

Cultural Value Project

'Cultural Industries, Work and Values'

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Executive Summary

The propensity in studies of cultural value to focus mainly on the consumption of cultural objects and experiences tends to obscure the cultural work processes which come prior to this moment of evaluation. Yet it is the labour of cultural work that locates both these objects and the individual workers whose skills, ideas and values shape culture's material and immaterial forms. This review examines the values embedded in cultural work in the cultural industries, drawing on interdisciplinary social science literature. It is first proposed that cultural (or 'creative') industries contain a productive tension between an 'economic' and a 'cultural' value, broadly defined. This provides an interstitial and indeterminate context in which both an economic value is realised, in the organized production of cultural goods, and where another value, linked foundationally to culture and politics, is similarly active and mobilised. The tension between the two, expressed in the increasingly economic impulses of the 'creative economy' agenda, set against a nascent sense of culture's relatively autonomous political value, are then explored, mainly through a review of different literatures that explore these values as they interrelate, empirically, in particular cultural work contexts. Adopting an approach that draws mainly on the critical sociologies of realism and pragmatism, values are argued to be plural, relational, as well as concrete and objective, situated and ethically-laden. The (cultural) value of (cultural) work is thereby judged to exceed the price paid for it in the marketplace – since it provides a context and resource for the cultivation of a political sensibility beyond instrumental calculation, one that might invite and demand a more critical orientation to the goods and purposes of cultural work, and perhaps even to work in general.

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1. Introduction

The coming to prominence of the cultural or creative industries¹ has demanded that UK governments and policy-makers establish the ‘valued-added’ by these activities, most notably in terms of their contribution to the ‘creative economy’ but also in terms of their potential for generating various extrinsic social goods or benefits (British Council, 2010; DCMS, 1998, 2008, 2014; Fleming and Erskine, 2011; Higgs et al, 2008; Holden, 2004; Nesta 2013; Work Foundation, 2007).

For some, the value of the sector is now quite clear. The DCMS (2014) recently estimated that the creative industries account for over a million and a half jobs or 5.6% of the total number of UK jobs. Total employment in the sector had grown by 8.6% over the period 2011-12, a staggering twelve times more than the rate for the economy as a whole. The Culture Secretary, Maria Miller, said the statistics showed that the creative industries, ‘consistently punch well above their weight, outperforming all the other main industry sectors, and are a powerhouse within the UK economy’. Furthermore the creative industries

¹ These terms are able to be differentiated (as I will show in this review) but are used here initially to simply identify the existence of various forms of activity that involve the commercial or public-service production of objects, texts, goods and services that are primarily valued for their creative, symbolic or aesthetic qualities.

provide valuable service in so far as they ‘build communities and give individuals a sense of belonging’ (Miller, 2014, no pagination).

But this upbeat evaluation also contains some unresolved issues about the specifically *cultural* value of these industries. Often cultural value is (quite reasonably) assessed in terms of the aesthetic qualities of the specific cultural objects, products or commodities generated, or else through some mooted contribution to more intangible goods as cultural ‘excellence’, ‘inclusivity’ or Miller’s ‘sense of belonging’. But while this kind of evaluation is necessary (and admittedly difficult), it is also perhaps insufficient. For one, it fails to fully account for culture in the more expansive sense that I want to use in this review – which is concerned with the specific cultural value of the *work* and the *politics* involved in cultural industries production.

In fact, within UK debates on cultural value and cultural policy, very little attention has been paid to the politics of cultural work², and the professional cultural industries work process - the primary source of cultural goods and commodities. Less so is the experience of the cultural *worker*³ seriously considered in estimates and evaluations of this industrial sector. This is mainly because cultural work tends to be viewed as a prestigious, positive and inherently rewarding vocation undertaken without much problem or difficulty; to work in the cultural industries is commonly regarded as both fun and a privilege, and therefore unlike ‘real’ work at all (see Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009). But one of the assumptions of this review is that the value of cultural work – what it is worth, what it can contribute to the betterment of our societies – has come to be defined within narrow economic parameters, or else within some quite limited and instrumental understandings of the social.

² ‘Cultural work’ is a general term I use to describe the processes and conditions of labour and production in the contexts of the organized and sectorally-defined ‘cultural’ or ‘creative’ industries. The boundaries of those definitions are of course open to question, and the site or point of entry for labour now strongly contested (e.g. see Böhm and Land, 2012) – nonetheless there remains sufficient integrity in the definition of those industries, and structure of the labour relations that serve them, to feel confident in persisting with the use of this term, and its general meaning, at least for our immediate purposes.

³ Throughout this term is used to refer mainly to what might otherwise be called the ‘artist’, the ‘author’ or the ‘creative’, often judged to be the primary source of the cultural value associated with the sector. This isn’t to idealise one kind of worker, or to disclaim the necessity of undertaking research into ‘craft’, ‘non-creative’ or ‘below the line’ workers in cultural industries, or to ignore their influence on the work process and production of value – rather to take cultural workers as defined here, as the axis point of organized cultural production, and the primary source of the cultural-political critique I wish to attribute to the sector.

The more fundamental premise of this review, therefore, is that there is a distinctive politics of cultural work and that this politics revolves around different and competing articulations of *value*. Through a reading of the interdisciplinary social sciences literature, this review posits that primary workers in the cultural industries – artists, musicians, designers and so on - not only draw from existing repertoires of value, but create different kinds of value, and invest their work with varied purposes and meanings, which then serves to influence the circulation and consumption of cultural symbols, ideas and commodities of value in worlds within and beyond the market.

In expanding on this premise, this review primarily addresses three questions:

- How should we value the cultural industries? (Section 3)
- How should we value the cultural work they contain? (Section 4)
- How can this inform wider debates on cultural value? (Section 5)

So this review is not so much about the cultural value of goods and things, but the cultural value of (cultural) *work*. By identifying what the cultural industries are valuable for, how we might value the work they contain, including how this work is valued by those who undertake it, we might inform wider questions about what cultural value is, and how we might define its composition and character.

The review therefore contributes to the Cultural Value Project in a specific way. It focuses on cultural work, and plural understandings of its value – the range of discrete qualities or characteristics we might attribute to it. By focussing on cultural workers as both reflective individuals and ethically engaged citizens, it identifies the views and sensibilities of such workers as one of the diverse sources of the components of cultural value. It particularly seeks to explore how the value-laden experience brought to bear in the cultural industries workplace has a cultural value, in a specific political sense. Finally, by focussing on the interdisciplinary breadth of (mainly) social science and policy studies of cultural work, the review aims to synthesise diverse sources of evidence for evaluating some of the plural origins and components of cultural value.

2. Value in Context

To value is to ascribe worth to something – to assess its standing or quality in a world of others. It has become customary to think of value in primarily economic or monetary terms. But the cast-iron objectivity this once promised now seems less certain - precipitated by a mooted ‘crisis of value’. This has arisen, allegedly because:

- Traditional measures of value, characteristic of the industrial period, have been challenged by the post-industrial; for example the pluralisation of forms of capital (such as ‘knowledge’, ‘social’, or ‘cultural’ capital) now raises questions for how to most effectively or usefully calculate economic worth;
- An intensified shift to valuing commodities through means other than price – where symbolic, positional or cultural value has become even more significant; and the ‘sign value’, or ‘expressive value’ of (of both material and ‘immaterial’) commodities and their linkages to other commodities can be hard to reliably calculate; the fluidity of value appears to preclude a simple or standard evaluation;
- Transformations in the nature of work have also had a marked effect; flexible, networked production and free and distributed labour in the ‘social factory’ challenge older models based on fixed site labour inputs and the ‘labour theory of value’; increasingly we tend to ask what, actually, *is* work, where does it occur, and what is it really worth?
- The global financial crisis has unseated both the actual and perceived value of a whole range of ostensibly secure institutions, practices and commodities; recession,

insecurity and austerity undermine confidence in economic value, and, as a result, other values seem more relevant again.

Here, then, we see the sense of uncertainty already introduced by structural transformations in the character of post-industrial economy made more tumultuous by the global financial crisis – with some significant loss of faith in economic institutions and ‘our trust in numbers shaken’ (Davies, 2010). Consequently, the security of economic value now appears less than certain, yet, simultaneously, techniques for making it *appear* so continue to proliferate - in a dizzying world of (still evolving, and still highly valorized) financialisation, mediation and measure (Arvidsson and Peitersen, 2013). It is into this context that, perhaps justifiably, a sense of concern about the foundations of value has emerged, in critical inquiry.

