to acquire persons who are capable of acting in between two (or more) national cultures, as mediators or boundary persons has been discussed (see e.g. Karppinen-Takada, 1994, Möller and Svahn 2004). Here, we will, however, concentrate on different fields or communities as defined earlier and will not enter the discussion on national cultures.

In this paper we wish to elaborate and research the mediating organizations in a specific context of bringing together talents and business and city structures, in the theoretical context of joining fields, words or communities of practice (see e.g. Ahola et al. 2004).

Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical context of the study builds thus on institutional theories on fields. The mediators are perceived as acting in the context of intersecting field. The sociological concepts of **field** or (art) world used by Bourdieu (1984) and Becker (1982) are built on the notion of shared activities and relationships. An organisational field can be defined as ".. those organisations that in aggregate, constitute a recognised area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organisations that produce similar services or products (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 148). Fields can only exist when there are people (actors) who share the same values and beliefs, who feel that they belong to a field (Bourdieu 1984, DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Meyer and Rowan 1983, Scott 1987; Jyrämä 1999; 2002).

In organizational learning and management studies the concept of **community of practice** has gained lots of interest (e.g. Brown and Duguid, 1991, 2001, Wenger and Snyder, 2000, Wenger 2000). The concept of communities of practice (e.g. Love and Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998, Wenger and Snyder, 2000, Brown and Duguid, 2001, 1991, Cox, 2004) means a freely-created community that engages in an activity together and then gradually forms a tight community that learns together through joint practice. It includes "the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedures, regulations, and contracts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes" (Wenger, 1998, 47). Wenger (1998, 73) defines the dimensions of practice as the property of a community through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.

Hence, both concepts include communities of people or in fields also organizations, which share some activity or practice, and have similar values, norms and language. Communities of

practice have mainly been defined as freely-created, but resent studies and uses of the concept present it as managed enabler for knowledge creation (i.e. manageable) (see Swan et al., 2002 for a discussion on "managing" communities of practice). Fields, on the other hand are also assumed to be created freely, but fields have not been presented as a management tools, rather as means to understand and analyze the dynamics, barriers, and issues within. In many studies (e.g Schein 2004, Brown and Duguid, 2001,) communities or fields have been defined through professions, e.g. community/field of scientist, engineers or managers.

The previous studies on fields and communities on practise (e.g. Bourdieu 1984, Becker 1982, DiMaggio and Powell 1991, Brown and Duguid 1978, 2001, Wenger and Snyder 2000, Wenger 2000) have mainly considered the (sub)fields as separate from each others, however, we want to propose that there can also exist fields that overlap with each other (see also Wenger 1998). The worlds, field or communities are intertwined as one person can belong to several fields or worlds. In a recent study (Ahola et al. 2004) a concept of **midfield** (see Picture 1.) was introduced to describe the area "in between". The midfield shares some of the values, norms and beliefs of both active fields. It is in constant tension to balance the expectations of both fields. However, it can be proposed that through shared activity the midfield starts to develop its own ways of acting based on the adapted values. The actors within a midfield develop different kinds of roles with respect to mediating the joint activity, either towards the two fields or within the midfield. (Picture 1, see footnote 2).

Picture 1.
Situating the Art Project and its Actors in the Intersection Between the World of Business Education and the World of Contemporary Art.
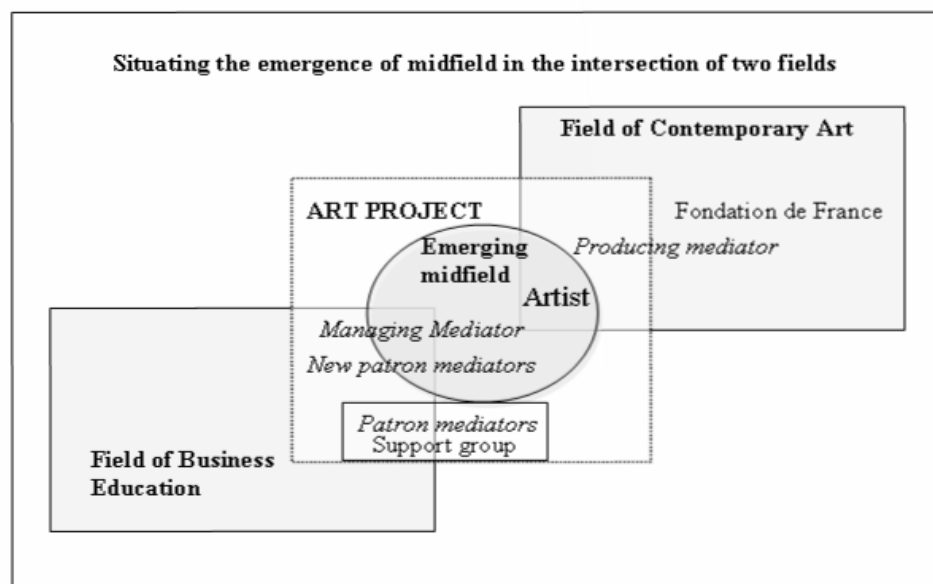
Mediator –concept can be defined from several perspectives. By the term cultural intermediaries e.g. Bourdieu (1984) refers to a group of workers who play an active role in promoting consumption through attaching to products and services particular meanings. They can be defined as people involved in the provision of symbolic goods and services and are most frequently found in the media, fashion, advertising and design industries. "Their symbolic work is

