Cultural Intermediation in the Creative Urban Economy

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## The team

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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
• 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