Clearly, of course, despite these difficulties, the economy still retains (perhaps an ultimate) primacy in framing our understanding of value. But also questions of value, or rather, *values* – the range of all *other* things that might matter to people, beyond economy⁴ - have returned in the midst of crisis. Of course, a huge range of non-economic values underpin everyday life, and have long provided durable objects of inquiry for the social science and humanities - yet recognition of this necessity now appears more urgent. What *matters*, and why – and how (or whether) we can demonstrate this through some kind of reasoned argument, measure or evaluation – has become a focus for some energised debate (e.g. see Adkins and Lury, 2012; Arvidsson and Peitersen, 2013; Davies 2010; Sayer, 2011; Skeggs 2014; Stark, 2009). While these social science approaches might differ considerably, a common theme of how we might understand, *relationally*, different economic and non-economic values, is perhaps at the heart of this effort. Here, the uncertainty over economic value has perhaps served to amplify the voices of those within (and without) the academy who advocate the necessity of elaborating other means, ends and measures of value, beyond the economic.

⁴ Bev Skeggs, usefully in my view, suggests ‘value is economic, quantifiable and can be measured. It is primarily monetized, but as with education, not always, whereas values are moral, cultural, qualitative and difficult to measure’ (2014, p.6).

One specific focus here has been a resurgence of interest in *cultural* value. The recent crisis has perhaps served to exaggerate two particular facets of this long-established inquiry. Firstly, significant public spending cuts, shrinking private finance and wider ‘austerity politics’ have further intensified challenges to culture’s idealised status as a ‘special’ practice that lies beyond the grip of calculation and extrinsic accountability; like everything else, culture is being called to account, impelled to make sacrifices and urged to pay its way. Secondly, and in turn, a new rearguard action has been launched by culture’s defenders to counter the now accelerated invasion of an extrinsic, instrumental value into the cultural sphere. In financial crisis, cultural value has become a terrain of heightened contestation; a battle intensified as the scarce resources that might enable such value to be realised now appear to be in absolute jeopardy - or at least challenged by appeals from other social realms that might posit a prior and more convincing claim to necessity. Cultural value finds itself in renewed crisis amidst the wider turmoil (e.g. see Alberge, 2014; Belfiore, 2014; Warwick Commission, 2014).

Yet, the wider academic debate on the value or ‘goods’ of culture has always tended to be somewhat ‘output’ or object-focussed, and much less concerned with the wider political, as well as intrinsic or internal, value of *working* in the cultural industries. In fact, the propensity to focus mainly on the qualities of cultural objects, texts, goods and commodities (or how they are consumed), has often served to obscure the cultural work processes which come first, ontologically and temporally. It is cultural work that locates both these objects and the worker-subjects whose own skills, ideas and values shape their material (or immaterial) form. Indeed, the work and the worker are at the very heart of the matter; without workers to produce cultural goods, there is nothing for publics and audiences to actually value. So this review proposes that work in the cultural industries might provide a particularly revealing case for illuminating issues of value, for it is precisely here that questions of economic value (what counts fiscally, financially, or in terms of ‘growth’) and questions of cultural value (or what otherwise matters, ethically, politically beyond an economic calculus) come most clearly into focus. Through outlining how different efforts have been made to value cultural industries and the cultural work that pertains to them, something is perhaps revealed - not

only about work in general - but also about cultural value, more specifically, in the context of its re-evaluation in crisis.

But why might cultural work be so distinctive in this regard? In a recent contribution, communications scholar Matt Stahl (2013) invokes the idea of cultural work as a ‘limit case’, that is, as a special type of labour that, in exaggerated form, now reveals both the positive and negative extremes of work in general. For him, cultural industry work both ‘heightens and denaturalizes’ (2013, p.74) *general* employment struggles over creativity, autonomy and commercial exploitation, because of its tendency to foreground such struggles in its ordinary undertaking. In this sense, cultural work throws into ‘high relief’ (ibid.) features common to *all* work, allowing us to view it as a kind of laboratory where ongoing experiments in workplace organisation, culture and politics help illuminate a range of future possibilities in other contexts. Here, then, we have a sense of cultural work as occupying some exemplary terrain where the constraints, potentials and possibilities of labour are thrown into sharp focus. Like Stahl, I will argue that cultural work appears intrinsically to contain an elevated and productive tension between what I will identify broadly as a ‘cultural’ and an ‘economic’ logic or value – a duality that might in some sense pertain to all kinds of work, but is perhaps most markedly evidenced in the cultural industries. In this tension we might identify not only a political potential for cultural industries, but for work more generally.

Prior to an examination of cultural work specifically, the following section considers how the cultural industries – as the principal contexts for the undertaking of such work – might themselves be valued. By identifying this tension between the discretely ‘cultural’ and ‘economic’ dimensions of the cultural industries, a framework for developing a subsequent understanding of the value of work, and value for the worker, is outlined.

3. Cultural Industries: Two Values, One Relation?

What are the cultural industries⁵ and why do they matter? In simplest form, the cultural industries might be defined as *organized worlds of symbolic production*. More precisely, they exist as forms of cultural, artistic or media work organised around the production of goods primarily valued as symbolic, aesthetic or expressive, rather than simply utilitarian and functional. This includes various publicly and privately-funded institutions and activities⁶ that generate literature, poetry, plays, television shows, films, music, art, ‘high’ fashion and dancing and other widely acknowledged ‘cultural’ or ‘artistic’ texts and objects – yet excludes activities such as (say) science, architecture and engineering which have obvious symbolic content, but are led by more functional purposes. Further, and regardless of specificity, the production of all these cultural goods creates a (potentially) profitable intellectual property that both demands - and tends to ensure - organization around a more or less complex ‘industrial’ model, depending on the activity in question.

This, then, goes some way to answering the ‘what’ question – though doubtless for some, this definition might prove inadequate or displeasing⁷. But I’ll presume to use it as a basis for addressing the second question - why do cultural industries matter? I’ll suggest two main reasons. Firstly, they matter because they provide contexts for human beings, alone or with

⁵ The term ‘cultural industries’ is preferred over ‘creative industries’ on the basis that the former carries deeper historical connections to issues of politics, community and culture that are intrinsic to the activities that comprise such industries, but that are not always foregrounded or attended to in creative industries thinking. The creative industries, as will be argued, represent a more recent policy object and form of discourse and praxis, contiguous with cultural industries thinking, but with some important differences of emphasis; not least a more ‘applied’ and instrumental orientation. To my mind, overall, the creative industries is a subordinate concept, better understood as located within the wider, and richer, notion of the cultural industries.

⁶ Although many have suggested that cultural production has now escaped the confines of the firm, or employment relationship (under the ‘social factory’, or through advanced ‘co-creation’ and ‘prosumption’) most of these cultural goods remain produced within traditionally recognised private and/or publicly-supported firms, organisations and by waged or otherwise remunerated labourers.

⁷ For alternative definitions see Galloway and Dunlop, 2007; Garnham, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2012; o’Connor, 2007; Scott, 2000; Throsby, 2010 – and numerous others; often it seems there as many definitions as definers.

others, to discover, disclose and distribute *meanings* - in all the diversity and complexity that this implies. In this way, cultural industries help make possible politics, and the examination of life⁸. Secondly, they matter because they provide a means of *economizing*, for generating and distributing resources – particularly for those who have a direct interest in processes of production, distribution and consumption. The cultural industries therefore concern us doubly – culturally and economically. Yet this duality begs a further question, how should we appropriately *value* the cultural industries? One way to address this is to consider how the cultural industries have been valued hitherto. Here, three kinds of evaluation seem most significant.

Firstly, the original use of the term ‘culture industry’ was unequivocal, and largely pejorative, reflecting Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s (1944/1992) dismay at the expanding commodification of human creativity. Here, the cultural industries were largely *valueless* – at least in the aesthetico-idealist terms favoured by the Frankfurt School. Adorno argued that through industrial standardization and mediation, all good culture came inevitably to a bad end. What value remained was only that lodged in capital accrued – the tainted profits of vulgarity and destruction. Recently, writers such as Lash and Lury (2005), Scherzinger (2005) and Steinert (2003) have offered differently nuanced takes on this position.

Secondly, the subsequent development of a regime of ‘mass’ media and cultural production has, of course, seen the cultural industry concept gradually re-evaluated in more upbeat terms – not least by those industry actors, national governments and policy makers keen to nurture and reap the economic rewards provided by its component activities. Today, the cultural industries are understood somewhat less as manifestations of a corrupted Enlightenment and rather more as vanguard executants of post-industrial economic growth. Now, re-packaged as the ‘creative industries’, the cultural industries are most commonly regarded as hugely

⁸ This is the most specific definition of the idea of the ‘cultural value’ that I’m proposing as intrinsic to the cultural industries – a capacity for politics and critical engagement with the conditions of life; a concern with social examination, provocation or dialogical inquiry through the means of aesthetic or symbolic production; as will become clear, this is counterposed throughout to an equally intrinsic, though more instrumental, economic value.

valuable contributors to the wider ‘creative economy’ of information, knowledge and symbolic commodities – vital sources of national wealth, as well as social innovation and cohesion (DCMS 2008; IPPR, 2014; Nesta, 2013; UNESCO, 2013).

