Professionalization in space: Social-spatial strategies of culturepreneurs in Berlin

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This article discusses the social interactions and spatial practices of young businesspeople, the so-called ‘culturepreneurs’, and the networking activities they use to form professional scenes in the field of design production in Berlin’s cultural industries. This article primarily deals with a problem currently facing entrepreneurship and creative industries: how do young start-up entrepreneurs overcome structural paradoxes between individual professionalization and competitiveness on the one hand, while improving their entrepreneurial performances by depending on a badly needed innovation climate provided in social contexts and professional scenes on the other? For the purposes of this article, ‘scenes’ will be conceptually understood as a necessary prerequisite for creative milieu formations. They are considered to be informal, communicatively established social constructions and are based on the local narratives as well as the self-descriptions of entrepreneurs. Infused with a unique mixture of local myths and everyday life stories, these scenes serve as atmospheric stimulation for many people endeavouring to feel connected to a specific urban place – in this case Berlin – where they can launch their own entrepreneurial project.

Keywords: culturepreneurs; space; professional scenes; design production; Berlin

1. New entrepreneurs in the field of Berlin’s creative industries

1.1. Culturepreneurs

One of the key urban and cultural developments in post-reunification Berlin is the emergence of a new hybrid of cultural as well as entrepreneurial agents, the so-called culturepreneurs (for comparable observations see Davies and Ford 1998; McRobbie 2002 for London; for Berlin: see Lange 2005b; Ellmeier 2003 for Vienna). While this new development has led to a substantial reconsideration of ‘entrepreneurship’ with respect to space on the one hand (Johnstone and Lionais 2004; Steyaert and Katz 2004; Steyaert 2007; Barnes 2008), it has also led to a new line of thinking with regard to the notion of economic progress and professionalization within entrepreneurial networks on the other (Rae 2004b; Sydow, Lindkvist, and Defillippi 2004; Gausdal 2008).

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The term ‘culturepreneur’ is a compound of ‘culture’ and ‘entrepreneur’ and was first suggested by Davies and Ford (1998, 13), following Pierre Bourdieu’s typological notion of an entrepreneur as someone who embodies various forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986, 241). ‘Culturepreneur’ describes an urban protagonist who possesses the ability to mediate between and interpret the areas of culture and service provision. He may be characterized, first and foremost, as a creative entrepreneur, someone who runs clubs, record shops, fashion shops, galleries and other outlets, as well as someone who closes gaps in the urban landscape with new social, entrepreneurial and socio-spatial practices. Such intermediaries increasingly emerged in the gallery, art and multimedia scene in different European metropolises, foremost in London in the 1990s (Grabher 2001). Davies/Ford (op. cit.) characterized this type of people who, in structural terms, are communicative providers of transfer services between the sub-systems ‘business related services’ and ‘creative scene’ and, in doing so, seem to have satisfied a necessary demand.

In this article, Berlin will be presented as the site for the emergence of new creative-based industries in order to contextualize how markets are formed and constituted (1). Furthermore, an overview of the case sensitive methodology employed (2) will be followed by a brief outline of the new notion of space as an analytical category in order to help explain the patterns of activity employed by young entrepreneurs as a mode of ‘producing’ social space (3). A closer look at the structural paradoxes of culturepreneur(-ship) will present recent understandings of entrepreneurial practices in creative industries (4). Concepts such as learning and modes of professionalization in this field of creative industries will then be conceptually linked to the observation that space has mainly been neglected as an analytical category (5). These considerations on how learning processes might be conceptually related to space and spatial contexts will be evaluated on the basis of empirical findings (6). The interpretation focuses on the overall research aim, which is to examine how entrepreneurship in creative industries can be re-considered with regard to its spatial practices as well as its spatialized networks (7). A conclusive statement will summarize culturepreneurship as an expression of entrepreneurship in creative industries (8).

1.2. Berlin’s creative industries and design segment

From an economic point of view, Berlin has recently demonstrated that only a few sectors (mainly design production, fashion and the music industry) in the field of creative industries have developed positively (Senatsverwaltung 2006, 2008): an increasing number of employees, start-ups in the field of design, fashion and music production have all led to rapid change in the urban fabric.

Over the course of the last few years, the design sector has grown substantially without being directly supported by the city administration. This group includes the areas of fashion-, web-, print- as well as media-design. In 2003, among all of the 1153 enterprises listed, 18.2% were established within the last 3 years, while 31.5% were established in the last 10. 84.4% of the total enterprises in 2003 consisted of only 1–5 employees (IDZ 2003). The crash of the so-called New Economy in the years 2001/2002 had a tremendous impact on the development of this professional group. In 2000 and 2001, 186 new companies were found in Berlin’s design sector, while 2003 saw the establishment of only 48 enterprises. This unexpected dynamic field of
action, which was initially neglected by the Berlin Senate (the city government), forced the public administration to rethink their political agenda. While focusing on nurturing the ‘potential’ of a self-organized and completely independently operating creative-based service segment, the public administrative sector had to find appropriate ways to govern these growing creativity-based economies.

In November 2005, Berlin was the first European city to be appointed by UNESCO to become a member of the ‘Creative Cities Network under the framework of UNESCO’s Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity’. Berlin was awarded the title of ‘City of Design’. In 2006 almost 11,700 Berliners worked in fashion, product and furniture design, as well as in architecture, photography and the visual arts, while roughly 6700 design companies generated annual sales of € 1.5 billion (Senatsverwaltung 2006, 2008). With a good grasp of the economic impact of its design industry, the city of Berlin stands out as a leading example in coordinating policy, training and networking support for its stakeholders. According to UNESCO’s evaluation of Berlin’s design industry, graphic designers, fashion designers, photographers and architects enjoy artistic freedom, affordable office space and living costs, social networks, as well as a public interested in design (UNESCO 2005; Senatsverwaltung 2006, 2008). Against this backdrop, the newly invented catchword of a ‘new entrepreneurship’ alludes to individualized marketing strategies and social hardships. Skilful alternation between unemployment benefit, temporary jobs, self-employment structures and new temporary network coalitions is practised by numerous young agents in the field of cultural production. Informal social bonds as well as network alliances have enabled the emergence of new creative milieus.

