

# ACADEMIA IN CULTURE

## 3.0: A CRIME STORY OF DEATH AND REBIRTH

(but also of Curation, Innovation and Sector Mash-ups)

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**Abstract:** Over recent years, the curation of new knowledge has become an important area of concern within UK Higher Education. There is a renewed call for public/academia interaction where the engagement with innovation is designed into the research process right from the start. Simultaneously and specifically within the arts, there has been an increasing momentum in, and a public appetite for, process (rather than product), and the 21st century has witnessed a new phenomenon, that which Pierre Luigi Sacco (2015) has labeled Culture 3.0, characterized by the use of open platforms, democratic systems, ubiquitously available production tools and individuals constantly shifting and renegotiating their roles between producing and consuming content. Sacco furthermore suggests that Europe is hung up on Culture 1.0, characterized by a distinction of high-brow vs low-brow, arts patronage, gatekeepers and value absorption. This article will attempt to contextualize these concepts as part of the

need to create curated interfaces between communities of practice and the wider society. The intentional act of curation can thus be a sense-making creative process. Taking the Manchester Metropolitan University's Axis Arts Centre as case study, what becomes evident is the need for a deeper understanding of the cultural relativity of arts-related practices and the roles that universities play to facilitate various cultural co-produced interfaces between arts and society.

**Key Words:** Curation; Culture 3.0; Axis Arts Centre; cultural interfaces.

### 1. Death #1: The Turner Prize

At the end of 2015 the art world rocked on its lofty Turner heels and for once I personally took notice. The Guardian described this event as follows:

“Turner prize winners Assemble: 'Art? We're more interested in plumbing'

It's been declared the death of the Turner prize: a bunch of radical young architects winning instead of an artist. Are Assemble bothered? No – they're too busy working out how to change the world over a few pints” (Higgins, 2015)

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There are various aspects of this event that struck me; that the prize was not given to one but to many persons; that they were not actually artists; and that it was not exactly an artwork or a series of artworks that was recognised by the jury. It was, as the Guardian article cheekily expressed, “a monumental category error, like giving the Man Booker to, say, an oral poet” (Ibid).

Was it more fitting to call it community arts? A socially engaged practice? The recognition for a collective that brought artfulness into everyday life? Rather than a piece or pieces of work, was it a model for working and living together creatively?

I came to the conclusion that what the Turner prize of 2015 also recognised was the importance of having ‘curated’ interfaces between arts and society at a time when art is not discrete but all around us, publicly demonstrating how the act of this immersive artful living can enhance our quality of life.

This led me to consider the emergence of a new type of cultural engagement, which can be conceptualised using Pier Luigi Sacco’s Culture 3.0 model (2015). This term encompasses a new phenomenon, characterized by the use of open platforms, democratic structures, value creation, ubiquitously available production tools and individuals constantly shifting and renegotiating their roles between producing and consuming content. Sacco furthermore suggests that Europe remains fixated on Culture 1.0, characterized by an historically derived distinction of high-brow vs low-brow, arts patronage, gatekeepers and value absorption. And remaining fixated on Culture 1.0 is, he suggests, holding us back as a society, as well as stifling productivity in our creative economies. There is a strong evidence base, he and many others suggest, that there are indirect effects of cultural participation on innovation, welfare, sustainability, social cohesion, entrepreneurship, soft power, local identity and the knowledge economy (Sacco 2015). And, providing we accept this as a valid truth, how do we in universities help society in moving forward towards Culture 3.0, use arts for increasing wellbeing, and exploit it for expanding our productivity?

This of course led me to debates around how we academics form partnerships with the external

world, how we define practice, what makes it academic, and how we – in the arts – define research, enterprise and knowledge exchange.

As an academic within the arts who is passionate about the concept of the public university and who perceives these institutions as regional hubs with international creative reach, the need for curated interfaces between arts and society raises questions about how we support our current and future talent to be impactful in this new context. Arts schools/university departments are some of the biggest patrons of creative thinking and practice, recognised even by the Arts Council, who posit:

“Higher education institutions are playing an increasingly vital role as custodians and champions of arts and culture in towns and cities across the country. They support the development of young talent. They lead on research of national and international significance. And their investment in arts and culture helps to build a sense of place. Universities, colleges and conservatoires have come to be powerful investors in their local areas, in the knowledge that a strong cultural offer makes our towns and cities great places to live, work and study.” (Henley, in Arts Council England 2016)

Universities themselves carefully position various interfaces between different levels of learners, different types of communities and different disciplines. This careful positioning is also a process of curation, with the facilitation of knowledge being (still) at the heart of this process.

