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Beyond the campus: higher education, cultural policy and the creative economy

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This article examines the dimensions and dynamics of an expanding area of policy interest: the relationships between higher education and the creative economy. These activities feature collaboration between individuals and networks from the different sectors, involved in teaching, curriculum and policy development, research and knowledge exchange. They have become the focus of policy debates through their central role in stimulating innovation, creative and cultural clusters, sector development and graduate employability as well as their broader contribution to economic development and regeneration. They sit at the crossroads of different policy fields, namely cultural policy (involving the explicit support and development of the creative and cultural sector), higher education policy (including skills and curriculum development, but also fees structures and widening participation) and work and economic development policies (concerning, for example, employment regulation and business support). In this introductory essay, we explore two key dimensions through which higher education institutions and the cultural and creative sector interconnect: creative human capital and knowledge development, drawing on findings from a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded international research network looking at the platforms, practices and shared spaces beyond the campus. We also introduce the themes and contributions to this special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*.

Keywords: higher education; cultural policy; creative economy

Introduction

Since the Department for Culture, Media and Sport Creative Industries Mapping Document (DCMS 1998) highlighted the key role played by creative activities in the UK economy and society, the creative industries (CIs) agenda has expanded with the support of local authorities, regional development agencies, research councils, arts and cultural agencies and other sector organisations. In turn, this framework for the CIs and creative economy has expanded from the United Kingdom, across Europe and internationally (UNESCO 2013). As part of this complex and ongoing expansion, higher education institutions (HEIs) have engaged in the CIs agenda – often with very practical interventions and projects – but have struggled to define the role that they play (or can play) in this growing sphere of activities.

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While in other disciplinary areas, HEIs are considered central to local knowledge economies because they engage actively in research exploitation through technology transfer, patenting and spin-offs, such activities have been slowly and reluctantly approached by the arts and humanities research base. The value of these interactions has been hard to define, partly because they overlap with the civic role of universities in developing the cultural life and offer of many cities (Chatterton 1999). This happens both through the involvement of staff in teaching, research, outreach and public engagement, and through the provision of cultural infrastructure, such as university museums, galleries and theatres. These key dimensions interact with another important role played by universities: developing graduates who enter the UK creative economy and deliver new innovative practises, products and processes in the society. The dynamics of these different dimensions of HEI-creative economy relations are highly embedded in networks of interaction and exchange which are often place-specific. The knowledge co-produced within these activities can therefore be obscured and hard to access, and developing dialogue between academics and practitioners and appropriate methods and milieu for collaborative working has been one of the key challenges for policies which aim to sustain and grow these relationships.

This special issue addresses these and other challenges to our understanding of the interconnections between *Higher Education, Cultural Policy and the Creative Economy*. Following some earlier reflections in Comunian and Gilmore (2014), it aims to critically engage with and reflect on the interplay between these different spheres, from the UK but including also international perspectives, from Australia, Singapore and mainland Europe.

From early engagement to knowledge transfer: universities and the arts & cultural sector

Universities in the UK and internationally have long been key cultural players in many cities and communities. They have been centres of cultural production and supported preservation through the centuries through the establishment of art collections, museums and galleries. Nowadays, they continue this relationship with arts and culture, also through hosting performing arts spaces on campus and through academic research on arts and cultural activities (Chatterton and Goddard 2000, Powell 2007, Comunian and Faggian 2014). However, more latterly, in the UK there has been a growing pressure on both higher education and economic policy to understand the impact of HEIs in relation to the arts sector and the CCIs and to add to their potential value (Arts Council England (ACE) 2006, Crossick 2006, Dawson and Gilmore 2009, Universities UK 2010). In the UK, the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has commissioned research to demonstrate the role of its activities and created specific funding programmes to support knowledge transfer as part of its objective of demonstrating research funding impact (Benneworth and Jongbloed 2010). Furthermore, arts policy bodies are increasingly interested in utilising these research capabilities to further understanding of their own impact, and contribute knowledge and evidence of the value of arts and cultural investment (Fisher, 2012, Arts Council England n.d.).

