

The PISTOIA, Tuscany Workshop 23 & 24 March, 2002 Rapporteur's Report

'Creativity in Technology R&D'

Introduction

The PISTOIA Workshop represented an innovative approach by the European Commission to obtaining inputs on key issues for the Sixth Framework Programme regarding the role of the 'creative communities' such as:

'to discuss the state of the art and future trends in the field of information technology for culture, in particular contributing to the next VI Framework Programme but also the role of contemporary art and culture in technology research'

The approach was to bring together a set of experts from across Europe from a diverse set of constituencies which included 'new arts, design, dance and music as well as from computer science, physics, mathematics, sociology, journalism, e-business and administration – some of whom were 'bi-cultural' i.e. from different spheres. A deliberate effort was made by the EC to ensure that the selection would force new connections with both pan-European and international perspectives. It followed a previous workshop at Darmstadt (May 2001) on Technology Platforms for Contemporary Art and Culture.

The intention was not to simply establish 'the next step' or 'to come to a collective, agreed or democratic conclusion' but rather to enable many different viewpoints to be seen and heard and to interact in an open-ended manner. The venue was indoor and outdoor in a private house and gardens (many thanks to the Gori family), both with superb art collections, in order to enhance the group's creativity on the subject of Creativity in Technology R&D in a Tuscan setting, the Fattoria di Celle. The modus operandi was mainly by small group working sessions, beginning with a plenary session of participants personal 'visions' on the central issue posed by the EC. The costs were generously supported by the Pistoia Savings Banks and organisational help was provided by the University of Florence (EVA Networking – EVAN project). Bernard Smith led the Workshop.

Key inspirational elements included:

- ✍✍ The Leonardo example of bringing together the best of the arts and science worlds to increase creativity
- ✍✍ First class editorial content as a vital element for creative technological solutions in practice - bringing the two worlds of the 'Creative Communities' and Technology R&D together can achieve greater success.
- ✍✍ Two major works by the artist Richard Long in the Gori Collection – one outdoors and one indoors, as indicated later.

Hundreds of ideas were exchanged, generated and discussed during the two days and evenings with highlights synthesised below and some exemplified by direct questions.

Highlights

Personal visions as starting point inputs ranged from the pragmatic to the general including:

- ✍✍ Cooperation using 'creatives' and 'enhanced publications' [international and multilingual] and international games for children contributing 'local unique objects' and thus learning
- ✍✍ Defining technological requirements in 'creative communities'
- ✍✍ Develop multilinguality, usability and personalisation – with key criteria including authenticity, understanding and co-contextualisation'
- ✍✍ More dialogue with users to increase social inclusion and access' – to promote learning including in a fun way
- ✍✍ We are in the Human Comedy – we have to have more fun, creativity and communication and to live in peace'. Emotion is a subject for creative technology.

Strengths and Weaknesses discussions revealed some 'double-edged swords':

Strengths

- ✍✍ World-class creative communities [ranging from art, music, design, film, TV, theatre and advertising]
- ✍✍ Cultural and linguistic richness, diversity and closeness (including tradition) 'creative conflict'
- ✍✍ Strong technological capabilities e.g. in industrial laboratories and universities
- ✍✍ World-leading Museums (& Galleries), Archives & Libraries etc seen not only as memory institutions (cemeteries/burial grounds) but sources of artistic and scientific creativity today and tomorrow
- ✍✍ Excellent links with other continents
- ✍✍ ++++++

Weaknesses

- ✍✍ Multilingual, multicultural difficulties in cooperation – no common language [NB general opposition to a unilingual approach]
- ✍✍ Most insidiously (even in the same language) differing 'discourse language' between the different communities e.g. Arts, EC, Science & Heritage etc
- ✍✍ Difficulties in facilitating best/good/interesting technology transfer in creative / cultural technology across Europe (some successes e.g. Digital Library Guidelines)

- ✍✍ No adequate pan-European (EU) structure to bring the many existing (creative communities and technology) networks together
- ✍✍ Very small size of almost all arts oriented organisation and relatively (to-Hollywood) weak film and TV industries

