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The Imaginaries of Creativity in the Entrepreneurship Sector in Colombia: An Hermeneutic Approach

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Abstract

Due to the complexities of the social, economic, and political context of Colombia, several authors have argued that Colombians tend to be very creative at an individual level, but that they face strong difficulties when trying to act collectively in a creative way. This article deepens in the concept of creativity through a literature review and then contrasts the defined concept with the vision and imaginaries of creativity of tech-entrepreneurs in the country. The main theoretical point is to contrast the empirical verification of the academic literature of creativity with the imaginaries of Colombian entrepreneurs in order to establish a more efficient and effective creative process.

**Keywords:** Creative imaginaries; Colombian entrepreneurs; Entrepreneurship; Enjoyment; Creation process.

1. Introduction

Contemporary capitalism demands ever increasing quantities of consumer goods directed to satisfy the insatiable demand for enjoyment of subjects, hence, the global popularity of the concept of "creativity" in the capitalist fabric nowadays. Creativity results especially attractive for the contemporary subject because it emphasizes in discovering innate talents with great social recognition – in entrepreneurship, music, cinema, art, design, etc.-. However, these talents require to be cultivated through strict normative behaviors since childhood with specific disciplinary regimes that start since birth and then continue in primary and secondary school and into tertiary education. Subjects are encouraged to look into themselves for finding the skills and abilities that will be useful in the future economy of productivity. Hence, creativity seduces both, a) through ideological constructions and culture based on multiple discourses – political, economical and popular culture – as well as the images of successful artists, creatives and entrepreneurs (see illustration 1), who are elicited as defined cultural objects – in movies, series or books – and b) through specific professionalizing education and training. In this sense, it's possible to see how creativity mobilizes desires, conditions behaviors and is found deeply rooted in the feeling and collective thinking of the hypermodern subjects.

Illustration-1. The character that embodies creativity for Colombian entrepreneurs
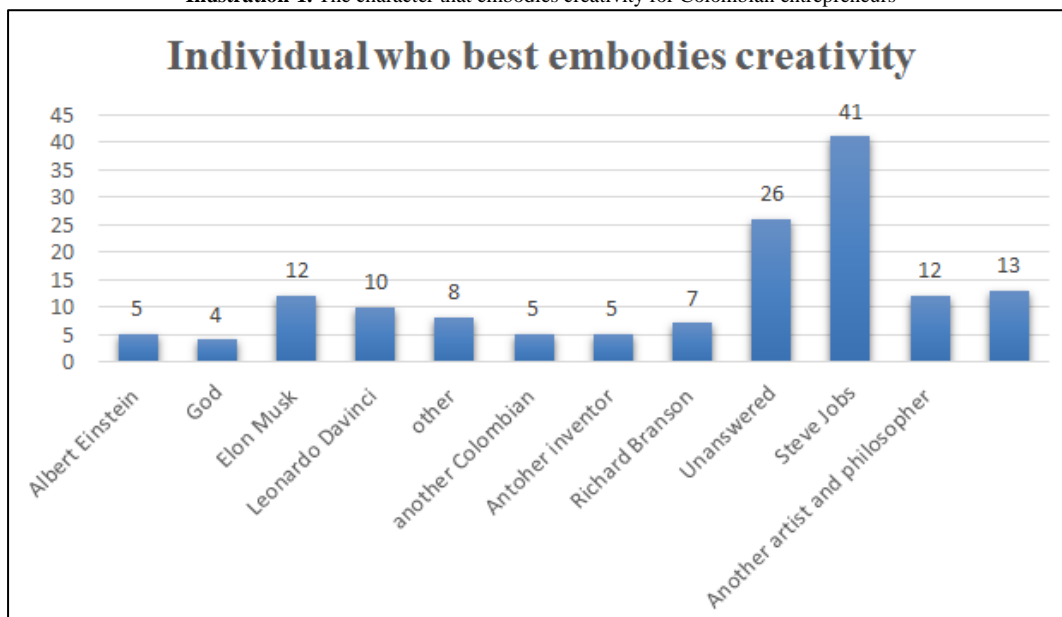
Source: Own elaboration

Accordingly, Osborne (2003) adds that "*We live in a time where being creative has turned in some sort of moral imperative*". We observe how creativity has constituted itself as an ideological category that responds to the necessities of late capitalism, that is, to the economic structures that must keep growing in saturated markets. Being creative, says Osborne, is an ideological construction as well as a way of governance that joins different interests and institutions (Rowan, 2010). However, to think of creativity as an instrument of power is nothing new.

