

CREATIVE ECOSYSTEM NEEDS



ECOCRIN

SUSTAINABLE AND
INNOVATIVE CREATIVE
ECOSYSTEMS

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Aims and Method

ECOCRIN project addresses the needs of the creative ecosystem for achieving sustainable futures. For an effective design of synergetic policies and innovations, it is crucial to understand the reality of creative individuals, companies and ecosystems (Midgley & Lindhult, 2017; O'Connor, 2010). These bottom-up needs and futures skills of creative ecosystem were examined and co-created by organizing three Heritage Futures Workshops (Siivonen et al. 2022; Siivonen 2022) and conducting 26 complementary interviews with individuals and companies across different cultural and creative sectors. We collected data via these two methods from three empirical case study areas in Finland: Kuhmo, Pori and Turku-Paimio. The three locations form a coherent whole and allow us to draw inferences about the creative ecosystems. Participants represented a wide array of creative sectors, including e.g., wood construction, literature, stories and games, visual arts, crafts, arts and crafts, design and the circular economy, music and dance. Each Heritage Futures Workshop had 20-30 participants with different competences. In each workshop, participants co-imagined different images of futures, and co-created futures skills needed today to get to desirable futures of ecosystems.

Current Needs

Breaking the unsustainable creative deal

In cultural and creative sectors, individuals experience tensions between creative freedom and making money that results into under-pricing and voluntary work. Authorities are perceived to see and treat culture as a cost rather than sustainable investment.

- Need for increasing the general appreciation of culture, e.g. through more cultural education at schools and at different levels of education.
- Need to broaden the understanding of cultural and creative actors that it is possible to make a living from the creative work without compromising artistic freedom.

More collaboration beyond the creative ecosystem

Individuals in cultural and creative sectors fear losing their values and the control of their own creative freedom if engaging in collaboration with companies outside the creative ecosystem. For companies outside the creative ecosystem, cultural and creative actors may appear irrelevant for their business as companies focus on technology, products and production rather than brand building and unique values.

- Need for breaking prejudices towards collaboration.
- Need for mutual language for communication.
- Need for making the mutual benefits visible.
- Need for mediators between cultural and creative actors and businesses outside the creative ecosystem.
- Need for platforms for "collision".

More collaboration within the creative ecosystem

Both creative individuals and companies work independently with their own projects and compete for same funding and customers. This may result into not recognising mutual benefits of collaboration and not seeing new income opportunities.

- Need for more networking, trust and communality among cultural and creative actors.
- Need for co-working venues where informal networking can develop into collaboration.

Lower threshold for experimenting entrepreneurship

Creative individuals do not perceive entrepreneurship as a desirable career path. This is partly due to a fear of failure and, also the actors do not identify themselves as entrepreneurs ('business persons'). In cultural and creative sectors companies are often small and do not necessarily aim for growth.

- Need for highlighting the opportunities of entrepreneurship rather than related risks and challenges.
- Need for including entrepreneurship studies into degree education.
- Need for flexible and low threshold financing for starting up new businesses.
- Need for regional success stories of growth companies.

More opportunities for diverse grassroots initiatives

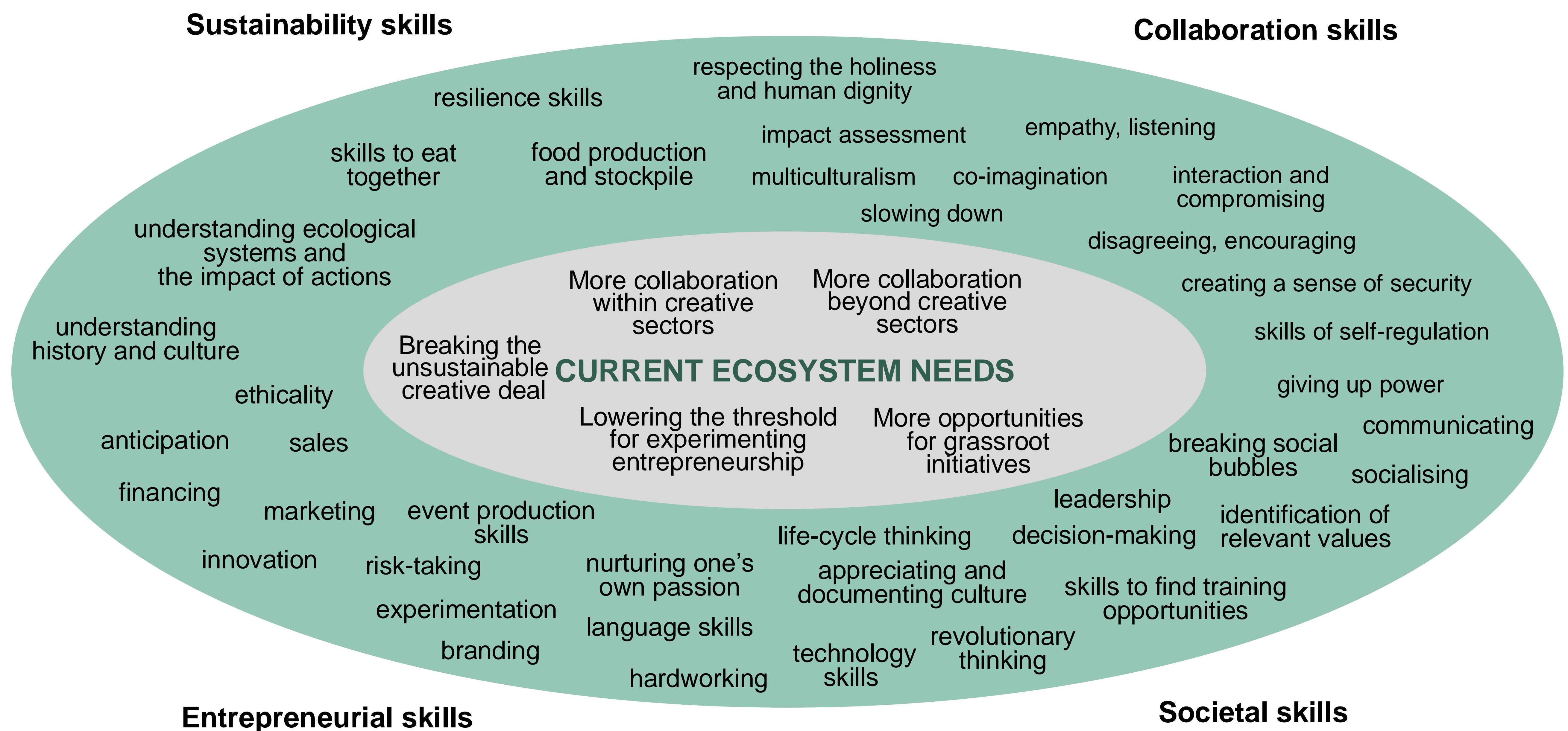
The role of grassroots actors in building networks and in bringing value to the whole ecosystem and society is not recognised enough.

