Decommodify the 2030 Agenda: Why and How to Finance What Is Not Profitable?

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Abstract: The 2030 Agenda serves as a guide for current economic policy. Despite this, the dominant political and economic discourse still relies on the market for success. Incentives are being developed to create business opportunities that align with the sustainable development goals. However, funding for these projects ultimately depends on their potential profitability. As a result, economic growth is seen as a necessary condition for achieving the 2030 Agenda. This approach leaves culture and the arts behind, as they are difficult to commodify. The artist job market highlights the tension between the democratic value of the arts and the values of the capitalist system. This challenge is seen in both the field of cultural economics and in discussions of culture’s role in meeting the 2030 Agenda’s sustainable development goals. To address this, the study proposes incorporating culture into a funding strategy not based on the private market by using the employer of last resort or job guarantee policy for future applications. This will redirect focus from the economic value of the arts to their value for human development, ultimately realizing the goals set by the 2030 Agenda.

Keywords: artistic education; employer of last resort; job guarantee; endogenous money; fiscal and monetary policy coordination; arts; human development; creativity; cultural economics

1. Introduction

After asking where the money came from, Fagg Foster determined that “technically feasible is financially possible” [1] (p. 966). The 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a benchmark to be considered in any economic policy. Today’s proposals and measures seem to be justified by these goals. This article examines the role assigned to the arts by the designers of this framework in achieving sustainable human development and how resources can be mobilized through artistic creation to meet the proposed goals, thanks to the implementation of the state as employer of last resort, also known as the job guarantee.

Artistic expressions of all kinds are neglected in the 2030 Agenda. So long as the SDGs’ fulfillment is dependent on market supply and demand and driven by the main goal of increasing the gross domestic product, progress will be contingent on its market viability and profitability opportunities.

Achieving economic and social development that prioritizes integration and social inclusion, respect for and development of identity, emancipation, and sustainability, and ultimately the enhancement of individual capacities and the resilience and revitalization of communities, are crucial tasks that should not be left to profit-driven private entities. The private sector is not necessarily insensitive to these goals, but the capitalist production mode takes precedence over good intentions. This is not a matter of values to raise awareness among private entities, but a systemic issue. In contrast to the false sense of individuality promoted by capitalist globalization, which is based on commodity consumption, the...
The arts offer tools that promote individual freedom, creativity, and exploration, as well as diverse ways of being, living, and appropriating public spaces through collective learning and diversity.

We conducted a literature review to examine the connections between the SDGs and the arts and culture, including their potential, strengths, and actions. We argue that the market is not an effective catalyst for achieving these objectives, so we propose an economic policy mechanism that can be utilized in a transversal manner to incorporate the arts. This mechanism, known as the job guarantee, is based on the principles of Modern Money Theory and consists of both stabilizing and transforming aspects. Our findings highlight specific SDGs that have been overlooked in the 2030 Agenda and emphasize the importance of coordinating fiscal and monetary policy to ensure the mechanism’s success.

This mechanism, which consists of stabilizing and transformative aspects and is derived from the institutional approach called Modern Money Theory, based on the nature and functioning of money, is known as the job guarantee. It is worth mentioning that the exploration of institutionalism to implement mechanisms for the right to employment has been advancing [2–6], and over the last 25 years Modern Money Theory has strengthened this institutionalist tradition. Matters such as demonstrating the necessary coordination of fiscal and monetary policies to ensure the system’s operation, revealing the entry of money into the economy and the enlargement of the notion of endogenous money, or presenting a concept of money that contradicts the metallic approach to money in explaining the abstract value pattern for determining other prices, are innovative developments with direct implications for the full employment policy proposal, which we discuss here [7–18].

From this approach, instead of relying on an indirect strategy wherein the achievement of goals is tied to economic growth that may not be inclusive or sustainable, we propose directly creating jobs that prioritize both aspects, with economic growth as a subsequent outcome. The institutionalization of the job guarantee reverses the traditional sequence of trickle-down economics. In theory, trickle-down economics assumes that stimulating private production will eventually benefit those at the lower end of the income distribution. However, this approach does not always deliver on its promises. On the other hand, creating jobs for all, the mobilized workforce, and the resulting income can stimulate productivity and have a ripple effect throughout the economy. Although any program may have positive effects, such as breaking negative habits and cycles caused by prolonged unemployment, promoting job creation for a creative workforce committed to the potential of art activities offers untapped opportunities with yet-to-be-discovered outcomes.