Already since the concept of "the cultural industry posited by Adorno and Horkheimer", power was problematized as a way to manipulate subjects through the ideas they internalize and take as their own in order to orient their desires. In this way, for Adorno and Horkheimer the cultural industry – referred initially to the cinematographic and media industry, Hollywood, radios, and magazines in the United States -, played the role of a manipulation machine, totalitarian and systematic, that demanded more and more adaptation to the capitalist system. This institutional structure served as a subjectivization shaper by submitting the individual to the absolute power and domain of capital (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2007). So, a fundamental component of the cultural industry is its totalitarian capacity in the form of exposuring the public into a permanent and repetitive unsatisfied promise. "*The cultural industry disappoints continuously its consumers regarding that which it continuously promise them.*" This, in turn, configurates a vicious circle that revolves around promise and desire, which keep the consumers in an unproductive state of dependence. In this regard, Adorno & Horkheimer argue that the products from the cultural industry deny and even prevent any kind of imagination, fantasy, spontaneity or active thinking by their consumer, because it is precisely this culture machine which produces it for them. In turn, this kind of ultra passive consumerism is complemented with a meticulous register of the audiences, which reduces them into statistics of dates, location, ages, gender, incomes, political affinities, etc. (Rauning, 2008). The consumers of the cultura industry finish converted in puppets of the capital, counted, serialized, and in complete dependence to the system.

2. Material and Method

Our research method is based on discourse analysis and literature review and comparision, which serves to do a theoretical study of the entrepreneurs´ testimonials who were interviewed for this research.

2.1. Defining Creativity

According to López (2010), the notion of "creativity" dates back to the Greek term "metis" (2010), which was a mental category to refer to some:

> "*(…) forms of representation, appropriation of experience, decisions making, and a whole way of effective reaction in unexpected and changing situations. It establishes, definitely, the importance of the theoretical knowledge, different from an apodictic knowledge, and to the thinking that proceeds tentatively in between the irregularities and uncertainties of the practice.*" (López Pérez: p.168)

However, metis as a category was never considered in deep by the classic Greek philosophers – as it was, for example, logic – and, in consequence, it disappeared as an explanatory category for several centuries. Later, the term "ingenuity", related primary with fantasy, emerged to occupate its place and by the beginnings of eighteen century, Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico rescued elaborated about its importance, when he proposed the neccesity to educate the youth through the boosting of memory and fantasy. Vico argued that even though the power of the mature thinking resides in the reason and experience, the youth takes its it from fantasy and flexibility. Vico started in-depth research on the category of ingenuity, defining it as the human faculty of configuring different things and put them in a specific order, join separate things and perceiving some relation between them, or as a way to establish a link between distant and diverse things. But, as it happened to the metis, this concept also finished weakening in the philosophical tradition and finally lost its reflexive capacity, to the point that today is barely used in academic research (López, 2010). On the other hand, the concept of creativity appeared to take its place and has been gaining more attention in the academic sphere since the middle of XX century as an important category for pedagogy, politics and economics.

In maninstream theory, there are four analytical lines dedicates to the study of the creativity, which focus 1) on the creative process, 2) on the creative product, 3) on the creative person, and 4) on creative place (or context). The first line (the one on the process), explores the techniques and mechanisms that allow the creation of creative ideas and objects; so, theories such as divergent thinking (Guilford, 1968) or creative staging (Wallas, 1926) are primarily based on the creative process. The creative product line[1], in turn, seeks to measure creativity embodied in ideas or thoughts trough psychometric tests, as well as reflects on the way social institutions and discourses assign the value of "creative" to an object - that could be summarised in the conditions of "novelty", "usefulness", and "valuableness"-. The studies on the creative person, analyse the intellectual habits - for example, tolerance, openness to new ideas, flexibility, autonomy, curiosity, imagination, etc. -, of the creative subject. And finally, in the creative

