

# Connect the professor

## Abstract

Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO/Hogescholen) score badly when it comes to their connection with the creative industries. That becomes clear from the research *4i-Primo*, which was carried out in the beginning of 2009 for SIA (Foundation for Innovation Alliance focused on higher education) by Via Traiectum in association with the Utrecht School of the Arts (HKU) and a large number of external parties. The creative industries count around 255 networks or forms of regular interaction which can be used by creative professionals to profile and develop their business. The presence of Universities of Applied Sciences in these networks is poor. This Article draws some conclusions, relevant to this issue, with some personal suggestions for the maximisation of the connection between Universities of Applied Sciences and the creative industries.

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO/Hogescholen) and the creative industries is poor. That becomes clear from a study into the formulation of a strategic agenda for the creative industries. There are about 255 forms of regular exchange active for the creative industries, but in these interactions the role of the Universities of Applied Sciences is negligible.

In the last few years in the Netherlands there has been an increasing focus on the creative industries. 90% of these industries are formed by small-scale ventures or creative SME (C-SME). Creativity is, according to the Dutch government, an essential element in a modern knowledge-based economy and that Dutch businesses can give an impetus (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005). Two factors are emphasised: businesses get more visibility of the possibilities which the creative sector offers, and the creative company branches are stimulated to get more vision for market possibilities (Creative Challenge Call, 2008). To prove this challenge, the positioning and shaping of C-SMEs are desirable and necessarily consistent with the position which Universities of Applied Sciences take in respect of the creative industries. This article outlines the relevant aspects from the formulated strategic agenda with some personal recommendations for Universities of Applied Sciences to improve their connections.

## 2. Context

From the reasearch report (summarised):

*The Netherlands has a strong creative offering, both domestically and also to international criteria. For the economy this means that the Netherlands has an important trump card. Besides creativity, innovation plays a large role, because innovation is considered as the critical success factor important to tackle social and economic issues.*

*Innovation and creativity interconnect: if traditional solutions no longer satisfy because questions become too complicated, it is necessary to develop new ideas and create new links (Berendse, 2008). From this innovation the high interest in the creative industries is explained. To attain successful innovations the creative industries with its imagination can be a prime mover for a new economic perspective in which the global interests (sustainability, cooperation, co-creation) are at issue (Kadervisie Creatieve Industrie, IPCICO, 2008).*

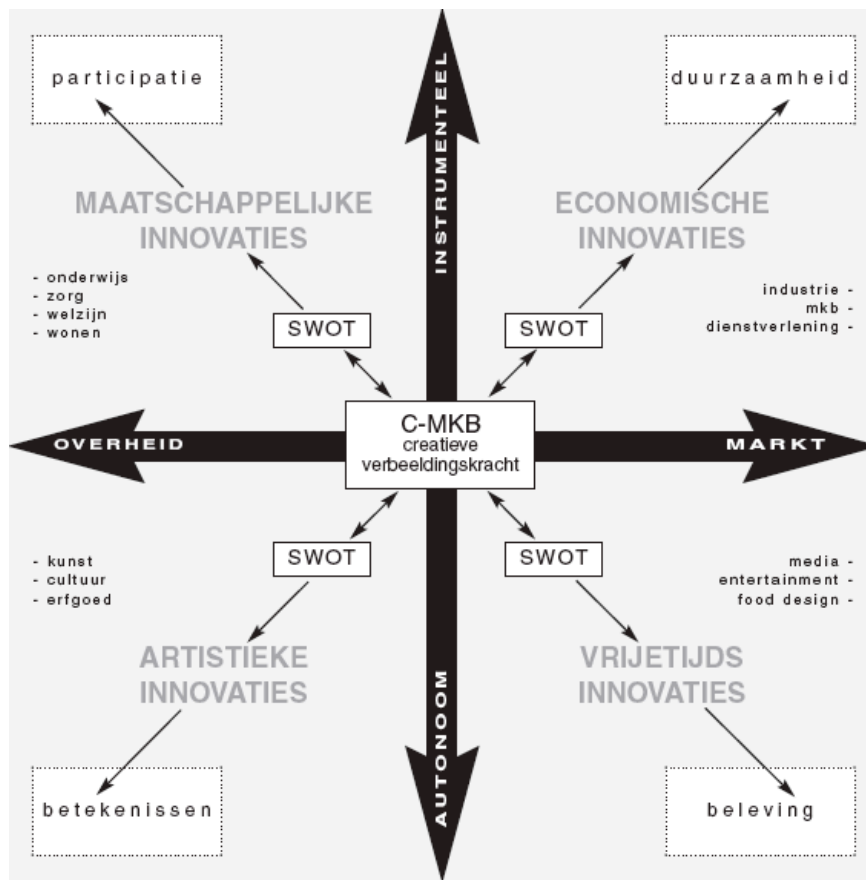
*Countries such as Finland and the United Kingdom have been aware to put creative industries politic with initiatives such as NESTA, Creative London in UK or Design 2005! and the Creative Industries Management Venture Fund in Finland (Van den Steenhoven, Van den Berg, Rietbergen, 2005). C-SME is considered here as a revitalising engine for businesses, for social sectors and more; in general for the knowledge-based economy. According to IPCICO (Interregional Platform Creative Industries Cultural Entrepreneurship) the commitment of the imagination of the C-SME for successful innovations in the Netherlands have however split up and get especially at regional level the relation creativity and technology the attention. An overall strategy to exploit the strength of the C-SME optimally and energetically, does not exist.*