The arts and culture are currently aligned with preserving and identifying specific historical social relations of production, serving as a means of alienation, and perpetuating the capitalist system. In response to the constraints imposed by the existence of a reserve army of the unemployed, employed artists can be seen as providers of tools for democratic education. Through collective participatory processes aimed at achieving the SDGs, individuals have the opportunity to collectively symbolize and work toward building the society they desire.

Throughout this work, we will use the term “arts and culture” to encompass various artistic and creative expressions. The approach taken in this work is institutional/historical, not quantitative/mathematical. Understanding economic phenomena does not require more data, but rather an understanding of historical facts and institutions [19]. The need to mathematically model behavior limits what can be addressed [20]. Our approach prioritizes the content of the theory over its form [21].

This methodological choice stems from an ontological choice [20–24]. The ontology, or our vision of the world, determines the methodology used in the study [25,26]. Our ontology in this case is our understanding of the economic system, the structures that govern individual choices, and what culture and the arts are. Following Keynes, we need to have a specific understanding of the facts, institutions, and characteristics of the capitalist system to move from a qualitative study to a quantitative one [27] (p. 11). Thus, our approach prioritizes the analysis of the economic structure rather than microfoundations,
in contrast to neoclassical economics and cultural economics within it [28–32]. We aim to avoid Solow’s observation that economists only refine their methods without considering the limits of the data [33] (p. 40). Given the particularities of the artist market and the demand for art, our approach is suitable to understand and design the role of the arts in the capitalist system [34–41].

The article is structured as follows. In the first section, we present the focus of our work, the hypothesis, and objectives, within the context of a capitalist system where profit drives investment and mobilization of unemployed productive resources, including artists who are seen as merely a factor of production. The second section provides a review of the literature on the functioning of the capitalist system and specifically, how the arts are integrated into it. This section also exposes the literature from cultural economics, as well as the critique of political economy and critical theory, as a coherent framework to formulate an alternative. The third section explores the role given to the arts and culture in the 2030 Agenda through an integrative review that supports the integration of various fields that shape the economic policy proposal. The fourth section presents the results of an exploratory analysis on how the literature recognizes and addresses the role of culture and the arts in the SDGs. In the fifth section, we propose a mechanism outside of the market for the mobilization of artistic and cultural expressions for the 2030 Agenda. We discuss what a job guarantee is, how it works, and why it is an appropriate mechanism for working on the SDGs by mobilizing the pool of employed artists who otherwise face chronic precarity and instability in their professional careers. In the conclusions, strategies are outlined to deepen the examination of aspects related to the job guarantee policy, specifically in regards to the arts and alternative approaches to sustainable human development, for consideration in future implementations of this policy.

2. Theoretical Framework: Art versus Commodities

Artistic creations are not limited to just commercially viable art products, which are the result of talent and produced for market demand. Neither are they free from constraints in public art projects, where art is viewed as a means to achieve social outcomes. The creative process is limited to specific results, lacking the ability to ask questions, observe, explore, and experiment that is inherent to artistic activity [42]. This can lead to the instrumentalization of art as seen by Marxen [43] (p. 49), who notes that art is often used as a form of token capital to glorify the project sponsor or supporting institution. This commodification of creative activities is a form of commercialization.

Art being used in our lives as more than just an entertainment product, like environmental sustainability or humanities education, depends on expectations of monetary profits. Commercial banks won’t invest in activities that don’t provide a return on investment. In a budgeting framework based on sound finance principles, the opportunity cost of financing these nonreturn activities by the public sector is high. The principle of endogenous money explains that an increase in credit is a result of solvent borrowers’ demand for money, not the supply of money available for lending [44]. Banks can increase their advertising budgets, lower lending rates, or reduce collateral requirements, but they cannot create demand for credit, as noted by Moore [45] (p. 373). This concept applies to any market-driven sector, including the arts and culture.

The logic of capital determines the priority of fulfilling the SDGs, cultural activities, and artistic education in relation to profitability, always based on the accumulation of capital. They will be prioritized if they are valued by the market, either as an artistic product or as a means to associate other products and brands with specific social or cultural values through the use of art. This results in the commodification of art and a clash with its own creative impulses [46].