The concept of knowledge transfer (sometimes labelled knowledge exchange or external engagement in this context) has therefore become increasingly important in making the argument that arts and humanities departments have a positive impact

on society and provide good value for money. Whilst this new pressure for knowledge transfer has been met by resistance to the imposition of a 'techno-economic' paradigm on arts and humanities in academia (Bullen *et al.* 2004), most HEIs have embraced this new perspective, seeing it as an opportunity to add value to their core mission (Powell 2007, Lindberg 2008). The knowledge connections which universities develop with CIs are becoming measures of impact and engagement, increasingly embedded within research assessment exercises (Comunian *et al.* 2014) and, although the evidence gathered is still currently mostly anecdotal, in the UK and elsewhere, there is an increasing pressure on higher education institutions and funding bodies to show the importance of these dynamics (Bakhshi *et al.* 2008, Hughes *et al.* 2011).

Recent changes have pushed this debate higher up on the agenda for both higher education and cultural policy-making. In particular, rising student fees and cuts to subsidy of arts and humanities university education have heightened the awareness of both higher education and cultural sector policy bodies of the potential 'exclusivity' of pursuing creative careers (Eikhof and Warhurst 2013). Similarly, the impact of funding cuts on the arts and cultural sector has pushed arts and creative companies to seek greater collaboration with HEIs and in general towards new 'partnership' developments which might open up new resources and efficiencies for both sectors (Fisher 2012). These are manifest in the co-production of research and evidence which concerns the CIs, their management, value and impact, although the basis for this co-production can result in misunderstanding, confusion over disciplinary boundaries and frustration with differences in timescales, practices and quality assurance for outputs on both sides (Gilmore 2014, Scullion and Garcia 2005). This form of co-commissioning is now increasingly sector-led, with Arts Council England developing a new research grants scheme (ACE *n.d.*) explicitly aimed at plugging 'evidence gaps' by involving academics in research, and the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts (NESTA/ACE/AHRC *n.d.*) which supported four waves of collaborative short research and development projects on digital audience engagement and business development, often with university research partners. There are other longstanding international models including the Australian Research Council 'Linkage' scheme for initiating collaboration between HEIs and external bodies which has an arts-specific programme (ARC *n.d.*) and 'Imagining America', the 'consortium of universities and organisations dedicated to advancing the civic purposes of humanities, art and design', active since 1999 (Imagining America *n.d.*).

The two main areas where these different sectors intersect are: *creative human capital* and *knowledge development* (Comunian and Gilmore 2014). The former recognises two main forms of human capital: firstly, the role of creative graduates and creative careers as bridges between higher education and the creative and cultural sector, and secondly the highly trained individuals that constitute the human resources of universities. Realising the potential human capital of creative graduates is problematized by the difficulties in finding suitable employment (Comunian *et al.* 2011) but also the proliferation of degree programmes in this area, linked to oversupply into a precarious, unregulated and vulnerable economic situation (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009, Oakley 2009) as discussed in this edition, in particular in Bridgstock and Cunningham and Brook's contributions. Academics in the creative arts follow specific patterns of engagement connected to the practise-based nature of their research, working within partnerships and networks spanning universities and the creative economy which they both build and rely on (Haft 2012). Arguably

these new hybrid ‘engaged academics’ contribute value to the teaching and research practises which lead to increased employability of creative graduates, and these brokering roles will become increasingly common features of creative education (as discussed by Moreton in this edition).

The *knowledge development* taking place within the context of these embedded networks and relationships is in turn engendering new platforms and practises. Notably, shared spaces are a key medium for engagement, sometimes taking physical form (e.g. incubation spaces, shared facilities), but often are virtual platforms or ‘third spaces’ (Dawson and Gilmore 2009). A key question for policy makers is whether ‘third spaces’ need to develop organically or whether they can be engineered to produce research and innovation, for example through initiatives such as the £16 m 4 year investment in the UK ‘Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy’ (AHRC 2011).