Yet between these poles, lies a somewhat turbulent history that reveals a third, most vital and enduring value of the cultural industries – at least from the perspective of critical social science and the humanities, and many practitioners and consumers alike. This is the value of cultural industries as contexts for the cultivation of countervailing forms of political, social and cultural expression, association and aesthetic critique. During the 20th century, a gradual shift towards understanding cultural industries as means for producing symbolic and expressive *life* – and not merely commodities – helped moved analysis beyond the petrifying austerity of Frankfurt critical theory, as well as frame the subsequent range of national and popular re-evaluations of the role and value of the commercial media, art and culture of high or late modernity. The re-evaluation of the cultural industries, especially in post-WWII European and USA contexts, was marked (not just) by recognition of their increasingly important value economically, in the midst of developing consumer societies, but also their role in enhancing the polity in liberal democracies, by helping to effect forms of public debate, popular representation and self-expression – and a more radical and challenging cultural politics (see Garnham, 1990; Harney, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Miège, 1979; O’Connor, 2011; Turner 2012).

In essence, then, we have three discrete values for cultural industries – three different, seemingly incommensurable, conceptions of their worth. Cultural industries as essentially valueless, *or* as (largely) economically *or* as (more) culturally valued. These continue to be publicly rehearsed, in ways that solidify their enduring and singular status. But here I want to explore the intersections between them - or rather the latter two - by drawing attention to the durability of an interstitial order of value located between economic rationality and cultural critique.

A Triumph of Economic Value?

In the 1990s, under New Labour, the idea of the creative industries came to prominence, based on more intensively promoting the economic value of cultural production. As Nicholas

Garnham (2005) has argued, the idea was strategically linked to wider, national ambitions to develop post-industrial ‘informational’ or ‘knowledge’ economies based on immaterial commodities and services. In the UK the drive to reap the benefits of cultural production, and (especially) the intellectual properties which pertained to it, demanded a means of classifying and evaluating the kinds of activities likely to generate the commodities identified as crucial to growth. The term ‘creative industries’ thereby emerged, providing an opportunistic frame and somewhat speculative context for manifesting and managing a set of objects that could be harnessed to deliver some demonstrable (new) economic outcomes. Partly, the use of the creative industries was about avoiding accusations of ‘elitism’ and separating out public support for the creative industries from traditional patronage of the arts and (‘high’) culture – this was resolutely not about subsidising ‘market failure’ but encouraging returnable ‘investment’. Indeed, as commercial success emerged as the principal arbiter of value – what sold was what mattered – the market’s apparently liberating tendencies helped push aside other (non-economic) concerns and expressions of democracy, especially those political, mainly social-democratic, aspirations that had pertained to the popular *cultural* industries promoted in the 1980s by left-leaning authorities such as the Greater London Council and some provincial cities in traditional ‘Old’ labour territories (Garnham, 1990; Pratt, 2005).

The consummation of this shift to market now seems apparent in the positive value afforded UK ‘creative economy’ initiatives, where the idea of any innate *political* tension or incommensurability between culture and economy has been more fully effaced. Indeed some of the more recent UK policy discussions and interventions (e.g. Arts Council England, 2014; CBI, 2014; DCMS, 2008, 2014; Nesta, 2013) make little or no mention of the political values of art and culture at all. Such ideas appear to have been absorbed without trace into an apparently harmonious and generalised ‘creative ecology’ (Vaizey, 2011a) that is valued only as the source of a vastly expanded repertoire of ‘innovation’, ‘creative occupations’ (including many lying beyond the creative industries) and ‘creative’ commodities (DCMS, 2014; Higgs et al, 2008; Nesta, 2013; Potts et al, 2008; Vaizey, 2011b⁹). At the same time, the publicly-funded arts and culture are increasingly reminded that they cannot secure their futures on the basis of any radical, idealist or intrinsic arguments, and must work much

⁹ ‘It always surprises me when people consider culture and the creative industries to be separate entities’ – offered Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey, in the foreword to Fleming and Erskine (2011).

harder to demonstrate their economic potential and worth – ideally by fulfilling the Treasury’s Green Book criteria or else-wise adopting the language and tools of economics (O’Brien, 2014, Wallis and McKinney, 2013). Toby Miller outlines the direction of political travel:

‘The neo-liberal bequest of creativity has succeeded the old-school patrimony of culture, because economic transformations have comprehensively challenged the idea of the humanities as removed from industry. Rather than working with the progressive goals of social democracy that uses the state in a leftist march of the institutions, the new development favors neo-liberalism’ (Miller, 2009. p.94)

Culture, therefore, has come to be regarded less the source of an intrinsic value or a social or political critique that might *challenge* the assumptions that have given rise to the creative industries, and rather more a resource for *enhancing* their effective functioning. A current fear is that, under advanced neo-liberalism and the new austerity, there is much more pressure to abandon value-talk that would seek to preserve some sense of relative autonomy of the cultural and the scope of its worth beyond the commercial.

This apparent economism has had explicit consequences for how cultural *work* has been valued. Indeed, any examination of policy literatures over fifteen years would reveal that the value of work in the sector has mainly been conceived in the terms of estimates of the numbers of jobs, revenues and exports generated – an important set of statistics that have proved influential, without ever fully convincing that they represent robust and reliable measures of the activities they purport to capture (Schlesinger, 2009). But this instrumental turn intensified when policy began to present the *experience* of work in the cultural industry sector as a harmonious conjunction of economic priority and the innate desire of workers to act - not as complex subjects - but as singular and individually-motivated ‘creatives’¹⁰.

¹⁰ Influential here was Richard Florida’s (2002) pervasive notion of the ‘creative class’ which (though actually encompassing a wide variety of workers) was amongst the first to identify and avow the benefits of the kind of work that appeared to signal the shift towards an economy marked by free, unalienated labour and the unfettered realisation of creative talent. In his analysis, cultural and economic values, rather than co-existing in an unruly or uncertain tension, always appear to seamlessly combine in a harmonious fusion of productive creativity. For Florida, the coming of the creative economy marked the happy resolution of some durable historical antagonisms: ‘...the tone of the Creative Economy was set. Bohemian values met the Protestant work ethic head-

Compared with the kind of vision of the cultural worker associated with the post-war cultural industries (and the 1980s GLC- and other ‘old’ Labour left-wing city councils), the new creative worker has been attributed a more individualistic, even autarkic, identity that happened to conveniently mirror the entrepreneurial spirit affirmatively valued by the economic planners and managers of the new creative economy.

In appearing to embrace more individualised modes of work, the cultural worker has come to be understood as an avant-garde economic subject - a harbinger or a blueprint. The idea that work is a calling and a form of self-sacrifice is deeply-embedded in the cultural industries, and has diffused to other sectors. The compulsion is to find one’s ‘talent’, pursue a ‘passion’ and then do whatever it takes to be a ‘success’ or ‘make it’ in some narrow and circumscribed terms, is arguably now common to all work. In a winner-takes-all economy, cultural work has itself now become what Andrew Ross calls ‘an amateur talent show, with jackpot stakes for a few winners and hard-luck schwag for everyone else’ (2013, p.178). Philip Schlesinger further notes that the cost of the shift towards venerating creative ‘talent’ is to diminish the idea that cultural work occurs in a socially-embedded set of *occupations*, shaped by market relations and forces that operate beyond the scope of individual aptitude and desire:

‘While ‘occupation’ is a relatively neutral, official descriptor of a type of work, in popular culture ‘talent’ is currently highly associated with wannabe celebrity. In *The X Factor* or *Britain’s Got Talent* context, it is deeply connected to being manufactured, ‘discovered’ and displayed for audience appraisal, thumbs up or down’ (Schlesinger, 2011, no pagination)

But in this and others kinds of cultural work, questions around labour market composition and dynamics, patterns of participation, inequality or pay and reward structures, progression and drop-out, have tended to be under-discussed, and much less seriously evaluated or adjusted in the light of any particular policy objectives. Inequality, the corrosiveness of a

on, and the two did more than survive the collision. They morphed into a new work ethic – the creative ethos – steeped in the cultivation of creativity’ (Florida, 2002, p.207)

relentless emphasis on ‘talent’ and the pathology of individualized modes of work have been consistently highlighted by critical scholars (Adkins, 1999; Ashton and Noonan, 2013; Bill, 2012; Brouillette, 2013; Cohen, 2012; Forkert, 2013; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie 1998, 2002, 2011; Oakley, 2011; Randle et al, 2007; Ursell, 2000). So while policy has tended to emphasise the innate virtues of creative work and its potential for contributing to economic growth, and creative self-realisation, much less has the question of the value of the quality of work been addressed, nor its wider ambitions and purposes beyond enhancing economic imperatives¹¹.

