

# **Questioning creative work as driver of economic development: the case of Newcastle-Gateshead**

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## **Abstract**

The adoption of creative and cultural industries (CCIs) as drivers of regional economic development in the UK has been unquestioned by policy makers. However the academic literature which looks at work practices and patterns of creative workers highlights contradictions between business and creative goals and issues of sustainability and growth within the sector. The paper tries to engage with these two perspectives and assess in which ways CCIs practitioners balance their work between business and creativity. Looking at a specific regional context, the North-East of England, and in particular Newcastle-Gateshead, it highlights the limits of looking at the CCIs from a narrow economic development perspective. The paper concludes by arguing for a re-assessment of regional agendas and for a more realistic and holistic approach in understanding the needs and practices of the sector.

**Keywords:** Creative industries; local economic development; public support; creative work; culture-led regeneration

## **The creative economy as local driver in post-industrial regions**

The creative and cultural industries (CCIs) in the UK have received specific attention in the last decade and have usually been associated with positive trends of growth and development (DCMS 1998; 2007). Policy makers and sectorial organisation have addressed them as new models of entrepreneurship and key for potential local economic growth (DCMS 2006). New programmes and incentives have been put into place in order to further support the sector and to ensure continued delivery of these objectives (see Devlin, et al. 2008).

Nevertheless, as many authors suggests (Jeffcutt and Pratt 2002; Scott 2004), there are at least two levels to consider when looking at CCIs and their economic and organisational performance. On one level, there is a fast-growing creative economy, mainly comprising large transnational corporations often interacting in wider global economy and based in major global cities – London within the UK. On another, there is a large variety of small and micro enterprises which often struggle to make a profit and grow, powered mainly by personal, social and cultural objectives. Lower running costs are often stated as a reason for these companies to be located outside the capital.

Although the policy focus has shifted towards the regional dimension of the creative economy (DCMS 2003), little consideration has been given to the impact of this change. While the creative economy can provide apparent success at a national level, the reality of how the creative economy works and performs at a local level is still under-researched.

Oakley (2004) critically states how every city and region in UK has blindly adopted creative economy policies and initiatives. Alongside active interventions, many cities and regions have tried to estimate their profile in the sector and supported claims on the importance of their CCIs in the local economy (Jayne 2005). The usual measures of success in this area include: number of companies, start-ups, size of companies and turnover. The CCIs are rhetorically presented as a model of entrepreneurialism (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999). In a regime where the numbers of business start-ups becomes a major indicator of development, the fact that many of these activities are established as micro-enterprises or sole-traders organisations has helped policy makers to make the case for support.

The association between CCIs and hi-growth technology-based industries was already being discussed in the UK even before the 'creative class' theory emerged (Florida 2002) . In fact, Garnham (2005) suggests that the move from cultural to creative industries was motivated by the necessity to include this hi-growth economic sector within the more tradition and slow growing cultural sector. Some authors (Creight - Tyte 2005; Oakley 2006) have criticised the inclusion of the software, computer games & electronic publishing sector in the 'creative industries' definition of the DCMS (1998). This is very similar to the criticism made by Markusen (2006) on the breadth of the occupational categories included in the 'creative class' of Florida (2002); she underlines that these professions do not share any specific characteristics in terms of job profile, income and ideals. In support of this argument, Comunian et al (2009) identify the different levels of economic rewards of graduates working in creative disciplines, compared with graduates in other fields. Also Erard (2003) highlights the difficulty of surviving from the earnings of people's creative/artistic work and states how usually they refuse to be associated with the mainstream creative economy and try to find ways to survive outside the market. This is further stressed by Gibson (2003) who suggests that a large number of assumptions about 'work' in the CCIs have not yet be critically examined in the literature.

The present research aims to explore further this problematic relation between creative work and creative practices as used and understood within regional development policies and as experienced by people working in the sector.

***“I am not in it for the money and there is no money in it”***

The positive narrative, which surrounds both national and regional CCIs policy documents, is in contradiction with an even larger set of studies that investigate the job patterns and careers of creative practitioners in a variety of sectors.