When addressing the development of social values such as creativity, inclusion, identity, sustainability, equality, etc. as part of a political strategy for economic growth, identifying the system in which they will be promoted is crucial. Achieving alignment with the SDGs cannot rely solely on corporate social responsibility or shareholder morality,
incentives, and disincentives. As Murray states [47] (p. 244), the first step is to focus on the underlying social purposes driving the capitalist mode of production.

The private sector is not concerned with the type of products it produces or how they are produced. Its primary goal, as Marx pointed [48] (p. 207), is to continuously acquire abstract wealth. The SDGs and targets set in the 2030 Agenda will only be incorporated into private production planning if they align with this objective.

Additionally, the abstract wealth gained through commodity sales is not just a relationship between objects, but rather a relationship between individuals. These relationships are far from equal. For the capitalist to acquire abstract wealth, they must first appropriate the surplus value of the workers. The sequence of first appropriating abstract wealth and then surplus value may appear inverted, but logically, the capitalists must first calculate the expected profit from selling the commodity before they invest in hiring labor. Unused surplus value stored in inventory is useless to the capitalist if it cannot be transformed into money.

Ultimately, as Luxemburg [49] (pp. 17–19) notes, it is not society’s consumption needs or willingness to use something that drives and fuels capitalist investment, but only demand with purchasing power as a crucial factor for realizing capital gains. If culture, arts, creativity, diversity, equality, sustainability and other things that 21st-century society claims to value and prioritize as objectives are not supported through the price mechanism, making them profitable goods produced by private companies, the success of achieving the SDGs dependent on the market will be highly disappointing.

Therefore, cultural and creative activities are closely tied to the logic and workings of economic dynamics. Although these activities impart a range of values that require an ethical rethinking in line with the concept of sustainable development, these values are only considered by private agents as they serve the purpose of capital accumulation. Culture does not shape the economic logic that governs other sectors, but rather is instrumentalized as its social value increases the added value of cultural activities, perpetuating the underlying logic of the system of social production relations to which they are subject. This can be seen as a process of differentiation and identification with a specific method or characteristic, operating as a form of cultural denomination. As Maraña [50] (p. 23) terms it, this is the “folklorization” of cultural expressions.

From a purely economic perspective, specifically in the field of cultural economics, it is important to understand the contribution to justify public policies aimed at creating and preserving cultural capital and promoting the creative industry as sources of innovation and territorial attraction that foster other industries and activities. As Benavente and Price [51] point out, the promotion of culture by the public administration is justified by its positive externalities. In this sense, arts and culture are productive activities, creating surplus value and cultural capital, as conceptualized by Throsby [34,52].

Based on the perspective of arts and culture presented from the cultural economics field, we believe that the precariousness of artists is not mainly caused by their individual preferences or consumer preferences, but by the nature of art and the values it represents [28–32]. These values are in direct conflict with the attitudes and goals that define and drive the capitalist system. The cultural economics field has primarily focused on the individual and their specific traits, disregarding the production relations that determine the role of artists and art in the capitalist system.

On the demand side for artistic products [34–41], the ability to launch a critical and divergent look that enables the individual to question and challenge the current state of affairs, search for solutions, experiment, and ultimately develop the capacities for human development mentioned in Section 5, should not be a privilege of the economically privileged classes. Art education is more important for enhancing the cultural industry than income. However, considering the narrow view of art as a commodity held by these authors, it can be understood that no progress has been made to this point. This narrow-mindedness, the focus on treating artistic creations as commodities to be consumed like any other, influences public policies aimed at promoting culture. Thus, as subsidies and tax
credits are established to support cultural production, or taxes are lowered to encourage consumption, the arts and culture disappear from academic programs at all educational levels. On the other hand, empirical evidence seems to support this field that disregards the vast literature on critical theory that justifies the value of the arts for society and the promotion of the cultural industry. Art education, not income, is the main determinant of cultural consumption [53–55]. It is true that people with higher income have access to cultural education, but it is this access, not income itself, that allows development of the skills necessary to understand the symbolic elements of cultural consumption. A tax cut to increase visits to galleries, theaters, operas, or museums will not change these skills; they can only be developed through policies that promote a taste for the arts.

However, in this article, we argue that for culture and the arts to effectively contribute to achieving the SDGs, they need to move beyond being seen as commodities and assert their own logic. The funding required to bring forth the resources necessary must be aligned with alternative criteria and goals.

Therefore, it is crucial to investigate alternative methods for incorporating culture into the 2030 Agenda that are not dependent on economic growth and profit, so that artistic and cultural expressions can be appreciated for their contribution to human development rather than just being used to boost the value of other goods and services. However, the question remains, has this approach been pursued?