But just as the Turner prize has moved from recognizing artefacts and products, to awarding a model of work represented by processes and ‘states of becoming’, so have universities moved from being just the ‘owners’ of sets of knowledges to facilitators of the networks and communities that are constantly in the act of becoming, constantly in the act of co-producing. This process is currently in tension, as external political forces are trying to push this unwieldy mass into a rather static shape that they recognise; the shape of markets, consumers and business sectors. It has become a sector *mash-up*.

Will the shaping come to a first point of stasis? Once this is arrived at, will there still be space for



these academically curated interfaces between arts and society? And if - as I would suggest - these interfaces are essential for society's wellbeing, will it leave us desperately trying to nurture the remnants of creativity growing in the cracks of a market-oriented cemented consciousness?

## 2. Death #2: The Public University

Sir Ken Robinson, in his January keynote speech at the Royal Society of Arts (Robinson, 2010), gives a short summary of our current educational challenges:

“Every country on the earth is at the moment reforming education. There are two reasons for this. The first of them is economic. They are trying to find out how do we educate children to take their place in the economies of the 21st century – how do we do that – given that we can't anticipate what the economy will look like at the end of next week – as the recent turmoil has demonstrated. How do we do that?[...] *The second is cultural: Every country on the earth is trying to figure out how we educate our children so they have a sense of cultural identity, how do we pass on the genes of our culture, while being part of globalization. How do we square that circle.*” (Robinson, 2010)

Robinson went on to advocate for more arts education in schools, suggesting that we seem to prioritise in our learning organisations a very particular way of academic thinking that excludes many children and young people. For Robinson, art plays a large role at a time in which we are trying to make education affordable in an economically challenged climate. And this need to create ‘glocal’ citizens, with local impact and global significance and reach, is also valid for Higher Education (HE).

English Universities are in turmoil as they have never been before, starting with the 2010 spending review and the Browne report (2010), which consequently led to the introduction of £9k fees, and, more currently, the 2016 UK White Paper on Higher Education. The British government seems to have found its own very special way of squaring the economic circle. It is something which probably not even Ken Robinson could have predicted, at the time he gave this speech, that our public higher educational institutions would be privatised in all but name. As Stefan Collini at the time succinctly stated:

“Essentially, Browne is contending that we should no longer think of higher education as the provision of a public good, articulated through educational judgment and largely financed by public funds (in recent years supplemented by a relatively small fee element). Instead, we should think of it as a lightly regulated market in which consumer demand, in the form of student choice, is sovereign in determining what is offered by service providers (i.e. universities).” (Collini, 2010:23)

This “retreat of the state from financial responsibility” (Ibid: 23) from its HE sector is of course one way to meet current economic challenges. But this ignores the “public interest in the provision of good quality education across the system, and the means for universities to make informed intellectual choices about the subjects they teach.” (2010:25).

This has specific implications for the Arts themselves. It has ‘glocal’ repercussions, often negative local impacts with international significance and reach, whilst having real personal and community-relevant bearings. My own local context is currently (in 2016) threatened by campus closure despite the (current) university-town of Crewe embarking on an ambitious multi-decade period of growth whilst its creative sector continues to generate a steady demand for new talent. This is taking place as the HE sector as a whole is being regularly required to adapt to the latest policy initiatives decreed by politicians that consider universities responsible for solving a diverse number of socio-economic challenges.

For instance, in recent months, within the year of 2016, universities have been publicly asked to take ownership for a) growing economic productivity; b) increasing social mobility; c) solving the challenge of our failing school systems; d) meeting the increasing expectations of student consumers; and e) doing all that with minimal public funding and simultaneously being increasingly forced to allow market forces to regulate their work; because, of course, this has worked so well in other sectors.