This contradiction is built around two main arguments. On one side, there is not a clear understanding of what is counted within the CCIs and therefore what constitutes growth in the sector - specifically considering the diversity across sub-sectors support nationally (DCMS, 2007). On the other side, even within a relative economic growth, there is no realistic understanding of what is the potential of employment and development in a sector where

short-term contracts and self-employment are often not a choice but the only possibility for people to work.

In reference to the first issue, many authors have in general highlighted the contradictions and difficulties in measuring the CCIs. Issues of what sectors and what businesses should be included have been debated since first defined by the DCMS (1998). The difficulty in understanding the unrecognised work of practitioners working in the sector but not VAT registered seems to question the threshold between producing culture and being an economic entity. Recently, Cunningham and Higgs (2008) have used their 'trident model' to take a closer look to creative and cultural occupations within and outside the sector. One of the main findings suggests that creative occupations are growing faster outside the CCIs than within the sector.

National data headlines often avoid looking at the reality of growth in the sector. "The creative industries grew by an average of 6% per annum between 1997 and 2005. This compares to an average of 3% for the whole of the economy over this period" (DCMS, 2007: 1). The reality is that this high growth is led by the software, computer games & electronic publishing sector (10%), radio and TV (8%) and advertising (6%) and art & antiques (5%), while all the other sector are performing within the average of the national economy 3% (design fashion, video, film and photography, publishing). One of the core cultural sector, music and the visual and performing art is underperforming with a 0% growth.

Very similarly, employment growth is estimated for the period 1997-2006 to 2% per annum (compared to a national trend of 1%). Again, in this overall growth figure some sectors are over-performing: software, computer games & electronic publishing sector (6%), design and designer fashion (4%) architecture and advertising (2%). All the others reflect the national trend (art and antiques, music and the visual & performing arts, radio & TV), while in two sector employment has declined (-1%): video, film and photography and publishing.

Looking at these figures in details can provide a very different account on the impact of the CCIs on local economic growth. In fact, considering that some of the most important, in economic terms, sectors are highly concentrated in specific regions – mainly London and the South East– it seems relevant to reconsider what is the hype and rhetoric around the growth of this sector at local level. There is not a clear picture of regional distribution but the few

studies who tried to address the issue point out the disparity between London and the South East and the rest of the regions. Creigh-Tyte and Thomas (2002) suggest in their analysis that in 1999 over one third of the UK's total employment in the creative and cultural occupations was in Greater London. Considering together London and the South East, it makes up over half of all employment in the sector. For some sub-sectors, this concentration is even stronger. Looking at the film and TV sector, Turok (2003) suggests that "London houses no less than 70% of all jobs in the production and distribution of film and video and 55% of jobs in television" (Turok, 2003: 553).

The second issue, the nature of employment in the sector and its real potential, has been investigated by a variety of authors within different sub-sectors of the CCIs. Authors, such as McRobbie (2002) and Ross (2003), highlight how the growth of the sector is based on a tendency of self-exploitation of people working in the CCIs. People juggle between different jobs, projects and opportunities that McRobbie (2002: 519) critically identifies with the "rise of the creative subcontractor and the downgrading of creativity". While some authors focus on the role of temporary project-based work, casual contracting and freelance work (Christopherson 2002), others underline the social pressure and difficulties of retaining and finding jobs and the role of networks, reputation and recommendations (Blair 2000; Ekinsmyth 2002; McRobbie 2002). A detailed account of spatial strategy in the city and 'business' strategy in terms of work patterns is offered also by Lange (2005) who follows the dynamics of '*culturepreneurs*' in Berlin. He describes them as "architects of spatial scavenging and recycling" (Lange 2005: 94) reflecting on their alternative business strategies - such as the idea of collecting start-up capital out of unemployment subsidies.