3. Method: A Feasible Hypothesis

To support the integration of fields presented in this work within a specific policy framework aimed at integrating arts and culture with the goal of achieving the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, we conduct an exploratory investigation by using the integrative review methodology [56]. This methodology allows us to examine the place of arts and culture in the 2030 Agenda and integrate results and assessments from various research designs and disciplines for a better understanding of relevant issues. This method is appropriate and flexible for investigating policy aspects and discovering new avenues to explore.

To find scientific literature, the search terms used were “Agenda 2030” AND “culture” AND “art*”. The search was conducted on 10 December 2020 by using the Dialnet database and resulted in 57 documents. The multidisciplinary team of researchers selected studies that directly connected the use of arts to achieve certain sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda. Reviews and studies that did not specifically address the role or usefulness of arts for the development of sustainable development goals were excluded. Based on these six texts, we used the Research Rabbit platform to find additional related studies, resulting in two more texts that met our criteria. Thus, the results presented in this article reflect the insights on arts and culture within the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development objectives directly addressed in eight texts. Although the literature may have increased due to the popularity of linking any research/activity/policy to the 2030 Agenda, this does not affect the purpose of this search.

We review, critique, and synthesize results and present arguments for discussion using the Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy paradigms, which give the arts a position in society aimed at developing individual capacities beyond commodification. This perspective on arts and culture analysis is particularly relevant given the limitations of reducing art to pure economic reasoning, as studied in cultural economics. This article aims to overcome this limitation by combining critical perspectives from the fields of arts and economics, along with the institutionalist approach in economics known as Modern Money Theory. The goal is to include in the SDGs and 2030 Agenda debate activities that are not economically profitable but are directly related to the development of multiple purposes. Figure 1 illustrates how integration/discussion between various fields has been carried out throughout this work.
4. Results: Old Wine in New Bottles

Studies on the impact of culture on the economy emphasize its role as a catalyst for creativity, productivity, and the enhancement of other industries in a specific locale [57]. Culture is considered a valuable asset for economic growth, beyond merely addressing poverty and human needs [58]. Additionally, culture has been shown to enhance social capital, drive innovation, spur entrepreneurship, and conserve historical and intangible cultural assets [59]. As Abeledo posits, the production of culture is justifiable due to its innovative potential and the prospect of generating synergies with other sectors through the leveraging of that innovation [60] (p. 37).

This author, along with Throsby [52] and Vaca and Ramirez [61], discusses the relationship between art or culture and Sen’s approach to capabilities, promoting crucial processes that enhance individuals’ capacities and broaden their opportunities. All of these authors emphasize the importance of culture in and of itself as a crucial part of human development, not solely linked to maximizing economic benefits. They also suggest that economic and cultural systems are interrelated, not isolated from one another. As described in Section 2, the essence of art in capitalism clashes with the aim of capital, which subordinates all labor to serve its own ends. Díez [62] also connects Sen’s capabilities approach to human development with artistic activities, but places emphasis on the de-commodification of goals and the significance of artistic creation as a means for personal growth.

Creativity is not just limited to innovation in production processes. It also drives innovation beyond market mechanisms, focused on addressing community issues and human needs, fostering diverse perspectives, and transforming social reality [63] (pp. 134–135). This perspective will be examined in greater detail in point 5 as a means of incorporating culture into the 2030 Agenda.

An analysis of the United Nations’ 25 September 2015 resolution “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” reveals criticisms about the omission of culture, the arts, and creativity in the 2030 Agenda [64]. Specifically, there are two references to culture and two references to creativity, with no mention of art. Both references to culture pertain to promoting and respecting cultural diversity. As for creativity, it appears twice in SDG 8, “Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all”. It is suggested that businesses
utilize creativity as a means of driving innovation and addressing sustainable development challenges. Thus, when creativity is referenced, it is within the context of market-oriented solutions aimed at achieving the SDGs.