to make products 'meaningful" (Hall & al. 1997, 62). Intermediary or organizational mediators are often defined as the actors operating at the borders between users and producers of knowledge. They may operate also between public and private sphere. Moreover, mediating organizations have been defined as influencing the structures and dynamics – as catalyst (Ståhle et al. 2004). We define the mediating organizations as actors who bring different fields closer to each other into a dialogue.

Hence, some people or organizations act as mediators in between communities (fields/worlds). They can introduce elements of one practice into another. These mediators may act in various ways. Wenger (2000, 235-237) introduces various forms of brokering(mediating): *boundary spanners* take care of a specific boundary space, *roamers* go from place to place creating connections and moving knowledge, *outposts* bring back news from the new fields/ worlds, and *pairs* do their brokering through personal relationships (see also Wenger 1998).

In the context of midfield, Ahola et al. (2004) identified several types of roles for people engaged in mediating[i]. The roles differ in respect of the importance given to mediating, and in respect towards the directions of the activity; inward or outward mediating. (Table 1)

Table 1:
Adapted from Ahola et al. 2004.

Mediator type	Roles	Activities	Importance
Producer mediator	Expert consultant	Brings knowledge of a specific field Moves between the two fields	Crucial because of her expertise
Managing mediator	Constructor and creator Situated in the midfield between two worlds	Builds bridges and creates a platform Translates meanings and filters emotions between different parties Nurtures the emergence of the midfield	The driving force Essential in bringing different parties together
Team Mediator	Interested member Part of the original "home field" and the emerging midfield	Creates, stimulates and participates in different discussions Support the work of the managing mediator	Integral part of the discussions for the purpose and activities
Support mediator	Supporters of the activity Part of the their original field	Shares his status, money, power and influence to support	Gives credibility and means

In addition, mediating organizations have been categorized in respect to the space involved and the type of mediating task. Ståhle, Smedlund and Köppä (2004) divide the mediating in respect to national (macro level), region (meso level), and local (micro level) and the type of mediating aims; developing knowledge and know how, developing guiding mechanism and creating dynamic structures, e.g. networks and collaboration.

In this study we will look into the roles of mediators mainly in local context, and wish to identify various aims and means for the mediating work. Next we will move along to present the research method.

Research Design

Qualitative research approach, more specifically a qualitative case study, was chosen as the method of the study. The study builds on three cases, the cases were not selected because they represents other cases or because they illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in their all particularity and ordinariness, the cases themselves were of interest (Stake 2000).

The data consists of interviews illustrating the operations of each mediating organization. We are looking into the phenomenon from the mediators' perspective; altogether 6 mediators we interviewed; 4 from Fondation de France, and one key mediator from both Art Palace and EU Urban II. From each case web pages and other reports and written materials were used as well. The interviews were informal; the themes elaborated included topics on daily activities, problems and challenges, experiences, and perceptions on working in intersections of differing fields.

In the analysis first the structures of organizations were looked into, and then the means and roles were identified. These were then compared to the categorizations presented in previous literature.

Case Descriptions

In the following we will present the different cases. The cases include various projects involving cities and identity building. The examples chosen show ways how art projects have been engaged in improving city life.They highlight roles that the mediators have had in city culture development.

