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The Future of the Cultural and Creative Industries will be Designed by its Actors

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Future scenarios

European scenarios for the future of the cultural sector differ little in relation to the most important trends for forthcoming decades.¹ As a rule, the topics mentioned in such scenarios – albeit in different orders and with varying emphases – include globalisation, digitisation and the changing relationship between the individual and society:

Globalisation: The existence of different mainstream concepts in different regions of the world, as illustrated by the predominance of Disney films, computer games and television series, relativise the European ‘exception culturelle’.² What also holds true is that possessing the competence to express traditional European values and reflections will remain relevant as a context and export good for aspiring Asian markets and actors in the coming years. In a reciprocal process, European culture will be shaped by dominant contents from the US and by Asian innovations. At the same time, we shall witness the growing significance of the legal and technical, logistical and organisational aspects of the production, performance and dissemination of art and culture.

Digitisation: New ways of creating, producing, disseminating and exploring art and culture imply quality issues, as exemplified by open source and social media or the emergence of digital communities and self-organised knowledge communities. What does being ‘professional’ mean in this context, especially if access to production possibilities becomes increasingly easier? To which (new/old) contents must the production of art and culture react? Which shifts at the interface between production and consumption become relevant? Digitisation thereby has implications for ‘content’ itself.

Particularisation: Classical ‘guiding or leading cultures’, known as ‘Leitkulturen’ in German, which encompass several social strata, are tending to lose significance. New audience structures are establishing themselves along community lines and changing rapidly. The meaning of artistic ‘identity formation’ for smaller and larger social groups depends on economic conditions. Times of crisis strengthen the need for secure cultural values while weakening existing institutions; economic upswings favour the particularisation of ‘scenes’ while authorship disseminates and organises itself in new ways.

Moreover, from a specifically Continental-European perspective, shifts in the cultural sector have become evident; up until the 1970s, around two thirds of European art school graduates, for instance, earned their livelihood predominantly in the public sector. Current developments in Europe (including the dwindling of public funding for culture and the rise of new occupational images involving a high proportion of self-employment) reveal that a growing number of art school graduates are now earning their living in the private sector. At the same time, the boundaries between sectors are becoming blurred, and the actors of the art-culture system are increasingly operating in hybrid settings.

Assuming, as we do, that these developments will become even more pronounced in the years to come, traditional perspectives on the cultural and creative industries

¹ Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, *Culture & Médias 2030 – Prospective de politiques culturelles* (Paris, 2011).

² Frédéric Martel, *Mainstream: Enquête sur la guerre globale de la culture et des médias* (Paris, 2010).

need to be reviewed and new scenarios developed. The still widespread belief that approaches from other industries can be transferred to the cultural and creative industries – or the delimitation of the cultural and creative industries as a complex of industrial sectors – is obsolete.

What we suspect is that only new approaches will help render fruitful the high innovation potential and the entertainment qualities, forms of knowledge and critical resources of this complex of sectors for cultural, political and social developments and also for other sectors. We further assume that a fundamentally new perspective is needed with which to formulate funding concepts and financial structures fit for the future.

State of the art

How are we to understand the cultural and creative industries ecosystem?

Closely examining the current situation makes good sense, since the corresponding discussions may be traced back a few decades. In Europe, the cultural industries were first debated in France in the 1970s, in the context of the diffusion of television; in the 1980s, Switzerland initiated a debate on indirect profitability [Umwegrentabilität] at the interface between culture and the economy; in the early 1990s, the first strategies informing our current notion of the cultural and creative industries were developed in Germany, in the context of the decline of the coal and steel industries; this period also included initiatives to define the UK and its capital as a 'creative hub' and definitively established the 'creative industries' as a political issue in the context of national branding. Since the mid 1990s, the issue has consistently been on the agenda of various EU directorates general.

One striking feature of these developments is that – despite longstanding debate – defining a common framework for the cultural and creative industries has not thus far been possible. Statistical delimitations and basic notions diverge depending on the specific location and motivation. In its annual report, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) lists, among others, the following (policy) areas in which the cultural and creative industries are a key factor: economic development and regional growth; urban and national planning; trade and industry; education; technology and communications; art and culture; tourism; social welfare. Given this diversity, one is tempted to conclude that the success of the cultural and creative industries rests primarily on interpretative leeway. That is to say, everyone can understand the cultural and creative industries as they please. We might ask, then, whether these industries are just another example of late 20th-century arbitrariness.