Despite these demanding work patterns, the CCIs practitioners care for their work (Banks 2007; Caves 2000) and elements of distinctions and cultural factors like the possibility to be in a 'hot' industry, or have a 'cool' job and live in 'cool' place has an effect on the type of compromises that workers are ready to undertake (Neff, et al. 2005).

Another critical dimension emerging from the literature but hardly taken into consideration by local policy, relates to the motivation and drivers of creative practitioners, specifically in the self-employed group. The balance between the creative aspects of their practice and the business commitments and opportunities is also a distinctive issue. On one side, creativity

and the cultural content are addressed as the core focus of the sector and its workers; on the other, there is a growing pressure on the economic outcomes and growth. Nevertheless, these companies “have a garage mentality. Not enough of them want to be Microsoft. [...] They do not live to build the business” (Leadbeater and Oakley 2001: 59).

From this overview of the literature the message - largely ignored in the economic development discourses - can be summarised by the following statement used by one of the creative practitioner in Newcastle-Gateshead: “I am not in it for the money and there is no money in it”. This contradicts not only the general understanding of CCIs as means of economic development – there is no money in it – but also the fact that the ultimate motivation of people engaging in the sector is different from the economic rewards.

### **Investing in the creative economy: Newcastle-Gateshead and the North East Region as research context**

Looking at these issues from a specific geographical perspective can add further depth to our understanding of how CCIs become drivers for economic development.

The context of the North-East region presents all the major characteristics of a declining post-industrial region. From the early 1990s, along side policies aiming to attract foreign direct investment, economic development and regeneration, culture becomes one of the drivers identified by the region – in particular by the major conurbation of Newcastle and Gateshead - to reshape its future (Byrne and Benneworth 2006)

The public-led cultural regeneration, with the most representative elements being The Angel of the North, The Baltic and The Sage Gateshead, coincides with further investments in the larger creative economy but also with an emerging landscape for support and promotion of the local CCIs. Minton (2003) suggests the potential of the impact of this public investment in terms of attracting of creative individuals to the region. However, other authors critically dismiss the capacity of these interventions to engage with the population of the region (Byrne and Wharton 2004)

One of the first research commissioned by One North East (the regional development agency, RDA) on the CCIs in 2001 suggested that the North East had witnessed a very rapid growth in the ‘content origination’ activities, but starting from a very low base (CURDS 2001). The

document sets a baseline for the sector, arguing that the regional creative economy function around a complex network which includes not only the private sector but also public and not for profit organisations. Consequently, One North East identified the sector alongside other fourteen as one of the major economic development clusters (ONE North East 2002).

Further studies followed, such as the mapping exercise of Northern Film and Media (2004), the regional support agency for the audio-visual sector. The findings exposed the fragmented nature of this sector within the region, with 67% of the companies being micro-enterprises; it also underlined the thin boundaries between enterprise and freelance work (Baines and Robson 2001). Even though there is a clear will to establish a profile of the sector, the comparison with the national landscape presents a scenario of underachievement. In the North-East web and internet workforce represents the 3% for the national figure, while 79% is based in London and the South East (Skillset UK 2005). The annual moving image revenues for the region represent only 0.84% of the national figures (Northern Film and Media, 2004).

Although the reality of the potential income and growth of the CCIs seems limited, still the regional agencies have identified it as an area for development and investment. Investment takes a variety of forms: generally the RDA is involved with supporting regional organisations delivering advices and support to the sector, such as Codeworks – the organisation supporting media and game industries.

Further support, which aims to stimulate the creative economy indirectly, usually through commissions, is distributed through the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI) attracting large-scale cultural events to the region. One North East also contributes to some of the landmarks of culture-led regeneration alongside national and European funding. Further initiatives, such as the *Culture Business Venture*, a grant scheme for CCIs, received support on the bases of aiming to stimulate the business growth of the creative sector.

