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Creative Cardiff: Utilising cultural mapping for community engagement

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ABSTRACT

In 2014 Cardiff University set up a Creative Economy team tasked with exploring how the university could improve its relationship with creative practitioners around the city. To explore this relationship the team embarked upon a research project to map creative industries in the city using a mixed methodology of online data collection and semi-ethnographic interviews. As the project progressed the creative economy team designed and launched a city-wide creative network Creative Cardiff connecting the city's creative populous through events, resources and a website with membership subscription. This article explores how mapping can be used to develop the university/creative economy relationship within metropolitan spaces as a contributor to the development of the modern civic university. It also explores the opportunities and challenges posed by a mapping project of this scale, taking into account debates in cultural mapping literature as to what a map actually is.

1. Background

The current UK Research Excellence framework calls for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to evaluate the impact of the research they produce. As a result, HEIs are being challenged to connect more thoughtfully and energetically with the communities around them and to engage the university with civic life, through partnerships of one kind or another involving business, third sector organisations and publicly owned bodies. As well as enriching the civic connectivity and so potentially the usefulness of research, these changes are seen as contributing to employability of graduates. These concerns and behaviours arise across all fields of knowledge, but this paper considers their emergence in the Creative Economy, as it develops in the post-industrial age. (see Figs. 1 and 2)

In 2014 Cardiff University established a small creative economy team tasked with understanding these issues and strengthening connections between the university and the city within which it is located. A foundation for this work was the activity of the Research & Enterprise in Arts & Creative Technology (REACT) project, initiated in 2012 by a consortium of five universities (Cardiff, Bristol, Bath, University of the West of England, and Exeter) along with Bristol's Watershed arts centre. Of particular relevance to this discussion was the partnership between two universities in Bristol and the Watershed in establishing an open innovation centre, known as the Pervasive Media Studio. The project's work involved ambitious collaborations between (mostly) arts and humanities researchers, digital technology experts and organisations engaged in fields ranging from museums and galleries to community journalism, games and virtual reality musical performance. This fertilisation of relationships between the universities and the creative industries surrounding them was an important aspect of REACT's legacy.

As the REACT 'creative economy knowledge exchange hub' (one of four such ventures funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council) approached its final phase of operation, Cardiff University's attention turned to the application of the lessons learned within the Cardiff city region.

Upon its inauguration, the Cardiff Creative Economy team identified lack of data about its potential network as a challenge. In 2015 the decision was made to map the creative economy in Cardiff in a bottom-up manner, with a view to gathering data not previously collected on the specific number of businesses and freelancers within the local authority area of the city and serving the various creative industry sectors defined by the UK government's Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). This data was intended for two uses: first, to start to build a picture of the creative economy in Cardiff and secondly to establish a database to inform the establishment of a creative economy network. The resulting intensified connectivity, it was hypothesised, would strengthen the city's creative economy, by enabling a more dynamic movement of people, ideas, contracts and collaborations.

This article will explore how this cultural mapping exercise developed and suggest how it might inform the development of Creative Cardiff, the university's city wide creative economy network. It will also examine the role of the university's creative economy work in engaging with civic and industrial life, and assess the usefulness of cultural mapping as a tool to assess and aid in establishing creative relationships. Finally it will consider the role this cultural mapping exercise

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DCMS Sector	Frequency
Advertising, Marketing & PR	77
Architecture	96
Crafts	75
Design: Product, Graphic & Fashion	220
Film, TV, Radio & Photography	260
IT Software & Computer Services	158
Museums, Galleries & Libraries	57
Music, Performing & Visual Arts	461
Publishing	45

Fig. 1. Table of frequency of businesses within each DCMS sector.

may have in future developments of the Creative Cardiff network and Cardiff University's relationship with the city's creative economy. It will also explore how this model of using cultural mapping to engage civic society can be transplanted into different global contexts.

2. The civic university

Like many other HEIs in the UK, Cardiff University is considering its future as a civic university. By financing the Creative Economy team it has sought to see how it can improve relationships between the humanities and industries. Naturally, this is not without challenges to its traditional way of thinking and provocations are needed to inspire change. This section explores provocations made in higher education literature and seeks to apply these ideas in a Cardiff context.

In his report *Reinventing the Civic University* John Goddard argues for and aims to provoke a rethink in the way universities are established and their mission within the UK Higher education system. Goddard's proposition demands of universities assimilation into a society driven role arguing that:

> 'If universities accept their role as one of a range of knowledge providers, along with government, business, the non-profit sector, individuals and others, this dichotomy becomes less important and the broad role of all universities in civil society becomes more apparent' (Goddard, 2009, p.9)

Goddard's arguments initially met resistance from universities more accustomed to a unidirectional role in knowledge transfer as opposed to a process of two-way knowledge exchange. Political pressure has grown in favour of a more engaged model for universities, including engagement which favours social innovation as well as the kind of knowledge exchange associated with companies 'spun out' of universities. In Goddard's words: 'We must view innovation in the round, not merely as a process in which academic research leads to saleable products' (Goddard, 2009, p.9) This takes us to Goddard's proposition for a civic university:

> 'The civic university has a key role to play in fostering such system wide innovation and tackling the big challenges that confront the modern world, for example the need for sustainable cities or the many challenges and opportunities that arise from an ageing population. It can do this by serving public as well as private interests and embracing business and the community found outside its front door, connecting these communities to the global arena' (Goddard, 2009, p.10)

From here, Goddard further suggests that: 'This means producing graduates with the right skills but also the right values. Part of the task of a university is to educate people with the social as well as the technical capacity that society needs' (Goddard, 2009, p.23). A series of ambitious recommendations follows:

- All universities should have civic engagement on local, regional, national, European and world scales as key parts of their mission.
- University leaders need to engage with this priority.
- The funding system should encourage this priority because the alternative is a university system of dwindling local and world importance.
- It should be on a par with teaching and research as a university mission.

DCMS Sector	Frequency
Advertising, Marketing & PR	22
Architecture	2
Crafts	104
Design: Product, Graphic & Fashion	116
Film, TV, Radio & Photography	241
IT Software & Computer Services	46
Museums, Galleries & Libraries	6
Music, Performing & Visual Arts	752
Publishing	65

Fig. 2. Table of frequency of freelancers within each DCMS sector.

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