As Greg de Peuter has suggested more pointedly, ‘creativity hype’ has exhibited a ‘tendency to ignore or, conversely, sugarcoat the precarious employment situations prevalent in the sectors it champions’ (2011, p. 418). And let us be clear, the cultural sector has occasioned some profoundly difficult employment situations. Contrary to its popular portrayal as inherently rewarding, democratic and liberating, and thus somehow a superior form of work compared to the hard and alienating labour of the ‘old’ pre-creative economy, many observers have argued the creative industries have done little to protect or improve the important values of labour market equality and justice. Banks et al (2013, p.4-5) summarise four areas of difficulty routinely identified in the literature:

- **precariousness**; work that is marked by uncertainty and instability, with clear patterns of over-working and accelerated intensity; jobs in the cultural industries tend also to be short-term, project-based, and be marked by high ‘churn’ or turnover (e.g. see Gill and Pratt, 2008; Raunig et al, 2011; Ross, 2003)
- **inequality**; a persistent and expanding over-representation of the already privileged (white, highly educated, male) at the expense of others is a principal feature of most cultural industry labour markets; the cultural industries tend to perform *worse*, not

¹¹ The issue of the value of cultural work and employment for helping to address certain social problems – such as inclusion and exclusion, community well-being, crime reduction and so on, has, of course been a prominent feature of the policy discourse (see Arts Council England, 2014 for a recent intervention). While ostensibly underpinned by certain democratic and participatory ideals, critics have suggested a tendency towards some rather bland and often contradictory claims about the capacities of individualised creative industries work to engender extrinsic goods and social benefits; with policy nostrums apparently geared towards maintaining certain conservative priorities for a (neoliberal) managing of the social - see Böhm and Land (2009) for an effective critique of this literature.

better than traditional economic sectors in this respect (e.g. see Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Oakley, 2011; Perrons, 2003)

- **informality**; a kind of ‘network sociality’ which, it is argued, attracts but also disadvantages many cultural workers, particularly women and ethnic minorities, and older workers; a kind of ‘clubbable’ and unregulated recruitment policy tends to pervade, at the expense of minorities and the already excluded (see Wittel, 2002; also McRobbie, 2002)
- **extensification**; the accelerated movement of cultural work beyond the workplace and into the previously separate or protected territories of personal and intimate life; the effacement of work and non-work; the ‘always on’ affordances of technology and management now preclude genuine autonomy or independence from work’s demands (Gill, 2007, 2014; Gregg, 2011, Turkle, 2011).

It is not just academics and activists that have highlighted these problems. Now, many professional and public-sector bodies, industry institutions and members of policy-making communities are beginning to identify that the price of the economic expansion of cultural work is a compromise of other values – values of decent, secure and well-remunerated work, equality of access and opportunity, and defensible workplace rights and employment standards (Creative and Cultural Skills, 2014; Creative Skillset, 2012; Sutton Trust, 2006).

While the critics continue to raise questions, it is notable that problems in cultural work recently broke into the political mainstream with a high-profile (and still ongoing) public debate about the use of internships. The use of free intern labour, as a standard practice in the cultural and creative industries, has attracted growing criticism, on a number of grounds. Firstly, internships are becoming more widely used in lieu of proper paid employment – with (especially) young people increasingly providing a kind of sustained and renewable source of free labour across a number of industries. Rather than, as originally intended, employers offering nascent workers the benefits of a light and temporary ‘work experience’, one that might aid them in their future careers, many employers are becoming increasingly reliant on using interns as a core and sustained (and essentially cost-free) labour input – thereby

exploiting them. Secondly, given that internships have become standard points of labour market entry, their availability is becoming ever more restricted to those social groups who can afford the luxury of working for free. Thus, opportunities in prestige industries are narrowly dispersed amongst the already privileged classes – the offspring of the already well-off. The opportunities for working class or otherwise disadvantaged groups to obtain these vital footholds in their chosen industry are thereby diminished – further narrowing the social basis of the sector (Malik and Syal, 2011; Perlin, 2011). It should be recognised however, that sustained campaigning by intern collectives and labour organisations¹² – coupled with some support from the mainstream media (perhaps ironic given that professional journalism is one of the most exclusive of occupations) – has seen the ‘intern debate’ attract the interest of various politicians keen to associate themselves with fair practices or reform (e.g. see Blears, 2013; Malik, 2012).

But, in general, the emphasis on economic value of work as a primary good (and the neglect of the problems of cultural work generally) has led to some significant decentring of the value of cultural work, as a source of social or political critique. The affirmation and legitimisation of ‘creative’ employment - as an exemplary case of positive and progressive new work - manifests the prevailing economic priority to divert people into precarious and individualised, but apparently freely-chosen and autonomous lives of labour. When cultural work is valued only economically, and workers regarded only as individualised ‘creative’ input, there is little sense that the any other value or significance of work might be recognised.

This is a depressing scenario for those who would wish to attribute some wider value to cultural work. But there is hope. While the prevailing critical narrative appears to suggest a final victory for economy and empirics over culture and meaning, the reality is more complex. For other critics, such as Graeme Turner (2012) or Justin O’Connor (2011), the potential for cultural (industry) politics remains. What is required is a more measured approach that seeks to unravel how the predominantly commercial values of the creative industries have been entwined with some of the more durable political values of the cultural industries, as O’Connor notes:

¹² For example Interns Anonymous, Carrotworkers’ Collective, Intern Aware.

‘We thus need to approach [the] trajectory in genealogical terms —of elements being brought together and transformed in unpredictable ways rather than as an evolutionary teleology in which ‘the economic’ finally dominates ‘the cultural’ (O’Connor, 2011, p.35)

Certainly, the logic of the market has assumed a greater precedence, and in some quarters the possibilities of meaningful work, critique and cultural politics appear remote; but equally, we should note, in others they have flourished – realised in the now intensified interest in plural forms of cultural production, cooperation and representation, radical critique, interventionist and ‘Occupy’ tactics, heterodox economic practices and the whole gamut of the construction of new modes of singular and common life (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gilbert, 2013; Holmes 2004; Occupy London, 2014; Ray, 2004; Skeggs, 2014). This suggests - less a pre-determined and straightforward displacement of cultural value by the economic - but a more complex and uncertain dialectic. So while the rise of the ‘creative’ industries marks a significant advance for an instrumental, economic value - in the next sub-section I will outline why, in the *cultural* industries, as I still prefer to call them, the value of culture - as politics and critique – must remain an essential component, even in the face of its current degradation.

The Necessity of Cultural Value

To some it might seem banal to note that cultural value lies at the heart of cultural industries. Yet, it is also important to recognise that this is not an incidental facility - but an abiding structural feature. Indeed, while the precise meaning or definition of ‘cultural value’ continues to provoke intense debate, this is of less concern here than acknowledging its pervasive durability as a focus for organizing action and its valuation as an intrinsic good. Firstly, the desire to pursue and maintain some specifically critical, cultural value in cultural (or even ‘creative’) work exists as a foundational organizing principle, widely (if not universally) held by those engaged in the kinds of artistic, creative or aesthetic practices that underpin cultural industry production. Non-capitalist desires, derived from multiple sources, are not just individually held, but are of course institutionally embedded in the various forms

of state and community support for arts and culture, and (less markedly) in commercial endeavours. In such contexts, culture is generally regarded as an intrinsic good with ‘transformative value’, and a kind of ‘meta-good’ (as Russell Keat 2000, p.157 terms it), a good that endows people with the capacity to reflect on the quality and necessity of *other* kinds of goods. In generating symbolic meaning, cultural industries provide a context and resource for evaluating the prevailing order of life. Of course, cultural critique has often proved eminently recuperable – able to be easily absorbed into a commercial logic¹³. And the idea that culture provides an source of ‘autonomous’ critique has been roundly challenged – notably from post-modernists and post-structuralists - but the idea has by no means disappeared, and (as we’ll see) remains valuable, pragmatically, concretely, as an organising principle and social force.