Opening up the debate via the special issue

The papers collected in this special issue aim to question the reality of a shared agenda between higher education, cultural policy and the creative economy, connecting up creative human capital and knowledge development, and to open up debate about challenges, policy disconnection and possible future developments.

The first article by Bridgstock and Cunningham explores data on the career trajectories of ‘creative graduates’. In ‘Creative labour and graduate outcomes: implications for higher education and cultural policy’, the authors highlight one of the principal ways that cultural and higher education policy and practice intersect, over a shared concern related to the supply of talent and its employability and career sustainability. They set the scene for this policy problem, identified and corroborated by various recent research studies of creative graduates, of precarity, portfolio working, oversupply and the lack of utility for creative graduates and their skills within the wider economy. In the Australian context, they argue, this is coupled with the marketization of Higher Education through the policy of deregulating student fees, increasing numbers and de facto deregulated curricula, accompanied by performance measures which emphasise graduate employability. This is a familiar story for those whose work explores the conditions for creative graduates and the value of their work, including Bridgstock and Cunningham who have contributed separately to the frameworks for evaluating creative skills and the embeddedness of creativity, for example through the Creative Trident model (Hearn *et al.* 2014, Potts and Cunningham 2008). The article draws on an analysis of graduate survey and national census data to explore how the career trajectories of creative graduates (in the fields of digital media, design, communications and journalism) can be better understood through a more nuanced examination of the competencies and capabilities they bring to the labour force, learnt through CIs higher education. Two findings are particularly intriguing: firstly, that graduates who perceive they are of creative value through their work report higher levels of work satisfaction, and secondly, that a large proportion feel that their skills are central to career success, but are neglected or ignored within their degree programme curricula.

These findings ought to provide valuable insights for those involved in setting policy for higher education and economic development, however, as Bridgstock and Cunningham note, recent Australian policy aimed at reforming higher education and supporting progressive cultural and creative labour policies has fallen victim to a

change in government. The authors therefore reinforce the ethical responsibility of higher education providers to meet the skills and capabilities requirements in their curricula, sometimes in tension with left-thinking critiques of higher education in the arts as overly vocational and devoid of critical capacity-building (Turner 2011).

In the second contribution from Australia, Brook challenges the educative project proposed by CIs degree programmes in his article, 'The exemplary economy: a Hunterian reading of the CIs as educative project'. This paper also alights on the issue of appropriate skills for graduate employability but from an alternative perspective. It draws on Ian Hunter's genealogy of the 'aesthetico-ethical exemplar' to describe how CIs education recalibrates the figure of the artist to provide a model for enterprise education, which extols the virtues of *implicit* forms of arts practice within an economic rather than a moral rationality. This framing allows for a critical interrogation of the normative expectations of creative education, and problematizes the claims of the project to provide skills that realise their value to the graduate labour market through embedded creative work, albeit within the context of highly differentiated occupational status and market instability. Conversely, a Hunterian perspective understands *the artist* as the model for economic behaviour, involving the properties of self-development, entrepreneurship and risk-taking, providing those who have trained to become artists with the ability to navigate the insecurities of the creative economy. This both valorise creative education as a project, whilst simultaneously drawing on discourses of instrumentalism and utility fundamentally at odds with the kinds of values to which artists themselves traditionally subscribe. Consequently, Brook points to the potential for a broader policy and sector discussion on what kind of transferable skills arts education provides.

Banks and Oakley's article, 'The dance goes on forever? Art schools, class and UK higher education', continues this interrogation of the moral, ethical and normative frameworks for creative practice and knowledge transfer from the education institution to the broader economy. The article explores the promise of social mobility through attendance at art school through the ages, through an historical examination of their progressive potential alongside changing agendas for employability and instrumentalism. The tension between the practical and aesthetic obligations of art schools to their graduates are at the heart of this debate, and the article explores how these discourses continue to be negotiated around the fractured lines of mobility and social class. The article's narrative hinges on the working class presence in art schools, moving from the status of the art schools as breeding grounds for radicalism in the mid-twentieth century, when low cost and entry requirements presented them as an alternative to university, to their incorporation within the expanding neo-liberal university market. Here, it is argued, art schools are factories for creative economy workers, functioning only to reproduce the precarious conditions where only the affluent can gain access to well-paid careers.