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[1] For Krausz et al. (2009) the first condition for something to be be considered as "creative" is the presence of what was not before, the presence of "novelty," whose minimum requirement is to be different in its internal and irreducible structure at all what preceded it. This novelty, in turn,is evaluated based on knowledge of the field where the contribution is made. So, for example, a creative contribution in the genetic field it will assess based on the criteria established by the state of knowledge in genetics in the moment of the contribution. For Krausz, every novelty carries with an inherent value of impressibility; that is, for something to be novel it must be unpredictable; otherwise it could be explained and determined, and if it were determinable it would lose the value of "novelty". In that sense, not only novelty, but creativity itself implies some level of indeterminacy and impressibility; hence it is historically common to find explanations to geniuses, given the impossibility of explaining their own creativity. In this way, Krausz et al. (2009) tell us that it is not possible to formulate a theory to explain the creativity concept as a scientific and determinable fact because in doing so the very concept of creativity would be eliminated

place line – social context[2] -, studies the social conditions in which creativity develops sucessfully – for example, an open culture, with access to resources, etc.-. (Kaufman and Sternberg, 2006).

In this sense, we observe that creativity more than a product with some unique characteristics, corresponds to a social phenomenon that depends on some historical conditions as well as specific cultural mindsets. Inside of these conditions, the necessity and demands of the historical moment constitute a fundamental factor. For Csikszentmihalyi, thsese demands can have their origin in three principal factors: 1) personal experiences, 2) the requirements of the field and 3) the demands of the field of power (2009). So, creativity can be understood as a product of the satisfaction and the existing tension between the current status and the desired status in terms of structures of power, according to the experience of each subject. In this way, for Csikszentmihalyi, the ideas or creative products are, more than anything else, the result of the interaction of various elements interdependent, and not in the work of an isolated mind as usually it's believed. Creativity emerges from the interaction between a system compounded by three dimensions: "*a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person that brings the novelty and the symbolic field and ambit of experts that recognizes and validate the innovation*." Csikszentmihalyi (2009).

Csikszentmihalyi argues that the creative process could be considered as the cultural equivalent to genetic evolution, as when a change in the genes result in some advantage for the organism, it will be assimilated and reproduced in its offspring making it effective for the rest of the species. Similarly, if a change or novelty in a symbolic field results useful, even in aesthetic terms, this will be assimilated and reproduced in a way that it can make effective for the participants of that culture. However, in the "evolution" of the symbolic fields, there are not equivalent mechanisms to the genetic evolution, that is, the knowledge of making a wheel, or how to burn something, or how relate in society is not transmitted automatically through the genetic code, but this knowledge (also called memes) must be learned through the approbation of some determinate languages (numbers, formulas, theories, languages, etc.). To model or reinvent these memes is what creative people do, as long as an enough number of people with the authority consider that change as something "useful" and "valuable" that must be assimilated by the symbolic field (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

In this way, understanding creativity is not just a matter of what the subject produces or what is produced or how was it produced, but also, the study of the social and historical context of all this production and validation. Hence, Csikszentmihalyi adds:

> "To say that Thomas Edison invented the electric network or that Einstein discovered relativity is a practical simplification. Satisfies our old preference for stories easy to understand that speak about superhuman heroism. But the discovers of Edison and Einstein would be inconceivable without the previous knowledge, without the intellectual and social network that stimulated their thinking, and without the social mechanisms that recognized and spreaded their innovations." (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

Accordingly, creativity in a place would not depend exclusively on the level of creativity of the people that live in that place, but equally depends on the disposition of the respective ambits for its recognition and the diffusion of novelty ideas and the facility to access to resources and the field in which it will make the new input (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

3. Results – Creative Entrepreneur

From the above, we are able to establish a theoretical framework that allows us to study creativity for the tech-entrepreneur and contrast his self-perception (imaginary), with the factors that define and explain theoretically. So, for Csikszentmihalyi the traits that define a creative personality are: 1) it is endowed generously of curiosity, discipline, and pleasure for the work, which leads to recognize more easily any potential novelty, because without a real interest and desire, hardly anyone can persevere enough to make a creative contribution; this desire, in turn, it is defined by a deep and determined experience that marks the subject and demands its resolution. 2) The creative subject has generally had access to both the field and the ambit where he brings the creative novelty – education in the best universities, work in the most recognized institutions, participation in networks with high symbolic capital, etc. -, because the information is not homogeneously distributed in the space, also the interaction between creative people provides more motivation and effervescence of ideas, which encourage the subject to experiment more and have greater confidence to transgress the boundaries of his field. 3) There is a dialectical management of complexity and opposites; the creative subject knows to be guided between the changing situations, like those of activity/rest, convergent/divergent thinking, loneliness/company, discipline/transgression, sensibility/insensibility, etc. Additionally, there are some common traits that are present in the creative personalities. From the work of