English universities are being torn asunder, on the one hand asked to act as businesses whilst on the other having to undergo intense public

accountability processes. This has created, it has been argued, a risk-averse, neo-liberal, overly managerial-reliant system inefficient in its excessive need to justify every part of its process. For learners, English universities represent currently not only the most expensive higher education system in the world, they also currently have one of the highest amounts of administrative costs internationally, and this is undoubtedly a result of governmental interventions. Thus universities are increasingly afforded to compete with each other in a climate where the socio-economic benefit to a region takes less priority than the need to make an institution more nationally competitive within its own HE sector and rise up those few points on various league tables.

But as the Turner prize was surprisingly awarded to a group of artfully-living and socially-engaged individuals, there are increasingly additional voices that demand alternative models for Higher Education; to be valued in terms of public benefit, recognising the importance of devising a diversity of interfaces between knowledge, learning and society. The numerous small-scale arts centres at various universities with public cultural remit can be seen to validate this position and in doing so use the power of art to construct these braided interfaces. For example, Manchester Metropolitan University's Axis Arts Centre, which is part of the Department of Contemporary Arts, is a useful model, as it creates a platform for curating artistic knowledge and processes, allowing members of the public to engage critically and actively in these activities (See Linden 2012), whilst being simultaneously integrated within a learning framework for students. However, a commercially conceptualised university landscape might not have a role for arts patronage anymore as the value of being a public good disappears whilst being afforded to provide consumer products directly for paying customers.

England is only one of a few countries where the current extreme stance of a commercially conceptualised HE has been implemented: a 'university market' selling education as a consumer good. The concerns around increased speculation and political governance that is characterised by "democratic deficits" is reflected in publications

such as the "Great University Gamble" (McGettigan, 2013). The intentional increase of these democratic deficits have led towards the "Unmaking of the Public University" (Newfield, 2008) and this, what Newfield calls "The Great Mistake", has led to locked-in economic inequality, systemic lack of student attainment whilst society has had to cope with unprecedented student debt (Newfield, 2016). There are increasing calls for revisiting the concept of what universities are for (Collini, 2012), what a public university should be (Levin & Greenwood, 2016), and the reiteration of the need for societally engaged universities with an institutional and individual conscience that break the ivory tower concepts once and for all (Watson, 2014). Various campaigns have emerged, such as the Campaign for the Defence of Public Universities in the UK<sup>2</sup> and initiatives to explore the viability of the first UK co-operative universities (Bothwell, 2016). 'New old' models of HE are being explored, focusing back on the concepts of trust (Boden et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2011); models of cooperative governance (Cook, 2013; Winn, 2015); and also, more relevant for the arts, university-community-industry partnership models for the creative sector (Boehm, 2015).

Rather than comparing universities to businesses, as the current UK government often seems to do, universities are more like "turbulent Italian Renaissance towns" (Aitken in Watson, 2009:85). They can be better understood through an awareness of community dynamics than through business models geared towards value or income accumulation.

As all these examples suggest, institutions catering for their socio-economic regions are still valued as interfaces that curate knowledge between disciplines, knowledge holders and communities. So in the same way that the Turner Prize gave a voice to the importance of socially engaged artful living, voices are increasingly demanding to get public higher education back on track and where it needs to be in order to be impactful to society.

3. Phoenixes arise: Community University Partnerships and Culture 3.0

<sup>2</sup> <http://cdbu.org.uk/> 1/10/2016



One solution may, ironically emerge out of recent governmental HE policy, in particular the current impact agendas also introduced by governmental interventions. Thus strangely enough the Westminster government-driven impact agendas have, probably unexpectedly, resulted in highlighting that the neo-managerialistic cultures with their specific accountability measures are increasingly becoming the barrier to a more holistic consideration of impact – one that exploits the multidirectional benefits of engaging in research, enterprise civic engagement all at the same time. Art here is always seen as a fabulous mediator, but when the subject of discourse is a deep new knowledge within artistic practice itself, it can be as hard in the arts as it is in the sciences to transfer this knowledge in a manner that provides societal impact.