Therefore, the context of Newcastle-Gateshead represents in this research landscape an interesting exemplification of the contraction emerging also in the literature. On one side, the regional cultural policy and regeneration – which has been considered successful for its cutting edge planning and design and its participation and inclusion profile – exemplifies the potential of culture as engine for reassessing image, civic pride and cultural participation (Bailey, et al. 2004). On the other side, the CCIs become a focus for economic growth, while

the contradictions and problems of a lagging and distant region, which tries to establish itself in the London-dominated landscape of the creative economy, remain often untold.

The paper draws on materials from 136 qualitative interviews undertaken in the context of Newcastle-Gateshead and the North-East region during 2004-2005. The semi-structured interviews were part of wider fieldwork, which included also social network analysis questionnaires and ethnographic accounts.

## **Working in the creative economy: dynamics and contradictions from a post-industrial region**

The specific research setting can be considered paradigmatic with respect to other regional contexts in UK. Therefore, it is important to consider some key dynamics and contradictions emerging in the economic growth discourse and reality of CCIs in a lagging region.

The analysis aims to highlight some of these contradictions emerging from the practice of people working in the sector. This is structured in three sections: the first section explores the role of public funding in defining CCIs and as a driver for the sector. The second considers how practitioners see themselves divided and juggling between running a business and pursuing their creative and cultural objectives. Finally, the role of these cultural and often socially oriented objectives is considered. These objectives emerge as one of the dimensions that many of the practitioners interviewed – across all sectors and with no correlation to their economic success or growth – considered key to understanding individual business decisions and the overall impact of the sector.

### ***The role of public funding as a driver for growth in the CCIs***

There is a strong emphasis for creative practitioners to see themselves as businesses and to become self-sustaining, however, the sector relies on support, both direct – through grants - and indirect - through business advice and events. Schemes like the '*Culture Business Venture*' aimed to re-shape the understanding that creative practitioners have of their activities and push them to see the potential for these activities to be run and managed as a business. A business advisor for the sector described his role as:

*Helping creative people recognise themselves as businesses, recognise that they are in a commercial environment, that they need to have a commercial attitude and that they need to know about marketing and financial management.*

In particular, in the North East both the Arts Council and Business Link have widely engaged with the sector and further organisations, such as New Writing North, Cohesion (glass artist network) or Aurora (Visual Artists network in rural Northumberland) engage in a variety of ways with practitioners. This support is acknowledged and considered valuable by practitioners for a variety of reasons. However, some people see in this support a form of 'grant culture' forming around the new CCIs agenda, as this jewellery maker underlines:

*I think there is a lot of money available, which is great, but just hanging out money sometimes it is not the best way to go on [...] there, is a moment where people need to stop and have a sustainable business.*

Often the relationship with funding bodies and funding seems to determine or define the value and dynamic of cultural production. As the manager of a local performing art organisation suggests, ultimately being commercially driven is determined by the lack of funding - rather than a decision to be business minded. This seems to imply that only organisations where public funding is significant have the freedom to engage with certain levels of cultural research which does not imply having a market or audience.

*We are seen and perceived as a commercial theatre, I put on shows to make as much money as possible, not all the time, but because our [public] funding base is so low [...] we have to therefore be extremely entrepreneurial, and commercial in our approach*

Decision on being commercial or being culturally driven seems therefore to be influenced by funding, despite the fact that organisations like the Arts Council suggest a landscape of continuity and homology between producing culture and being able to sell it. There is division of roles between organisations as to what path is worth pursuing: the commercial or cultural one. Similarly, the curator of a contemporary art organisation suggests describing the role of his gallery:

*It's rather to bring them [artists] here to answer a question that they may not have been able to answer in the commercial sector*

The same contradiction is expressed by a visual artist in reference to the way public funding are in contrast with the market and seems to be in contradiction with a successful creative economy:

*I think there's a slight conflict with the public sector funding because I am a commercially viable artist, I sell my work, and I don't know, maybe they see no reason to fund me; why should they when I'm selling work*

In this respect, creative practitioners sometimes adopt an opportunistic approach. While they find it hard to identify themselves with a business and with the CCI's discourse, they have accepted that within this definition, they get different forms of recognition and funding that would not otherwise be present.