1.3. **Forming markets: Question, purpose and approach**

Since the mid-1990s, new forms of project-based cooperation (Grabher 2006) as well as specific spatial practices have had to be invented in order to economically, culturally and socially sustain targeted markets. Especially in harsh transformation contexts such as post-reunification Berlin, very few market practices, tools of application and strategic guidelines were in place and have therefore had to be completely reinvented by new entrepreneurs. However, these agents have been developing their practices in an unclear, unstructured and unstable market realm (Thomas 1999; White 2002). Within the framework of what is called the creative industries, they are forced to collaborate, to interact and to network with other agents. By doing so, they are confronted with the risk of losing their symbolic capital. Consequently, it is relatively unclear how they balance their unique selling proposition with the danger of losing their creative capital.

Based on this conundrum, this article addresses the following question: how do young entrepreneurs develop strategies to gain access to markets, to observe markets and subsequently establish a position in those markets when all the while they depend on social interaction, information on new trends, new products and production tools directly related to the same markets? In examining this perspective, this article addresses a specific problem which is rooted in the structural paradoxes of entrepreneurial, social as well as work practices in the field of Berlin’s creative industries: when more than 80% of the newly emerged entrepreneurs act independently and solely in small, instable and insecure markets, how can processes
of professionalization be detected and what are the structural prerequisites for modes of acting professionally on the road to become an entrepreneur in the field of creative industries?

This article therefore analyses the potential role of these entrepreneurial incubators and their methods of establishing new micro-geographies in urban settings. ‘Place’ and ‘space’ are conceptually introduced and understood as analytical tools in order to fully comprehend the process of developing new products in testing realms and professional scenes. A context-sensitive approach will highlight the strategic processes involved in making entrepreneurial practices attractive for clients in a process of affective experience in social realms (Steyaert 2007).

2. Research methodology

The methodology used to analyse the professionalization processes of culturepreneurs in new markets is a combination of network (Johannisson 1998; Jack, Dodd, and Anderson 2008) and milieu analysis (Matthiesen 1998). Its aim was to explore the entrepreneurial practices employed by culturepreneurs in their ‘lifeworld’ by gaining access to their place-making processes, interactions, narrations and self-descriptions (Uzzi 1996; Steyaert 2007). This perspective allows for analysing how informal networks change over certain periods of time. The explorative approach focused on young (‘budding’) entrepreneurs in the field of Berlin’s booming design production. In respect of the recent upsurge of young entrepreneurs, the following criteria were developed in order to select study participants:

1. Work performance as a designer
2. Operation as an independent businessperson for at least 2 years
3. The renting of workspace in Berlin.

Special attention was paid to identify stages concerning the purpose, the role and the social construction of the work environment, which is aimed at displaying symbolic products to potential customers (Jack, Dodd, and Anderson 2008, 134). In order to focus on the network processes, an ego-centred perspective was selected with a view to understand the social as well as potential business ties of emerging entrepreneurs. Case studies were selected by means of minimal and maximal contrast rules (Silverman 1986). With the help of a semi-standardized interview manual, participants were asked to describe the development of their Berlin-specific entrepreneurial approach, their ideas on how to start, to place and to apply their distinct methods of promoting their particular entrepreneurial and design-based business. In short, they were asked to reveal how they defined their professional practices in relation to space (Hernes 2003, 283–4).

The individual case studies mentioned were also aimed at generating themes, categories and narratives from sequences of semi-standardized interviews. The intention behind this was to gain an insight into ‘lifeworld’-related aspects as well as situational and socio-spatial ascriptions that provide a more detailed explanation of certain protagonists’ practices, their associated professional groups and their personal networks (Johannisson 2000, 370; Steyaert 2007). Initial generalizations with regard to professional biographic transformations and their spatialization can then be deduced. In other words, the lifeworld explanations obtained from the study do not simply provide information on one individual case, but on the specific
creative milieus and social arenas which apply to the sequences of all the interview case studies undertaken (Elliott 2002).

In contrast to David Raes’ comparable methodological studies (Rae 2004a, 493), emphasis is placed here on the actual process dedicated to the ‘making’ of spatial as well as social dimensions. From this perspective, market access gained by new entrepreneurial agents is, in analytical terms, irrefutably linked to the dimension of swiftly conducted social interactions by young entrepreneurs (Meyerson, Weick, and Kramer 1996, 180). When presenting the empirical results, it is of primary importance to investigate the practices employed for attracting social attention and creating performance realms along with carefully enriched atmospheric spatial settings. In doing so, it is possible to explain how agents in social networks of emerging professional scenes ‘become’ relevant in the development of a network-based entrepreneurial career. In brief: how are relevant socio-spatial contexts for entrepreneurial practices actually constructed?

3. Space and spacing

Within the framework of a theoretically formulated and socio-geographically based ‘cultural turn’, cultural codes, meanings of spaces and processes of evaluations, as well as devaluations have become the central hinges of recent socio-spatial analysis (Cook et al. 2000). From this new perspective, the focus of spatial analysis has shifted towards understanding the relationships governing cultural codes and enduring physical spaces, materialized spatial constructions and culturally coded identities (e.g. Glückler 2006; Faulconbridge 2008; Lange et al. 2008).

