

“OPEN CCI”: SHAPING REGIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH PUBLIC EVENTS

Regional Test Case Documentation

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0. Abstract

The work and value of CCI is often present only in the minds of those working in this field. The public, even in places with a high density of CCI enterprises, is oftentimes unaware of what CCI are and what they offer in and for the region. This is especially true for historically industrial regions, where the identity for a long time was constructed through industry. With the format “Open CCI” we present one way of many to give the local creative scene publicity and visibility.

1. Introduction

Industrial transformation is already ongoing, the question is how the communities of regions with a long-standing industrial heritage deal with it. CCI play a crucial role in helping these communities to become more open to innovation, change and entrepreneurship. With their hybrid forms of collaboration and unconventional methods, CCI create a unique seedbed for social innovation. Thereby, CCI offer perspectives for the future of industrial regions and empower the respective communities to actively create their future instead of being a by-stander. This potential for community empowerment through CCI set the ground for our test case.

The Creative Region already had a format called “Open Studios”, where companies of CCI opened their offices for other creatives in order to see how the “colleagues” work and to encourage cooperation between creatives. Within InduCCI we built on this basic concept of opening creative studios but wanted to approach a new target group - the public and students.

2. Objective

With the public format “Open CCI” we were aiming at raising awareness for the work these CCI enterprises are doing, showcasing the creatives’ transformative power for and contribution in an industrial dominated region, presenting CCI as employers and thus as career option, because we believe that jobs “outside” the still dominating heavy industry are ultimately necessary for an industrial region to successfully transform.

The target group was the general public. At the same time, we invited specifically also pupils and students who usually visit big companies as part of their curriculum under the headline of “vocational orientation”. We were convinced that presenting the youth of an industrial region interesting local job opportunities empowers them in their career choices and gradually transforms the economic landscape. This, we thought, could contribute to interrupt the circle of young people not seeing perspectives for themselves in an industrial dominated region with jobs that they do not feel drawn to or that they see diminishing, and therefore leaving the region to work elsewhere.

3. Applied approach

For “Open CCI”, we built on our experiences with the “Open Studios” format, where creatives meet creatives. We adopted it and developed a guideline for a public Open CCI. Initially, we planned to pilot it twice, once in an urban, once in a rural setting. The idea of visiting CCI offices and workspaces with a big group of people, was then unfortunately not feasible due to the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time of implementing the test case. We first postponed the implementations and then, at the beginning of 2021, when time started to run up, adapted the design of the Open CCI several times, first to a hybrid

format, then to a virtual one, namely to online interviews with an ample Q&A session. In re-designing the Open CCI format, we were guided by the objectives we initially set ourselves: What do we want to achieve with the format? And how can we achieve this with means feasible in times of a pandemic?

We did not want to offer a simple video call or recorded presentation of a CCI workspace, so we decided to design the virtual “visit” interactive and include CCI into the production of the format. We decided to contract a studio to design a [virtual room](#) that reminded of the Tobacco Factory Linz, where the concepted Open CCI in an urban setting should have taken place, and a film studio to organize live streaming of the talks with CCI. The virtual room was supposed to include material about the companies that were going to present themselves as well as the live stream, and afterwards the recorded talks.

4. Results

Under the changed circumstances of the event itself and with regard to the difficult situation many companies, also from the CCI, had to face during the Covid-19 restrictions, we could win three CCI studios from Linz who were willing to be interviewed in a live stream in March 2021 - this was the design studio [OrtnerSchinko](#), the video marketing studio [Pulpmedia](#) and the advertising studio focusing on brand experiences [Fredmansky](#).

We then advertised the dates of the live streams on social media, our website and in our newsletter with reference to the virtual room so that interested people could already inform themselves beforehand. To give the three separate interviews a joint theme, we focused on “CCI as employer”. We [explicitly advertised the format for pupils and students](#), for whom we thought the format could be interesting as a vocational orientation.

The three studios each had a separate live interview session (two on 9 March 2021, one on 10 March 2021) and brought several videos and pictures of their work and workspaces to the interview that were shown during the live stream. The audience could pose questions via the online tool [slido.com](#). These questions were then asked by the moderator and answered by the respective interview partners.

We recorded the live interviews and published them (e.g. here [the one with Fredmansky](#)) and wrote an [article](#) with the essentials said in the interview, with which we reached an additional audience, as the figures of the videos on YouTube show.

After the implementation of Open CCI digital, we summarized our experiences with it as well as reviewed our previously organized Open Studios (where creatives opened their workspaces for other creatives - see introduction) for possibilities to open the format for the public and collected insights and suggestions for creative communities who are interested in organizing such an event by themselves. [The guideline](#) was published on our website and is available for download.

5. Goal Achievement and Lessons Learned

Although we had to scale down the Open CCI format due to Covid-19, we could still meet the goal of raising awareness for the work of CCI in Upper Austria and present CCI as employers in the region. One teacher wrote us after the three live streams an e-mail: “From my point of view, the format was totally successful and well done, the interviews were all very interesting, students certainly benefited a lot!”. Also, he explained that schools still mainly visit large companies for vocational orientation and do not draw the attention of their students to smaller, local companies.

