Fact Sheet

CREATIVE ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

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ECOCRIN

SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

Aims and Method

ECOCRIN project adopts the ecosystem perspective on cultural and creative sectors. We defined an ecosystem as a community of interdependent stakeholders that create and enable the social context and networks supporting cultural and creative individuals' and companies' activities (e.g., Isenberg, 2010; Stam, 2015). We aimed to build a comprehensive ecosystem mapping, which identifies the key stakeholders that support sustainability and emergence of cultural and creative sectors.

Instead of categorizing cultural and creative sectors' actors as outputs of ecosystem, we included them in the analysis to identify their needs. This choice differs from concurrent ecosystem approaches where the focus is solely on stakeholders who generate and maintain ecosystems (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). Moreover, our mapping covers both cultural and creative industries even if they differ among others in their not-for-profit and for-profit orientations (De Bernard et al., 2022).

First, we examined local creative ecosystems through desk research by contextual and geographical mapping of key stakeholders and their inputs in the empirical case regions of ECOCRIN project, Turku and Paimio, Pori, and Kuhmo. Second, we conducted personal interviews (n = 26) with individuals and companies in each case location across different cultural and creative sectors. Finally, we conducted an international benchmark on regional creative ecosystems of Lund from Sweden and Liepãja from Latvia.

A Simplified Interview Tool for Analyzing Creative Ecosystems

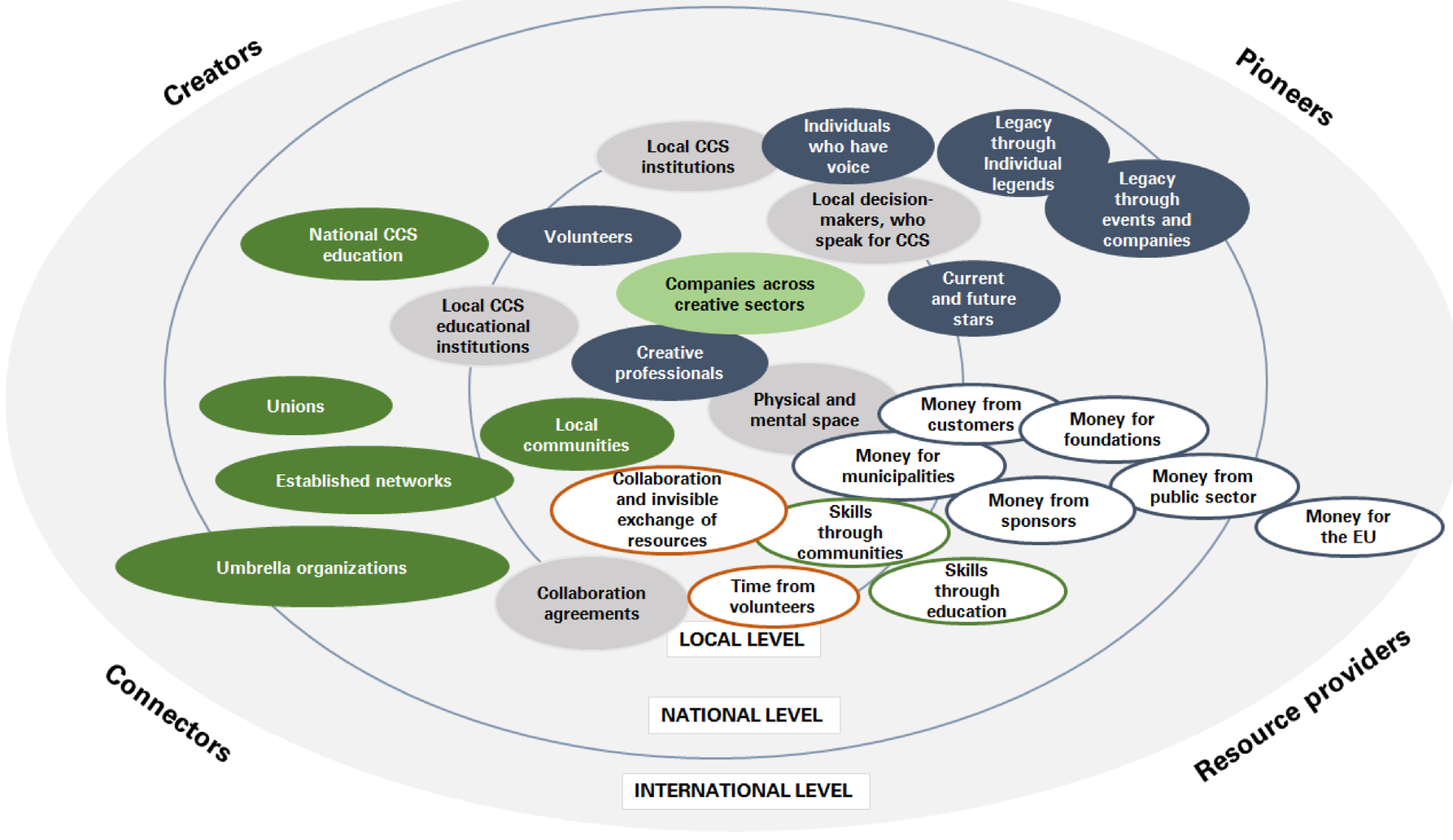
To grasp the key aspects of the creative ecosystem in qualitative data collection, we adapted and adjusted Brown and Mason's (2017) framing of an ecosystem (see Figure 1). This approach enables to identify the key actors, connectors, resource providers and pioneers of any creative ecosystem. Accordingly, this approach gathers the crucial stakeholders of an ecosystem and enables to detail their relationships.