With respect to this, spatially relevant patterns of activity, networks of specific actions and the creation of institutions are always coordinated and mediated by symbols, processes of communication and modes of governance. Such approaches are often based on the notion of ‘creative’, social and cultural capital as a means to mobilize existing and new opportunities (Fletcher 2006). This can take place by processes of recoding with a view to designing new planning strategies to solve spatially relevant problems. A major change in this regard was instigated by Hernes (2003, 277) when he argued to shift from the term ‘context’ to that of ‘space’ as the central parameter for understanding the logics and social embeddedness of organization. He introduced ‘space’ not in a material sense, but more so in a social and mental sense of activity in organizations (Hernes 2003, 277). In doing so, he focused on the dimension of process (how?) and not on the dimension of fact (what?) in order to understand the evolution of social systems being shaped by space as well as actively shaping spaces themselves (Steyaert 2007; Jack, Dodd, and Anderson 2008).

In a comparable manner, thanks to the theoretical studies of German urban sociologist Martina Löw, new process-oriented tools can be applied to the empirical analysis of the diverse social formations of people and their place-making strategies (Löw 2001). A central prerequisite for such an approach is that the categories of space, which in the past have been regarded as only marginally relevant or of a solely physical nature, should now be brought centre stage. Here, space is to be understood as the result of an act of synthesis based on the specific strategies and tactics of individual protagonists. The term ‘spacing’ (sic!) therefore describes the active
process by which an individual orders social goods and bodies in relation to each other (Löw 2001, 158). Based on this premise, Löw argues that space constitutes itself as a process through the synthesis of these social goods and bodies by means of perception, memory and feeling.

This becomes particularly relevant in the context of the post-industrial city, where urban strategies are symbolically and culturally formulated. The socio-spatial structure expresses itself ever more strongly in local politics: Individuals not only create a symbolic difference, but also attempt to arouse attention through positioning tactics anchored in the location. Theoretically, Löw (2001) pointed out that such processes are ‘brought about in acting by a structured arrangement of social goods and people in places’. According to Löw (2001, 204), ‘objects and people are arranged synthetically and in relation to each other’ (transl. by B. Lange). Löw posits that spaces are not always visible formations but can also be materially perceived. The constructivist approach adapted by Löw makes a changed relationship between body and space, the individual and the temporal collective centre of attention. Hence it can be deduced that spacing as well as place-making processes provide the analytical framework required to present socio-spatial entrepreneurial strategies for accessing networks (milieus and scenes) in Berlin’s emerging creative industries.

In relation to markets, networks and their interaction, business practices are not considered a separate social sphere. By referring to White (2002), Grabher (2006, 107) assumes that social network analysis offers a repertoire of tools to conceptualize economic processes such as entrepreneurship and innovation in network terms. According to Grabher (2006, 107), ‘networks in social network analysis, in other words, are not the counter-world to markets, they fundamentally are markets’. In order to understand individual entrepreneurial actions and their distinct forms of creating visibility as well as establishing recognition in social contexts, Johannisson (2000, 369) has highlighted the potential role of personal networks for entrepreneurial growth. Personal networks are understood as ‘deliberately constructed by entrepreneurs’ (Johannisson 2000, 371) in order to carry out and to communicate their business ventures.

It was Daniel Hjorth, in particular, who introduced the notion of studying entrepreneurship through ‘spatial concepts’ (Hjorth 2004, 418, see also Steyaert and Hjorth 2003; Steyaert and Katz 2004). By asking how ‘space is where disciplining/normalizing forces come to play as demarcating the possible and proper place’ (Hjorth 2004, 419), Hjorth portrays spatiality as a highly complex and difficult concept within the context of organizational and entrepreneurial studies. Hjorth’s theoretical framework is closely related to the concept introduced earlier by sociologist Martina Löw, although he extends the constructivist perspective by referring to Foucault’s (2000 [1984], 179) concepts of heterotopia, describing how something occupies a place it normally should not be in. This notion of distortion allows for a broader description of spaces as places intended for playful experimentation and interaction. In this respect, places are shaped by social dynamics and distinct strategies as employed in the de Certeau (1988) sense. It is hence a central aim of this article to apply these criteria to the way new entrepreneurs in creative industries work towards inventing social boundaries as modes of organizing social inclusion or exclusion. In doing so, it can be assumed that they are attracting market attention while at the same time creating new organizational modes to access these markets.
4. Creative industries and their paradoxes

To a large extent, creative industries have been subjected to organizational changes within small and medium enterprises (Neff and Stark 2003; Rae 2004a; Wilson and Stokes 2005; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005; Scott 2006; Lange 2007). It was Gernot Grabher, in particular, who focused on the inner-organizational dimension of the emergent network-based project ecologies and their entrepreneurial and socio-spatial practices in these industries (Grabher 2004; DeFillippi, Grabher, and Jones 2007). Rapidly changing project-based constellations within flexible network formations pose structural constraints not only on enhancing learning among temporary team members, but also on sustaining what is understood as ‘traditional’, long-standing learning cultures (Cameron and Quinn 1988, 8). Apart from such learning processes, several structural paradoxes are closely related to creative industries and their entrepreneurial agents. Major paradoxes include: (a) the need to reconcile tensions between the work ethos and human resource practices in creative and more routinized activities; (b) the need to balance the advantages of flexible and temporary organization with the advantages of tight integration. And two further paradoxes play a crucial role in the articulation of work practices: the ‘Globalization Paradox’ and the ‘Identity Paradox’. These will now be explained in more detail.

The Globalization Paradox generally addresses the impact of globalization on labour in advanced industrial countries. One body of work addresses that this paradox pushes all countries towards the condition of a globally operating neoliberalism; another argues that the impact of globalization will vary according to prevailing institutional arrangements and predicts continued divergence between the so-called liberal and coordinated market economies (Thelen 2003). Focusing on the territorial dimension of creative cities and creative agents, the ‘Globalization Paradox’ addresses the ambivalent nature of newly emerged creative milieus and their territorial embedding practices; they oscillate between a distinct local context for their professional practices on the one hand and the necessity to have access to and be present on a global market on the other (Zhang 2004). Practically speaking, professional agents are forced to invent the ability to operate worldwide, while socio-spatially integrated ‘communities of knowledge’ (Wenger 1999) have gained increasing importance in providing the necessary embedding ground for these same agents at a local level.