Secondly, and less obviously, recognition and provision for cultural value *also* exists as structural precondition for effectively operating capitalism. This is so because providing cultural workers with relative autonomy (aka ‘cultural freedom’) to fashion demonstrably new goods remains the best guarantee of any future accumulation. As Bill Ryan observed, the cultural industries suspend on a tension between providing cultural workers with cultural and artistic freedom and curtailing and managing that freedom:

‘The historical problem facing capitalists engaged in the production and circulation of cultural commodities has been how to devise a system of employment which enables artists to create genuine original and marketable works of art which are stamped with signs of genius, but which also disciplines the creative process and brings it under the control of the firm, such that management may set the standards, rate and timing of creation and keep labour costs to a minimum’ (Ryan, 1992, p.104)

The principal aim of capitalism is unfettered accumulation – to be guaranteed partly by the scientific management of the workforce. But cultural industries exist in contradiction to this

¹³ For example, Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) argues explicitly that, in the post-1968 era, firms and managers have appropriated those abiding cultural or ‘artistic’ desires for individual freedom, creativity and autonomy once specific to the counterculture. The realm of cultural opposition (the ‘artistic critique’) has now been fully assimilated into post-industrial capitalism which vigorously *promotes* previously suspect cultural values – rule-breaking, dissension, playfulness, subversion - as central to success in the creative or knowledge economy.

managerial imperative. A crucial point here is that the demand from the public for original products - generated by concrete rather than abstract labour - tends to impair the ability of capital to fully depersonalise and standardise creative labour inputs (Ryan, 1992; see also Banks, 2007). Or put another way, the common-sense idea that cultural value is intrinsic to the works of freely-acting, autonomous authors and creators tends to allow (some) cultural workers an unusual degree of workplace freedom. Thus, not only are workers themselves usually motivated by their own cultural concerns¹⁴, usually derived from sources external to capital, capitalism itself must nurture this motivation in order to extract novel commodities sufficient to avoid stasis and diminishing returns from the existing repertoire of goods. Of course, standardization and formatting, not to mention skilful management and marketing, may help capitalists overcome the problem of managing difficult individuals with complex artistic demands and cultural ambitions (Harney, 2010). But, equally, because cultural industry markets and production regimes are known notoriously as difficult to predict and perfect, as Robert Witkin (2000, p. 165) has argued, '[s]ooner or later...the possibilities of invention are exhausted and the culture industry must return to the sources of authentic aesthetic creation that lie beyond the compass of its design initiative', namely the relatively autonomous 'creative' or cultural worker-subject.

It is in this zone of permissibility – between culture and economy, management and freedom – that cultural goods are conceived and made. Thus, I would propose that the cultural industries can never be entirely about a 'pure' or disembodied economic value, and can never be fully divested of their cultural or non-economic components, since they would cease to be recognisable *as* cultural industries, either for workers *or* capitalists.

This does not, of course, *per se*, guarantee any socially progressive outcomes, or negate any less desirable ones. It simply means that cultural industries, by definition, occupy an *indeterminate* space – where abiding desires for cultural value, or a transformative value that challenges the hegemony of political and economic arrangements, can co-exist, combine or clash with a commercially-seated principle. In this respect, this space of possibility has

¹⁴ Again, as a reminder, when I use the term 'cultural' and 'cultural value' in this review it is mostly to refer to a general, productive space of meaning-making, dialogue and politics – a potential for the examination of life; not any *particular* culture, object or aesthetic.

parallels with those counter-hegemonic zones of cultural and political potential that others have identified as inherent to the structures of capitalism – realised, for example, in Raymond Williams’s (1973) idea of the ‘residual and emergent’, Stuart Hall’s (2011) ‘open horizon’ of unfolding counter-hegemony history, or in David Harvey’s (2000) ‘oppositional movements’. While these spaces might always be under threat or in some way compromised (and never truly ‘outside’), the autonomous claims of their inhabitants remain vital as a necessary counter to the more pervasive acceptance of a colonising economic rationality. As Nicholas Brown has argued:

‘If the claim to autonomy is today a minimal political claim, it is not for all that a trivial one. A plausible claim to autonomy is in fact the precondition for any politics at all other than the politics of acquiescence to the dictates of the market’ (2012, no pagination)

Foundationally, as these writers suggest, there is always a generative contradiction at play in culture-economy relations. As Ryan (1992, p.14) has it, ‘[t]he culture industry is explicable not as purely capitalist but only in its combination with art’. This relation (the ‘art-commerce relation’ in Ryan’s terms), regardless of *what* it generates, ought to be recognised as having an intrinsic value – as an indeterminate and somewhat *unruly* context that provides opportunities to shift the focus of cultural industries in any number of different ethical directions, for good or ill.

Here, then, we have two values, dialectically entwined. If this is accepted, the issue becomes less one of lamenting the *absolute* decline of culture, amidst a now totalising economy, but rather evaluating how culture is counter-posed, managed and arrayed in relation to the economic – and often against it - in particular empirical contexts. And while in many cases the actual relationship between cultural and economic value is highly antagonistic, sufficient for one to appear wholly antithetical to the other, at other times the relation appears to be more mutually supporting and harmonious – successfully producing both kinds of value. Yet, most often perhaps, the relation between culture and economy¹⁵ appears to be an inconstant

¹⁵ Others have of course argued against maintaining a culture-economy distinction, partly on the grounds that the economic is in itself cultural, in so far as it is mediated and made in discourse, as much as it is objectively

and emergent one, marked by perpetual tensions and a continually reflexive mode of evaluation of the part of actors and institutions. In short, in cultural industries work, a *plurality* of values are likely to be co-present – and in attempting to understand the relationships of cultural work to cultural value, it is necessary to examine the range and quality of those values that institutions and workers preference and prioritise, or otherwise regard as negligible or inessential.

4. Values at Work

Thus far I've proposed that the distinctiveness of the cultural industries lies in their particular capacity to hold two different, broadly, 'cultural' and 'economic' values in a productive tension. However, much recent policy discourse has been shown to exhibit a tendency to focus only on the more instrumental, economic aspects of this relationship, while ignoring some difficult and entrenched problems of exploitation and inequality, as well as almost entirely disregarding the political dimensions and value of culture. Yet, this section provides some examples, drawn from an interdisciplinary range of studies, of how values of a broadly cultural and political orientation might interleave with economic priority and shape the practices and ambitions of cultural workers. In this field, an economic motive or imperative is usually accepted as given – what is of interest are the additional or complementary values that shape and direct the undertaking of cultural work. This is not meant to be comprehensive, but merely indicative – illustrative of some of the principal writings in this rapidly expanding field of inquiry.

'real' and independent (see for example the exemplary collections by Amin and Thrift, 2004; du Gay and Pryke, 2002). Ideas of the cultural and the economic are merely pragmatic invocations, it is argued, raised to serve local purposes at particular conjunctures. There is a lot to be gained here, not least in an enhanced capacity to obtain a purchase on social construction, and on the complexity and fluidity of social relations. But clearly, my position differs, both for analytical and political reasons – to my mind, the distinction is analytically necessary to separate out orders of value and action that I would maintain have fundamentally contrasting purposes and intentions; namely a dialogical and non-instrumental concern with meaning, contrasted with a more instrumentalist orientation towards provisioning (e.g. see Sayer 1999). Secondly the relatively autonomous realm of 'culture' broadly conceived, is helpful, in so far as it maintains the necessary idea of open space where politics can occur, in contrast to the already established; a plausible terrain where something beyond the current might be conceived or built, however difficult or compromised.

Firstly, however, how should we think *specifically* about the plurality of values, as they relate to people's working lives? As a provisional point of entry, I propose that it might be useful to think of values in three ways. Firstly, I want to suggest that values are *concrete* – that is they pertain to real, objective conditions of existence, as people (variably) understand and evaluate them; secondly, that these values are *situated* – they are located in particular time-space contexts that are both fixed and mutable dimensions – and, thirdly, that values are *ethically-laden*, concerned with questions of how one could and should live well, in relation to others. Three lines of inquiry I have found particularly helpful in reaching this conclusion.

The first is rooted in critical realism. Conventionally, critical social science has been suspicious of values – regarding them as inappropriately ‘normative’; a term which is often used pejoratively to suggest the suspect presence of ideology, partiality or bias, or an oppressive ethnocentrism. In order to be objective, social science should, ideally, be ‘value-free’. But the idea of ‘value-free’ social science is not only impossible, it is, in itself, *cryptonormative*, i.e. it uses a normative position (‘normativity is wrong or bad’) in order to disavow normativity. And by definition, any *critical* social science worthy of the name must itself be normative – it must adopt an orientation of evaluation and judgement in order to be effective as *critique*; that is, to be able to say why some things are better or worse than others. In referring to values, realists are often simply concerned with what I would term ‘concrete matters of worth’ – the ordinary things that matter to people and the reasons and justifications they might give for valuing them. That is, realists are less concerned with ‘value-judgments’, or what are often regarded by other social scientists as mere subjective preferences, and instead on the range of things that matter to people, in an objective sense. This draws most evidently on the work of Andrew Sayer (2011), for whom values are understood as a kind of *reasoning* about events and circumstances – a process that involves both affective and emotional, as well as rational, dimensions - grounded in some sense of what actually matters to the flourishing and well-being of the person involved (there is an acknowledged debt here to Amartya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approaches). Sayer proposes what he terms a kind of ‘plural objectivism’, an approach to value that seeks to identify the everyday, practical worlds in which people can reasonably make claims about the conditions that give

rise to their well-being (or lack of it), but in doing so he neither seeks to impose any *singular* view of value, nor accept that *any* kind of value (or reasoning) is always legitimate:

‘This objectivist conception of well-being does not assume that there is only one good way of living; it is compatible with pluralism, but not with relativism. Pluralism in this context is the view that there are many kinds of well-being, but that not just any way of life constitutes well-being (...) relativism (is) the idea that that what is good is simply relative to one’s point of view’ (2011, p. 135)

Sayer seeks to challenge constructionist social science approaches (where values are regarded merely as ‘conventions’ or ‘norms’, i.e. subjective and arbitrary), poststructuralist thought (values are merely power-laden, linguistic conceits), and postmodernism (there is no stable or objective human value, so don’t bother looking) and holds out the hope that through shared commitment to a more rational and reasoned (but appropriately reflexive) debate, societies can come to some assessment of how people could or should live better in ways that enable them to flourish, and to minimise harm to themselves and others. For Sayer, although there might be no way of identifying an absolute value ‘truth’, there *are* values that might be regarded as more (or less) justified, or premised on some better sense of their truth or falsity, that we might collectively choose to adopt - not just for reasons of their ‘practical adequacy’ - but also, importantly, because of the sense that to do so is both right and just. The value of anti-racism is one good example. Ultimately, for Sayer, values matter empirically because, while not infallible (since people can make an incorrect evaluation) they must be taken seriously as expressing the truth of a situation for the persons involved in making the evaluation. By assuming here the basic tenets of a similarly pluralist approach it is possible to come to some assessment of the range of things that appear to *matter* to cultural workers, objectively, if never universally or infallibly. It also allows us to be critical of values (if necessary), while taking them seriously as meaningful and objective components of people’s worlds of work, rather than just arbitrary social conventions or misguided fallacies.

Secondly, from a more pragmatist perspective, the sociologist David Stark (2009), building on the work of Boltanski and Thevenot (2006), has recently cast the idea of plural values in other, yet equally distinctive, terms. Arguing that economic practices are characterised by

multiple schemes of value – or ‘orders of worth’ – he has shown how even the most apparently commercial or market-oriented organizations and industries are characterised by ‘heterarchical’ orderings of competing evaluative principles, where the pursuit of market interests runs in tandem, and interleaves and intersects with, other interdependent principles of evaluation and worth. It is the ‘productive friction’ (2009, p.18) of different orders of worth (say between the logics that make-up ideas of the ‘free market’, ‘good citizenship’ or ‘creative design’) that result in the vitality of new commodities or ways of producing them. The idea of intersecting ‘orders of worth’ – with, *a priori*, none being automatically assumed to hold precedence – is helpful for drawing attention to the plurality of motives and ends that circulate in economic contexts, including cultural industries. Stark posits not just a sense of plurality, and a legitimate co-existence of values, but a productive *abrasion* between values, and one that appears particularly relevant in cultural industry contexts, marked, as they are, by strongly contrasting and competing cultural and economic (and other) value criteria. Indeed, Stark’s own ethnography of new media start-ups in New York is revealing in the ways in which a complex ‘ecology of value’ ensures a plethora of ‘divergent principles’ (see Stark 2009, p.84) are brought to bear in creative production – which combine in *tension* (echoing Ryan’s notion of the ‘art-commerce relation’) with respect to different interests and intended outcomes. As a pragmatist, Stark is less concerned with playing arbiter to any *particular* values, or (like Sayer) establishing some rational basis for adjudicating between them, and much more with revealing discrete empirical ‘situations’ in which different values might compete and intersect, relationally, according to their own internal logic: but politically, Stark is an advocate of the productive potential of heterarchy unbound:

‘...the response to the problems of heterarchy is not less heterarchy but more – a rivalry of evaluative principles not only within organizations but more broadly in the society (...) a heterarchical politics that openly challenges the market metric of value by articulating alternative principles of the valuable’ (2009, p.210-11)

A third, related, approach draws on the literature on social ‘practices’ – understood in a specific, neo-Aristotelian sense (Arvidsson and Peitersen, 2013; Banks, 2012; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Muirhead, 2004; Sayer 2011; Toynbee, 2013). The benefit of this approach (which is in some sense both objective and pragmatic in its concerns) is to situate value

within an *ethical* context of work and its routine, quotidian undertaking. Most influential here is the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) who uses the term ‘practice’ to describe any kind of skilled, complex and collective activity that possesses its own ‘internal’ goods – a set of standards of excellence, techniques and ethical precepts which are unique to the specific practice in question. What connects people in a practice (in the cultural industry context, let us say journalism, painting, screenwriting or opera) is not simply that they might singularly and competitively pursue or accrue ‘external’ goods (such as profits, or other forms of actual or symbolic ‘capital’), but that they also share some commitment to these internal goods of the practice, which are recognised as distinctive and special, and collectively valued for their own sake, rather than for an exterior purpose. In this respect, practices are not simply (or only) understood as ‘ways of doing things’ (as in their most commonplace definition) nor, as in Pierre Bourdieu’s (1993) assessment, habitual acts ultimately concerned with optimising social advantages, but as shared, ethical endeavours – strongly linked to ideas of how one should live (‘virtuously’ in the Aristotelian tenor of MacIntyre), and, crucially, how one should treat others, in the practice, and beyond. While in order to function, a practice always requires some kinds of external good, such as money, resources or status, it can never be entirely *reducible* to them – since the maintenance of internal goods, goods for their own sake, is part of the defining character of the practice. The health and continuation of any practice relies on achieving an appropriate balance between the pursuit of external and internal goods. Cultural industries offer many examples of this kind of practice, where external rewards are managed in relation to deeply valued internal purposes. As the political theorist Russell Muirhead has it:

‘Internal goods are goods of character that make a claim on our identity and give definition to life – they shape who we are and make us persons of a particular sort (...) they are transformative goods. Practices, and the internal goods they convey, are not merely performed or enacted, but are *lived*’ (Muirhead, 2004, p.156-7, his emphasis).

Practices are not inherently virtuous (think of the journalistic practices brought into question by the Leveson Inquiry). But the idea of practices is useful for illuminating further the plurality of (intrinsic and extrinsic) values and motives that pervade cultural work. It helps us see, once again, how ostensibly discrete values that might relate to an ‘internal’ or ‘external’

object or end, can interrelate dynamically. It also offers a way of thinking productively about how work is valued by cultural workers themselves - not just as a means to making a living or a profit, but as a way of being part of a community of others, adhering to common standards and goals (or not), and developing, qualitatively, a sense of work's social and ethical value – the fullness of its' worth beyond the merely instrumental.

So my claim is that it's important to think of value at work in these (or other) pluralistic terms. My approach, drawing of elements of realism and pragmatic thought, is to try and position value(s) as concrete and objective and related to people's own (fallible) evaluation of the goods of their lives, situated in multiple and often divergent 'orders of worth', and as shaped by the ethical practice of work itself – which I would argue provides a way of thinking through, or bringing more depth to, the broader scheme of culture-economy value relations that I've argued defines the cultural industries. The next sub-section looks at how this scheme might relate to ideas of value embedded in cultural work, as otherwise addressed across the interdisciplinary literature.

Values, culture and politics

It is worth noting first, that some of the more optimistic accounts of value(s) in work tend to focus mainly on the values of personal choice and self-realisation now afforded to workers in progressively media-saturated market societies. Here, writers such as John Hartley (2005), John Howkins (2009), Henry Jenkins (2008) and Mark Deuze (2007) have emphasised the new productive union of technology and desire, knowledge work and hybrid consumer-workers, cleaving together in a world rich with possibility and potential. In a 'converged' world where the boundaries between production and consumption appear more progressively effaced ('prosumption'), cultural workers tend to be regarded as autonomous relays for – yet somehow in more control of - the proliferative stream of symbolic and informational relationships that now power post-industrial production. The predominant values of cultural work here are the values of unfettered making and *self*-making, creating and adapting to democratic worlds of media-rich possibility. As one of Deuze's media workers describes, now, adaptability and a purposeful sense of self-direction are all:

‘Persistence and determination pay off [...] no-one cares what school you went to, it’s really just what you bring to the room [...] in every job you have to pay your dues, mostly to get your name out there and make contacts. It’s all about relationships (...) (Deuze, 2007, p.198)

It is in this vein that John Hartley has claimed that ‘[p]eople are making themselves up as they go along [t]hey create their own identities’ (2005, p.111) and the creative industry worker appears at the heart of this, seamlessly and effortlessly making new selves and worlds in a horizontal plain of ‘symbiotic, mutually reinforcing, and recombinant ecologies’ (Deuze, 2007, p.240). There is much that is intuitively appealing in the work, since it is invested with the kinds of positivity that characterises much of the industry and popular rhetoric about the virtues of creative and knowledge work – and likely it does capture the experience of some cultural workers; particularly those whose concrete situations allow them to take advantage of opportunities that the market affords. But it is not a general condition of labour, or of value.