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ACTORS Who or what entities would you identify as key players in the creative ecosystem?	**RESOURCE PROVIDERS** Who or what entities provide resources to actors in the creative ecosystem? What resources do they offer? To whom are these resources provided? (What is needed for the creative sectors to thrive?)
CONNECTORS Who or what entities promote networking and collaboration within the creative ecosystem? (For example, are there any key communities?)	**PIONEERS** Who or what entities serve as important role models in shaping attitudes towards the creative ecosystem in the area? (For example, the visibility of the creative ecosystem?)

Creative Ecosystem Map

In the ecosystem mapping blue bubbles comprise individuals and companies. Green bubbles cover organizations and associations that build and maintain networks, whereas grey bubbles demonstrate the role of local governance of creative ecosystem. White bubbles describe the resources that move across the stakeholders and cultural and creative individuals and companies. In the mapping, we examined the creative ecosystem at three levels: local, national and international.

CREATIVE ECOSYSTEM MAP



Cultural and creative actors form the core of ecosystem, while other stakeholders generate and maintain opportune environment for them.

- *Individuals* are personally involved in creative work to make themselves, their outputs and organizations visible.
- *Companies* generate creative content and combine creative and market-orientation
- *Volunteers* organize and manage various cultural and creative events (Luonila & Karttunen, 2024) and run local associations.

Pioneers serve as important role models and shape the visibility of and attitudes towards cultural and creative sectors.

- *Legacy* is crafted by well-known cultural and creative individuals, such as artists and architects, or groundbreaking companies through their work over many years. For some these legacies are national or even international.
- *Current stars* may break through the current barriers and generate legacy in the future.
- *Individuals with voice* often take public space and share their message to many audiences. Moreover, those in positions of trust who speak for cultural and creative sectors may play crucial role in supporting the actors of creative ecosystem.
- Well-known *companies, festivals and events* bring fame and legitimacy for the entire creative ecosystem.
- *Societies and communities* that clear the way for cultural and creative actors embrace local success stories and shape the social status of cultural and creative sectors.
- By delivering cultural experiences through their institutions, such as libraries and orchestras, *municipalities* also have an important role as creative ecosystem pioneers.

Resource providers fund, advice and inform cultural and creative actors. Our approach details some resources that move between ecosystem stakeholders.

- *Money* is distributed between stakeholders locally (municipalities), nationally (foundations, government institutions) and internationally (e.g., EU), and it can be generated among others by customers or sponsorships. In culture and art discussion about money means income, but in cultural and creative sectors it may mean turnover and growth.
- *Physical and mental space* shape where cultural and creative actors operate and how they feel the given support. For instance, municipalities provide public spaces, while various communities, associations and companies spread and enable culture to wide audiences.
- *Advise, expertise, and education and training* are provided by communities and institutions, such as artists' societies and associations, but also educational institutions foster the development of creative competences.
- *Skills* and *time* dedicated by volunteers to local creative ecosystems are important, albeit often less officially addressed resources shared in the ecosystem.
- *Invisible exchange of resources* through collaboration without any official contracts also develops the visibility and fame of the creative ecosystem.

Connectors promote networking and collaboration within the creative ecosystem.

- *Individuals* foster networking through and by sharing their social connections.
- *Municipalities* create networking through their collaboration agreements, for instance.
- *Associations, cultural and creative sectors' unions and communities* also connect and bring cultural and creative actors and stakeholders together.
- *Umbrella organizations* may have suborganizations at national and local level that support cultural and creative individuals and companies.

International Benchmark on Regional Creative Ecosystems

- Regional creative ecosystems can divide to different types of geographically distributed creative areas. For instance, in Lund, traditional and established cultural institutions, like museums and theaters, locate in the city center.
- Science can be a key actor of regional creative ecosystem. For instance, high-tech companies, start-ups, technological and medical science and university may be perceived as ecosystem actors.
- Neighboring regional creative ecosystems, each with unique creative profiles, can be strongly interconnected. For instance, Lund known for its administrative role with established institutions and support organizations, is closely linked to Malmö, which is recognized as a hub for grassroots culture.

Conclusions

Overall, our findings emphasize the multiple roles that various stakeholders play in creative ecosystems. Individuals, companies, organizations, municipalities, and even national organizations directly or indirectly participate in building, supporting, and maintaining creative ecosystems. Geographically, our mapping demonstrates how stakeholders often locate in bundles close to certain local landmarks (river, market square). One of the strengths within studied ecosystems is that cultural and creative individuals and companies share multiple roles: They are at the center of creative ecosystems, for which various stakeholders create conditions, but they also participate in creating conditions for others. Hence, the understanding of the needs is up-to-date.

At the root-level, the talk about funding mostly focuses on public sources, and valuable resources such as time and skills are shared through volunteering. Cultural and creative sectors seem to be divided into culture and arts and creative industries, which do not share same ideas about money. Due to normalized models and habits of seeking support for creative and cultural work, this challenges the sustainability of cultural and creative sectors, especially if public funding becomes scarcer. Moreover, it appears that creative ecosystems do not necessarily reach non-creative stakeholders. Despite the richness of cultural and creative sectors, too narrow insights may risk the sustainability and competitiveness of creative ecosystem. Hence, there is a need for network brokers who could translate culture into innovation policy-making and vice versa so that both would understand and support each other.

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