Mapping

In-depth analysis shows that the reasons for uncertainty in dealing with the cultural and creative industries should not be sought in the arbitrariness just mentioned, but instead in the corresponding conceptualisations. These approaches, it must be added, fail to take account of the specific mechanisms of this complex of industrial sectors. From a macro perspective, strategic positioning is all too often imprecise,

and the aforementioned interfaces between policy areas remain blurred. From a micro perspective, the focus is generally placed on institutions and products. This inadequately explores not only the manifold models of creativity, organisation, development and business but also the accompanying processes of creativity, performance, communication and implementation. Moreover, the diverse processes, practices and actors who make up the cultural and creative industries seldom come into view.

If we are to gain a comprehensive understanding of the macro level, we must first establish an overview. Doing so reveals the ways in which highly diverse concepts are superimposed upon each other as best illustrated by a coordinate system (Figure 1).

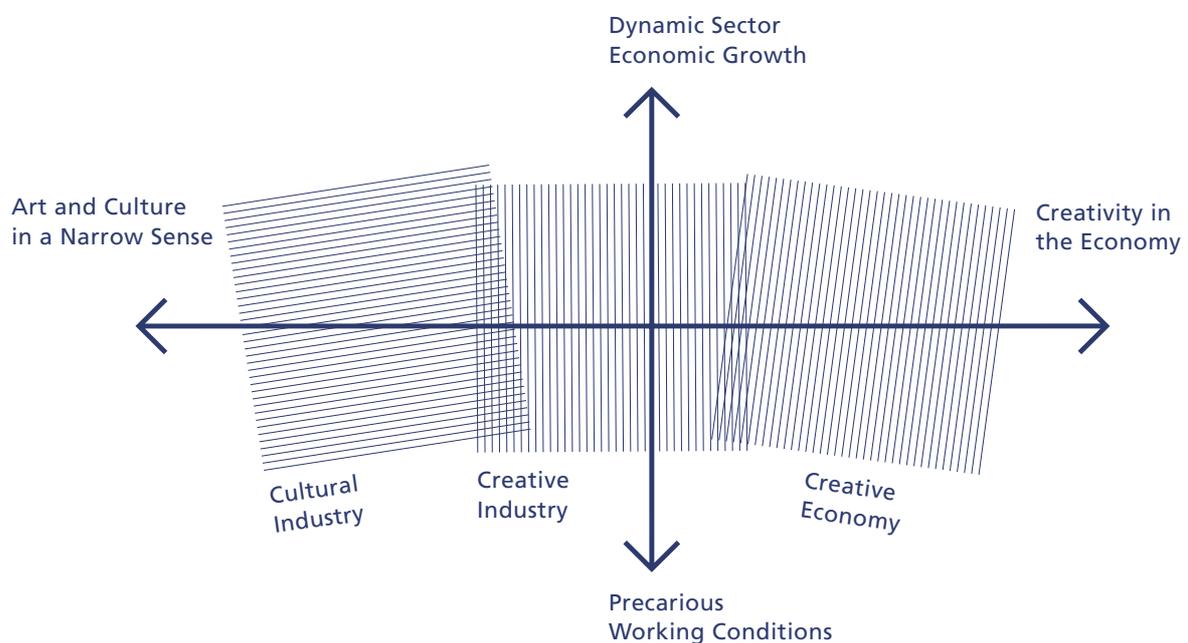


Figure 1

Along the horizontal axis lie the various dimensions between art and culture in a narrow sense (see left) and a focus on creativity in the economy (see right); its vertical axis spans economic growth (see top) and precarious working conditions (see bottom). This system offers a simple illustration of what the cultural and creative industries mean in the current debates; it also shows why the various perspectives and debates in this field partly remain adjacent, yet unrelated. The concepts on the left (cultural industries) can be found in Continental Europe, the approaches in the middle (creative industries) have spread from the UK to Europe and the Commonwealth, and the approaches on the right (creative economy) can be found in the US, from where they spread to and across Asia.

The discussion about the economic significance of this complex of sectors and its promotion in the force field between growth dynamics and precarious working conditions is manifested differently around the world.

