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Wright, Adrian, Marsh, Dorota and Mc Ardle, Louise

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A Darker Side of Creative Entrepreneurship

Adrian Wright, Dorota Marsh, Louise Mc Ardle

University of Central Lancashire

Corresponding Author email: Awright2@uclan.ac.uk

Abstract: This article aims to contrast positive interpretations of enterprise in creative work, which are characterised by freedom, autonomy and choice with less optimistic accounts of the nature of enterprise in the creative industries. By examining extant literature, it illustrates the entrepreneurial responses of designers to instable and dynamic market conditions. It charts how designers adapt to market forces by reconciling creative and commercial pressures, enhancing their labour mobility and commercialising their own labour potential. This article argues that designer's normative feelings about their work enable them to reconcile the challenging aspects of their work.

Keywords, Design, Creative Industries, Enterprise, Entrepreneurialism, Designers.

1. Introduction

A mainstream view of enterprise is that of the self-made heroic entrepreneur, centred on positive images of successful independent businesses (Casson and Casson, 2013). Such rhetoric of an 'enterprising self' has led to an ethos of enterprise that has consumed parts of entrepreneurial discourse (Du Gay, 1996). At its heart is the romanticised character of an entrepreneur, who displays characteristics such as initiative, risk-taking, flexibility, independence, imagination, hard work and an internal locus of control (Gibb, 1993). This characterisation of enterprise is coupled with entrepreneurial career forms, such as the 'boundaryless' or 'portfolio' career, highlight the positive benefits of flexibility and choice that individuals can enjoy by pursuing this type of career (Handy,1990; Defillippi and Arthur, 1996). Embedded within notions of enterprise is individualism (Ahl and Marlow, 2012). The language of enterprise has been characterised as a key lexicon around which life has been organised as individuals are required to manage 'me-plc.' (Nayak and Beckett, 2008). Reflecting the global shift towards greater neo-liberal individualism in society (Beck, 1992), enterprise has found itself at the centre of 'optimistic individualism' (Ahl and Marlow, 2012: 544) through its ability to enable the realisation of human potential for creativity and innovation (Down, 2010). The heroic figure of the entrepreneur has been characterised as one who bears the load of revitalising society and economy by leading us to the 'promised land of economic growth and prosperity' (Weiskopf and Steyaert, 2009:4). Contrasting optimistic interpretations of enterprise, a body of work points to this employment forms increasingly fragmented and insecure nature (Grimshaw.et al, 2005). In the context of predominantly positive interpretations of enterprise,

some authors have called for the need for literature to address the 'dark sides' of entrepreneurship as an alternative to popular clichés, and narrow conceptualisations of the phenomenon (Rindova et al, 2009).

In 1998 the then newly created Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) set out what the creative industries were to include. These were defined as: "Those which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS, 1998:3). This categorisation included advertising; architecture; art and antiques; crafts; design; designer fashion; film; interactive leisure software; music; the performing arts; publishing; software and computer services; and television and radio (DCMS, 1998). This intervention permitted all 'creative activities' to benefit from the prestige surrounding this recatergorisation and allowed government to put creativity at the forefront of economic activity (Tremblay, 2011: 290). It enabled identification of an economically competitive 'new economy' driven by digital technologies and intellectual property and in resulted in the "intensive commodification" of artistic activity (Banks and O'Connor, 2009: 365). Since the creative industries conception, 'creative' jobs have been compared favourably with 'uncreative' and alienating jobs suggesting that creative workers are free to utilise their intellectual and artistic talents and enjoy enhanced control over their work (Hesmondhalgh and Banks, 2009). This characterisation rests on the premise that the values of freedom, autonomy and choice predispose individuals to pursue self-employment and entrepreneurialism in search of self-exploration and self-fulfilment (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999). The drive for enterprise has ultimately led to altering expectations of the creative workforce to become a 'creative class' of model entrepreneurs (Coulson, 2012) as structural forces have combined with agency to promote common values of entrepreneurialism (McRobbie, 2002).

Contrasting accounts of enterprise are apparent in the creative industries that highlight unstable and insecure labour market conditions for all but 'star' performers. High levels of job insecurity are prevalent in the creative industries as project work, flexible employment models, and changes in the structure of the sector leave employment in the sector, at best, fragile and unstable for many workers (Wright, 2015). Furthermore, the discourse of "do what you love" (DWYL), describes how notions of fun, passion and love of the job frequently come alongside legitimising inhospitable work conditions and challenging work conditions becoming normalised (Tokumitsu, 2015). To add to the challenging work conditions experienced by creative workers, inherent pressures surrounding the production of creative products exist as common challenges of risk and uncertainty are combined with tensions surrounding autonomy and commercial pressures (Lampel et al, 2000; Townley et al, 2009).