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[2] In his work on the field of art, Bourdieu argues that for a subject to make a creative contribution, it requires, in first place, the appropriation of the symbolic code of the field and its history, also of the acquisition of the expression code and its behavioral rules; this includes the function of the stylistic possibilities and thematics as well as the contradictions and problematics to overcome in the field. In that sense, Bourdieu adds: *All the history of the field is imminent to each of its states and to be up to its objective demands as a producer but also as a consumer, one must possess a practical or theoretical domain of that history and of the possible space in which history survives. The open right that every beginner has to satisfy is nothing more than the mastery of all the acquired experiences that support the current problem. Any questioning arises from a tradition, from a practical or theoretical domain of inheritance that is inscribed in the structure of the field itself, as a state of things, hidden by its own evidence, which delimits the thinkable and the unthinkable and that makes way for questions and possible answers* Bourdieu,(1995). From another perspective, creativity will less relapse on the creative person and more on the system that constitutes, legitimizes, consumes it.

Csikszentmihalyi (2009); Eysenck (1995); Kaufman and Sternberg (2006); Krausz *et al.* (2009). We propose the following as main features shared by creative personalities:

1. Discipline and perseverance.
2. Motivation[3].
3. Multiple interests[4].
4. Experimentation.
5. Field knowledge (build in the thinking of others).
6. Courage and risk for making decisions.
7. Attention to find topics and identify necessities.
8. Confidence (Believe in yourself and in that it is possible)
9. Self-evaluation and self-criticism
10. Contingency, joint, and good luck.

Raised these traits, we proceed to put in context, additional perspectives of Colombian entrepreneurs. So, for Mateo – a founder of a company that offers cleaning services through an online platform that fomalizes the work of cleaners in Colombia -, one of the traits that encouraged him to start a business was his curiosity. Mateo says:

> *"What I do think I've always had is a bit of curiosity about anything. I would say yes, I have had a passion for business; however, a curiosity to understand the dynamics and the mechanisms of the business. Why something it is going well, and something is going wrong, why something is sold more and something is sold less, and how some decisions are justified; for example, I was always curious how fashion moves worldwide. It is an interest beyond the business and understanding human behavior".*

For his part, Sebastián from TuProyecto – a platform of corporate online education - points out that for being an entrepreneur, you must:

> *"Have some addiction to resolve problems… you must enjoy solving problems and one feels happy solving them and feels a triumph every time one solves a problem, and that each time a new one is presented, not obfuscated, not blocked, but you feel… Come on, this is a new opportunity to show that I am made for this'."*

Similarly Wilber, Co-founder of Wheels – a ridesharing app -, who considers that every good entrepreneur must meet three conditions:

> *"1) Discipline, that is, fulfills what was committed, 2) rigor, he has a logical structure that leads him to know that sentence two goes after the first and really goes before the third, and 3) communication, he is able to communicate the discipline, knowledge and the rest".*

In that sense, Wilber defines himself as someone addict to life, which means that if he works, he works like an "animal", and he parties, he does it like an "animal" as well.

We highlight how important is discipline, motivation, perseverance and the knowledge of the field for being a creative entrepreneur, and this is recognized by their testimonies and a survey. When asked how entrepreneurs perceived themselves, on a scale of 1 to 5, in relation to certain creative traits, we noted that their self-perception is very positive (see illustration 2); which, in the first place is a sign of self-confidence, useful for entrepreneurship. The traits with the higher positive classification are "motivated" with 4.56 on average, followed by "multiple interests" with 4.44 and the experimenter with 4.34. In turn, the traits with the lowest classification were "sensibility" with 3.56 and "disciplined" with 3.89. We believe that the low scores in these traits obey to the belief that the engineer is a more rational and logic subject and less propense to the sensibility, and referring to the discipline, it could be related to Colombian and Latin American cultural and idiosyncratic facts. However, we highlight the high self-perception of the entrepreneurs regarding these traits factors, which on average is 4.16 out of 5.