The first case brings into view the independent mediator organizations grouped under the *Fondation de France's "New Patrons in Art Program"* where anyone, a person or an organisation, can become "a commanditaire" and apply for an artwork to be created by a world artist in the pursuit of solving "a problem" of any kind. The interviews were conducted with mediators with long experiences. *Xavier Douroux* is a head of a contemporary art center in Dijon, Consortium, and has acted as a mediator in several New Patrons in Arts commands. For example, the portraits in Maret university; where artists Yan Pei Ming gave the people working in the cafeteria "faces" – by painting large portraits of them. He brought into dialogue the fields of contemporary art and local workers. The example shows how the people engaged in our everyday life, who often are not noticed can be "introduced" to us by art – and given an identity. The mediator built a bridge between our everyday life and art.

Catia Riccaboni, now working as the coordinator for the program, was a mediator in Hopital Raymond Poincaree de Garches – morgue, where artist Ettore Spalletti renovated the whole department. The project brought into dialogue the contemporary art field and the hospital workers. The mediators had quite a task to create understanding on both sides of differing ways of operating. For example, the workers did not understand when the artists did not want to see the space before starting to work on it – and the artist understood to respond positively when his

work had changed by bring flowers to the morgue – he responded by adding vases to his work. Mediators role as enabling the dialogue was vital. Moreover, the work itself now builds dialogue within the hospital, and also with art experts visiting the work – it brings the public hospital space also into creative arena of the city.

Sylvia Amer is the new patrons mediator in Marseilles, heading also an art centre. She has been a mediator, for example, in the project of showing the cultural diversity of Marseille in a book collecting the recipes of local women from differing cultural backgrounds. In the project the city people were given means to show their own background and cultural heritage. This highlights the special characteristics of Marseille being a multicultural city with many immigrants. The project gave a positive image for it. The mediators created dialogue between art and immigrants – but also brought culinary field into the sphere of contemporary arts.

Mari Linnman, has been involved in new patrons program in the Paris region. An example; Café de Reflect where Association de la rue Montorgueil created an art cafe with artists Jean Luc Villmouth. The projects created dialogue between the artist and local inhabitants; the artists photographed the views from their windows then brought the local people's lives into café by mirrors and these photographs. This project created identity for the town part and for the local people. It brought once again into dialogue the local people and the contemporary art field.

The Fondation de France's new patrons program consists of a very small coordinating department (2 people). This organization works with independent mediators, who themselves actively engage in finding people, groups or institutions interested in making a command. The mediators have guiding philosophy and ways of operating adapted from the Fondation de France; yet they can operate quite independently. Some work quite individually and some with small teams or groups. The connecting structure is the ways of operating – the idea of bringing people and art together. Fondation de France provides the mediators with part of the funding and their reputation – also advice is given when needed. The Fondation mainly funds the start, the study for the project– which was perceived as the most difficult part to find funding for. Moreover, they encourage mediators to share experiences and have launched the concept in other countries as well. Hence, the idea behind the program is creation of a concept that enables the mediators to work with artists and the patrons. Different mediators emphasize differently, however, the roles of artist and patrons – and have differing perceptions on their own roles as mediators. The organization gives mediators a frame. Within given frames mediators are free to choose their own way. Some of the mediators quite actively seek for demands some mainly respond to the ones coming their way. For some the mediating task is only minor part of their work and for some it is the main work – and other activities are only secondary.

Second case describes EU URBAN II program – a case of community art in eastern Helsinki. Residents and artists together create art that features their community. Together with residents and representatives of different administrations, two artists living in the area organized and brought up projects of environmental art and art classes according to the residents' wishes. Community art encourages people to participate in developing the quality of their environment and the information society. Artist, *Martti Kukkonen* gave for example, art courses in glass paintings for a large local housing complex with the inhabitants. He has been working with the local people for several years now, more recently in the connection of EU Urban II project. He has brought art into the lives of the local people through various art courses. He has also brought artwork into the local public space –and created dialogue between the city officials, local people and contemporary artists. The mediator being an artist by education has been giving the art courses himself – engaging the teaching with projects involving e.g. improving the houses. He has also been responsive to the occurring events. For example, when a local

"forest" was cut down despite the opposition of the local people, he organized an art event around the trees and used the cut wood for artistic work with the protesters, creating a dialogue between the nature lovers and contemporary art field. These projects are directly dealing with improving a less prosperous town part and building it a better identity and image.

