

## Culture Crash. The killing of the creative class

The financial crisis of 2008 and other changes in the economy and culture – such as “the continued trickling of wealth to the very top”, the ‘storm of innovation’ unleashed by the Internet, a growing faux-populist disregard for expertise” – have had a pervading impact on the creative sector more than on any other field.

The “implosion” of the creative sector “is happening at all levels, small and large”, as noted by Scott Timberg, author of “Culture Crash. The killing of the creative class”. The closure of record stores, independent bookstores and video rental shops; the failure of newspapers and magazines, which “announce repeated waves of layoff”; the music sector difficulties and a general attitude of indifference, are all evident signs of the “culture crash”, whose human costs are still largely ignored.

Using an original style, which combines autobiographical elements with a deep knowledge of the present and past music and culture panorama, Scott Timberg allows us to explore the suffering status of a creative class, which he belongs to.

In 2008, the newspaper he worked for was bought by a risk taking real-estate mogul, who however led the company to the bankruptcy. The author lost his job and with his family started living a situation of economic instability. The same fight for surviving that a lot of his friends and colleagues, who were employed in the creative industries sector, are now facing.

So going deeper, “what is this thing called creative class?” According to the author, the creative class includes “anyone who helps to create and disseminate culture”. So along with artists, architects and sculptors, he considers also “deejay, bookstore clerks, theatre set designer, people who edit books in publishing houses and so on”. In trying to go over the mythic image of “lone creative genius”, mostly derived from the romantic age, Timberg underlines that “without these other figures, culture does not reach the audience”.

Making a comparison between the 1950s in Boston, when poetry thrives and poets such Robert Frost or Robert Lowell burst on the scene, the art boom in Los Angeles in 1960’ and the Austin affirmation as the city of music in 1970’, the author finds few common denominators that stand out “when culture works”. These are “the day-job principles”, which give artists, musicians and poets the possibility to earn money to face daily life; the presence of academia and universities, which means audience for artists and the generational change necessary to put consolidates aesthetic canons into question and so to let affirm new ones; and last but not least institutions. The Poets’ Theater in Boston, Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles and the two clubs Armadillo and Threadgill’s in Austin were fundamental.

Creativity, therefore, depends on not only the original inspiration of talented figures, but also “on an infrastructure that moves creations into the larger culture and somehow provides material support for those who make, distribute and assess them”. Today, however, “that indispensable infrastructure is at risk, imperilling an entire creative class”.

The shutter of bookshops, records and videos stores is an example. Clerks of these shops and stores are disappearing and with them a job which formed many artists before they become famous. However, what is going to disappear above all is their experience, their invite to taste something different from the two or

three hits of the moment and the possibility to get in touch with different perspectives and develop critical capabilities.

According to Scott Timberg, the question is not simply that creativity survives, because that aspect of human experience will never entirely die, but “that its exercise remains open to any talented, hard-working person”. “If we’re not careful, in fact, culture work will become a luxury”, something available to only the very lucky or well born and if this will happen the independent perspective of artists will be lost too. “Just as a democratic nation benefits from a large, secure, and informed middle class, so too”, said Timberg, “we need a robust creative class”, not only because culture helps individual to become self-confident and nobler, but also because “a broad-based class making its living in culture ensure a better society”.

## **Culture Crash. The killing of the Creative Class**

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