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Opportunities

- ✍✍ To create more jobs including in conjunction with overlapping/ related areas e.g. education, entertainment, media and tourism by raising the creative communities' roles in EC Culture x Technology R&D
- ✍✍ To help create 'critical mass' on a global scale in the European communities and industries, but avoid threat
- ✍✍ Use of touring arts exhibitions to help in cross border technology transfer

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Threats

- ✍✍ A single, bland European (Euro-American) creative community and culture
- ✍✍ Continued alienation of many of the ~80% of citizens who do not visit cultural institutions – especially the ethnic minority, other disadvantaged and children
- ✍✍ Continued fragmentation of the European cultural communities and industries by a 'do nothing' or 'too little approach'

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Some Future Steps

Divided into small working groups, the participants developed a number of suggestions although no attempt was made to force consensus or majority voting for a future course of action. However, it seems useful to note some of them:

1. Ideas Regarding Objectives & Policies

- ✍✍ Provide and disseminate actively information on available tools so that they 'are not just available to those in the know' as well as 'good/best/interesting' practices (with more help from Member States) and the EC projects themselves
- ✍✍ Establish key jobs as 'Creative Arts & Technology Evangelists' in the EC as has already been successfully done by the Cultural Heritage Unit with a museum person on a temporary contract. The suggestion could also be applicable to Member State administrations and would help in the 'discourse language' problem
- ✍✍ Cooperate with national arts organisations so that they can participate in project evaluation processes and 'pair' with technology expertise.

- ✍✍ Increase access to the creative arts by technological means as appropriate [NB relationships with 'technology push' e.g. Darmstadt Conclusions, the Florence Agenda, Glasgow Response & Berlin Conclusions in 2001]
- ✍✍ Encourage and assist 'memory institutions' to become sources/stimulators of creativity not just 'cemeteries and temples'
- ✍✍ Cultural heritage and legacy is not just a matter of bringing the past into the present and future, but *cultivating creative activity in the present*, illuminated by the past and with an eye toward the future'
- ✍✍ Bring together creative institutions (to reduce self-referential tendencies) and also interested technology sources
- ✍✍ Address the audience issues e.g. who is the 'citizen artist' and 'citizen curator'
- ✍✍ Focus on the younger generation and also intergenerational cooperation to ensure that the 'silver seniors' contribute and benefit

Most radical of the suggestions was that of initially pursuing a 'Doing Nothing Positively' strategy – i.e. a kind of 'creative non-action' by forming a vacuum or space (NB Richard Long's two works in Gori Collection) which would then doubtless be filled by a torrent of ideas and suggestions from a much wider set of people than the Pistoia group. This course of (non) action would be carried out in the remainder of 2002 using as 'creative spaces' for example:

- ✍✍ The RADICAL project 'MEDIATEQUE' in July
- ✍✍ EVA 2002 London's Symposia on the Performing Arts, Film, Video & Broadcasting and New Technologies and Contemporary Art Documentation the [re]Construction of Creativity.
- ✍✍ Diffusion by all the PISTOIA participants to their own 'networks' of the opportunities for creative ideas

2. Ideas Regarding Supporting Measures by the EC

- ✍✍ Conduct a detailed survey of existing work (NB The existing idea of an 'Observatory' of the Creative Arts & Sciences)
- ✍✍ Carry out/commission 'cultural-socio-economic' impact analyses for technology R&D work involving 'creative communities'.

Concluding Observations

The general view of the PISTOIA group was that the event was a worthwhile one and it is to be hoped that it will help the Commission in its efforts to strengthen the role of the Creative communities in the Sixth Framework Programme. This should be beneficial to Science & Technology R&D as well as the Cultural & Arts communities themselves and society in general.

Post'script

The Sixth Framework Programme, especially in the areas of 'multimodal interfaces', 'networked audiovisual systems and home platforms', 'technology-enhanced learning and access to cultural heritage' and 'cross-media content for leisure and entertainment', appears to provide good opportunities for the 'creative communities' to participate.

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