

Cultural Intermediation in the Creative Urban Economy

Phil Jones

School of Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences
University of Birmingham

The team

University of Birmingham

Phil Jones

Ian Grosvenor

Natasha Macnab

Lisa De Propriis

Richard Clay

Antonia Layard

University of Salford

Beth Perry

Tim May

Paul Heywood

Birmingham City University

Paul Long

Andrew Dubber

City University

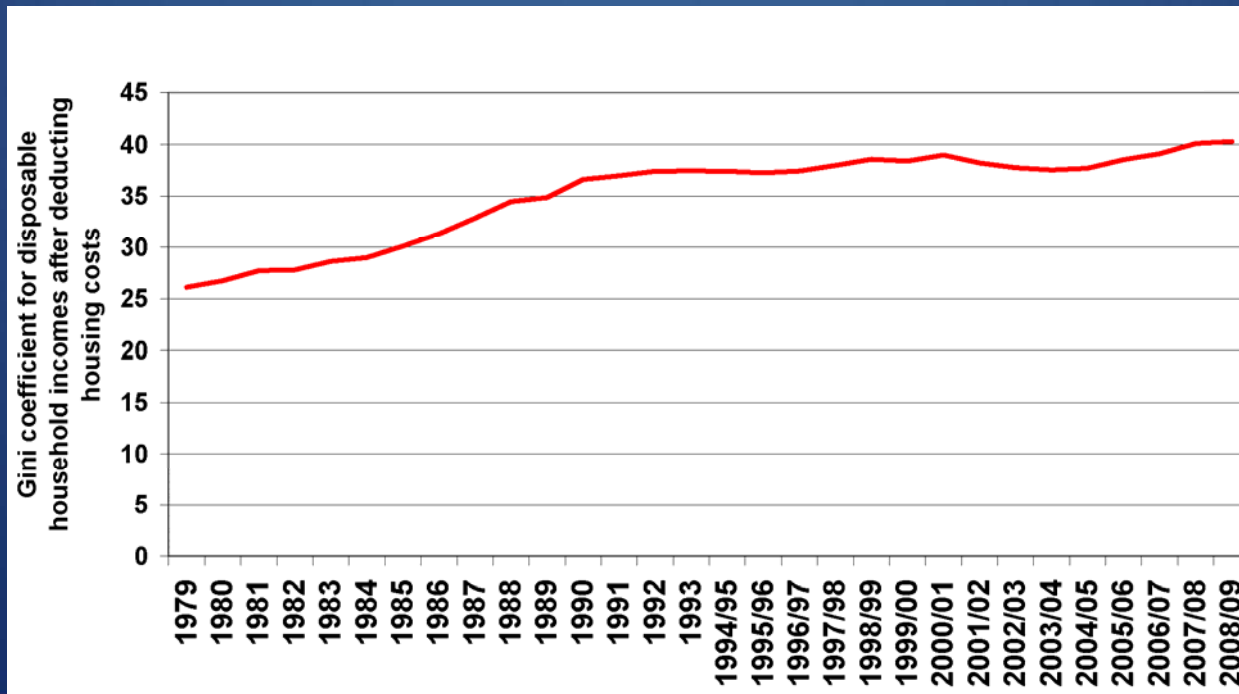
Dave O'Brien

Liverpool John Moores

Kerry Wilson

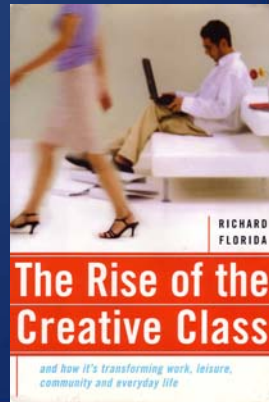
Creating an unequal economy

- 30 years of deindustrialisation and transition to a 'creative' economy
- Widening gap between rich and poor



Creative economy impacts

- DCMS 2007 40% of creative workers have degrees compared to 25% non-creative
- Arts increasingly justified *instrumentally* as generating economic growth
- Powerful influence of discourses such as 'creative class' reinforcing neoliberal urbanism
- Polarisation of connected, creative communities and deprived service class



Connected Communities Programme

- Runs across UK Research Councils, but led by Arts and Humanities Research Council
- “to mobilise the potential for increasingly inter-connected, culturally diverse, communities to enhance participation, prosperity, sustainability, health and well-being by better connecting research, stakeholders and communities.”

The research problem we identified

- If the 'creative economy' is significant, then who is benefiting from it?
- How is the creative economy (broadly defined) connected to different communities?
- What processes of 'cultural intermediation' operate to make these connections?

What is 'cultural intermediation'?

- Bourdieu's (1984): intermediaries as agents who *tell* communities what cultural phenomena to passively consume
- Broader notion of 'intermediation' as processes linking cultural economy to the wider world
 - individual artists, public arts venues, creative industries, agencies/networks supporting the arts, etc. etc.

Intermediation as connection

- Implicit assumption that connecting more people to the creative economy will reduce inequality
- Cultural intermediation already exists
- But
 - Is cultural intermediation the best way to make connections?
 - Does it function in the most effective fashion?
 - Can modes of working be found that improve this 'connecting' role?

Overall aim

To identify means of enhancing the effectiveness of cultural intermediation as a mechanism for connecting different communities into the broader creative economy

Integrated interdisciplinary design

- Arts & humanities approaches embedded in the project framing
- Valuation mapping exercise identifies case study themes...
- ...shaping the historical project which...
- ...informs examination of contemporary governance which...
- ...identifies different communities who are asked to co-construct the research...
- ...and commission creative interventions

Deep case study approach

- Allows the creative economy *eco-system* to be explored in each city
- Topical
 - Birmingham LEP/enterprise zone ‘creative city’
 - Salford Media City
- How well do community needs/aspirations map onto cultural policy and the activity of intermediaries
 - What are the circles of influence / cliques that exist. How do these include / exclude groups?

Community-led research

- How visible is intermediation activity within communities ('hard-to-reach institutions')?
- Training for community members to undertake research themselves
- De-centre the power of intermediation to have communities determining priorities for action
- Community membership of local panels commissioning £140k of intervention activity

Summary

- Intermediation is a key process in the creative economy but has lacked critical scrutiny
- Project takes an interdisciplinary, deep case approach to analyse the sector in an integrated fashion
- Creative, action-oriented approach driven by communities
- Context of localism, big society and (big) cuts make reappraisal urgent