The second paradox, namely the ‘Identity Paradox’, addresses the ambivalence between individual or collective careers, identities and reputations. From an analytical point of view, inventing static concepts of entrepreneurs is considered not to be very productive because mavericks and outsiders as well as independent creative artists are the major protagonists in this market (DeFillippi, Grabher, and Jones 2007). What have been coined as subcultural ‘niches’ are often seen as incubators for future developments, new trends and cultural standards. Due to the efforts of Kosmala (2007), understanding the nature of work among artistic and creative agents in the field of creative industries is intertwined with different understandings of personality, identity and societal position. Their efforts to constantly invest in new formats, new forms of representation as well as their search for new ideas has to be seen as a central prerequisite for the operational logics of creative industries (Lange 2008).

In the course of the dissemination of these artistic practices in new (creative) industries, attributes formerly associated with the profession of artists have
infiltrated the formation of various fields of work as well as professional and entrepreneurial identities. Attributes such as flexibility, originality, authenticity and spontaneity clash with traditional forms of organized labour and their respective professional identities (Rossiter 2007).

5. Professionalization in creative industries

As both a phenomenon and a standard term, the notion of professionalization links work biographies to the formatting of sub-markets and professional categories. In addition to observations concerning mobility and theoretical assumptions regarding place-binding criteria, professionalization relates creative industries directly to socio-spatial constellations, new network practices and the creation of identity. From a socio-professional point of view, professionalization can essentially be explained on three levels.

Firstly, by considering the forms and inherent roles of professional activity;
Secondly, by looking at the development of professional groups, their access to markets and their agreements with state institutions as well as the conditions for membership in a particular professional group (Pfadenhauer 2005) and
Thirdly, by examining internal roles inside professional networks in order to understand how they position themselves in emerging markets and how they legitimize their entrepreneurial habitus.

Generally speaking, the assignment of the status ‘professional’ mirrors the promise of a service that can rarely be fulfilled precisely where it is sought after. This is the case in risky areas of creative industries in which it is difficult to provide any certain assessment. That is why the ‘professionality’ of professional activity also constantly refers to specific semi-institutionalized forms of control, assessment and expertise. Systems relating to functions of control, assessment and expertise can be very easily stabilized once they are anchored in fixed-place personal networks or in professionally associated spaces, for instance.

The inherent control function of professionalized activity is currently the most important theoretical subject matter of socio-professional reflection (Freidson 2001; Evetts 2003). Professional self-assessment is fast becoming a key component in the current practices employed in Human Resource Management and company organization: that is where we find the new employment relationship of the professional closely linked to the organizational form of the internal entrepreneur. This is therefore where control takes place as control at ‘a distance’ (Fournier 1999, 280) or also as internalized self-assessment.

In the case of the creative industries, local networks or local markets adopt the function of assessment. This takes place by means of a communicated and stabilized performance assessment. In view of the fact that the field of creative economy is a matter of significance and differential production, it will only be possible to assess professional services by employing a mixture of established standards (for marketing) and the consensus of relevant, ‘interesting’ distinguishing features with regard to novelty (e.g. of styles).

The first and second function of ‘professionalization’ has highlighted forms and inherent roles of professional activity and development of professional groups. The third function focuses on the expertise function of professionalized activity, which
plays an external role in relation to customers and the general public as well as an internal role, e.g. inside social networks, in order to differentiate and legitimize professional standards. In this way, the direction of ‘collective’ competency development in local creative economies as professional groups is defined. That is why it makes sense to talk of professionalization and not simply professionality or professional activity. Professionalization refers in the main to processes of an individual, social and socio-spatial nature, to transitional stages, for example, from recreational activities or acquiring competency to paid work, or also from the communication between like-minded creative people moving towards a particular market. The significant points of transition within this development are characterized and driven by transformation in the regulation of trust (e.g. from ‘experts’ to qualification), the development of competency (e.g. from individual erratic to academic) and the establishment of assessment regulations (e.g. ranging from control, personal trust and even globalized professional networks).

All in all, professionalization is a phenomenon of social closure that enables us to understand the socio-spatial constitution and transformation of creative industries. It is not just simply a process whereby professions must prove or reconstitute themselves via the social arenas of actual work (Abbott 1988). Therefore, in creative industries, professionalization denotes the formation of local competence and sub-markets in reference to partial, global comparisons.

6. Empirical findings

In the following section, I want to present empirical and interpreted findings obtained by semi-standardized interviews and case reconstructions. These findings allow for superordinate explanatory conclusions which rise above the level of individual cases, thereby offering a unique insight into how entrepreneurial milieus and their professional scenes perform. Significant attention is thus focussed on the relation between an established workplace and a temporary exhibition space. This unique constellation gives rise to specifically formed points of intersection whose characteristics are determined by working space on the one hand and by exhibition space on the other. Where these organizational entities intersect, a new potential space emerges which forms a strategic place for entrepreneurial purposes (Hjorth 2005, 387). These points of intersection allow for focus to be placed on the creation of spaces for play, for experiences, for testing new symbolic products as well as on the way new products are introduced into social networks. According to Hjorth, (2005, 387) this is a quest to extend traditional managerial discourse on entrepreneurship and strategic management (Sandberg 1992).