*I see creative industries as positive and negative, I can see literature being commoditised [...] this is quite problematic [...] on the other side it can be positive as I see that I am part of the creative industries and that gives me an identity both as a self-employed writer and it is nice to have some support, so for example three years ago I received a business support grant.*

Whether support to the CCI's is motivated by purely cultural/artistic reasons or because of business/economic growth agendas, for the creative practitioners the only goal is to create and practice their original activities. However, they often struggle to coordinate the business and creative dimensions, as the director of a local dance company suggests:

*I do not want to become a business as in making huge profit margins; that's not what I want to do, but you can take aspects of that business and why it is successful and put it into the creative industries. There is not much cross over about finding how to do that, you are either an artist or a businessman, there are not that many links.*

The direction of public funding also seem to highlight a short sighted idea that increasing the number of companies – the number of business being a traditional measure of growth - equals to growth of the sector. While, as a designer suggests, grants to design companies often weaken the market – especially in a small market, such as the North-East - as they create unfair competition. He explains that more should be done in creating a market for design:

*Highlighting, showcasing, and showing the business benefits. That would do more than any grant [...]. Design grants just increase the number of businesses and what you actually need*

*to do is increase the number of contracts available so that the business themselves will expand to fill in those contracts*

### ***Balancing acts between creativity and business***

Understanding the unstable equilibrium that each creative worker experiences in their own practice is key to critically assessing the contribution of CCI to local economic development. Often policy documents are interested in listing new start-ups and adding businesses to the regional landscape. However, as a regional filmmaker explains, the business is often a cover to allow regional funding to flow and creative work to take place, rather than being an engine for economic growth:

*We needed to set up this company to raise the funding because we couldn't do it as individuals. So that was 1997, when I established the company, and that's just a company that has supported either my film work, or film work of people who deal with issues that are very similar to the things I'm interested in.*

Commercial work is often seen as a compromise or a cover, which allows practitioners to sustain creative expression, as this other filmmaker explains:

*If I can sustain myself and make some money doing commercial work for the first say ten years, twenty years of my career I will become wealthy enough to fund my own creative works where I'm not beholden to the industry to fund it.*

In this respect, there is a 'not for profit' mentality behind some of these activities. The profit is not reinvested into the commercial side, for expanding or growing, but into the creative side, to support creative, i.e. not economically viable, activities. This is happening not only within the visual arts but also across sectors of the creative economy, which we would normally consider commercially driven. As illustrated by the director of a lighting design company:

*Call it commercial rule or non-commercial [...] The commercial stuff we need in order to be able to afford the other non-commercial stuff.*

Often the portfolio career is seen as a way of keeping the balance between making profit and expressing yourself. A copywriter working in advertising questioned the originality and creativity of the advertising sector, which was his main source of income. He balanced that side of his career with writing for films:

*That's why I like writing for films because I can do something that is sort of original even if does not pay the bills.*

As other authors in the field suggest (Wheelock 2002) this can extend to the point where a normal everyday job becomes the mean to support the person's creative practice, as a writer explains:

*I suppose at the moment I am mostly focussed on making enough money to support the artistic side of things [...] I have to make it outside of the creative industries to actually support any creativity I have.*

Being 'creative' becomes a title that allows practitioners to enter different sectors and find new opportunities. As this young freelance cartoonist explains this implies a compromise in dealing with jobs inside and *outside* the creative sector, while building useful networks and a portfolio:

*If I had enough freelance work it would be my job, but in the meantime I get day-jobs that vaguely related to what I do [...] I describe myself as freelance concept developer, leaving it that vague because I want to try and get job doing anything.*

The business dimension is considered important not for its own sake but because it becomes the base which allow the person to pursue their creative and cultural research. This business dimension is often clashing with the respondents' background, capacity and objectives. However, it is considered an imperative as the contrary would mean not being able to run their creative practice. This is highlighted by the director of a commercial art gallery:

*I am not a commercial businessperson, but I have to run a business [...] the priority needs to be the business, because I have to make it work, so the creative bit comes second.*

Although running a business is the only viable option for creative practitioner to continue being creative, they still have a strong need to stay true to their cultural agenda and their personal cultural choices. However, these are often not the most viable and economically rewarding choices. As the marketing manager of a local record label articulates:

*We do have a balance because we would not sign an act that we do not like just because we knew it would make money, we try to get the best of both, so we sign a band that we like artistically what they do and we think that we can sell record and make money*

A public sector support manager highlights that the difficulty in dealing with creative practitioners is that *“in the creative industry the person is the business and the business is the person”*, while elsewhere these can remain two separate entities. This is also expressed by many other practitioners, who identify two irreconcilable halves within their practice. As a freelance poet suggests:

*In the last three months I have not had a lot of creative space [...] I had a big job, so I was too busy but I am aware that I can go back on track, it means I earned enough money in three months for six months so now I can concentrate on my creative work, sometimes it is difficult to turn down work and maintain creative impetus.*

This is also addressed with a division of roles within the creative industry itself. Often ‘t-shirts and suits’ (Parrish 2005) need to be combined to overcome the limits of too much creativity damaging a company growth, as the director of a design company explains

*I was a business adviser, I had no design background and the couple of designers who set the business up said they were a group of designers without any business strength, the business was not developing in the way it should [...] so I decide to join the business, to place a strategic programme to grow.*

This problematic balance clashes with the rhetoric presented by policy documents where CCIs are portrayed as a successful economically driven sector. Ultimately, as the director of a local magazine suggests, *“the business is a vehicle”* not the goal itself:

*[It] allows us to do other things, so we can do things like organising exhibition, putting up music events; it is the vehicle that will let us play with other stuff.*

This is linked to an ethical dimension in the cultural work (Banks 2006): the choices are being not only economically driven but also – and often firstly - artistically driven. This will be explored further in the next paragraph.

### ***The moral economy within the creative economy agenda***

One of the key element that has been ignored in the policy-led CCIs agenda is the moral (Banks 2006) and ethical dimension that practitioners pursue with their creative work.

This problematic dimension has not only been overseen but also openly ignored in the economic development literature. Within a research document on the economic impact of the

moving image sector in the North East, it is soon (page six) identified that “90% of the SMEs surveyed have no commercial goals [...] While the key individuals in each firm are often highly entrepreneurial, most currently choose to apply that talent to building cultural or social capital rather than making money” (Northern Film & Media, 2004). While this finding could contradict the overall understanding of economic value of the sector, nevertheless, the rest of the report pursue the collection of data on the commercial/economic development of the sector, including firms’ size, distribution, age, turnover and development, workforce etc.

This kind of contraction characterises much of the policy-led research taking place in the sector. As a filmmaker suggests:

*If all I wanted to do was just make a living then I probably wouldn't work in the cultural sector because it's so tough to try and break even*

This is one of the core dimensions that Caves (2000) includes in the main features of CCIs: people in this sector care about their work independently of the economic rewards that it can offer. The honesty towards an ethical/cultural imperative emerges in many interviews, across different types and sizes of practices and companies. The director of a very innovative design company explains:

*Some months you think “I really need to make lots of money this month to pay the bills”, the next thing we would make an exhibition and it is going to cost us some money, [...] we do not judge the job only on the money we also judge it on whether we want to do the project, whether there is a creative opportunity there; like this book project, we spent three months and made not money on it, but we worked with an artist to rethink about the concept of a book, it was worth spending time and money on it.*

Similarly, this sole trader glass artist suggests:

*I don't make decisions because it would be a good thing to do to make some money. I make decisions because I want to make something and if it costs me more to make then I don't make much profit on that... I will do it but obviously you can't just keep doing that.*

Some people felt that their business side was overpowering the cultural dimension, this was expressed some form of ‘guilt’ or need to get back to culture. As this manager of performing art organisation suggests:

*Right now there's less culture and more business and hopefully we will tip it back the other way again but we're quite a big organisation now and we have to do certain things and compromise on certain things to pay the bills. We don't really do anything that we don't like or we don't believe in, but in terms of being really, really cutting edge, we are not there yet.*

Sustainability remains a strong commitment and compromises are accepted to maintain certain level of business activities. However, compromising specifically on the creative content remains problematic. Ultimately, the creative choices behind a certain product appear to be more valuable than the economic return they could offer. As this publisher explains:

*Our books are driven by the desire to tell a particular story [...] some judgment and observation of a social phenomenon, a theory about the world [...] they also need to meet some notion of the market. But I would not change our books, artistically, I do not think I would change the book, if someone came and said, you can sell 5000 more copies if you made it a different colour or with more words. [...]. I would rather find the 2000 people that like it the way it is.*

### **Driving cultural or economic growth? An open question for cities and regions.**

The findings presented highlight the contradictions existing between an understandings of the CCIs based on their internal dynamics and grassroots thinking and the way policy makers and regional development agencies see the sector as key to economic growth.

On one side, the CCIs remain a sector receiving funding and support from a variety of cultural and economic development agencies. In what respect this support is directed towards isolating and supporting the business side of a creative practice or on the other to support a specific cultural outcome or product, remains a problem. As Garnham (2005) notes the motivation behind this support remains unclear: if the aim is to deliver economic objectives then subsidy does not seem to answer the problem, economic viability should be established by the market. Looking at the different organisations involved in supporting the CCIs the message can also be quite confused. Support comes from the Arts Council, RDAs, various trusts or foundations, however, each of these funders seems to pursue different objectives.

On the other side, it has been underlined how public policy adopts a very narrow perspective on the concept of '*development*', mainly measuring investment, jobs and economic growth. This might alienate the local cultural producers, who do not recognise themselves in this agenda. In particular, the sector clearly identifies other cultural and social objectives in their practices. However, researchers and policy makers still concentrate on measuring economic indicators that do not reflect the way the sector and its practitioners define or measure their own success.

From the present analysis, the contradiction between how CCIs – with their specific objectives and work dynamics – can be part of cities and regional development economic strategies remains an open question.

Measuring cultural participation, fulfilment or engagement is considered meaningful only within certain contexts – mainly public funded arts activities. While measuring GVA and numbers of jobs may be relevant for other economic sectors, there has not been a strong attempt to consider how the CCIs should be measured and what variables may or may not be relevant or meaningful.

While the CCIs definition has tried to break the barriers between 'culture' and the 'economy' by merging very different activities together, the latest attempts to measure the sector have simply imposed the 'economy' perspective on the 'cultural' side of the sector. In fact, the latest investigation commissioned by One North East is focused on the "commercial creative sub-sectors" (One NorthEast 2007). This is nevertheless very close to the original DCMS definition: "the major elements of the commercial creative sector are those businesses which offer opportunities through the commercial exploitation of creative Intellectual Property" (One NorthEast, 2007:1). Surprisingly, not a single person interviewed within this research project, across the different sub-sectors, mentioned or defined is job as dealing with 'exploitation of creative intellectual property'. Therefore, the distance between policy and research relevance still appears problematic.

The agenda in reference to impact and assessment of the creative economy should be reconsidered at the local development level. Some of the practices of creative work test our understanding of the boundaries between personal realisation, lifestyle, social commitment and the economy. A more realistic approach should take in consideration what practitioners

consider important within their work. This will probably be linked to a different definition of local development where export potential and intellectual property might not be as important as pushing cultural boundaries and knowledge sharing.

Taking the stand adopted by Chatterton (2000) on the creative city debate, it seems important that if we accept that the creative economy includes different sectors, we need to be open to accept that successful development might mean very different things across these different sectors.

A debate about what constitutes development from a creative economy perspective should be taking place before we attempt to measure it. This debate need to start from within the sector and holistically include all the actors taking part in the creative economy, not simply the one considered economically relevant.

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