The structure of the EU Urban II gives the mediator a context and funding – however, there does no seem to be any forced structure or way of operating given from the program – rather the different actors decide themselves how to work and adapt the projects aims. Of course they report to and are evaluated by the EU Urban II program. In the case of the eastern Helsinki art – the structure is quite light and mainly dependent on the mediator himself – how he organises his own activities. His way of mediating is build on self initiative and sensing the local environment.

The third case presents a small company specializing in marketing knowledge for artistic talents, for example doing the marketing for a chamber orchestra and running projects involving cities, businesses and artistic talents. The Art Palace is built around its founder *Mari Peltomäki*, who has worked as a producer and marketer in various companies before. She was involved in the Helsinki Culture City 2000 events through another producing company – and has since created her own small enterprise. She works as marketing consultant for some artists and art organizations. In addition, she is involved in many projects with connection of the cities. Her experience from Helsinki cultural capital has given her a large network and knowledge on how to work with city officials. Currently she is involved as a project manager with a large city development program – Aviapolis. Avipolis is a new business area near the Helsinki-Vantaa airport that is currently strongly developed. Among other, Mari Peltomäki has brought an environmental artist, Juhani Rajala who is improving the visual image of the area as "just fields" by an art work. Mari Peltomäki has created, hence, dialogue between the Aviapolis group that consists of business and city people and artistic talents.

The structure of the organization is light – it is a small enterprise of the owner Mari Peltomäki and a half time assistant. The mediating occurs mainly through the own activity of the owner, she seeks for projects and has a large network of connections in the artist and the city fields. The main activity is bringing people together, creating new types of networks.

Cross Case Analysis

Role of Structures

In the case of Art Palace the structure is a small firm, build around one entrepreneur – but organized based on market logic. In the other two cases the structure is build around institutional settings (a foundation, city and EU governance). Traditionally many mediating organizations are organized by institutions or are state or city funded (see e.g. Ståhle et al. 2004). It is interesting to reflect does the way of funding affect the ways of operating. In the case of the Art Palace, the entrepreneur needs actively to seek for projects and is involved in variety of activities. However, also the mediators in new patrons program seek actively projects and commands. The sources of money seem to get intertwined – the public and private sphere intersecting. This may affect the way of operating from concentrating on one expertise into a multitude of projects having similar types of competences needed.

It would also be interesting to analyze if the structure affects the efficiency of the activities of these organizations. On the other hand, it seems that the mediators irrespective of the official structure act quite creatively and entrepreneurially.

Question of Time

Many mediating programs are built around projects that have no continuity with predefined time span. The lack of continuity – and constant uncertainty about the future affected the ways of operating. The mediators needed to be involved in several projects simultaneously to create continuity for themselves. Yet, to create a midfield; truly bringing the actors from differing fields, with differing values, norms and languages to work together in creative dialogue requires time (see e.g. Ahola et al. 2004, Von Korgh et al. 2000, Love and Wenger 1991). The question of time is interesting, in some case the projects and actors involved could benefit from a longer interaction and dialogue. For example, the interactions and collaborative practices between various city department, business and art, created during the Helsinki Cultural Capital year are longed for. Yet, the openness has remained, these practices continue in different ways, e.g. the operations of Art Palace. In some cases there seems no need for longevity. For example, often the new patrons programs are "once in a life" experiences for the artist and the patron – but everyday activity for the mediators. The dialogue created by the mediators may result a continuous openness and understanding for outside influence in both fields. This has been said to enhance creativity (e.g. Florida 2002).

Role of Individual

The role of the individual was emphasized. Mediators told stories where projects were left undone if they personally were unable to work on them, e.g. due to maternity leave – and when they returned the project was started again. The mediators seem also to act as catalysts – the activity may cease to exist without the constant presence from the mediator in bringing the different parties together and creating the joint space for activity and sharing. The dependence on individuals to actually get any dialogue may be worrying. It brings out the question on should we try to capture the competences the mediators accumulate and how could these be shared?

Means

The means of mediating identified can be summarised as expertise in relevant fields, for example expertise in business and expertise in art, expertise in city bureaucracy and relationship skills. The fields involved and the cultural differences created differences for each mediator, yet in a more abstract level similar means to operate can be identified.