6.1. Case 1: Launching an entrepreneurial project

6.1.1. Preparing the place

The first case study deals with three men aged 27, 32 and 35 years, two of whom studied graphic design in Cologne until 2000. They worked there during their studies in different offices and agencies and acquired additional experience after graduating as employees with far-reaching competences and job profiles in both national and international agencies. In late 2001, they moved from Cologne to Berlin, searched for office space in the borough of Prenzlauer Berg, where they found a suitable office. It was a floor space of approximately 145sqm and was a disused shop near
Helmholtzplatz. The rent was quite cheap; they redecorated the rooms themselves, brought their own equipment and ‘organized’ table boards. An Internet connection was established using a cable strung from their window across the courtyard to another office next door. The business project was launched with an enormous party; works of art created by friends and colleagues were exhibited and visual jockeys transformed the office place into a temporary club location.

6.1.2. Forming identities: ‘Universal dilettanti’

Their identity-creating work is rooted in their training as graphic designers at the University of Applied Sciences so that they may be called – in the broadest sense – design-intensive symbol producers. They define the specifications of their production with the term ‘holistic designs’, which for them implies necessarily high design standards as well as an artistic self-image in the performance of their activities. This specification shows artistic motives on the one hand, while on the other, it is unspecific, adjustable and extremely variable in terms of content.

Conditioned by the socialization patterns of their respective educations as ‘universal dilettanti’, the transition to their working life appears to have been directly linked to parallel developments in their private life. Actually, it is not possible to clearly define a point of entry into working life, for education and working life were so intricately entwined over several years. The continuation of these entwined phases manifests itself in the conceptualization of their business. The business concept is established, apart from its thematic openness, also in socio-organizational terms as an interaction platform and docking station for other cooperative agents.

‘Working in a team’, therefore, (consistently) entails a professional integration of like-minded friends, partners and even lifelong companions. Work in networks is structured systemically, whereby every agent from different European cities who temporarily collaborates on a project contributes his or her skills to the current work in progress. This organizational structure can be easily, swiftly and flexibly adjusted to meet with any external requirements. Thus, new enquiries and orders may be addressed within a few hours or days by putting together appropriate teams. A suitable team can be presented to third-party clients not only as a quantitatively large, but also as a perfectly custom-made design office.

This organizational model consistently combines and links work and private spheres. Strictly speaking, there are no classical work time models and time structure models that find application in all situations. The previously separated life spheres of ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ are defined according to specific customer demands and employment situations. The organizational structures of agents in the field of symbol-intensive service provision swiftly point to hazardous subsistence conditions, which reflect the difficult status of Berlin’s urban transformation. Furthermore, these agents have also developed strategic responses to overcome and endure precarious individual situations. Hence, future focus will be on questions concerning tactics and strategies which can be derived from the self-ascriptions of agents and which are developed in times of extremely strong competition arising from hardly any order intake.

On the one hand, special emphasis is placed on free design competition, personal networking and integration approaches, as well as on cooperation with associated offices. On the other hand, micro-spatial strategies are used to subject immobile and clearly programmed office space to various sorts of temporary change and
re-programming. Such internal (re-)orientation and (re-)structuring of places illustrates one possible response to the extreme structural crisis and scarcity conditions prevalent in Berlin. Yet, besides their organization as a flexible supply-oriented platform with extensions in many other European cities, I have also identified approaches to a development of creative demand options. The necessarily competitive organizational character of the Greige enterprise highlights communicative strategies designed to make proactive use of the micro-location ‘office’. Their organizational model can be considered in ‘de Certeau’ terms as a symbolic strategy for raising awareness in the place-making process, as well as for establishing a tactical method to create a hub for social networking and cultural scenes focused on targeting new social attractiveness.

6.1.3. Playing (with) the places

Culturepreneurs’ locations are part of a highly individual and, at the same time, playful practice of attracting attention. In order to register locations in the minds of other people, it is necessary to employ a specific policy of location and scene which renegotiates a sense of cultural belonging. Greige, for example, may be the meeting place for an open, but clearly defined, group of friends, colleagues and rivals, as well as for the interested and for the curious. Its access and perception are guided by policies which display similarities to those of a club. However, the well-known selection mechanisms of a club – i.e. bouncers turning people away at the door – does take a rather subtle form in the case of Greige. A variety of marketing media, such as word-of-mouth recommendation, or mailing lists and flyers ensure that information on upcoming events, exhibition openings or even new products, reaches a specific target group. Apart from this information policy, however, efforts are also made to ensure that the location of Greige occasionally recedes into oblivion. For months on end, nothing happens; no events are organized, partly because there are other matters to be attended to.

In the case of Greige, we can see that a game is being played with visitors, camouflaging the location and then returning it to public consciousness at a later date. Greige works without an annual plan and announces its art exhibitions at short notice by sending invitations via e-mail lists, above all to selected friends and interested members of the wider, Europhilie Berlin art scene. The header on the e-mail indicates (or fails to indicate) membership of what has thus ostensibly become a scene and it is this membership which has become a criterion for inclusion or exclusion in a social formation about which no one bothers to talk openly.

This, at first glance, surprising and seemingly contradictory strategy of hiding is in fact a type of behaviour which evokes memories of the old socialist mentality with regard to the service industry: the customer is not king and business apparently does not seem to matter. This strategy is also employed outwardly: to the outside world, the appearance of the Greige location offers no indication of what events take place inside. Only insiders and those with local knowledge perceive it as a place where events and performances take place. In positioning itself in urban space by means of this policy of hide-and-seek, Greige creates not only a social difference, but also keeps the broad masses at a distance.

When eager searchers actually do manage to find the location, another subtle differentiation criterion is brought into play. At the parties which take place after openings, for example, a very particular expression of identity is manifested in the
form of art exhibited and electronic music played. A guest’s ability to meaningfully participate in the event, however, largely depends on the extent to which he/she can identify with these carefully selected cultural-symbolic products. This is where the subtle exclusion strategy lies: no one is refused entry to the location; indeed anyone may be admitted, but only a few are ultimately integrated. This integration simultaneously constitutes a challenge to secure membership on a permanent basis. The fluid character of the location guarantees first and foremost that no particular trend is created, that no financial dependencies arise and that commerce does not hinder the creative enterprise; it is this act of maintaining a precarious balance by permanently changing the parameters of their creative endeavour. In doing so, they avoid pure commercialization by employing hiding strategies that ensure the survival of this location and its protagonists for some time.