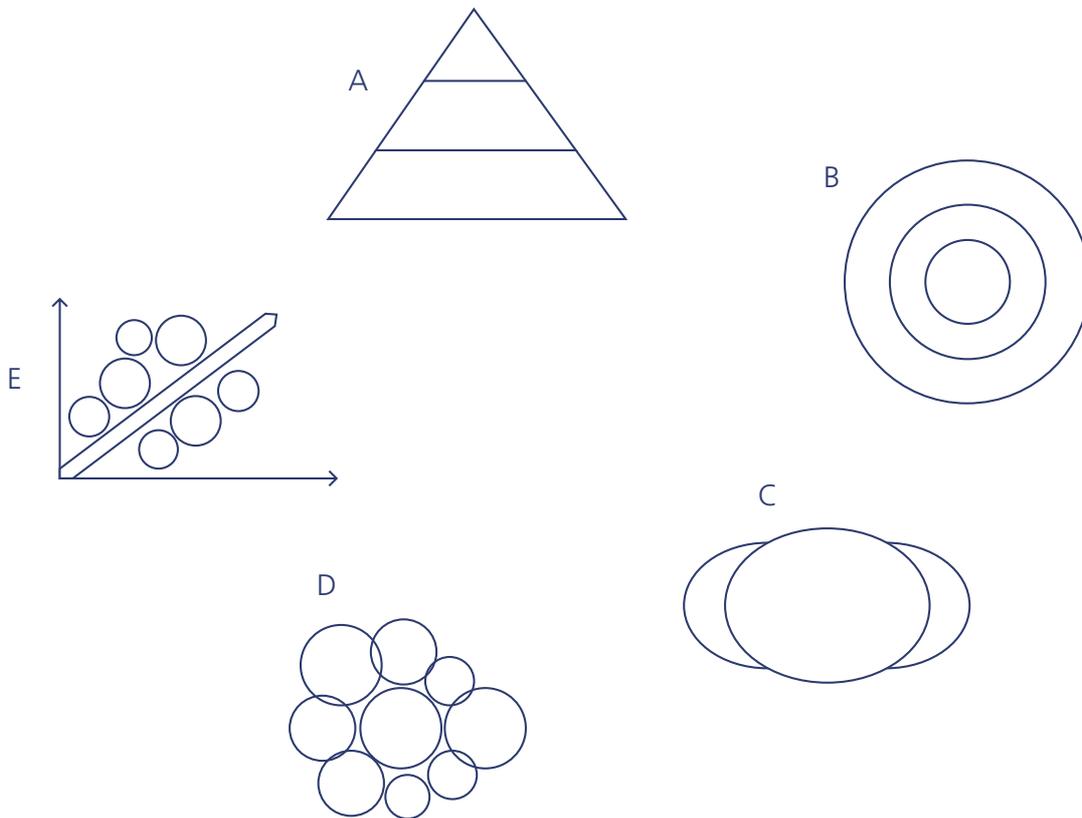


Figure 2

Models

This rough schema establishes a multitude of understandings and thus also possible strategic positionings in relation to the cultural and creative industries. Whether these notions are adequate or not can only be deduced from their specific context, taking account of funding constellations, political strategies, cultural or economic conditions, and so on. To put this another way: the starting point for a discussion about the cultural and creative industries must be a specific case. Postulating a generally valid understanding or even a global definition of the cultural and creative industries isn't helpful. This means that every engagement with the cultural and creative industries implies a specific perspective and context. When focusing on these factors, highly diverse interpretations and models for discussing the cultural and creative industries become evident.

This fundamental point is illustrated by considering some key visualisations taken from reports on the creative industries. Such visualisations (Figure 2) often reveal implicit notions rather than explicitly reflected premises. In Singapore, for instance, one finds that **triangular representations** (Figure 2A) are used; these models position the cultural and creative industries at the top and in the middle of a triangle and regard these industries primarily as a content provider for a bottom layer consisting of technologically-defined distribution channels. By contrast, in France the cultural and creative industries are represented as **concentric circles** (Figure 2B): here, a core area – consisting of music, text and image – is considered worth safeguarding against further (outer) circles, which primarily connote industries specialising in processing and distribution. A third kind of visualisation is that of **interface models** (Figure 2C), which are used in Scandinavia, for instance; such models designate a zone between the cultural and corporate sectors. Whereas

the corporate sector is taken to be comprised of products and services developed in ever-closer cooperation between producers and consumers, the cultural sector encompasses content-driven value creation and acknowledges the uniqueness of such products and services. Emerging at the interface between these two notions is the so-called experience economy. Then, there are **highly complex models** (Figure 2D) that attempt to represent either the multi-faceted dependencies of the cultural and creative industries on public funding structures or the relationship between these industries and the intermediary sector (foundations). Such visualisations are foremost in countries with a longstanding federalist tradition, such as Switzerland and Germany. Finally, **arrow models** (Figure 2E) define the cultural and creative industries as an independent value-creation chain, which exerts an external influence on other branches and sectors due to its dynamics. Such a notion is especially prevalent in regions experiencing strong economic growth, such as Asia.