In my observation a substantial part of the C-SME, which is the latent ability to innovate and co-create, miss the connection with the knowledge and research and development areas of the business. This results in suboptimum levels of cooperation and networking that are essential if it is to contribute to economic and social innovations. A central role for the Universities of Applied Sciences is appropriate here.

### 3. Research

The research here discussed has carried out an exploration of factual material for the elaboration of a strategic and at the same time practically-oriented agenda. This agenda is necessary to map the most important questions from the field of action of the C-SME and to give visibility to the need for specific knowledge for companies and institutions within the C-SME, the Universities of Applied Sciences and public knowledge institutions.

For this strategic exploration the working method was the formulation of a substantive framework based on preliminary analysis, followed by several expert meetings in respect of finalising the preliminary analysis and construction of topics for the strategic agenda.



Source: 4i-Primo research report, April 2009

For the study into the strategic options of the C-SME the 4i-model of IPCICO forms a substantive point of departure (Kadervisie IPCICO, 2008). The model is based on the enormous diversity of the creative industries and visualises the outlines for an innovation engine. It postulates a model with which the creative industries is distinguished on the basis of a coordinate scheme with four variables: autonomously versus instrumental (vertical axis) and government versus market (horizontal axis). In the model the separation is visible between autonomous driven creative ventures (aimed at artistic and experimental innovations) and instrumental driven creative ventures which are aimed at social and economic innovations. This last group forms the central issue of the 4i-Primo research with the main question: *Which interactions can be found between the C-SME and the non cultural sectors of society?*

By means of this model it is apparent why knowledge and experience are shared sometimes laboriously between the different occupational groups and types of activities. In spite of that the creative industries by definition can be characterised as interactive.

From the research it is shown that there exist approximately 255 networks or forms of regular exchange for the creative industries (qualifying date 31.12.2008); that the creative industries are often considered as a strength for innovation; and that many (especially spontaneous) examples and organisations can be found which are busy with the same

subject. A helpful frame concerning the treatment and cooperation on the creative strength of the C-SMEs in relation to innovation is lacking however. Social institutions and businesses do not know or hardly know how the imagination of the C-SME can be used. And with the current knowledge the C-SME is frequently not able to handle questions and structure possibilities in an operational perspective.

In the current material important issues for the creative industries remain vague:

- It is not clear to what extent the C-SMEs use the existing networks effectively and if the capacity of those networks are well exploited.
- From the governmental and research reports there is no common understanding about 'creativity (of the C-SME) as an innovation strength'.
- There is no unambiguous definition concerning the 'creative industries' and the demarcation of the related professions.

It's quite clear however that the role of the Universities of Applied Sciences in the field of the C-SME is far below expected:

- There is (often) no effective alumni policy.
- They are not involved actively in the C-SME networks.
- They are not involved actively in exploiting creative capital.
- They are not involved actively in the matching of the C-SME and remaining businesses.

In the centre of the gap between the Universities of Applied Sciences and C-SME lies a weak notion of the large diversity within the creative industries.

#### 4. Practice

Interaction is in the first place based on successful networking to exchange knowledge, experiences and information to be able to develop or to generate a better reputation and cooperation – or even better: co-creation. The research shows that on local and regional level there are sufficient possibilities for the C-SMEs to encounter each other. It appears that most of the 255 agencies or initiatives that the C-SMEs can use to develop activities have been aimed at the local and regional creative industries. There exist national and international initiatives but they are poorly visible.

The role of the Universities of Applied Sciences in these activities is weak. The report shows on several different perspectives a bad or non existing connection with these activities such as *Research and distribution of knowledge*, *Networks and meeting places*, *Support for new ventures and starting entrepreneurs* and *Congresses and events*.