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[3] Some theories propose that exist an important relationship between creativity and affection. According to ISen, Daubman, & Nowicki (1987), there are at least three main effects that the affection has over the cognitive creativity: 1. A positive affectivity (motivation) implies a higher generation of cognitive material to be processed by the mind, increasing the possible number of ideas to be associated creatively. 2. A positive affectivity derives in "unfocused attention" and in a more complex thinking context, increasing the possibles uses of the same idea or element in the resolution of the problem. 3. A positive affectivity increases cognitive flexibility, increasing the possibility that diverse cognitive elements, in effect, are associated. These same studies have found strong evidence about the casualty between the creative act and the positive affectivity, that is, not only the pleasure to do something that increases the creatives possibilities, but the creative act also can increase pleasure when it is done (Isen et al., 1987).

[4] On the other hand, the research contucted by (Guilford, 1967) has found that the crews with higher levels of "diversity" tend to be more creatives, explained by the increase in the diverse thinking.

Illustration-2. Entrepreneurs' creative self-perception
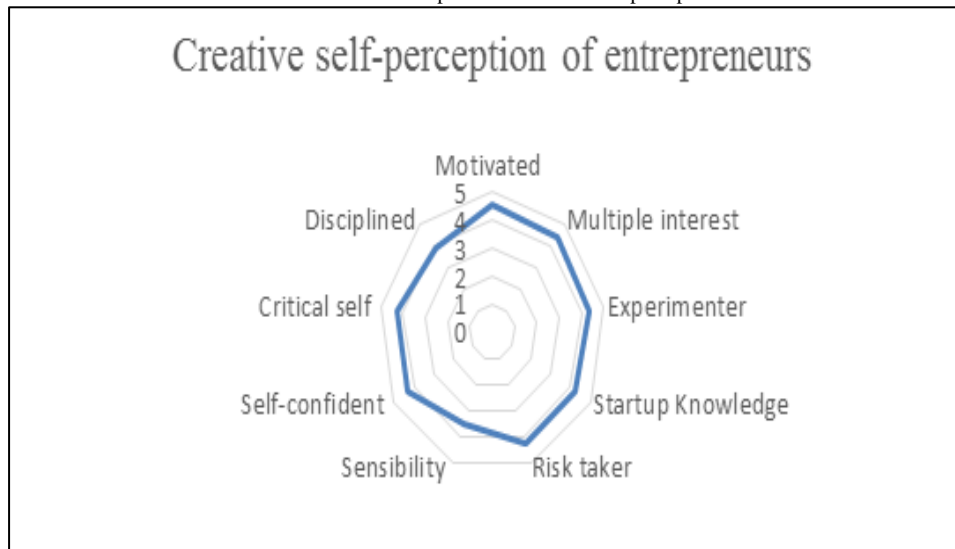
Source: own elaboration

From the above we get that it is valid to consider creativity as a fundamental interpretative category that defines tech-entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial process; that is, we argued that the entrepreneurs by definition must be creative.

In relation to the specific studies about creativity made in Colombia, we highlight the work of Gómez Buendía entitled "¿Where is Colombia going?" (1999), where the author proposes the theory of the Almedrón to explain the typical behavior of the Colombian at an individual level and collective level of organization and social action. According to Gómez Buendía, due to the complex social, economic and political conditions of the country, Colombians tend to be very creative at the individual level, but they face strong difficulties when trying to organize effectively and be creative in collectively. Gómez Buendía defines the Colombian as a very creative subject, witty, and recursive, that finds the way to achieve his goals regardless of the tools (legal or illegal). The individuality, greed, and insight are characteristics highly valued in the Colombian society (Gómez, 1999). However, he also highlights that at the collective level, Colombians have traditionally encountered great difficulties in organizing and acting jointly according to a common propose, whether the consequence (and cause) of a weak State, low levels of compliance and acceptance of the law, drugs cartels and the activities of armed groups, that lack of trust in the "other" and the difficulty to act collectively have led to Colombia to have historically poor sense of the "public", very weak institutions and a clear tendency to overestimate individual welfare at the expense of the collective.

We have an interest in this perspective as a point of exploration in terms of how creativity is defined in the country, in what objects/activities it is embodied, and how it is carried out by entrepreneurs. Thus, we proceed to examine creativity based on the results of the survey, the entrepreneurs' testimonies, and the technological objects that they produce (along with the narratives) based on the perspective of the imaginary.