Useful here is to consider new partnership models that allow the barriers of these different spheres to be negotiated more effectively, to allow the ‘ivory tower’ to become more permeable. Etzkowitz’s model of university-industry-government partnership, the triple helix (Etzkowitz, 2008), was expanded in 2012 by Carayannis and Campbell to include the third sector, and with it universities’ own civic engagements (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012). Watson (Watson, 2009; Watson, 2014; Watson, 2011) has foregrounded this latter role; his concept of the ‘engaged university’ proposes that social enterprise and the not-for-profit sector should be considered within the helix model. These quadruple partnerships are evidenced to better support innovation, but they will also allow innovation to happen in a non-linear, collaborative manner with overlapping processes of basic research, application and development. In this model research is not the sole concern of universities, and technology exploitation may be not the sole concern of industry, creating what has been called a ‘socially distributed knowledge’ (Gibbons, 1994) or a (Mode 3) ‘Innovation Ecosystem’ (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012)<sup>3</sup>.

And this is where arts in the academy have already foregrounded their own practices that could be seen to fall into mode 3 knowledge production models, with its debates around co-authorship and co-ownership and the current considerations concerning the disappearance of the creative industries in a world characterised by Culture 3.0.

Creative clusters and networks, and within these, the cultural artefacts or processes, are more often than not developed in our contemporary arts world in cooperation, in collaboration and in co-authorship. These resonates with the practice of Turner Prize winners Assemble - a collective where it is not clear who produces and who consumes; where the process starts and when it stops, what is being produced and what shape this product takes, exactly.

This is what Luigi Sacco (2015) calls Culture 3.0, an historic evolution from 1.0 onwards. In his

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more ‘elderly linear concept of innovation’, in which there is a focus on basic research ‘discoveries’ within a discipline, and where the main interest is derived from delivering comprehensive explanations of the world. Mode 2 has characteristics of being inter-, trans- and multi-disciplinary, often demanding social accountability and reflexivity. The exploitation of knowledge in this model demands participation in the knowledge production process; and the different phases of research are non-linear, for example discovery, application and fabrication overlap. In this model, knowledge production becomes diffused throughout society for instance a ‘socially distributed knowledge’, and within this, tacit knowledge is as valid or relevant as codified knowledge (Gibbons, 1994). Mode 2 is seen as a natural development within a knowledge economy.

The 2012 Carayannis and Campbell expansion of the Gibbons Modes 1 and 2 to include a Mode 3 knowledge production model, defined it as working simultaneously across Modes 1 and 2. Adaptable to current problem contexts, it allows the co-evolution of different knowledge and innovation modes. The authors called it a ‘Mode 3 Innovation Ecosystem’ which allows ‘GloCal’ multi-level knowledge and innovation systems with local meaning but global reach. This values individual scholarly contributions less, and rather puts an emphasis on clusters and networks, which often stand in ‘co-opetition’, defined as a balance of both cooperation and competition.

<sup>3</sup> Mode 1 and Mode 2 were knowledge production models put forward by Gibbons back in 1994. Gibbons conjectured that Mode 1 knowledge production was a

conceptualisation, Culture 1.0 was characterised by patronage, with limited audiences. It had gatekeepers where the cultural offering was determined by the patron's tastes and interests. There were no structural cultural markets or technologies for reproduction, and a key characteristic was that it rather absorbed value than created it; the money invested in it had to be created somewhere else and from another sector of activity.

Sacco suggests that Europe is 'hung up' on Culture 1.0 and that this is holding us back in terms of innovation and productivity, as well as health and wellbeing. He links Innovation to cultural participation, providing evidence through the comparison of rankings, those from innovation scoreboards and from active cultural participation barometers. Creative and cultural participations builds capability for innovation, he suggests, and it is strongly linked with innovative systems, as it questions one's beliefs and world views; promotes acquaintance with, and assigns value to, cultural diversity; allows us to experience the transformational impact of new ideas; and builds new expressive and conceptual skills (Ibid).

Sacco's incrementally nuanced model includes Culture 1.2, which refers to a time where 'Kultur' was increasingly seen as a component for human development, and public patronage entered the picture. However, the state still decided on what deserves to be patronised, creating the contemporary divide between high and low brow culture. Access to highbrow culture thus becomes a sign of bourgeois distinction. This era also experienced audience expansion, but culture still absorbed value and could be seen as a value distribution ranging from "citizens who don't attend to those who do" (Ibid).

Culture 2.0 enters the picture with its technological innovations that support mass production, and the conceptualisation of high/low brow results in the process of commercialization itself being seen as problematic. Characteristic of this era is unlimited reproducibility of creative content with very large audiences, and this produces significant turnover and profits. Key terms describing the main characteristics of Culture 2.0 are 'copyright' and 'IPR' and its geographic centres are the US with its Film and Music Industries.