Design and designer fashion [1] is a significant part of the creative sector and employed over 160,000 workers (DCMS ,2018), 97,000 of those are self-employed which suggests the sector reflects the common drive for entrepreneurialism in the creative sector. However, little is known about working experiences of designers, particularly with reference to critical perspectives on entrepreneurship. This leads us to question the nature of entrepreneurialism in design and to what extent the nature of work in the creative industries is relevant to the experience of those working the design sector.

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[1] Design relates to the Employment by Creative Industries sub-sector of design and designer fashion and reflects there methodology of 'Specialised design activities'.

2. The Cultural entrepreneur

The movement towards cultural entrepreneurialism can be linked back to the transformation of work, the decrease of full time employees, changes to the labour market, industry restructuring and entrepreneurial initiatives such as tax breaks, have influenced the development of entrepreneurial activity in the creative industries (Down 2010). In design outsourcing has become an important part of the industry for large firms and SME's (Utterback et al, 2006) as freelancing, self- employment and individualised work are reflective of other areas of the creative industries (McRobbie, 2002).

Ellimier (2003:3) introduces the concept of the cultural entrepreneur as 'individuals that do not follow prescribed standards but who (have to) try out their own combinations and assert themselves on the market and society'. The concept of the cultural entrepreneur broadly relates to the new form of labour supply conceptualised by Pongratz and Voß (2003) as the 'entreployee' where employees are forced to redefine their capacity within the workplace and the wider labour market as a reaction to changing macro factors and insecure labour market conditions. This suggests that 'the market' has the capacity to control the behaviour of individuals in the absence of organisational influence. Although the 'entreployee' primarily refers to the employees within an organisation, a significant expansion by Pongratz (2008) broadened out this framework to include the self-employed business, a single person business, and the freelancer, enabling the framework to be applicable enterprising individuals in the creative industries. Central aspects of the concept are found in literature discussing the nature of enterprise in the creative industries (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006: Bergvall-Kåreborn and Howcroft, 2013, Wright, 2015).

According to Pongratz and Voß (2003:3) the 'entreployee' may be identified by three features:

- *Self-control – Intensified independent planning, control and the monitoring of work by the person responsible.*

- *Self- commercialisation – Intensified active and practical 'production' and commercialisation of one's own capacities and potential on the labour market as well as within companies.*

- *Self-rationalisation – Self determined organisation of one's daily life and long term plans, and the tendency to accept willingly the importance of the company (employer) as an integral part of life.*

The following section will describe these features from Pongratz and Voß's (2003) original work in more detail and consider their application to work in the creative industries and design sector.

2.1 Self-Control

This feature see the individual in charge of all aspects of actual work performance, from the number of working hours an individual performs to where and how the work is carried out, social ties and how the individual

motivates himself or herself to get the job done. This section focuses on two elements of self-control, the extent the individual exhibits self-control in their work and the importance of updating skills to enhance labour mobility.

Self-control over the content of work is questionable in the creative sector. In the creative industries a typical notion is the idea of free and creative work, however more detailed analysis suggest that commercial imperatives limit this type of freedom to, at least some degree, as creative products are conceptualised and produced to limit risk (Lampel et al, 2000). Others maintain that creative workers have some autonomy in terms of creativity over the conception of their product due to the nature of cultural work (Thompson et al, 2015). This correlates with Haunschild and Eikhof, (2009) who describe that workers can at least add their own artistic interpretation to production, giving them some scope for self-control in their production in contrast to non-creative occupations such as a banker or call centre worker (Haunschild and Eikhof, 2009).