Despite the limited presence of culture in the 2030 Agenda, there have been several studies that associate culture with specific goals and SDGs as implicit factors in their achievement, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Perspectives on art and culture in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>SDGs</th>
<th>Main Consideration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[59]</td>
<td>4, 8, 11–12, 13 and 16</td>
<td>Culture as a crucial element of the creative economy concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[61]</td>
<td>8, 9 and 10</td>
<td>Incorporation of a cultural variable in development indices to make its impact evident.</td>
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<tr>
<td>[63]</td>
<td>1–17</td>
<td>The author considers culture as the fourth dimension of sustainable development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[58]</td>
<td>4, 8, 9 and 11</td>
<td>Tensions within the culture–sustainability paradigm. Insufficient evidence demonstrating the correlation between cultural promotion and profitability opportunities in terms of development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[60]</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Advance the cultural vibrancy of territories to drive the growth of the creative economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[65]</td>
<td>1–17</td>
<td>Art contributes to the achievement of the objectives outlined in the 2030 Agenda, rather than solely adding to the cultural capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[66]</td>
<td>1–17</td>
<td>Culture as a manifestation of a society’s values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[67]</td>
<td>1–17</td>
<td>Social transformation as a process requires evoking emotions in people to spur reactions. Art serves as the catalyst for that emotional response.</td>
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The works of Utrera [65] and Martinell, García Haro, and Vázquez [66] emphasize the presence of culture throughout their studies. They highlight that culture, which encompasses values, beliefs, convictions, expressions, languages, knowledge, arts, traditions, institutions, and ways of life, is the foundation that builds everything else. However, if the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda are viewed as opportunities and achievements to be achieved through market mechanisms, the lack of emphasis on culture in the agenda is understandable. Although culture may serve capitalist motives and the pursuit of monetary benefits, the logic of the two may conflict and hinder each other.

Martinell [67] provides more specific information regarding goals related to culture, whereas Utrera [65] makes an association with specific goals and objectives. Based on the goals identified by both authors, culture would be present in five out of the 169 goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

- Target 4.7 aims to ensure the acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge by promoting education on human rights, gender equality, global citizenship, appreciation of cultural diversity, and the contribution of culture to sustainable development. This involves creating safe, inclusive, nonviolent, and effective learning environments for all.
- Target 8.3 focuses on promoting policies to support the development of creativity and innovation, with the aim of boosting economic activity.
- Target 8.9, focused on promoting policies for sustainable tourism that emphasizes culture and local production.
- Target 11.4, focused on preserving cultural and natural heritage through fostering connections between communities, nature, and economic entities at the local and regional levels.
• Target 12.b aims to promote local culture and products for sustainable tourism, which appears to overlap with Target 8.9.

As observed, four out of the five identified targets are closely related to the commodification of culture as profit-making opportunities for the private sector. Only Target 4.7, which falls under SDG 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, seems to encompass the notion of culture that is advocated for in this chapter. Furthermore, we contend that the recognition of culture in the SDGs can also be aligned with the following goals, which will be discussed in Section 5:

• Target 1.4 aims to ensure that all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable, have equal rights and access to basic resources and services. Although not explicitly stated, culture must be considered a basic right and service.

• Target 5.4 aims to acknowledge and recognize the value of care and unpaid domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies. In short, it aims to make these activities visible and promote shared responsibility. The market values activities through monetization of the services it provides; that is, those that are profitable. Socializing care is an effective way to meet this goal that operates outside the market dimension.

• Target 5.5 aims to ensure complete female participation by granting women a voice and providing effective leadership opportunities across all levels of political, economic, and public life.

• Target 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including equal pay for equal work and equal pay for work of equal value, particularly for women, youth, and persons with disabilities who experience higher rates of unemployment and inactivity.

• Target 8.8, which is directly related to the previous one, aims to secure the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, with a particular focus on women, migrant workers, and workers in precarious employment.

• Target 10.2 seeks to enhance and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all individuals, regardless of their characteristics and identities, including disability, race, ethnicity, origin, or religion, without discrimination.

• Target 11.1 aims to ensure that all individuals have access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services in communities, with a special emphasis on addressing the needs of marginalized neighborhoods.

• Target 11.3 aims to implement inclusive urbanization, participatory management, and integrated and sustainable planning for urban and rural communities.

• Target 16.1 seeks to reduce forms of violence by building capacity at all levels to prevent and combat crime.

The goals highlighted here are directly related to the cultural needs of marginalized populations, as well as the indirect and intangible benefits that culture provides for social cohesion, civic engagement, and collective identity. These are crucial for human development and, in turn, for economic development. However, within a capitalist system, only those activities that yield profit are typically financed and produced. Although it is possible to finance cultural activities through a nonmarket logic, it remains a challenge within this framework.