But Culture 3.0 has now entered the picture, with digital content production and digital connectivity. With its ubiquitously available tools of production, mass distribution of content happens without mediators. There are open platforms, social media supporting these platforms, and co-production occurring at all levels. It is often seen as 'democratic' with constantly shifting roles of content producers and users. There is economic and social value produced in sales and participation, and thus it does not absorb value anymore. As it is ubiquitous, it is hard to demarcate the industry. With no pre-determined market channel bottlenecks, creative and cultural industries may cease to exist, with culture no longer an aspect of free time use, but entrenched in the fabric of every-day life. It is immersive, predicated on co-production and its big emerging geographical centres are likely to be in Asia.

#### 4. Curation, Innovation and Sector Mash-ups in Practice: the Axis Arts Centre, MMU Cheshire

Are current art centres, such as our MMU Axis art centres, also hung up - as Sacco suggests - on Culture 1.0 or if not, how does innovation happen, where is it supported, and is it co-produced? The Turner prize was able to move from recognizing artefacts and products to awarding a model of work represented by processes and 'states of becoming'. Have we in the university sector also been able to move from being just the 'owners' of sets of knowledges to facilitators of the networks and communities that are constantly in the act of becoming, constantly in the act of co-producing? And how do we manage this HE related public/private mashup of agendas, how do we design and create these academically curated interfaces between arts and society?

And this is where a case study of our own Axis Arts Centre might help bring those abstract concepts of innovation, culture, co-production into a more clear focus.

The Department of Contemporary Arts at MMU, through its public-facing Axis Arts Centre, is known for its commitment to contemporary arts practices and Practice as Research. Like many academic arts departments, it has a diverse undergraduate and postgraduate portfolio of provision, in our case Music Technology, Popular



Music, Composition, Performance, Intermedia, Live Arts, Drama, Theatre, Dance, Creative Writing and Community Arts.

We have a strong relationship with the creative sector (both for-profit and non-for-profit) and we see ourselves as a department which is continually influencing the contemporary live art scene in Britain and beyond. Our academic and research active community is relatively large, with 25 members of permanent staff, 40 associate lecturers and instrumental/vocal tutors and a further 40 postgraduate research students, 7 performance and digital media technicians, and various student interns, ambassadors and regular student volunteers for arts centre activities. Since 2008 we have new, purpose-built facilities in Cheshire, including music studios, sound recording studios, post-production facilities, project spaces, specialist media suites for both audio and video work, theatre and dance spaces.

We also have a non-for-profit creative enterprise in our midst, the Axis Arts Centre, co-funded by the Arts Council and housed within the Department. It has been programming for more than 25 years and has built a reputation for its work, which features acclaimed companies and practitioners in live contemporary arts practices.

Our webpage states that:

Axis Arts Centre aims to promote the best emergent, national and international small-scale touring contemporary theatre, live art, contemporary dance, performance writing, new music and installation. It developed as a public facility out of the 'Cultural Policy' of the old Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education, in the early eighties.<sup>4</sup>

Axis has programmed some of the world's leading artists, including Michael Nyman, Wayne McGregor, Les Ballets C de la B (Belgium), Frantic Assembly, Odin Teatret (Denmark), Goat Island (Chicago), Forced Entertainment, Théâtre de Complicite, Tim Crouch, Benjamin Zephaniah and Lemn Sissay.

<sup>4</sup> Axis Arts Centre at the Department of Contemporary Arts, MMU Cheshire. <http://www.cheshire.mmu.ac.uk/dca/axis-arts-centre/> 14/11/2016/

Quoting our Director of the Arts Centre, a member of staff within the department, the

"... AAC is a public arts centre and a resource for audiences in the region, a key function of the centre is to offer supplementary learning, research and performance opportunities for students within the Department of Contemporary Arts (DCA), which AAC is housed within. According to the department's strategy, recruitment material and induction sessions for new students, engagement in arts centre activity is considered important for the experience of post-graduate and undergraduate students, specifically in relation to enhancing and expanding their knowledge, skills, professional contacts and practice in the sector." (Gibson, 2014)

One of the examples of the ways in which academic departments like ours balance inward and outward facing interests is that the process of running a public Arts Centre is integral to our research activities; the curation of programmes is a research topic, with staff expertise in the department. Thus the exercise of choosing artists that are perceived to be contemporary is interrogated with a rigorous research enquiry (see Linden 2012) and questions of what makes arts practices unique, or what unique processes artists apply to ensure their artwork and performances are innovative, is an integral part of our academic ethos.