Broadly, a common view is for designers to engage in an open-ended an approach to design, which relies upon aesthetic sense and judgement to open up new conceptual and commercial spaces (Michlewski, 2008). However, tensions surrounding freedom and autonomy in the creative sector appear relevant to the experiences of those who work in design. Cruickshank and Evans (2009) suggest an inherent freedom in the nature of designers as they are trained to value their personal abilities, vision and experience above collective, objective or participative processes. However, tensions can be created as in many companies design choices are guided by a philosophy governed by company specific beliefs about ways of designing products (Ravasi and Lojacono, 2005). This suggests the necessity for designers to reconcile personal beliefs and experience with innovation, consumer preferences and their own creativity (Ravasi and Stigliani, 2012). Gotsi et al, (2010) study of new product design consultancies highlights the need for creatives to wear both creative and consultant hats and how effective identity regulation help creatives cope with these tensions. Rather than oppressive forms of control, effective identity regulation engages creatives to become the 'practical artist' as organisational processes accept tensions, which energise and empower rather than paralyse and control. The result is a new and liberating comfort with commercial tensions. This suggests that design emerges from a carefully managed process (Bruce and Bessant 2002), albeit managed normatively. In some respects, design in small business presents similar tensions as the prioritisation of customer demands, resource constraints, and manufacturing capabilities narrows the focus of designers (Berends et al, 2011). Furthermore, issues of time and cost and reduced project lead times, which disrupts conceptual development, acts as a further constraint to SME designers (Millward and Lewis, 2005). These authors suggest a systematic approach to design with clear specifications and the adoption of design tools. However, these techniques appear to do little to wrest control back to creatives and points to freedom and autonomy existing only within the commercial boundaries.

Labour mobility is presented positively in the creative industries as an opportunity for workers to transfer their skills and knowledge for personal and corporate gain (Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009). Furthermore, UK creative policy has shifted towards a skills agenda that emphasises the need for developing craft and technical skills (Banks, 2010). Banks (2007:36) further explains the necessity of being a 'flexible' worker in the creative

industries. According to Banks, this "essentially means that one must do whatever is required to support commercial interests". Banks continues to depict the creative industry as one where workers take on more hours, more responsibilities and relocate according to the organisational demands, thus committing themselves to commercial imperatives over and above non-work commitments. From this we can understand the increasing necessity for individuals to update skills under their own volition. Design is noted as paradigmatic of the kinds of labour arrangements and entrepreneurialism in the new economy (Julier, 2014). The design function crosses a broad range of fields as the skills of designers are applied to a vast amount of goods and services (Julier, 2014). As the design function evolves so does the workforce and thus requires designers to pick up new forms of expertise and be highly mobile moving from one job or project to the next, be prepared to move from one geographical site to the next (McRobbie, 2002). This suggests designers constantly need to revaluate their position in the workplace. The rise of enterprise in the design sector suggests that designers not only need to be designers but consider how to use their skills in order to remain employable or in other words be 'marketable'. This takes the designer beyond traits such as creativity, ingenuity and imagination and means they must be flexible, enterprising, socially responsible communicator, who can be an active promotor of their work. Thus 'designers are a combination of craftmaker, cultural intermediary and opportunistic entrepreneur' (Press and Cooper, 2017:7).

This section has discussed potential challenges to the freedom and autonomy of designers in comparison with other areas of the creative industries. Despite the difficulties of generalising throughout diverse industry settings, it appears that designers have freedom, autonomy and self control over their lives but this is limited due to relationship of the controls set by their relationships with capital. Designers are positioned as 'practical artist' experiencing liberating tensions (Gotsi et al, 2011). This section has also found the rise of enterprise has enhanced the necessity for the designer to constantly redefine their skills and themselves in accordance to the market, the next section will demonstrate how designers self-market this labour potential.

2.2 Self- Commercialisation

Here the entreployee regards his or her own capacities as a commodity. In contrast to a typical employee, where the employer employee relationship is focused around the organisation exploiting as much labour from the employee's labour 'capital' as possible, within this function the individual actively exploits their own 'capital' to secure a living (Pongratz and Voß, 2003). According to Pongratz and Voß (2003) there is a focused and continuous effort towards gainful economic usage within the labour market. Ultimately this leads to a higher level of commercialisation of labour power and has two implications. Firstly, the employee must actively and consistently generate capacities and performance therefore creating a deliberate production economy of their work capacity. Secondly, the employee must also market his or her own capacities to ensure that their capacities are both needed and paid for. The result of this is that the formally passive individual is an entrepreneur of his or her own potential.