5. Discussion: Reversal of the Development Sequence

Soini and Dessein [68] distinguish between a narrow concept and a broad concept of culture. The narrow concept refers to the production of cultural goods, whereas the broad concept encompasses cultural expressions that serve as the basis for all areas of human endeavor. They propose three classifications or representations of culture: (i) culture in sustainability; (ii) culture for sustainability; and (iii) culture as sustainability. Given that different values operate in each representation of culture, it is necessary to foster their incentives and direction with different economic policies.
The first representation refers to cultural and artistic products and is seen as a result of cultural policies, where culture is considered complementary to other areas of life. In the second representation, culture is perceived as a regulator of other areas, serving as a resource or requirement for development. Culture is viewed as an input from other sectors, either as a catalyst for innovation or as a source of attraction that generates opportunities for other activities. The third representation considers culture to encompass all aspects of social and human life and acts as a transformative force in other areas. In this representation, culture is not seen as a resource for development, but rather, development is viewed as a cultural process. This last representation aligns with the fulfillment of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, whereas the creative industries and cultural capital are limited to the first and second representation.

Sánchez Galera [69] highlights the absence of any reference to the fundamental right of participation in cultural life in the context of SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The author emphasizes that culture should not only be protected and promoted for its contributions to productivity and its relationship with other economic activities. Instead, she argues that it is critical to shift toward a new social model that places the individual and nature at the center, rather than serving economic interests. This shift, she states, must be driven by institutions and public administration, with concrete policies in place [69] (p. 163).

Despite advancements in the theorization of the right to participation in culture [70], the identification of vulnerable groups whose access to this right is limited, such as women, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, minorities, migrants, and those living in poverty [71], and its role as a means of transmitting and acquiring emotions, which are essential for overall well-being and driving the social change required for sustainable development [72–74], this right is not being addressed in economic and social policy. This is exemplified by its omission from the 2030 Agenda. In line with Sen’s capabilities approach, culture can be viewed as a platform for promoting dialogue and exercising freedoms and opportunities for participation. Participation in culture affects the recognition of individual and collective needs, whether by exploring them or addressing those that are already acknowledged, and requires appropriate attention. It also creates new avenues for communication, expression, and action [75] (p. 198).

We need to shift our focus in addressing vulnerable communities. Instead of viewing them as passive recipients of top-down development, a bottom-up approach that involves them in both the planning and implementation of projects would better capture important factors and local development concerns that may not be addressed by government policies. This approach would also foster internal social relationships that are more attuned to local social, environmental, and economic issues, and ultimately strengthen bonds of solidarity, co-responsibility, and collective identity that contribute to sustainability, as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda [76–78]. To facilitate such processes, some studies have emphasized the power of culture and the arts as a tool for empowering, revitalizing, and enhancing the resilience of communities through inclusive diversity and co-education in critical thinking [79–83]. Additionally, other research has highlighted the numerous benefits to mental health and well-being that result from participating in activities such as choir singing [84,85], neighborhood theater plays [86,87], plastic arts [88,89], writing [90,91], or dance [92,93]. Effective participation in these activities can lead to self-knowledge and cognitive activation that can provide truly therapeutic emotional and spiritual experiences, to which individuals may not have otherwise had access.

However, we believe that an institutional mechanism is needed to ensure the stability of these processes and to fully realize the potential for transforming culture and the arts, rather than remaining limited to symbolic and anecdotal efforts with limited continuity [94]. Money is crucial in mobilizing resources within the capitalist system, as commercial banks create money ex nihilo to fund projects deemed profitable, albeit with a degree of uncertainty. Banks play a central role in credit creation, and profits are generated through the sale of production in the market, which is made possible by the introduction of money into
the economy. Without this, credit cannot be repaid, and the introduction of money without a corresponding increase in goods and services leads to an imbalanced economy [95].

States, like private banks, are not intermediaries between private individuals. They do not redistribute savings from some agents to others through the provision of public services or monetary transfers. The state monetary circuit starts with public spending and ends with taxes, meaning the state spends first and then collects. Therefore, the monopoly issuer of currency can only demand payment of taxes once the private agents have the means to pay the debt that circulates [12] (p. 104). From this perspective, public spending results in net financial assets for families and companies, which can be saved as benefits, whereas taxes destroy these assets [96,97].