Indeed, the kind of ‘ecology’ envisaged by Deuze is quite different to the ‘ecology’ identified by Stark. While Stark emphasises that commercial opportunities might allow for institutional growth, and enhanced personal choice, in more fluid social and market contexts, he equally notes the persistence and significance of other values, ones that might make vital contributions to economic growth, but might equally seek to challenge that priority. In cultural industries the ‘logic’ of good design, or care, or citizenship would, in Stark’s terms, be typical elements in the heterarchy of values and symptomatic of the kinds of ‘organized dissonance’ that now characterises the new economy. Stark’s is therefore a (more convincing) ‘deep’ and diverse ecology of struggle, competition, accommodation, advance and retreat - where species other than the free creative, flourishing under benign and open conditions of convergence¹⁶, might exist, and might matter.

In this vein, others see the relationship between the economic and cultural aspects of value as an equally complex battle, a ‘striving for coherence’ (Taylor and Littleton, 2008. p.289; also 2012) in a world shaped by social relations that can inhibit, as much as enable, say, an ethical

¹⁶In contrast with John Howkins (2009, p.3) who argues that ‘creative ecologies allow everybody to have a go’

commitment to a cultural industry practice. In their work on nascent arts professionals, Stephanie Taylor and Karen Littleton examine in great depth the different aspects of ‘identity work’ invested in by these young cultural workers, which serves to reveal:

‘the multiple possibilities and also the conflicts and constraints involved in a speaker’s identity work (...) the meanings which prevail in the wider contexts of a speaker’s life’ (2008, p.279)

These included a set of ‘repertoires’ that people perform in talk and action, that deal with the complexities of pursuing both artistic and commercial value, as well as senses of value and worth that were about some of the other situated affordances of work. That is, the value of work is considered in terms of a set of relational obligations and entitlements to self, family and meaningful others, and lives beyond, as well as being shaped by (particularly) classed and gendered social structures and roles. What work is worth, they surmise, must take these issues (aka ‘orders of worth’) into full account. Work here is therefore regarded as *social*, in every sense of the word. This is ambivalent, since, as we have seen, while work often has a positive social value, many writers have drawn attention to how this value is compromised strongly when exploitation and inequalities pertain, particularly so for women and minority groups. Taylor and Littleton’s work draws attention to this and there are perhaps further important links here to a set of researches on ‘work-life balance’ and dignity at work (Bolton, 2007; Sayer, 2008) – which similarly reveal the plurality of non-economic values that pervade work, while noting their vulnerability to the instrumental imperative. This is an important debate about the overall quality and character of work - its full range of values – that is almost entirely absent from recent cultural policy and creative industries literature.

Other academic research has similarly focussed on the complexities of building value – in the shape of a decent and meaningful career - under conditions of contradiction. The work of David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker (2011) is exemplary here, and also shows some strong connections with the kind of plural objectivism argued for by Sayer – a commitment to analysing concrete empirical conditions, rationally reforming work *generally* for the greater good, yet tempered with recognition of some complex difficulties, contingencies and differences that might inhibit such a possibility. In their studies of journalists, television and

music industry workers, they argue (as I have) that culture and economy operate as distinct but interwoven dynamics that produce a series of ambivalences, tensions and conditions of possibility. In their search to specify the conditions for ‘good work’, they offer a rich theoretical and empirical account that identifies many instances where workers strive to undertake meaningful work that fulfils in a number of measures, while simultaneously being shaped and constrained by powerful and disaggregating social forces. Here, for example, one musician (‘Eli’) talking about his music, captures some of the nuances involved:

I was really happy with it. The only thing that bugs me is when you talk about politics, some people, mainly reviewers, scoff at it (...) like music should be purely superficial bullshit, and have no business aspiring to more than that’ (2011, p.195)

Such a politics is fundamental to the cultural industries, and, as I’ve suggested, often linked to ideas about work as a ‘practice’. So in Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s study, when ‘Matthew’ an art director, argues that: ‘You’ve got to design something which is successful, but you can still be good within your design’ or the camera operator ‘Nigel’ avers that ‘when your peers appreciate you (...) you get a slightly better quality of work as well’ (2011, p. 213-18) we are given a sense of the ways in which the internal goods of doing a job well, in a community of others, might matter as much as any economic priority. But viewing cultural work as a practice can lead beyond the immediate confines of the workplace, since it is precisely those desires to uphold the internal goods of a practice – to work and to live well – that can inform labour struggles of a wider constituency, realised not just, for example, in disputes about pay or terms of employment, but also about the appropriate respect for quality and for internal standards of work (e.g. see Saundry et al, 2007; Sengupta et al 2009).

The cultural industries literature also reveals how the intrinsic values of work become manifest in the material goods that are produced. One example comes in the form of the products of materially-embedded ‘craft’ labour. A number of observers have identified the resurgence of a craft labour politics, in the context of (re)traditionalized kind of cultural work marked by veneration of hand-making or other forms of artisanal, small-scale, local production (Hughes, 2013; Luckman, 2012; Sennett, 2007). Here the ‘workshop’ production of cultural goods marked by the signature hand of the maker is judged as something of a

bulwark against, and refuge from, the demands of capital for standardised, mass-produced goods and a uniform mode of industrial production. Seeking to reject the more conservative connotations of the unchanging craft and guild, and embracing the more left-leaning humanism associated with craft politics, Susan Luckman (2012), for example, argues that the tradition of capitalist critique in craft work has much to commend it in a contemporary workplace marked by tendencies towards corporate agglomeration and the disembedding of cultural production. This is realised in the accounts of her research participants, many of whom see in craft an intrinsic political value:

‘I think people feel a bit as though they’ve got no identity, and buying handmade products kind of helps I think with a sense of who you are. The more you buy into the mass market, the more you become part of it, and I do feel individualism is what people are looking for within themselves and around them’ (ceramic craftworker, cited in Luckman, 2012, p.162).

Of course, it is important to note that the renaissance of the ‘local’, ‘organic’ and the ‘handmade’, conjoined to ideals of artisanship, is itself a commercial field, in so far as the goods that enter the market primarily obtain their value as a consequence of their apparent denial of a conventional commodity status. As Christina Hughes has noted, by producing ‘authentic’ goods, stamped by the impress of a maker’s personality, craft workers attempt to carve out some ethical position within the edifice of consumer capitalism. However, Hughes also notes that it is in their ‘very antinomy to the market’ (2013, p.8) that craft designer-makers present policy-makers and capitalists with a valuable field of difference, ripe for commercial potential (here, another take on Ryan’s art-commerce relation). Yet, in the rejection of the kinds of standardised, corporate production commonly imagined to lack the kind of reflective, humanistic mode that might permit the full realisation of an ethical personality, the pursuit of a craft value also offers ‘a sense of the authentic in an inauthentic world’ (Turney, 2009, p.80).

Indeed, the idea of a more radical craft politics has recently re-emerged, through a coming together of different feminist, environmentalist and political economy critiques under the

umbrella term of ‘craftivism’. Here, through provocative and playful use, craft practices and objects are arraigned politically against the colonising forces of capital:

‘...the practice and discourse of craftivism imply questions of mobility: nomadic knitting while on public transportation; use of mobile technologies to organize and execute yarn-bombing brigades; installation of needlework in public, urban spaces; and the recording and publishing of knit graffiti or knit-ins by mobile devices. (...) As craftivist acts, knitting and crocheting also represent a kind of tactical media, a form of resistance and social struggle’ (Wallace, 2013, no pagination)

If ‘craftivism’ shows the ‘tactical’ values of cultural work in a material, object form, allied to this, but perhaps distinct, are the activities of the mixed communities of artisans, hackers and technology producers whose capacities for innovation, while central to fashioning a new round of capital accumulation¹⁷, are also the source of an oppositional cultural politics attuned to the demands and affordances of the digitally networked era. Here, one of the original and more prominent and original theorists in this field outlines the hacker ethic that underpins such work:

‘To hack is to differ Hackers create the possibility of new things entering the world. Not always great things, or even good things, but new things. In art, in science, in philosophy and culture, in any production of knowledge where data can be gathered, where information can be extracted from it, and where in that information new possibilities for the world produced, there are hackers hacking the new out of the old’ (Wark, 2004, p.3-4; cited in Jordan, 2009)

It is often claimed that the rise of hacking and the proliferative emergence of ‘hackerspaces’ marks a field of value committed to a new politics of the commons, a mode of being political made possible by new technological affordances of digital life. To hack is to take existing materials, and recombine or transform, to uproot a system or an order, and engender a new value. In here, the cultural worker – aka the digital labourer – is imagined as an agent of radical change, alongside others, and much recent social theory has come to view hacking as