Despite considerable research highlighting the benefits of accruing and developing skills in the creative industries, there is a debate as to whether skills alone assist the creative worker in sourcing new work opportunities. Blair (2009) render skills virtually ineffective without the social contacts to leverage knowledge and skill while DeFillippi and Arthur, (1996) highlight the acquisition of contacts as crucial in the development of the boundaryless career. The value of networks when breaking into or finding work in the creative industries is well documented (Blair, 2009; Townley et al, 2009; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Coulsen, 2012; Siebert and Wilson, 2013). In the creative industries, individuals (with the exclusion of 'star' performers) try a series of activities in order to find work and market their own labour power. Wittel (2001) points to the cultural industries where 'network sociality' is particularly visible and present. In network sociality, Wittel (2001) maintains social relations are not 'narrational' but informational and based primarily on an exchange of data. Engaging in 'network sociality' often means working beyond 'normal' working hours to maintain and develop contacts or find work and develop experience in a competitive sector. Due to the oversupply of labour, an additional strategy used by those in the creative industries is to work for free or for subsistence wages (McRobbie, 2002; Ross, 2003). This assists individuals to 'get in' by working without payment (or for deferred payment) in the formative stages of their career which provides an additional example of how individuals commercialise their labour 'capital' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Siebert and Wilson, 2013).

In the absence of traditional work structures due to fragmentation of design work (McRobbie, 2016), individuals are encouraged to self-market design in order to facilitate opportunities and mechanisms of gaining work. This involves promoting the economic utility of design and enhancing the recognition of the benefits of design as a way of increasing productivity and competitiveness of business (Champy, 2006). This becomes even more relevant in the context of the higher level of saturation and competitiveness between designers, as SME's avoid working with external design agencies (due to the limited resources) and do not prioritise the improvement of their internal design capabilities (Julier, 2014; Freel, 2000; Woodcock et al 2000). Thus, designers engage in self-commercialisation by emphasising to their potential clients the economic utility (productivity, competitiveness, job creation) of design, voluntarily promoting the 'economization' of their field of activity over the creative side of the design work (Champy, 2006).

The increasingly precarious forms of labour, have encouraged many designers to adopt more entrepreneurial activity. In the context of project-based work and the necessity to continuously win new contracts, designers secure work by cultivating and building relationships with clients. Vankan et al (2014) note the increasing importance of the relationship between design firms and their clients, as designers aim to mitigate the uncertainty of wining future contracts by "investing" their time and effort in social interactions for the sake of commercial benefits. This form of "relation-specific investment" signals instrumental approach of designers to their clients, and resembles the phenomenon of "network sociality' prevalent in the creative industries (Wittel, 2001). Other examples of instrumental networks involve knowledge partnerships and clusters (Inns et al 2006; Millward et al, 2005), where relationships are built between designers and non-design businesses to enhance future opportunities for work via establishing connections and relationships with various partners. This implies

that the individual designers assume their responsibility for securing work by engaging in diverse forms of instrumental networking.

This section demonstrates the self-commercialisation of one own capacities are at least, to some extent relevant the field of design. Designers increasingly must promote the economic benefits of their work to secure contracts, and participate in extensive networking with clients, and understand it as an "investment". The consequence is that designers consistently re-evaluate how to commercialise their own capacities. The consequences of this is additional work tasks potential further intensifying designers' work.

2.3 Self-rationalisation

This aspect involves the understanding that the active production and commodification of capabilities will cause profound changes to the lives of the people concerned. Concerns over work, life balance and job retention and a strictly separate private life can no longer be safeguarded as entreployee's understand that their commitment to work and to commercialising themselves will blur previous work and life boundaries and a systematic reorganisation of life needs to occur to reconcile this (Pongratz and Voß, 2003:7). Pongratz and Voß (2003) suggest that as self-employed individuals adapt to changing circumstances and work consumes all areas of their working and private lives.

The general acceptance of centrality of work as 'the status quo' is apparent in studies in the creative industries. Practices such as networking appear to blur the boundaries of what is work and non-work hours (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). Randle and Culkin (2009) see this as leisure becoming work and friends becoming part of work time. The implication for the creative worker is no off work or nonwork time. However, a bigger issue is that all parts of non-work life have become instrumentalised. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) suggest that at best, the worker has a feeling of ambivalence towards such issues and describes a "complicated version of freedom" where working conditions blur the "cool" and "liberating" image of working in the creative industries. It is important to note that there are examples of workers that are accepting or even happy with the conditions of their work. Arvidsson et al, (2010) highlight that despite dire conditions, overworked and underpaid workers exhibit high levels of satisfaction. This is explained by the power of the 'ideology of creativity', the popularity of the 'creative lifestyle' and the search for self-actualisation.