Their interest in location and in what location expresses indicates a palpable pleasure in playing the local coding game. At the same time, however, this pleasure is accompanied by the challenge of having to dress the location in a specific narrative of location-symbolism in order to be perceived at all. In this playful drive for uniqueness, locations are, for this reason, battlefields of symbolic landscapes in the post-industrial city. Subtle tactics of social positioning can be observed at (and in dealing with) these locations. Even places in relatively established housing areas display heterotopic characteristics (Foucault 1984). They can no longer be categorized as either underground or mainstream, as would have been perfectly possible a few years ago: those who operate and play at the locations have achieved a degree of reflection which makes it possible for them to employ emplacement tactics. These tactics, in turn, work with and play in economic and cultural terms with social utopias and alternative blueprints.

6.2. Case 2: Exploring and designing Berlin

6.2.1. Urban ethnographers and storytellers

The second case study involved two interview partners (one female, one male), aged 26 and 27 respectively, both of whom hail from Lucerne (Switzerland). They received training as graphic designers in Switzerland. In 1997/1998, they relocated to Berlin where they worked as interns in several agencies, took on the art direction of a magazine and did mainly freelance graphic work. Since January 2002, they have worked together in a disused shop in Friedrichshain, bordering on the borough of Kreuzberg.

Their identity-creating work is rooted in a multi-faceted creative design production, mainly in the print media but increasingly in the Internet sphere. Apart from smaller orders, they were given the opportunity of designing the magazine *Berliner* in 2000. Three issues of this high-quality magazine were published before it was discontinued. It was a medium in which – *nomen est omen* – Berlin was re-discovered. The following is a closer review of the identification criteria employed in the work on this magazine.

What is striking is their approach to ‘move something with a company formation’. This moment of movement in space presupposes a location that is not pre-moulded. This construction of a space which is not pre-moulded in their view forces the agents to develop strategies of self-assertion with regard to new space, to quasi discover their own territory and to symbolically occupy and re-code it.
Their self-constructed image of Berlin consists of a terra incognita and a No Man’s Land. This in turn reflects their view of the morbid charm of the former workers’ borough of Friedrichshain. The two agents regard themselves as strangers in the city of Berlin. In so doing, they are basically taking on the role of ethnographers in which they re-define and re-evaluate the social relationship between insider and outsider, old and new, in and out.

They use a variety of attributes to describe a romantic situation of Berliners, an almost extraterrestrial situation, a spatial peculiarity that is hard to match. The symbolic space of Berlin appears to the agents, who originally hail from Switzerland, to be a space for movement that seems to be, for the most part, suited to their current living world and their professional and social situation.

6.2.2. ‘Being a Berliner’

This attempt to assign meaning to these urban conditions however, does not only exhibit exclusively self-referential aspects but also strategies to access social networks and their adjacent markets. Both agents developed a product – a magazine entitled Berliner – which represents, on a graphical level, the disparate cartography of how the two protagonists perceive Berlin. In other words, this product combines social and psycho-geographical knowledge that is distributed to an ever changing community of temporarily like-minded people. Thus, the semantic, graphic and event-oriented spatial expertise is produced, imparted, distributed and supplied to a broad clientele by ‘scene’ experts. It is at the intersection of space and social networks that their economic utilization is combined with their entrepreneurial philosophy. The company name chosen by the agents, ‘Substrat’, is a professional manifesto, since it commodifies their entrepreneurial cultural practice and hence, represents their identity.

This unique construction forms the bedrock of the Bohemian-like marginal standpoint from where the two Swiss citizens can position themselves as artists and make professional use of their situation. Hence, the obvious positioning and self-ascription fits in with the spatially-conditioned location perception in Friedrichshain: A disparate urban context (old workers versus new designers, anonymity versus socialistically idealized practices, etc.) that permits the recognition of a stimulation substrate which, in turn, is reflected in the products of the two Swiss designers. What is not shown are economic and social interdependencies or any other factors that keep the business economically afloat. Rather, they search for a necessary stage on which to express their self-made biography by tapping into the symbolic potential of the local area. Within this process of self-stylization, the agents produce temporary social arenas and mental territories within which they relish re-coding the social hardships, deprivations and stagnation situations as a subtle stimulation in order to arouse interest in their entrepreneurial endeavour.

The counter-horizons are the common myths of Berlin, the ‘city as an island’ that is to be conquered, ‘Berlin mentalities’, but also structures of local opportunities brought about by economic decline in the perforated workers’ boroughs of Berlin. The high degree of adjustability between professional and biographic situations is combined with the geographical place-making of the ‘Substrat’ enterprise. The economic transformation context of Berlin, with its neo-liberal and extremely flexible labour-market demands in times of scarcity is translated as an invitation to cultural self-assertion, sites for new cultural projects and entrepreneurial self-realization.
7. Re-considering entrepreneurship in creative industries

On a meso-level, the empirical results highlighted entrepreneurial agents and their informal institutional frameworks. A close look has been taken at how symbolic innovation is carefully distributed in various social contexts, evaluated by colleagues, friends and rivals and suitably adjusted to meet with market standards. This evolutionary process (Jack, Dodd, and Anderson 2008, 130) of how new agents gradually achieve professional standards, step by step, is marked by the extent to which it is rooted in flexible, creative and subcultural milieus.

7.1. Spatial practices: Spatialized networks

Not only do the socio-spatial practices of these urban pioneers provide insights into the new urban policies of responding helpfully to analyses of communal culture, they also allow the observation of the playful (self) production and performance tactics of these individuals on the urban stage. These spatial practices and entrepreneurial activities are treated as significant changes in a reconfiguration of work organization with respect to both space and place and focus on how these subjects operate in precarious existential life situations.