On the one hand, superimposing these exemplary models, and their various emphases in mapping the cultural and creative industries, reveals that outspoken deliberation on that which is all too often a tacit premise can prove worthwhile. On the other hand, we see that these models and mappings are chiefly focused on reducing the multifaceted and complex landscape of the cultural and creative industries down to manageable and structured approaches. It may be argued that this approach conceals the heterogeneous, controversial and creative nature of the dynamics described as characteristic of the cultural and creative industries. We therefore suggest that, rather than concentrating on structures and models, current discussions can benefit from carefully exploring the force fields involved and the strategies for dealing with these.

Force fields

The complexity of the creative industries map introduced, and the highly diverse interpretations of the cultural and creative industries in each specific case, forbid any conclusive definitions. The field spanning the different approaches outlined here is neither neatly arranged nor linear, but instead characterised by shifts and ruptures, controversies and interactions (Figure 3). We are convinced that every attempt to simplify these ruptures and controversies, with the help of structures and models, underplays that which characterises a thriving industry in general, and

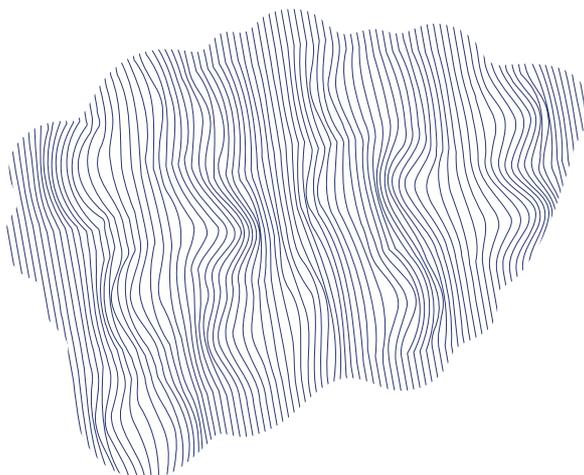


Figure 3

the cultural and creative industries in particular. We therefore suggest exploring the debate on the cultural and creative industries by describing the force fields involved. In this context, force fields refer to extreme poles, like global–local, cultural–economic, innovation–preservation, public–private, strategic–experimental, individual–collective. The poles of each pairing are a priori mutually exclusive, but they can also serve as a starting point for projecting new settings, models and strategies, in which initiatives of the cultural and creative industries can take place and in which their actors can develop individual and singular positions and thereby distinguish themselves.

Innovation – Preservation is a force field discussed on two levels. As a rule, this force field refers to the issue of governance; cultural and creative industry actors should think ‘outside the box’ and do things no one has done before them. This requires such actors to continually change their surroundings and framing conditions in order to try out new ideas. Political bodies and promotional agencies, however, function according to the rationale of legislative cycles and funding priorities.

Strategies

If we seriously intend to incorporate different understandings and approaches in the field of the cultural and creative industries, if we seriously intend to critically reflect on and interrelate diverse models and positions and if we seriously intend to explore this complex of sectors in terms of force fields, then this has to mean at least three things:

- First, when discussing models from a macro perspective, we must consider how any given model impacts upon the central force fields of the cultural and creative industries – by setting its own priorities, for instance, and by promoting the cultural and creative industries along certain lines (culturally valuable and/or commercially successful). The model will not smooth the spheres of action, but instead it will effect certain shifts and favour certain approaches over others.
- Second, raising the profile of any model and form of representation implies (and this factor is constitutive of the inherent dynamics of such a system) that, unlike institutions, individual actors will be consciously and significantly more mobile within these force fields and spheres of action. They will move in highly distinctive ways – partly competitively and strategically, partly collaboratively and interlinked, partly innovatively and subversively. This will happen because such movement can be important for their own positioning.
- Third, the focus on an analysis of cultural and creative industries will shift from discussing adequate models and stances to discussing the processes and practices through which individual actors, but also institutional players, can more successfully pursue their heterogeneous ambitions. Under these circumstances, globalisation, digitisation and particularisation all present specific challenges. Platforms for debate, rather than solutions, will be essential.