4. Discussion – The Creative´s Imaginaries

According to the survey, for entrepreneurs creativity is primarily embodied in the following objects/activities:

Illustration-3. Objects/activities that embody creativity
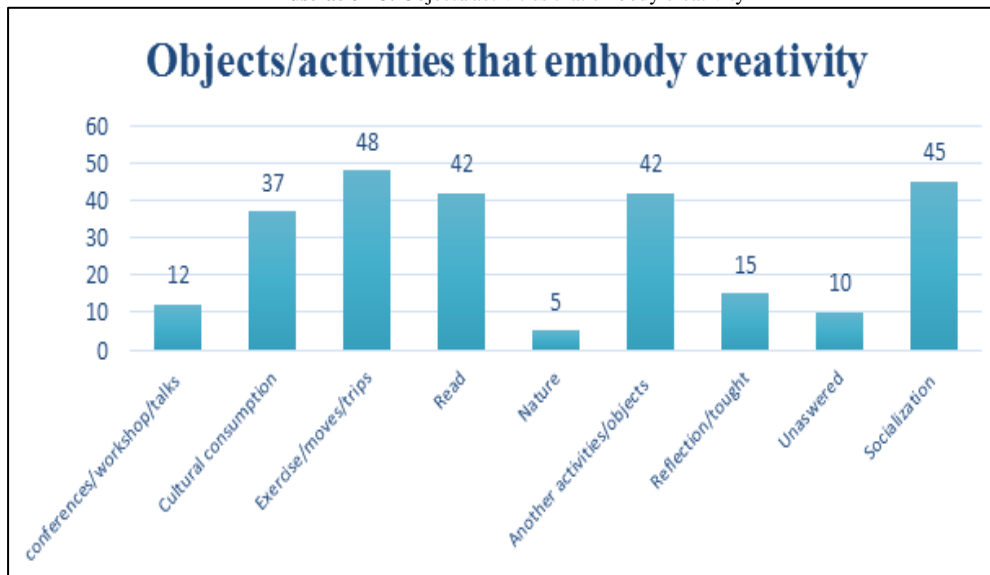
Source: Own elaboration

We observe that the main activity that encourages creativity is related to physical exercise, travels and movement (driving, going by bus or bicycle, etc.); others main activities are "reading" – related to reflection/thought/experimentation" -, "socialize" with others entrepreneurs, and the "cultural consumption and artistic activities" whether it be cinema, TV, the internet, as well as playing music or writing. As for "other activities or everyday objects," we include activities as sleeping, working, meditating, videogames, drugs, showering, computers, among other things, that show the multiple interests among the entrepreneurs in terms of the daily living. These results are an empirical verification of the systemic theory of creativity that we have exposed, in which to learn extensively the field in which one works, socializing, and meeting with like minded peers of the field, as well as having diverse interests and different perspectives results fundamental for the creative production. Thus, in principle, we observe a correspondence between what the theory tells us and what entrepreneurs consider as more important in their creative process.

Likewise, we highlight that in the startup's sector the value of creativity is given by the acceptance that its technological products have in the market, which, however, it is not necessarily linked to financial profits. We observe for example Facebook or Twitter that don't charge for the use of their applications directly and took them years to get to the financial equilibrium point – Twitter still has difficulties in this regard-, and however, they employ thousands of people, they are used by hundreds of millions of people around the world, its stock market value is several billion dollars and nobody doubts abouts its creative capacity. In this measure, the value related to creativity must be understood beyond the financial indicators and put it in the perspectives of hypermodernity: efficiency, productivity, and social responsibility (where we include the democratization of access and production of knowledge), added to the conditions that define creative objects: novelty, value, and utility. It is based on the articulation of these two axes, that we consider that creativity triggers technological innovations in the tech entrepreneurship sector.

In turn, for tech entrepreneurs in Colombia, creativity is:

"*Do something different, (...) be somewhere else, adapt it*, *make it work here, think differently*.", Miguel McAllister.

"*Creativity is the possibility to connect things unconnected that usually, people cannot connect or that they do not know how to connect.*", Elkin Garavito.

"*Creativity is to have the capacity to blow your head and dream with new things.*", Mauricio Salazar.

"*The first thing that comes to my head is to do different things, but with a goal, that is, to really solve things. Find a new way to solve a problem.*" Camilo Jiménez.

"*Creativity (...), taking the risk to speak on ignorance, it must be in the capacity to generate different things, that can be for better or for worse. Perse, it is not a great attitude for me, accompanied by other criteria I think that it can be a very important fact for innovation.*", Wilber Jiménez.