In this regard, culturepreneurs display a playful attitude in using and producing distinct locations and specific places in order to temporarily gather together different social networks and cultural scenes (Certeau 1988). Places are the urban terrain where heterogeneous professional scenes engage in providing various contexts to ensure processes of socio-spatial re-embedding. Thus the uniqueness of their popular cultural and artistic products is ensured. Looking at the way entrepreneurship is achieved in sub-segments of creative industries, we can regard entrepreneurship as an ‘event’ or as a way of organizing ‘management practices as a reproducer of ordered places’ (Hjorth 2004, 429). Culturepreneurs play a decisive role in this process, acting as key agents by providing, knowing and inventing new urban narrations during a phase of complex reorganization in Berlin’s local economy (Hjorth and Johannisson 2003). The interpretation of these new spatial strategies offers insights into new knowledge-based models of urbanity shaped by design-intensive professional group members and the locally as well as internationally oriented scenes.

By understanding the relation between work and play, the concepts of art and creativity are explicitly clearly distinguished from each other. For example, workplaces are considered as spaces of creativity in order to attract the desired social attention. This allows the protagonists of such spaces to facilitate the search for symbolic and social innovation (Hjorth 2005, 393). Furthermore, the ambiguous nature of these observed workplaces is meant to unleash stereotypes of the notion of work, of production as well as of entrepreneurs. It enables the protagonists to regain entrepreneurial autonomy in a phase where socio-economic and market stability is rather weak.

The empirical material demonstrates that there is, as yet, no professional category for the ‘curator’, ‘project manager’, ‘communication designer’, etc., who is multi-skilled and ever willing to pick up new forms of expertise. Efforts aimed at constantly finding new niches for work and thus inventing new jobs for him/herself (e.g. ‘incubator’ or ‘creative agent’) are framed by moving from one job or project to the next, and in the process, also moving from one geographical site to the next. Social interaction is fast and fleeting, friendships need to be suspended on temporary
trust which is formed around a common task with a finite life span (Meyerson, Weick, and Kramer 1996).

7.2. Staging entrepreneurial narrations
The field material described characteristics and manners of perception through which culturepreneurs make themselves known as a new structural genre on the urban stage: they form a new network-based relationship between their work practice, the entrepreneurial turnover and their own social and creative development. This set of activities must be framed by and tied into a tension-filled ensemble of socio-spatial images and codes. These codes are difficult to interpret from outside, but are interpretable for insiders. By referring to Daniel Hjorth’s perspective that space can be analytically considered as a method of forming social boundaries in a playful way (Hjorth 2004, 421), the empirical material allows for identifying new self-descriptions of emerging entrepreneurs at the spatial crossroads of formerly separated systems, namely that of culture and economy. These observed culture-preneurs indicate a playful attitude towards these very spatial codes, serving to illustrate the distinctive nature of these entrepreneurs. At the same time, these codes can be ironically instrumentalised in order to express their own placing policies in a highly mobile market context. This approach is necessary in order to position a new entrepreneurial endeavour in a flexible environment.

7.3. Spaces of experience: Professional experiences
With qualitative interpretative methodologies, it was possible to show that young cultural entrepreneurs in this emerging design market attach more and more importance to informal milieu and knowledge of social networks than to codified forms of knowledge. In contrast to such codified modes of knowledge (either of a technical, management, business and organizational nature), their ability to know how, where and when to interact is of utmost importance in order to establish a professional identity as an emerging entrepreneur. But these social-network and milieu forms of knowledge have a distinct, yet non-essentialist relation to space and place. Considering creativity as a decisive source for competitive advantage, it is crucial to shift the focus to spatially relevant practices in the field of symbolic production, because symbolically designed products must be introduced, tested, adapted and upgraded first and foremost in social contexts.

The permanent creation of new genres, formats and products demanded by the market is connected with inventing narratives and social practices as well as with spatial strategies to place these products symbolically but also spatially in urban-based social places. Before being able to talk about, let alone sell and distribute products, it is necessary to invent a narration connected to the product. Apart from these opportunities to communicate, these social practices allow potential clients to be able to talk about and to experience symbolic goods in the first place. Therefore, the encounter with the immaterial good, an imperative part of the process, has to happen on the basis of affective experiences. While focussing on the way in which products are introduced into the markets of creative industries, it is important to take into consideration that immaterial products, meaning symbols, signs, sounds, etc., not only have to be communicated in social networks, they should also initially be tested on the basis of their performative and atmospheric qualities.
That is why products have to be placed in carefully and consciously arranged places – such as gallery openings, exhibitions, show cases, clubs, etc. – in order to allow performances to take place at all. Symbolic products therefore acquire social relevance when people experience their performative and distinctive quality first hand; they then have the vocabulary with which to talk about the quality of immaterial products, communicate it to the respective clients, write about it, etc. From this perspective, producing symbols is a social process that is stimulated, fostered, orchestrated or hampered by specific organizational as well as spatial contexts.

So the category of space and spacing provides the opportunity to analyse processes of product-based symbolical upgrading as well as re-evaluation in the field of creative industries. Forming space aims at achieving a necessary degree of professional competency with which they can present their symbolic products. These spaces provide an atmospheric-based story to accompany their inmaterial products. With this in mind, professional scenes need club events, galleries, exhibitions, staged office openings, etc., that can be understood as temporary place-makings resulting from social formation on the urban stage. Scene-related clubbing practices not only have infiltrated the formation of professional identities as well as respective entrepreneurial strategies to access markets, they have even become a constitutive prerequisite to forming an entrepreneurial identity in the first place. Subcultural creative scenes as well as their milieu practices, which previously operated informally, have been transformed into professional scenes of design production providing a minimum of individual and collective ground for establishing the confidence needed for communicating their products and their modes of business procedures.