Thus for us, and for most academically housed small-scale arts centres, there is the equilibrium of sustainability to be met in an ever-shifting climate and agendas - not a straightforward measurement considering that the activities are often funded through a variety of sources.

There is a vital difference between an academically-housed arts centre and a public arts centre, just as there is a difference between an academic-arts-practitioner and a (non-academically engaging) artist. The obligation, remit or privilege of universities to make knowledge explicit, to allow knowledge to be transferred over time and space, sets arts academics apart, with public knowledge remits including learning, teaching and research as one continuum.

Thus there is the affordance, and obligation not to just create unique art-work, but to allow



the broader community to have an insight into the processes that make this art-work unique. The new knowledge here might be inherent within the artwork, and the artwork can be seen as evidence of a process that applies innovative practice, but the new knowledge from an academic point of view resides, and can only be made explicit, when considering the process rather than the artefact.

Thus there is a continuum of inward to outward facing vested interests, often logically (but not always) aligned to the resources of funding, linked to different activities and their associated agendas. It is this balance of inward and outward facing interests and associate communities, which creates a sustainable equilibrium.

How this equilibrium manifests itself depends on various factors. In a very short study we undertook in 2013, Carver (in Boehm et al., 2014) interviewed the artistic directors of four academically housed, small-scale live arts centres in the UK's northwest, which demonstrated how diverse the different foci of these centres are, from one centre being seen foremost as a resource for and benefitting students, to another with a more dominant outward looking community impact and research impact agenda.

Within our Axis Arts Centre, we have defined 5 functions that clarify how much our on going activities are linked to our remits as a learning community. These functions are sometimes more difficult to explain to university executives who might not have an in-depth understanding of the embedded and holistic nature of the role of the arts within a learning community. It allows the fragmentation of professional HE sector functions, conceptualised under terms (and support sections) of employability, widening participation, student experience, learning support, research-informed learning, enterprise, etc. to disappear, and evolve into a more intricately interconnected and multi-directionally learning community with a creative practice at its core.

A more simple analogy might be that academically-housed small arts centre can be seen to be similar to what labs would be to engineering students, or what business books mean to business students; they allow students to experience the contemporary live form of a practice

they are currently studying. They also provide opportunities for students to engage professionally as artists, front-of-house staff, project managers or volunteers, and thus have an embedded employability agenda, whilst also allowing student successes to be celebrated, by platforming the best of their work. For staff, similar embedded agendas can be supported through academically housed arts centres, practicing artist-academics thus have a public platform, allowing research impact agendas to be addressed. Through curated knowledge events, insights into their practice (and praxis) can be related to a public, that is increasingly interested in process.

Having a professional arts centre run by staff and students, as part of their everyday learning, research and knowledge exchange activities, also allows us as a community of academics to continually practice and research in an in-depth fashion what we teach, becoming practitioners informed by professional practice through the processes of running a publicly co-funded arts centre. It meets enterprise agendas by attracting funding that supports our students and staff through commissions, creative projects, or community-university partnership projects. Lastly, but of equal importance, simply by allowing this wider learning community to engage in contemporary practices, from undergraduate to professional and PhD level, the Axis Arts Centre also provides a cultural asset for external communities. Together, it creates a curated and intentional interface (or sets of interfaces) between a university and a local/regional/national/global public.

The latter point also indicates some of the tensions and threats faced by the arts within the UK HE system. With the disappearance of the public university, due to the shift from a taxpayer funded sector to a privately, student funded system, these multidirectional benefits are more difficult to capture when fragmentation of functions is sought. A decision-maker only wanting to define an academically housed arts centre as an enterprise activity able to make its own profits, will not be able to exploit its benefits for learning by students. Similarly, fee paying students increasingly see only assessed work as evidence of their learning, and only classroom lectures as the service they are



paying 9k fees for, and thus are in danger of seeing everything else as a university indulging its own interests. Thus the strength of this holistic curated interface between academia and the public is its weakness.