"*Creativity is the capacity to analyze, think, and ¿how can I say? Develop independently of the stereotype with which similar concepts have been analyzed, filtered, and developed. Yes, that is, it is a bit intelligent thinking that goes a few beyond the stereotypes whit which that thing has been thought.*", Matteo Cera.

"*Creativity is to combine what you know with what you like to find new ways to see the world.*", Carlos López.

"*I would think that is like the capacity of people to generate new things from a point of view or a perspective that is suddenly not common, then find ways to see things or to resolve problems that might be they are not the more evident.*", Sebastián Siachoque.

"*Creativity is get something unexpected, within limitations of a situation with limitations.*", Alan Colmenares.

Similarly, entrepreneurs recognize that creativity is not only at the individual level but also collectively, so Rene of HudBog highlights that:

"*It is human, the characteristics are in the capacity of a society to change the way that it works, an example of Israel and the Israeli decedents that lived scattered around the world and then gathered to build the country. It is more historical than geographical. In Colombia, we have an inherited culture from the Spanish which we do not wonder how to make new things every day unlike to the Anglo-Saxon or Escandinavian. This is not the Colombian case and is explained by the culture. We are a country of employees.*"

And about the creative process, Rene adds:

"*[It must be] organic, open and in constant touch with the market. Go to the street perceive, observe, discuss, collide ideas, understanding that ideas are ideas and do not have value. An idea is a natural secretion of the human brain, appear like sweat. Make those ideas a company, there is the difference.*"

Thus, for Rene creativity in startups must be useful as a tool to solve specific problems, that is if there are not operational solutions, if the necessities do not get effective satisfaction, then there would be no creativity. In this regard Rene adds:

"*At a conference, they told me, Rene, but from where one comes up with ideas, where one sees the problems, and I said, at the bus stops, sit in a bus stop for a day or two days, and look. Look the traffic problem, the garbage problem, the peddler's problem, the contamination, everything, and*

those problems are those that require solution under a conscience of how and for what the ICT exists. That is, being conscience about that there are tools, but how it works and for what serves. They are not just for communications, but ICT has changed the way that humans consume, live, is transported, is feed, is drees, is build himself, is fall in love, that means that everything change."

And in that sense, Rene concludes with the next definition of creativity:

"Creativity is to challenge the way in that society works. Startups are disruptive related to the function of society and its historical development."

We can note, according to the entrepreneurs, how creativity must derive in solutions that effectively change a symbolic field, an industry or even a society. Likewise, in these definitions of creativity, we observe the presence of some signifiers that we have previously discussed as changing/transforming, generating, connecting/combining, unpredictability, new, different; and an additional significant that seems particularly important and is to "dream".

5. Conclusion

The notion of dreaming is important to creativity because it is realted to the imaginary, to the fantasy, and even to the fictitious, which allows us to link our object of study: creativity, with our theoretical and methodological framework. This, in turn, we can understand from two different perspectives, on one side, creativity as imaginary as it does necessarily refer to an "affection" capacity that may differ from the factual state of things, necessary in order to create new and valuables outcomes; and on the other side, the role that imaginary plays in the production of visions and fantasies that encourages creations – from the yearnings, desires, symptoms and modes of enjoyment -. Thus, in our study of "imaginary of creativity" of tech entrepreneurs, there are some physical points where this happen – offices, coffee shops, accelerators, garages, startups weekends, etc. -, and some objects that embody creativity, but also there are stories, theories, images, and archives of technological objects from which desires and enjoyment can be deduced. It is in these places (of both material and symbolic production and consumption) where we locate the "public" of the imaginary of creataivity; in this way, the tech-entrepreneurship ecosystem in Colombia constitutes primarily the public space of the imaginary and determines the point of view from where entrepreneurs "create" the different technological products. This,in turn, it is useful to assess the entrepreneurs´ visions about creativity and the various elements and actions that participate in the creative process, as a reflection that seeks to understand the significance of creating in Colombia. In the analysis of the imagined creativity, the ways in which entrepreneurs dialogue, interrogate and produce the stories of their own creation processes, and the group dynamics that validate them are studied. On the one hand, we recognize the great capacity of new technologies to generate wonder – and, consequently, imaginaries -, and we highlight the great imaginary component of the entrepreneurs of the sector, who are creating these new technologies.

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