When undertaking any in-depth pursuit of the subject along the three lines just discussed, it is productive to orientate it towards a quality that is crucial for many actors in the cultural and creative industries: design. What this means can be approached from three directions. Firstly, from Otl Aicher’s perspective, ‘the world can be understood as design. As design, that is, as the product of a civilisation,

as a world made and organised by man'.³ Secondly, this view entails distinguishing a focus on 'the world as it is from a focus on how it could be' as articulated by Herbert A. Simon.⁴ Thirdly, in the pointed words of one designer, Branko Lukic, and thus of a representative of a key sector within the cultural and creative industries, 'The impossible drives the possible. [...] A designer's motto should always be: "What if?"'.⁵ Importantly, all three arguments focus on the creation and shaping of a space of possibilities. Thus, we would like to suggest that the debate on the cultural and creative industries should renounce any further attempt to describe this sector and instead focus on designing its possible futures.

It follows that focusing on the possible future of actors in the cultural and creative industries, as well as on the patterns, landscapes and force fields resulting from their description and modelling, holds out an exciting prospect. Importantly, as Julian Bleecker has observed, 'It would be useful in the design world to prototype things in a way that helps us imagine and wonder and consider unexpected, perhaps transformative alternatives'.⁶ Finally, James Auger puts forward the position that every design of a possible future stands in a tense relationship to the present, to the world as it is: '1. Project current emerging development to creative speculative futures: hypothetical products of tomorrow; 2. Break free of the lineage to speculate on alternative presents'.⁷

Shifting perspectives – from the current to the possible, from the existing to the future, from the clarified to the open-ended – brings into play at least six distinct aspects. These can be related to designing a future landscape of the cultural and creative industries. It goes without saying that the most diverse actors within the cultural and creative industries are always at work on these six aspects and the questions and challenges bound up with them.⁸ What is new, however, is to consolidate these aspects into a central focus of debate (Figure 4).

We need **design processes** (Figure 4A) that are radical claims about which future models could be possible, both as an innovative opening-up of perspectives and as a critical debate on the present and thus also on the world as it is. From this perspective, the cultural and creative industries may be understood as an incubator for models of the future – that is, not an attempt to play unconventional and new dimensions of value creation (new constellations, culture and the economy, society and aesthetics) off against each other but instead to hybridise these dimensions. Hybridisation will turn the cultural and creative industries not only into a laboratory of their future, but also into a wellspring of inspiration for other industries and actors.

³ Otl Aicher, *Die Welt als Entwurf* (Berlin, 1991).

⁴ Herbert A. Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).

⁵ Branko Lukic and Barry M. Katz, *Nonobject* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

⁶ Julian Bleecker, *Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fiction and Fiction*, Near Future Laboratory. Available at: <http://nearfuturelaboratory.com/2009/03/17/design-fiction-a-short-essay-on-design-science-fact-and-fiction/>.

⁷ James Auger, 'Alternative Presents and Speculative Futures: Designing fictions through the extrapolation and evasion of product lineages', in Swiss Design Network, *Negotiating Futures – Design Fiction* (Basel, 2010). Available at: <http://sdn2010.ch>.

⁸ Simon Grand, 'Strategy Design: Design Practices for Entrepreneurial Strategizing', in Michael Shamiyeh *Creating Desired Futures: How Design Thinking Innovates Business* (Basel, 2009).