Therefore, the most effective mechanism for a development agenda where the arts play a significant role is the implementation of a job guarantee program. This program not only has a stabilizing effect on the macroeconomic field, but also aims to transform communities through a cross-cutting approach by using culture and the arts to achieve the SDGs outlined in the 2030 Agenda. Rather than relying on market opportunities and trickle-down effects from expected economic growth, this strategy focuses on directly providing jobs to mobilize real resources within the community, from the bottom up [98].

In Forstater [99], the job guarantee is proposed as a solution that addresses environmental sustainability by utilizing low-capital goods and minimizing the use of raw materials that cause significant structural changes for a new “green” private production. These activities aim to conserve nonrenewable resources and reduce pollution as much as possible, which is not achievable in the private sector due to competitive pressures that restrict discretion in the selection of inputs, products, and methods. The pursuit of maximum profitability and cost reduction often overrides social and environmental considerations, as reflected in the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

Certainly, short-term and focused projects can be inspiring and produce tangible results. However, the job guarantee, by offering stable, decent employment for the community’s transformation and renewal, promotes medium- to long-term interests and a broader perspective. It also provides the participants with functional tools to engage, avoiding the perception of the program as a pilot test or temporary event. This eliminates opportunistic behavior and distrust toward the program’s goals, and helps prevent the program from being seen as a leisure activity rather than a serious initiative.

The job guarantee is, in general terms, an automatic stabilizer that works by employing workers who cannot find a job in the private sector. During economic recessions, the program will expand in size, whereas during economic booms its size will decrease due to increased demand for private sector employment [100,101]. Participation in the program is voluntary. The state sets the wage it pays for activating the workforce, and individuals choose whether to participate. In other words, the total expenditure for this mechanism is not determined by the state, unlike other programs regardless of their objectives. Mitchell and Muysken [102] (pp. 141–142) point out that the size and direction of the public budget is an endogenous result. This can be understood through a basic understanding of how automatic stabilizers work: a sharp drop in demand reduces tax revenue and increases spending on, for example, unemployment benefits, automatically increasing the public deficit. Attempting to limit the effect of automatic stabilizers or even suppress them to conform to a budgetary balance rule only deepens the recession. This is because households and companies rely on others’ spending, and if the state is forced to cut spending, the monetary gains that it generates by maintaining purchasing power to soften the fall in demand will disappear, resulting in more job losses and company failures.

The aim is that these programs are mainly temporary and do not require specialized training. They can be designed in a flexible manner to include groups that are frequently excluded from the labor market: the chronically ill, ex-convicts, disabled workers, young people entering the labor market for the first time, ethnic minorities, or people who have been out of the labor market for a long time for any reason [103]. In regard to the topic at hand, artists also fall under the category of people who are frequently excluded from the
The labor market, with high unemployment rates, low wages, and chronic insecurity [104–106]. This is due to the nature of artistic activity and its incompatibility with capitalist values, as explained in Section 2 of this article. These jobs do not compete with the need for public employment and the traditional welfare state, but rather should be considered as a beneficial job for society that provides a bridge to the private sector, although this transition may not always be necessary, especially for artists, due to their unique characteristics. According to the labor preference model, the artist values emotional income over monetary income, resulting in a higher level of satisfaction compared to what they would obtain from engaging in another activity [107,108].

In this way, market forces determine the size and direction of the public budget automatically. The job guarantee operates as an anchor for prices and wages, effectively replacing the traditional method of controlling inflation by maintaining a reserve army of the unemployed with a reserve of employees. In times of economic recession, when companies lay off workers, those who become unemployed will have the option to take part in these last resort jobs, which help to balance swings in private spending and investment. During economic growth, private employers will be able to hire workers from the pool, by offering better working conditions. The maintenance and improvement of individual skills and abilities compensates for any increase in wages, preventing an inflationary spiral. Mitchell and Mosler [109] referred to this reserve of employees that maintains stable inflation as the non-accelerating inflation buffer employment ratio (NAIBER), as an alternative to the natural unemployment rate used by mainstream economics to control inflation.

The programs would be funded through coordination between the treasury and the central bank, with the government serving as the “employer of last resort” in a manner similar to the central bank’s role as the “lender of last resort” for maintaining financial stability. Just as private banks introduce credit into the economy to meet the demand for loans to start production processes, the demand for income can also activate unused resources, providing them with useful employment that would certainly offset the high individual and social costs of unemployment [110,111]. This allows market forces to determine the size and direction of the public budget. The job guarantee would act as a nondiscretionary operational rule, but it can also be considered a constitutional rule “under the rule of Leviathan”, to use the words of Brennan and Buchanan [112] (p. 351), enabling active fiscal policy without falling into fiscal dominance [113].