Expertise in a field includes acquired knowledge, such as knowing the key actors' names or for example, bookkeeping. It also includes tacit knowledge learnt by participation, such as knowing the conventions or the proper manners for dealing with city officials or foundations. Moreover it includes understanding of the field's values. These values reflect on the proper manners. Expertise of a field cannot thus be learnt without participating in the field's activity Learning the skills take time (see also Jyrämä 1999). For example, it was said: *"now I start to know the ways to deal with city people, whom to talk first – to go straight to the top"*. Or: *"I have noticed differences on how to talk with businessmen or city people – with artist it is very individualistic – I need to listen to find the right tone with each one"*

Relationship and network skills refer to the ability to create and maintain networks. They also refer to the ability to understand human nature and respond to it, such as in relationships with artists or business people or city officials. (See also Jyrämä 1999). For example, it was said *" I spent time with the people just to chat, to know if they have family or what is their hobby, then afterwards it is a lot easier to work with them."* Moreover, relationship skills include the capacity

to talk correctly about the special aspects of that field, e.g. art and reflect proper values in one's discourse.

Relationship skills can also be interpreted as social capital, which is part of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1982). Moreover, it is related to the person's past relationships and reputation. These affect the capacity to create networks and relationships (Håkansson and Snehota 1995). This results go along similar lines to the study of mediating organizations by Ståhle et al. (2004), where the ability to create networks and also create connections "outside" was found important.

All the identified means are dependent on learning tacit and non-tacit knowledge (see e.g. von Krogh et al. 2000). Moreover, they are dependent on individuals' personal talents and capacities. The means are, thus, more related to individuals than firms or organizations.

Roles

The mediator roles identified from the studied three case emphasizes either the expertise or the network skills discussed previously. However, the mediator needs both to act successfully. Yet, some seem to have more emphasis on one or the other. If compared to the categories of Ahola et al 2004, the types of expert consultant and managing mediator were found. For example, some mediators in new patrons program perceived themselves mainly as experts in contemporary art bringing their expertise into the interaction, whereas some felt more as managing the whole project and dialogue. The Art Palace mediator could be clearly categorized as a managing mediator, since she nurtured the projects and as during her absence the projects did not advance. The EU Urban II case showed signs of expert consultancy in some projects and managing mediating in some.
The cases analyzed occurred mainly at the local or in some case in regional level. The content is each dealing with building knowledge and competences and creating new networks and collaboration (see Ståhle et al. 2004). The roles and the means are, thus closed linked to each others.

Conclusions

The study increases our understanding of mediators and their role in enabling creativity to be engaged in urban life improvement or in business context. The cases show various examples of projects where the mediators have created dialogue between the city people, officials and the creative talents. The mediating organizations facilitate creativity in the city culture by creating the dialogue and by opening the "other" fields towards the art field. The joint activity may result a new emerging midfield, where the actors start to have shared values, or at least a new understanding on the differing ways of operating, talk, and norms. The openness has been said to be key for creative environment (e.g. Florida 2002).

Mediating individuals have a strong role in the organizations. We identified from the cases the following mediator roles; expert consultant and managing mediator. The means for mediating are for expert consultant a strong expertise in one field (e.g. art). They took an outside position, perceiving themselves as teachers and emphasized the professional schooling and knowledge. The managing mediators on the other hand emphasized networking skills and felt like nurturing the projects. Their presence was found vital for any activity. For them the expertise in field(s) was found important. They translate and mediate the different meanings that are bouncing back and forth in the midfield.

Institutional structures served as rather loose frame for the practices. Since lack of continuity and resources and strong dependence on individuals was identified as important obstacles for creating creative dialogue between fields there seems to be a need to intensify the structures around mediating work. For example, the founders might want to find ways to encourage teamwork and knowledge partnerships between the mediators themselves. The spaces to share knowledge could be encouraged. For example, the funding should include enough means to employ two rather than just one mediator in a project or encourage sharing two projects by two mediators.

To summarize, the results indicate that the role of the mediators is vital in order to create "space" for joint activities. The interaction between the various actors might not take place or would occur at a slower phase where the mediating work absent. However, the role of mediating organizations is often perceived as invisible, and hence, their work is not always acknowledged or given the status merited.

The study gives various insights for city developers in their pursuit for creative class in the global competition. In also provides examples on how to better the living environment trough art projects. In all, it presents how the use of creativity may be facilitated as a source of city attraction and economic wealth.

Notes

[i] The case analyzed was Helsinki Business Campus project (HBC). For more elaboration see Ahola et al. 2004.

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