Connecting the dimension of talent with the development of a local creative economy, Comunian and Ooi explore the case of Singapore in the article, 'Global aspirations and local talent: the development of Creative Higher Education in Singapore'. This article investigates higher education and cultural policy shifts in Singapore over the last decade, from the perspective of a young nation with a history of economic development working pragmatically with higher education, attempting to institute sustainable infrastructures for talent development in the context of international competition and global pressure to invest in and conform to off-the-shelf models for creative economy development through HEI expansion. Drawing on qualitative interviews with

key players in higher education policy and higher education institutions, the article explores the case of Singapore as an opportunity to generate different approaches which mitigate the over-supply and the innate vulnerability of creative careers.

Benneworth and Dauney take a different case study, that of the French technocratic elite system for ‘applied arts’ in ‘Stability vs. dynamism in French institutional responses to CIs: notes from the case of ENJMIN’. This article explores how the creative economy policy in France plays out in relation to a specific creative cluster, that of *bande dessinée* (comics and animation) in Angoulême, which has both place and education policy dimensions. It examines the longer history of French cultural patrimony and the system of elite schools, or *Grande écoles*, and argues that these histories produce the cultural policy and institutional configurations, including the encoding of a popular culture cluster as equivalent to traditional culture and the recognition of its wider economic value, which impact on this cluster and allow higher education to engage with the sector in innovative ways.

Moreton’s article, ‘Creative, academic or both? The changing politics of work in the ‘third mission’ of knowledge exchange in the Arts and Humanities’, also explores institutional and cultural policy spaces in his case study of the REACT AHRC-funded Creative Economy Knowledge Exchange Hub in the UK. It argues that these newly configured fields require academics to adopt new ways of thinking about how they produce and perform knowledge, which may be susceptible to critiques of neo-liberalism and instrumentalism, as they negotiate the politics of these third spaces.

The special issue includes two book reviews which highlight how this topic has been become important in recent academic research. Perez Monclus reviews *Creative Work Beyond the CIs: Innovation, Employment and Education* (Hearn *et al.* 2014). It shows how the book explores the evidence and current debates concerning the prevalence of creative work outside of the formally recognised CIs sectors through the phenomenon of ‘embedded creative workers’. There are implications for policy makers proposed through the uncovering of the economic development potential of this ‘hidden workforce’. However as the review points out, there is a tendency towards reactive advocacy rather than pro-active policies for higher education, skills development and regulation, which might introduce more stability and address the hidden inequalities within the economy.

The final review is of *Cultural Work and Higher Education*, (Ashton and Noonan 2013). As Jacobi highlights, this book provides a provocative new direction for the study of cultural policies concerning higher education and the creative economy and the underrepresented role of higher education in shaping cultural work and nurturing creative and cultural human capital. The book is situated at the intersection between pedagogy and professional practice, positioning these transformative processes within higher education as cultural work in their own right.

Future scenarios and research

The special issue offers an opportunity to reflect on the emergence of collaborative practices and shared interests and spaces between higher education institutions, cultural policy and the creative economy. It highlights the need to develop a better understanding of these practices at the crossroads between CIs, academia and public policy as part of a complex triple helix of relations and expectations (Etzkowitz

and Leydesdorff 2000, Comunian *et al.* 2014). It conveys the global importance of this agenda, and the different responses and frameworks of cultural policy and higher education in countries around the world.

However, the contributions also invite reflection on future scenarios and research requirements, in the areas of creative human capital and knowledge development for the creative economy. Whilst the concerns of (over) supply to the creative economy, precarious labour markets and changing obligations for CIs education are linked to globalised and supranational economic forces, the policy responses remain specific to geographical and historical contexts and are contingent on their constituent normative and ethical frameworks. They lay the ground for future research in this area, comparing international and national cultural policies and theoretical frameworks for knowledge development and higher education curricula for the creative economy.

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