Unemployment, as Tcherneva [114] explains, operates in our communities like an epidemic, and as we have learned from the current COVID-19 pandemic, we respond to pandemics by doing everything necessary to stop them [115]. But unemployment is not the only challenge we face. There are many challenges outlined in the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. Designing job guarantee programs to meet these objectives and doing so through culture and the arts is a crucial commitment that must be explored for their effective implementation. We know, given the unique characteristics of the labor market for artists and creative professionals [28,34–41,52–55,116,117], that we have the human resources available to accomplish them.

6. Conclusions

There is a relationship between the representations or conceptual classifications of culture according to the scheme of Soini and Dessein [65] and the corresponding policies. This relationship moves from promoting culture as a means of experimentation and communication of the human experience to promoting the consumption of cultural and artistic products and the development of cultural capital. The effective demand and development of these products and capabilities requires the acquisition of skills, competencies, and codes that must be acquired through training. The cultural industry requires an appreciation of symbolism that cannot be achieved through the tax incentives of traditional cultural policies. Change and innovation processes also require a space for experimentation, exploration, making mistakes, and testing alternatives, which the uncertainty of market demand
expectations restricts, as Mazzucato [118] explains with regard to disruptive innovation that transforms sectors and activities.

In any case, as Sen [75] suggests, if participation processes are to be considered as essential components of development, and culture provides the tools and spaces to actively participate in the reconstruction of the community and coexisting identities in the area, it cannot be seen as just another means of contributing to economic growth. Furthermore, the lack of opportunities for cultural activities to develop deprives individuals of key skills and capacities to participate in other areas of life. If we understand the lack of education, for example, as a limiting factor for economic, social, and political participation, it is not just education designed to meet the labor market’s specific skills needs. Art education promotes a series of personal growth opportunities that solidify as individual and collective processes, which do not necessarily have to result in a product or intangible asset to serve productivity and economic growth. However, they can certainly promote political and social participation by empowering individuals and creating a space for dialogue. It is clear how culture promotes individuals’ economic participation, but the reverse is not true.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires the active participation of communities in which it operates, with a bottom-up approach that is sensitive to and committed to local needs and the sustainability referred to in the SDGs’ triple dimensions of social, economic, and environmental domains. The cultural and artistic processes discussed here are difficult to quantify as market-evaluated results. Commodification dilutes their inherent transformative potential. However, this does not mean that there are no useful indicators. López Fernández Cao [72] lists a vast array of indicators such as reducing isolation, promoting tolerance and conflict resolution, increasing neighborhood security, fostering intergenerational interaction, encouraging people to take positive risks and changes, increasing demand for social services through heightened political and social awareness, improving leisure options, and empowering communities, particularly women and minority groups, by giving them a voice and leadership, etc.

As the programs under the employer of last resort mechanism are not guided by profit motives, they can be evaluated based on criteria such as those mentioned by López Fernández Cao to monitor public policies and prevent resource wastage. This waste is not caused by the absence of profitability or a specific result for other sectors under this approach. It allows for experimentation, mistakes, and the continuation of projects regardless of their form. Using artistic activities provides a safe space for exploration and mistake-making, which would otherwise be inaccessible. The processes are dynamic and driven by local sensitivities, but the programs must be designed with certain characteristics to achieve their objectives. These characteristics, not monetary profits, lead to the success of the 2030 Agenda, and although it is not a direct or easy path, it is a way forward and can be adjusted if necessary.

From the institutional approach followed in this paper we can effectively finance the decommodification of the 2030 Agenda, and more specifically, art and culture can be mobilized to achieve various goals associated with the SDGs without following profitability criteria. As in the case exposed by Nersisyan and Wray [119], Galvin and Healy [120] and Tcherneva [121] for financing the Green New Deal, the question is not whether we can get the necessary funds to pay for it or whether we can create profitable business opportunities to meet the 2030 agenda. If it is technically possible, we can finance it. Moreover, in line with the aforementioned evidences, it would also serve as a policy to reinforce a broader artistic and cultural policy complementing the market as well.
evidence mentioned, it would also serve as a policy to complement the market and reinforce a broader artistic and cultural policy.


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