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Everybody loves creativity these days. There is even a whole industry sector that names itself the creative industries. Apparently creativity is in vogue.

If we look at the concept of creativity it has (at least) 5 connotations. I take these from Ruben Jacobs publication *Iedereen een kunstenaar* (Everybody an artist), that challenges the thinking on the realtionship between art, creative industries and capitalism. Unfortunately, it is only available in Dutch (www.v2.nl/publishing). Of course, the wording here is completely my responsability.

The first connotation is that creativity is a good thing in itself. Being creative connects to a positive meaning, creative ideas, creative solutions, creative cocreation, they are all concepts which have become central in our conversations on the future of the economy. Creativity means hope.

Second: creativity means self-expression. And self-expression is good because it helps us to develop ourselves into the person we want to be. Developing our emotions and feelings, expressing them makes us better people and also better at work. Because our inner and outer worlds get connected through creativity.

A third connotation is that of making the world look better. We design our lives and the products that surround us. Even experiences get designed to sell them better. Food design, social design, interaction design, design thinking, they seem to rule he world. Apparently all this creativity is needed to make our lives acceptable.

Fourth: being creative means being active, making something, being an individual and autonomous being. Taking your life in your own hand. That is what creative people do, don’t they?

Last but not least: creativity is being coupled to innovation. The assumption is that creativity leads to not only new and exciting stuff, but also to practical applications that make our lives better, increase economic potential of companies and create a new world. Creativity is innovation is economic growth. That is the line of reasoning in a lot of policy positions these days.

This is a very big claim. But do we really know what we are talking about? What is this

creativity? Is this really specific for the creative sector? Are other sectors less creative? We all know how some very creative bankers designed products of which nobody knew how they worked but caused billions in losses and we all had to pay for it. This is not the creativity we are looking for?

The Creative Class of Richard Florida included almost all knowledge workers in sectors as software, science, health care, legal sector, education, etc. But the creative industries as a sector is much smaller than that. Does that mean it has a specific creativity that others do not have? And is that creativity a genetic trait or a trained quality? For some people we would say that they were born with it. Others say all children are born creative but the school system annihilates that creativity. Nowadays we certainly believe it can be trained. Or organised: some organisations are more creative than others. Especially big and hierarchical organisation are considered not to be creative.

Is the creative sector more creative because the creative workers had more and better training in creativity? Creativity is so to speak their daily routine? Their speciality? And how does it work for those coveted cross-overs, where the creatives bring creativity and innovation to other sectors of society? The assumption stays that they have a creativity that others do not have. But do we really know what kind of creativity this is? I do not find it in all those policy papers, except in vague wording such as: different angles or perspectives, out-of-the-box thinking, looking afresh. Things I hope we all do. On micro-level I still do not know what this special creativity is. And that leaves a big black hole in the claim to fame of the creative sector. It almost looks like an ideology: you have to believe in it.