With respect to the theoretical reflection that substantial paradoxes (DeFillippi, Grabher, and Jones 2007; Lange and Kalandides 2008) are crucial in determining the way sub segments of creative industries function organizationally, the empirical material provides a preliminary answer to these paradoxes. The dynamic spatial patterns I observed in the context of Berlin’s creative industries concern various modes of self-regulation as well as the establishment of new professional standards. The identified social networks are organized differently in that they are perpetually changing, necessarily mobile and they operate in the context of temporary working projects (Grabher 2004).

The culturepreneur can be seen as one possible answer to this growing hybridization of urban economies. Within these emerging design markets boundaries as well as socio-spatial work-relations constantly blur. This gives rise to flexible and precarious urbanites who position themselves carefully in between different systems in order to avoid getting caught in the paradoxes of long-term working models. This reflects on the one hand an administrative state body that, by and large, follows a rather standard approach towards organizing and planning labour within a given territory, while at the same time exhibits the reality of a market that is abandoning these parameters and constituting itself far beyond the administrative borders. Reacting to this paradox, culturepreneurs create their own spaces of interaction where traditional borders systematically blur. With the help of Foucault’s concept of heterotopia (Foucault 2000 [1984]; Hjorth 2004), one can grasp how competition and cooperation, exchange and isolation, private and public, work and leisure can temporarily co-exist and thus allow for a new understanding of how an entrepreneurial position is formed in a newly established market. They invent
forms of self-organization in order to gain access to power structures based on their ability to work with socio-spatial networks and symbolic coding practices.

7.4. Culturepreneurship

Culturepreneurs stand for the spread of a model where the work biography is derived from the kinds of lives led by the classic artists. The job market for artists has long been one of the most dynamic and flexible part-time job markets. Discontinuous careers are the rule here and serve nowadays as a highly ambivalent role model; frequent alternations between employment and non-employment and between various forms of work are the order of the day. Culturepreneurs adopt this model with all its contrasting and paradoxical facets. The formidable marketing of their own labour is set against an existential insecurity that is hidden by a playfully Bohemian attitude in which scenes provide a major informal embedding ground. Critical voices nevertheless highlight the lack of sustainability associated with these creative entrepreneurial practices. An instable socio-economic as well as financial backbone result in an increased necessity to speed up the production of new formats with respect to more institutionalized and inflexible industries (McRobbie 2002). Within the last number of years, these effects posed new knowledge-based requirements for professional agents to act in newly emerged (creative) industries where the formation of a suitable personal identity has to be seen as a central condition to gaining credibility and acceptance (e.g. Kosmala 2007). These constraints are even present in a critical economic context such as Berlin. These powerful and critical circumstances are inscribed in these entrepreneurial milieus as well as in their strategies to escape temporarily and regain autonomy for individual action in a self-defined spatial environment. Therefore, having the appropriate knowledge as to how scenes operate in local environments provides at least a temporary reliable testing ground for entrepreneurial operations where experiences can be gathered and ideas for entrepreneurial endeavours can be explored and tested. Existing and described flexible spatial practices open up the need to relate and adjust an entrepreneur’s personal identity in order to meet with the specific economic, social and cultural demands of the design market, be that as producer, as a creative agent, as manager or as spatial pioneer (or as all together) in a newly coded and not yet fully defined geographical context of Berlin. These flexibilities open up the question as to how scenes function.

The linguistic analogy of the sociological category *Szene* [scene] and the spatial category *in Szene setzen* [staging something or putting something into the limelight, trans. by B. Lange] links scenes to the ambience of a physical place (Lange 2005a). Club events, galleries, exhibition and office openings, for example, are stagings and temporary place-makings of scenes on the urban stage where the protagonists use urban fabric – the city or solid buildings – to create a relationship of symbolic meanings. This social formation called ‘scene’ experiences itself and performs in its body-based materiality and sociality by employing its emotional presence at and interplay with the places it selects. Consciously constructed places enable individuals to see and to be seen, to test their identity and their products. These protagonists are both at once: participant and spectator, both equipped with subtle knowledge and the requisite skills of knowing how to get ‘in the scene’ and how to ‘stay out’. From this perspective, invented and coded micro-geographies generate scene-based sociality anew and provide a first step in the creation of new work opportunities.
8. Culturepreneurship – Concluding statements

Five aspects mark the central conclusions of this article:

(1) The findings of the culturepreneurs presented here using the example of Berlin demonstrates that they use their respective localities, especially for entrepreneurial activities, first and foremost to create that unique (relationship which guarantees them artistic and entrepreneurial recognition and collective autonomy.

(2) Culturepreneurs can be considered social switch points and urban pioneers within which new formations will be tested, professional scenes formed and subsequently opened. Their entrepreneurial activity is characterized by a fast-moving fluctuation in terms of spatial location.

(3) A culturepreneur’s model of urbanity can be described as an intermediary institutional function employed in order to establish specific scenes. Given that the category ‘scene’ seems to be more appropriate than the category ‘group’ or ‘community’, these social contexts provide the template for a socially constructed embedding ground, which needs a culturally coded spatial equivalent. These social formations not only provide informal social security systems, but also fertile ground for trading information, testing products as well as placing practices.

(4) When ‘scene knowledge’ become increasingly relevant for entrepreneurial practices and when entrepreneurs are confronted with managing various forms of knowledge that do not mesh well with their everyday articulation, many paradoxical situations emerge: for instance, economic knowledge on the one hand and artistic forms of acting, driven by their individual, expressive will on the other hand. They depend on different forms of rationalities, thereby rendering coexistence hardly possible.

(5) In order to determine the modes of professionalization employed in the field of creative industries, the category of space and place have been addressed as a fruitful research area intended to contextualize the sometimes self-driven evolution in creating an identity as an entrepreneur.

References