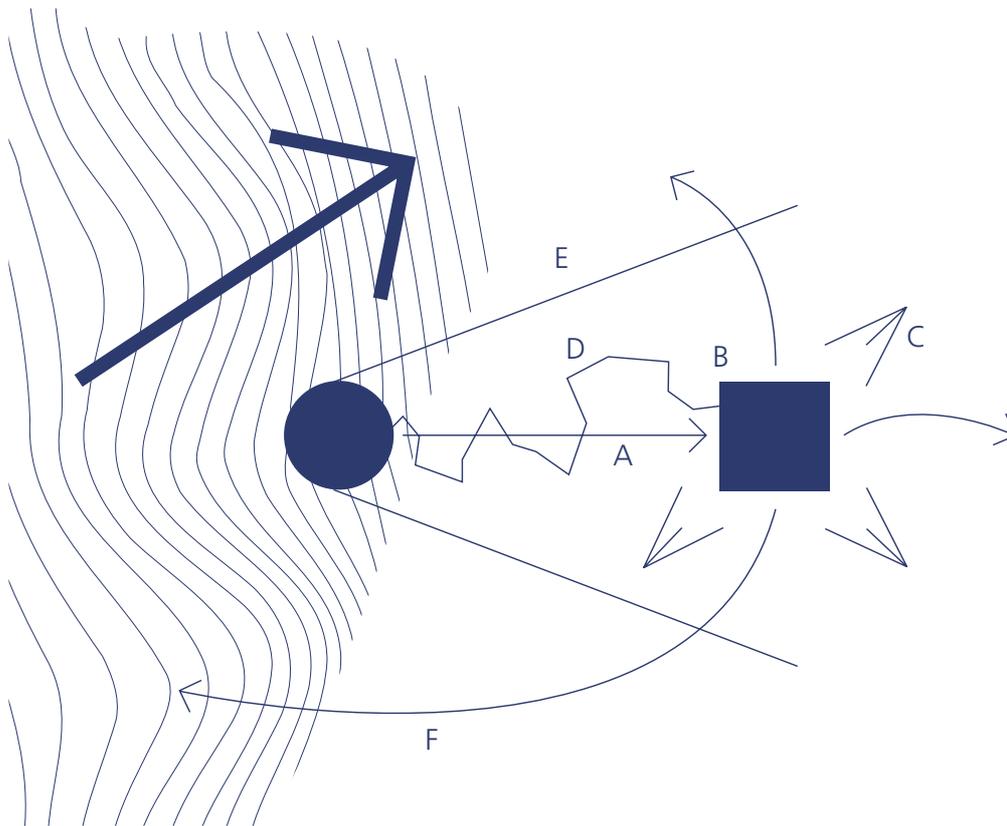


Figure 4

We need **materialisation processes** (Figure 4B) that are attempts not only to formulate radical claims in an abstract manner and to translate these into speculative designs, but also to put such claims into practice so that they can be concretely tested and made tangible. From this perspective, it becomes exciting to conceive of new models of agencies, curators, producers, journalists, collectors and galleries, not merely as peculiarities of an entirely different industrial constellation – one not yet successfully institutionalised and established – but instead as reference models of a possible future – one being tried and tested in practice, for instance in the shape of ‘critical companies’ and ‘cultural enterprises’, ‘curatorial practices’ and ‘social communities’.

We need **reflection processes** (Figure 4C) that are (internal and external) platforms on which designs and their materialisations can be controversially negotiated from different perspectives and with the help of heterogeneous evaluation criteria. These processes will bring forth exciting perspectives, for instance, for higher education and cultural institutions that see themselves not primarily as independent actors but rather as platforms, experimental systems and arrangements in which precisely these discussions can take place. At the same time, these will be the sites and constellations at which the established and the new, the tried-and-tested and the subversive can be confronted.

We need **process design** (Figure 4D) in order to enable the creation, development, implementation and testing of new models, particularly against the backdrop of global process constellations and the digital possibilities that exist in this field. With a view to the globalisation of the cultural and creative industries, as discussed

at the beginning of this paper, it could be very stimulating to understand exactly how global creation, production, transportation, distribution and communication processes are changing and developing while establishing new processes – artistically and logistically, creatively and operationally, aesthetically and organisationally. These developments present not only opportunities but also challenges for the established structures.

We also need **systematisation processes** (Figure 4E), in order to enable, structure and routinise designs, controversies and processes, not only as one-off and subjective procedures but also as repeatable and collectivised ones. This requires new concepts for how culture and creation can be understood. Against a backdrop of digitisation, and given that software development is also part of the cultural and creative industries, concepts emerging from this field are highly promising. Seen thus, software development would be the starting point for developing ‘cultural software’, so to speak, along the lines of concepts such as hacking and open source, automatic testing and model-driven development, permanent beta and extreme programming.

Finally, we need **translation/distribution/dissemination processes** (Figure 4F), in order to situate specific positions and attitudes in multiple contexts, heterogeneous spaces and distributed worlds as productively, effectively and sustainably as possible. This particularly needs to happen in relation to the ‘mainstream–singularity’ force field and in the context of the shifting relationship between society and the individual. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, this shift is occurring in terms of what we have called particularisation. Each translation involves new perspectives and references, and thus also the question of criticism, in that the new calls into question the established, the precarious, the successful and the surprising, which appeals to the majority.

Particularly promising for our debate within the context of the cultural and creative industries are the models, strategies, practices and processes of individual actors. As part of their agenda, these actors also explore and co-develop the future of the cultural and creative industries, either wholly or partially, as possible positions within the various force fields and spheres of action and with a view to globalisation, digitisation and particularisation.

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