On the basis of the results the research has created the first step for the development of innovation indicators for successfully creative entrepreneurship. Recommendations have been made in the form of a strategic agenda for the creative industries, consisting of three levels (from the report):

- *knowledge which is important in the near future for companies and institutions belonging to C-SME, with emphasis on mutual and cross-sector cooperation;*

- *the knowledge position which Universities of Applied Sciences can take on this, with emphasis on the shaping of opportunities; the role of the Universities of Applied Sciences in matching C-SME and SME; and a successful student policy for C-SME;*
- *the way in which Universities of Applied Sciences and public institutions can contribute to the connection between knowledge development in the market and the validation of innovation indicators for C-SME, particularly where research is focused on the link between creativity and innovation.*

## 5. Maximise connections

Over the years in several research projects, it has been concluded that a positive link exists between entrepreneurship and economic growth. Especially in start-ups and young companies, the entrepreneurial employees have a positive influence on the economic growth and innovation (Voortgangsrapportage Programma onderwijs en ondernemerschap, ministeries van EZ, OCW en LNV, 2008). An important result of the research is the vital role of the Universities of Applied Sciences to contribute towards the increase in innovation strength of the creative industries.

There is rising attention at Universities of Applied Sciences for the entrepreneurship but these remains still frequently limited to adjusting the curriculum. The gap between education and practice proves to be too much for many young professionals, after gaining their degree, particularly in the creative industries. Effective connections between Universities of Applied Sciences and successfully creative entrepreneurship is scarce.

In the strategic agenda of the research action is outlined for Universities of Applied Sciences among others. On this basis of this outline I give here four concrete but brief perspectives.

### *Effective alumni policy*

Many faculties in Universities of Applied Sciences have no, or a very poor, alumni policy. Often alumni cannot be traced with certainty. Under active alumni policy can be thought of a digital portal in which work, CV and personal data of alumni are taken; workshops for maintenances of entrepreneur-specific skills; exchange between students and alumni; following and exploiting activities of alumni.

### *Mobility of knowledge*

For successful entrepreneurship research and development are required. In the creative industries an inherent form of renewal exists, owing to creativity. In spite of that, insights which are important for the entrepreneurship, are frequently missed. The main reason for missing such insights is the size of many creative ventures. 90% of C-SME are formed by small-scale ventures with between one and the forty employees. Just like the SMEs in other sectors, time and money are important obstacles to research and development beside the daily routine.

Cooperation between C-SMEs is here an opportunity and in the case of the creative industries a permanent flow of knowledge from the Universities of Applied Sciences can

be mobilised. Universities of Applied Sciences can - especially in the creative industries - participate actively in this cooperation as a supplier at operational level. Initiatives in this area are seen already but are frequently insufficient, still groping and by its own surroundings (education and market), badly understood and exploited. Good practices are the Expertcenter of the Hogeschool Zuyd and the Expert-CKMB and the COCI programme of the HKU.

#### *Active presence at networks*

It has been confessed: networking means obtain and bring. In respect of the 255 networks in the creative industries the Universities of Applied Sciences are scarcely (visibly) present. On the principle to obtain and bring, it will be necessary for the Universities of Applied Sciences to invest. It is obvious here to think of the mobility of knowledge as a good investment: research and development arranged for operational use, but also knowledge and insights concerning effective cooperation, cross-disciplinary and cross-sector. Bringing such knowledge to networks, will be rewarded with new insights concerning successful practice and the reinforcement of skills.

#### *Return on creativity*

What is the impact of creativity on our economy and society? This social aspect has to be examined and communicated by Universities of Applied Sciences. Vision on the 'colour' of our society is to a great extent a responsibility of Universities of Applied Sciences in the creative industries. To these Universities of Applied Sciences the challenge is to make that vision visible and to involve entrepreneurs in the creative industries.

These briefly outlined perspectives are close related. In the *4i-Primo* research these relations comes up as problematic and refractive. Because everything coincides with each other it seems that little progress can be made. This becomes painfully clear by the absence - or at least the poor visibility - of Universities of Applied Sciences in the enormous quantity of interactions which take place in the creative industries. For Universities of Applied Sciences it is urgent to leave the comfort zone and to make an active connection with the creative industries.

Erik Uitenbogaard

The *4i-Primo* research (in Dutch) can be download via: [www.viatraiectum.nl/onderzoek](http://www.viatraiectum.nl/onderzoek)

#### **Bio**

Erik Uitenbogaard (1956) has been educated as graphic designer and master strategic management. He is owner of Creatief Bureau Via Traiectum and runs creative projects and research for several contractors. He is guest lecturer and supervisor for the HKU, faculty Art and Economics. The *4i-Primo* research was executed in commission of the SIA in cooperation with the HKU on the IPCICO foundation. For contact and more information: [www.viatraiectum.nl](http://www.viatraiectum.nl) and by email [erik@viatraiectum.nl](mailto:erik@viatraiectum.nl)  
With thanks to Eltje Huisman, David Ingleton and Johan Kolsteeg.

#### **Sources**

*4i-Primo, strategische verkenning C-MKB*, research report, Via Traiectum, April 2009.

*Kunsvakonderwijs*, letter to the Parliament from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, March 2009

*Voortgangsrapportage Programma onderwijs en ondernemerschap*, report to the Parliament from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, November 2008

*Waarde van Creatie*, publication from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, September 2009

All of these sources can be found on the internet.