A pupil that participated said: “I found it very interesting to see the different ways creative people work, so the format was very informative for me. It also gives you an idea of the kind of environment you might like to work in later on.”

The changed format of a digital Open CCI under a specifically defined topic (CCI as employer) also had advantages: We could reach much more people than we could have taken with us for a real life visit to the studios. 80 persons registered for the live streams and the analytics on youtube also show this picture: by now there are 170 views of the [video with Fredmansky](#). The other two videos had to be edited and had to wait to be published again, because they contained unpublished projects that could not be available for download immediately after the interview. The live stream with Pulpmedia had 24 live views and the [edited video](#) 48 views. The live stream with OrtnerSchinko had 37 views and the [edited video](#) was just recently published again due to the above-mentioned reason. The e-mail exchange with the teacher made clear, that they watched the video in class, which means that there stand more people behind the figures.

The registration list shows that a lot of pupils watched the interviews. This is definitely due to the focus on “CCI as employer”. To have a coherent event, we recommend finding a thematic umbrella under which the presented creatives find themselves.

The Covid-19 situation is currently still vague so that it keeps being difficult to make concrete plans. We had planned [the second Open CCI event](#) in a rural setting but had to postpone it already three times. It was agreed with the administrator of the co-working space that should have hosted the event, to try it again in September. We do, however, not know, if it will really be possible to organize this event in fall 2021. Therefore, we decided to separate this action from the InduCCI project and keep trying to implement it outside the project.

6. Outlook, Sustainability and Transferability

We experience that many sides benefit from “doors wider open” - the population of the respective region, other economical branches, administrative staff and CCI itself. The immediate first effect for our organization was that we started to use the format of live streamed interviews and talks with Q&A sessions via slido.com in other events (examples: [Talk about Social Media Marketing](#), [Talk: Make an impact!](#)), because after the first wave of video call meetings during the Corona pandemic, this form of presentation was losing attractiveness while an end of the Covid-19 restrictions was still not in sight. We see potential in professionally filmed interactive interviews and talks that keep being available online after the event ended.

The format was also picked up by creatives in the town of Steyr, the third biggest town in Upper Austria, a former industrial town hosting this years’ [Upper Austrian Regional Exhibition](#) “Work Wealth Power”, who organized three talks in June and July 2021 with creatives on a stage and with live streaming as part of the exhibitions’ side program, in which we supported them ([Talk 1](#), [Talk 2](#), [Talk 3](#)) In winning pupils and students as persons interested in CCI, the knowledge and awareness about it is often extended to their parents, friends and teachers - they serve as multipliers and thus an even broader public is reached.

These examples show well, how the format of interactive live streamed interviews with CCI can be adapted and implemented in other places.

By extending the scope of our organization's target groups to pupils and students, we can start with supporting and strengthening CCI not just, when people have already become entrepreneurs or work on their business idea, but when they are still in the phase of vocational orientation. Showing young people local, alternative, interesting, meaningful and prospective job opportunities and thereby giving them a perspective of staying in the region positively impacts on a sustainable transformation of this region. Therefore, we decided to intensify our work with universities and schools - after all, pupils and students are potential newcomers in CCI, the next generation so to speak.

We will continue the Open CCI format for the public in ways possible. The question on how we can generate publicity and visibility for our regional CCI has kept us busy throughout the time of the InduCCI project. We found additional ways how to bring the public and CCI in touch with each other: we started to publish the [Creative Review](#), a magazine, in which we present projects and works of creatives and of CCI in cooperation with traditional industry. The magazine is available free of charge as pdf and in print in multiple locations throughout Linz and at specific spots in the region. Also, we could win the City of Linz as a cooperation partner for the window display project "[Spot on](#)": windows of empty shops in the center of Linz are made available for the presentation of works and enterprises of creatives.

We believe that the idea behind the test case - giving CCI a public stage - is vital, and we will keep on doing this in manifold ways.

7. Annexes

Guideline: How to organize an Open CCI event in your creative community (in German):

<https://creativeregion.org/2021/04/tipps-fuer-eure-open-studios/>

Virtual room with information about the participating studios (info in German):

<https://apps.mox3d.com/creative-region/>

Recorded interviews with the three enterprises of CCI on YouTube (in German):

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvt7Uk6i26eZVX53g7vVKA8iXFzvchV43>

Article with hints for newcomers about working in CCI (in German):

<https://creativeregion.org/2021/03/volle-kanne-wollen/>

Other projects of Creative Region aiming at raising awareness for CCI in the public (in German):

- Magazine „Creative Review” in pdf and print:
<https://creativeregion.org/2021/08/sie-ist-da-die-creative-review-1/>
- “Spot on” Project: Ciao vacancy - hello creativity!
<https://creativeregion.org/2021/06/spot-on-ciao-leerstand-hallo-kreativitaet/>