Literature on working conditions in the field of design is scant, however by looking at areas such as fashion or web design we can see similar attitudes towards the centrality of work to designers lives. The difficulties of reconciling, passionate and emotional attachment to their work with the economic reality of sustaining their businesses are apparent, as designers are forced to reconcile their creative integrity with the entrepreneurial values (McRobbie, 2003; Arvidsson et al 2010; Elzenbaumer and Giuliani, 2014). The challenging work conditions and dedication to their craft appear equally relevant to design. Mc Robbie (2002) provides evidence of a harshly competitive environment, in which young fashion designers are forced to juggle several contracts, take evening jobs, work long hours to secure their living and commit to unpaid work in a form of work

experience and internships hoping to secure paid work in the future. Whereas Elzenbaumer and Giuliani , (2014) highlight how designers trade control over their work "to do design". Despite the uncertainty and precarious working conditions, designers proclaim passion for their work as a driving force and voluntarily accept the sacrifices to derive their sense of identity as the work is perceived as "cool". An acceptance of individualised work and enterprising behaviours are apparent in the experiences of web designers as working conditions are marked by increasingly competitive environment fuelled by a requirement to take individual responsibility for managing risk and sustaining networks (Kennedy, 2010). The necessity to be seen to be "putting stuff out" and to be known, alongside securing work via informal networks and updating skills are a result of a requirement to be an entrepreneurial and a flexible worker, which appears to be accepted due to the emotional connection web designers have with their work (Kennedy, 2010).

Evidence of self-rationalisation in other areas of design is more nuanced and typically reflects compromises on the idealistic notions of design work. As highlighted in the section on self-control, Elsbach's (2009) demonstrates how designers attempt to reconcile tensions between their professional values and the commercial context of their work with maintaining their idealistic and independent approach to design. This example demonstrates that designers are not immune to the market imposed constrains, but are required to self-regulate the level of resistance to corporate rules to sustain their careers. Similarly, Michlewski (2008) demonstrates how designers empathise and accommodate the market forces by referring to positive aspects of their professional identity such as bravery and acceptance and evoking a profound role of design in people's lives alongside notions of being involved in self-actualising work. It appears that much like in other areas of the creative industries challenging work conditions are seen in the context of the emotional and passionate connection designers feel about their work, which enables conflicting values to be reconciled and mediated.

3. Conclusion

This article has explored how the rise of enterprise in the creative industries has effected the working lives of those working in the design sector. It appears that despite positive interpretation of enterprise highlighting the flexibility, choice, freedom and prosperity that can be enjoyed, work in the creative industries is more nuanced when considering the experiences of designers. Using Pongratz and Voß's (2003) conceptualisation of the 'entreployee', this review of literature has discussed how designers react to unstable and dynamic market conditions.

This article has argued that, despite the difficulties of generalising in diverse settings, mainstream designers freedom and autonomy must be seen in the context of activities of controls imposed by market forces. Like others in the creative industries (Lampel et al 2000), designers are encouraged to be 'practical artists' (Gotsi et al, 2010), who exercise autonomy and freedom but within the parameters of commercial pressures. The rise of entrepreneurial careers form have also encouraged designers to consistently redefine their skills and position within the marketplace in order to remain employable. In order to gain work, designers prioritise economic benefit of design, at times over the creativity and ingenuity of their work. Similar to other areas of the creative industries (Wittel, 2001), designers instrumentally network and understand this as an investment of their time

due to the importance of securing contracts or future opportunities. Rather than being resistant or unhappy with the challenging nature of their work designers appear accepting of challenging work conditions and appear broadly accommodating the increasing intensification of their work. It seems the normative feelings of passion and self-actualisation that designers hold about their work enable, designers to reconcile challenging conditions.

This article contributes to the debate on creative work and entrepreneurialism in design and provides a deliberately provocative assessment of entrepreneurship in design in order to engage in conversations regarding the lived experiences of design entrepreneurs. It is best seen as an exploratory take on currently literature, which crosses academic silos. It does not claim generalisability, as we accept design occurs across diverse settings. However, it does provide an alternative to the positive interpretations to enterprise. It also calls for further qualitative assessment into the lived experiences of design entrepreneurs to examine the darker side to entrepreneurial activity in design.

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About the Authors:

Dr Adrian Wright researches work in the creative industries and work in the new economy. Adrian is Director of the Institute for Research into Organisations, Work and Employment (iROWE) at the University of Central Lancashire.

Dr Dorota Marsh is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire. Dorota researches critical perspectives on entrepreneurship and is a member Institute for Research into Organisations, Work and Employment (iROWE).

Louise Mc Ardle is Director Academic Resources and Portfolio at the Lancashire School of Business and Enterprise (UCLAN). Louise researches in the area of Critical Management Studies and is a member Institute for Research into Organisations, Work and Employment (iROWE).