- Need for municipalities' support (money, venues, communication etc.) for active network builders.
- Need for lower bureaucracy and flexibility in using public space for performing and experimenting cultural and creative activities.
- Need for favouring local companies in public procurement.

Futures Skills = Heritage Futures

Heritage future is intangible, living cultural heritage, such as skills. In the Heritage Futures Workshops, it has been important for participants to understand which phenomena of our current culture should not be preserved for future generations and which phenomena require new solutions, new heritage futures. (Siivonen et al. 2022; Siivonen 2022.) Some of the futures skills co-created in the workshops were targeted for all citizens, while others were more directly linked to cultural and creative sectors. The following futures skills are equally important for individuals and companies. (Figure)

REQUIRED SKILLS TO SOLVE CURRENT ECOSYSTEM NEEDS AND TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE FUTURES



Cross-cutting collaboration skills

- Collaboration skills are key skills that are highlighted in all other futures skills groups.
- Collaboration skills include for example, interaction and compromising, co-imagining, listening, disagreeing, encouraging and creating a sense of security.

Societal skills for all

- Combining cultural and environmental education from an early age supports the development of future skills.
- In addition, societal skills include, for example, a set of civic engagement skills such as social skills.
- It is important to learn to understand different ways of thinking, for example by breaking social bubbles.

Fostering sustainability skills

- It is essential to learn sustainable development skills, with an emphasis on resilience, understanding ecological systems and understanding the environmental impact of one's own actions.
- For example, the ability to think in terms of the life cycle of objects and products as well as skills to use new kinds of materials are seen as strengthening the sustainability skills of cultural and creative sectors.

A broad understanding of entrepreneurial skills

- In addition to basic entrepreneurial skills – financial, marketing, innovation and branding – cultural and creative entrepreneurs need foresight, ethical and self-expression skills.
- To achieve a sustainable, desirable future, emphasis is also placed on strengthening a range of collaborative skills, such as empathy.
- A long-term perspective, the ability to think about the futures of the cultural and creative sectors at local and regional level, requires knowledge of the content of previous work and an appreciation of the passing on and reframing of skills.

Conclusions

Overall, our findings show that to achieve a sustainable and innovative future of creative ecosystems, there is a need to develop interconnected set of skills that concern individuals, companies in cultural and creative sectors, consumers of art and culture, policy makers and society accordingly. Therefore, more dialogue, and related skills, are needed between public, private and third sector actors across regions and creative sectors.

Our results show that to meet the needs of the ecosystem it is not enough to only develop the skills of the cultural and creative actors themselves. Accordingly, there is a need to increase cultural and environmental awareness among all citizens. Some creative ecosystem needs are common across cultural and creative sectors and different regions. For example, need for an entrepreneurial mindset and skills as well as a need for skills to foster collaboration beyond cultural and creative sectors are widely shared among actors.

However, there are needs which concern specific sectors and regions. For example, in the games sector actors collaborate actively regionally and nationally, whereas in the visual arts there is a need for overcome the routine of working alone and to see opportunities in collaboration.

Further, different regions have unique resources which need to be developed towards regional strengths. Additionally, it would be useful to identify roles that different organizations may play in enhancing, or providing models for developing, skills required to respond to the ecosystem needs.

References

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