

# Culture thriving in age of austerity

November 26 2012

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(Phys.org)—In a recently published paper, Andy Pratt, Professor of Culture, Media and Economy at King's, argues that the relationship between culture and the economy has changed, challenging the popular view that, in times of austerity, culture is the first to suffer.

Presented at the Regional Studies Association conference in London, 'A world turned upside down: the creative economy, cities and the new austerity', claims that our current view of the relationship between culture and the economy – that culture is something we spend money on when the basics are satisfied – is wrong and could have serious consequences for [economic recovery](#), culture and communities in the UK.

Professor Pratt said: 'Without a doubt state-funded culture is a critical part of the mix, the foundation of the commercial sector. State supported arts produce massive benefits for relatively small investments, generating

as much as four times the initial investment. In this light the current cuts to arts budgets are not only a real concern to the state supported sector, but also to the [commercial sector](#), with which they have a significant co-dependency.'

Pointing to the current strength of the cultural and [creative economy](#), Professor Pratt's paper counters the view that economic recessions cause culture to suffer, either through reduced state spending, or through reduced discretionary spending. Professor Pratt believes the idea that people 'buy less music, eat out less and see fewer films' is inaccurate, arguing that culture provides an important 'feel good factor' in times of austerity.

'The cultural sector has not collapsed as was expected', says Professor Pratt. '[Consumer spending](#), whilst not at previous levels, has survived. Film-going has not collapsed, people are still consuming music, TV and visiting the theatre; they are also going to museums and galleries.' Professor Pratt claims that, relative to many areas of the economy, culture continues to thrive in [recession](#).

Professor Pratt says there are two main explanations for this. First, we are seeing the development of a cultural 'mixed economy'. He said: 'The suggestion is not that the cultural economy is replacing finance or manufacturing in the urban economy, but rather that culture is becoming a more significant part of the urban mix, less a spectator, more of a player.' The paper suggests that the commercial arts and culture sector now play a leading role in the UK economy, providing a substantial number of jobs and exports, as well as added economic and cultural value. The second explanation put forward by Professor Pratt is that people are assigning greater value to discretionary purchases, as well as, or sometimes in place of, basics.

The paper highlights the need for a new perspective on culture and its

role in the [economy](#), as '[culture](#) may be one of the key components for recovery.'

**More information:** [www.andycpratt.info/andy\\_c\\_pra...g\\_downloads\\_files/A%20world%20turned%20upside%20down.pdf](http://www.andycpratt.info/andy_c_pra...g_downloads_files/A%20world%20turned%20upside%20down.pdf)

Provided by King's College London

Citation: Culture thriving in age of austerity (2012, November 26) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-11-culture-age-austerity.html>

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