In response to our own continuous expansion over the last 3 years, we initiated both an academic process of inquiry as well as a public discussion and debate around the role and value of small academically housed arts centres, with themes covered being sustainability, remit, programming and impact. These discussions - with different view-points focusing on contemporary challenges - have informed the ways the arts centre continues to develop its provision as a departmental AND public-facing arts centre. In this process, a series of local, regional and international public panel discussions representing various perspectives have led and simultaneously guided us towards reconceptualising a more dynamic model on which to build the Centre's sustainability and identity, in order to maximise impact. (Boehm et al., 2014)

The result from this careful expansion is the ever-greater inclusion of students and members of the general public, which widens the learning community and thus enhances all of the five functions of the arts centre. The Axis Arts Centre continues to have autumn and spring seasons of professional work housed on-campus. This can be seen as the spearhead of presented contemporary professional work and attracts most of the external income, but also incurs the largest cost in running. Thus it does require patronage, and ACE funds these activities to ca £10k/annum, which is match-funded by the university by another £10k. But in addition to this, there is now an off-campus touring programme, Axis Exposed and Axis on Tour, which has been developed in collaboration with Cheshire Rural Touring<sup>5</sup> and brings contemporary live art to rural towns. Our students are often involved as either audience members or artists. Moreover, Axis Explored brings into play activities that universities do as a matter of course, from final year degree shows, research conferences

with a performing arts practice embedded, or community outreach activities such as arts summer school for local schools or CPD. The Axis Arts Centre label allows this activity to be seen not from a university-centric point of view of being either "community engagement", "outreach", "widening participation", or "employability enhancement activities" but much more holistically understands that a department with its arts centre is involved in talent facilitation and place-making, and that there is the basic premise that this is simply in everyone's interest.

Considering then, our expanded Axis Arts Centre concept, with other 'seasons' that include touring work, student work and co-production and co-curation models, we have developed supporting structures more closely aligned to Culture 3.0, whilst still mediating Culture 1.0 content. Our touring programme is a good example of this; our community engagement director works with a rural community to understand and identify which piece of contemporary work might be most apt, most relevant and most popular in their particular context. The content thus might still have the traditional characteristics of Culture 1.0, but the curation process is co-produced. The result is often that, through the co-produced choices of spaces, times, and contexts, the performance is often re-mediated in ways that are very much akin to Culture 3.0.

Other pieces of work emerge as well in relation to a variety of communities and contexts, whether they be site-specific, participatory, applied or community arts, geared towards students, a section of the public we are working with, or academics that are pursuing a specific interest or project. More often than not, there are multiple communities working together to co-curate, and then co-produce a creative event, and in true Culture 3.0 form, it might be difficult to differentiate here between the creator and the consumer, or where the work begins and when it stops.

Most of the emerging new live arts scene is keen to get audiences involved and is comfortable with co-production models, and pre- and post-show workshops/discussions that allow an audience not only to gain an insight into the research and thinking behind the practice, but often merge

<sup>5</sup> Cheshire Rural Touring Arts, <http://www.cheshire-ruraltouringarts.co.uk/> 14/11/2016.

seamlessly with the performance itself. From a Culture 1.0 perspective, these activities might not even be considered as extensions of the artwork, and possibly 'only' considered as community arts, socially engaged, applied arts or participatory arts. From a Culture 3.0 perspective, these engagements are genuine Culture 3.0. Would it be more fitting to call this community arts? A socially-engaged practice? A complex learning community that bring artfulness into everyday life? Is it a model for learning how to live together creatively?

Just as with the Turner prize of 2015 I come to the conclusion that what we need to recognise in our contemporary world is the importance of having 'curated' interfaces between arts and society at a time when art is not discrete but all around us, publicly demonstrating how the act of this immersive artful living can enhance our quality of life. Universities have a large part to play here, to facilitate this as part of the concept of the wider learning community where cultural engagement is an inherent part. As Sacco suggests:

"Culture is not simply a large and important sector of the economy, it is a 'social software' that is badly needed to manage the complexity of contemporary societies and economies in all of its manifold implications" (Sacco, 2015)

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