¹⁷ See for example Nesta’s, (2014) ‘Digital Makers’ project and The Sunday Times ‘100 Makers for the 21st Century’ (9TH March 2014); a sure sign that some critical energies have already been recuperated.

possessing a particular value for disrupting the established powers; for Tim Jordan however, the value of hacking needs to be evaluated in situated and concrete, as much as abstract terms:

The politics of hacking lies both in the particular, for example in the free information politics of crackers or the property–as–distribution politics of FOSS [Free and Open-Source Software], and in the general, in the identification of everyday determinative affordances as the central process of technological politics (Jordan, 2009, no pagination)

No doubt, cultural workers who value openness, commons production and creative disruption, are drawn to projects that offer the possibility of making new objects, symbols or codes that might carry a wider transformative potential and value. But the cultural work of hacking, or digital production and *making* more widely, in analogue or digital modes, is often strongly invested with the idea of local and particular, as much as general, transformation of society. For example, the rise of many UK hackerspaces has become notable for their embeddedness within (often) urban communities of cultural production (e.g. LondonHack, Manchester Madlab, Potteries Hackspace, Derby Makers and so on) that combine cultural and economic value production, but often with citizenship engagement in disadvantaged communities; the following is typical:

‘On Saturday, the MadLab team are heading over to Longsight¹⁸ Library to host a day of making, coding and creating. Primarily aimed at women and girls, MadLab will be teaming up with Manchester Girl Geeks to showcase a range of fun tech and science-themed activities. Resident DIY biologists Noah Most and Asa Calow will show you how to extract DNA from strawberries, create yeast balloons and make ricotta cheese from milk and lemons! Visitors will also be able to create their own ‘Brushbots’ (mini robots) and take part in workshops from Arduino to Raspberry Pi to making banana pianos’ (Madlab, 2014, <http://madlab.org.uk/>).

¹⁸ An inner city district of Manchester with high levels of social and economic deprivation.

If this seems partly about a benign ‘inclusion’, or a (local) ‘sense of belonging’ as imagined by Maria Miller, it also about a sense increasingly *less* valued – that of culture as a project of open-ended and potentially proliferative engagement with marginal groups, and a kind of harder-edged community and cultural politics. For Maxigas (2012), hacking spaces more avowedly radical in their praxis – such as London’s Hackney Crack House - offer a community space much more aligned with a politics of marginal production, squatting and occupation, a resource for media activism and anti-capitalist critique.

Beyond the glamour of the hack, and the ‘activist ghetto’, the digital is also the terrain of a more mundane politics of cultural work and *care*¹⁹. Helen Kennedy’s (2012) research on ethical production in web design reveals the foundational political assumptions that underpin many routine digital production contexts. Her work is a rich empirical account of how values of open access, overcoming inequality and contributing to a reformulated and more active democracy are grounded *in situ*, in concrete institutions, interventions and projects, populated by workers that regard the construction and maintenance of a decent, ethical practice as foundational, and as important as any broader commercial orientation. Here a developer describes the work of a project designing web content for users with intellectual disabilities:

‘I’m interested in enabling access to content to the broadest possible audience. It is why I love the web – anyone can access, publish and have an opinion on content. It is really important to me that we make content accessible to all (Frances, web developer, in Kennedy, 2012, p.117)

The work of Kennedy’s participants, in terms of the value scheme I’ve proposed, is both deeply concrete and situated, made significant by virtue of its relation and orientation to objective and lived ideas of the social that lay beyond market subjectivity, instrumentality and issues of self-resourcing. Kennedy argues that such work cannot help but be broadly ‘suffused with ethical inflections’ (2012, p.213) when it is (at least partly) geared towards some sense of politics and of social critique or amelioration.

¹⁹ One of the external sources of value that confounds pure capture; as Skeggs notes in relation to her recent projects examining community relations amongst working class women; ‘Caring, selflessness, anti-cruelty, anti-greed, anti-instrumentalism, loyalty, against injustice (...) were all values generated in opposition to the logic of capital’ (2014, p.20)

Yet, for the most radical exponents of immaterial and digital labour, values and ambitions for work extend beyond the immediate, to a more fulsome capitalist critique, and ultimately to an imagined transcendence of work *in toto*. Inspired by Italian *operaismo* and autonomist social movements, writers such as Hardt and Negri (2000, 2009), Lazzarato (1996), Virno (2004) and Berardi (2009) have theorised a world of cultural production now fully immersed in capitalist relations, where the whole gamut of thoughts, ideas, dreams and desires – the worlds of cultural possibility I’ve argued to be intrinsic to the cultural industries – have come to be shackled to an accumulation imperative. Culture, and cultural value, is now subsumed as part of that broad set of human relations – sociability, creativity, divergent thought - that add value to the knowledge commodity (Hardt and Negri 2000, Virno 1994)²⁰. Initially, there seems no value for culture and work in culture other than as a resource for capital, and no obvious position from which to mount a cultural critique. However, the signature reversal of autonomist thought is to argue that that even amidst the apparent total triumph of economic value and power, the possibilities for revolutionary transformation are not extinguished, but energised and enabled. This is deemed so partly because the more capital relies on mediated, networked and communicative forms of co-operation between creative workers, the greater the capacities for resistance are enhanced, since new combinations of knowledge, and associations and affiliations are always emergent amongst a labour power judged to be restlessly intelligent, always capable and ‘never completely controllable’ (Dyer-Witheford, 1999, p.236). But more fundamentally, cultural critique remains possible because of what are regarded as the inherently productive capacities of ‘living labour’. Autonomists claim that the true power of the system lies not with capital, as an all-conquering and abstract force over docile workers, but with labouring subjects themselves who’s imaginations and energies actually precede and pre-suppose the kinds of ceaseless reinvention, appropriation and exploitation that capitalism inherently requires²¹. In the guise of a ‘zombie’, capital is presumed to feed off labour and its ideas and imagination, which it tries to tame, but can

²⁰ For Böhm and Land (2009) the idea of ‘human capital’ formation is linked to wider societal changes where ‘the production of ‘affect’ and reproduction of the social in the image of capital have become central concerns’ (p.77), suggesting that people’s entire personalities, relationships and lives beyond the workplace have become harnessed to a capitalist imperative. Quoting Antonio Negri’s injunction that ‘capital is the totality of labour and life’ they identify culture as simply another realm where, not just commodities, but the *social* gets reproduced – in all its current containment and oppressiveness.

²¹ This is what Shukaitis (2009, p.40) wittily describes as ‘playing the Marxist LP backwards’

never fully subordinate, since to do so would quell the fire of its own energies. The autonomist perspective thus sees workers (a capable ‘multitude’) as possessed of a collective ‘surplus’, or a ‘general intellect’ in terms of Marx, that is always excessive, unruly and somehow ahead of capital, which capital attempts to harness, but has the innate potential to transform the social in unforeseen and (potentially) progressive ways. Here then we have an amplified and more intense idea of the kinds of culture-economy relations I’ve hitherto proposed – a more abstract, apocalyptic, yet also utopian, vision of a world transformable by forces beyond the merely economic, derived from an (intrinsically) restless and (ultimately) ungovernable labouring population. Viewed in this light the cultural industries become a site where radical potentials ceaselessly ferment, and new ideas of the social are being always formed. But concrete empirical investigation is not always the strongest feature of autonomist thought, and so I would suggest, once again, that the best of this work actually involves the evaluation of objective situations, where issues of concern are realised in embedded forms of ethical practice. Thus, for example, Stevphen Shukaitis (2009) is unusual in offering a number of illuminating case studies of patterns of work resistance (and, indeed, work refusal) amongst cultural workers, that revolve around the idea of what he terms ‘minor composition’ or ‘productive mutation’ – taking the elements and structures of work and remaking them as new, or working them against the grain, through varied tactics of irreverence, irony, play and subversion. His examples draw widely on precarity activism, worker’s movements, situationism, feminism, even the utopian experimental communism of black jazz music and experiments in ‘outer space’ cinema; and it is this kind of empirical depth that offers more weight to his more general claim that it is in these local assemblies:

‘...of different modulations and intensifications of the shared imaginary of social resistance, through the continual recomposition of the radical imagination, that one finds the movement to abolish the current state of things, in which other forms of social life emerge’ (2009, p.223)

And, finally, to bring things literally back to earth, we should note that cultural work is often valued for its connections to a material geography, of concrete places. The capacity of place to act as source of value is, of course, central to much cultural commodity making (bell and Jayne, 2004; Christopherson, 2007; Neff, 2005; Rantisi, 2004; Oakley, 2009; Scott, 2000) -

think how much more value is invested in goods associated with particular places (Parisian couture, Danish furniture, New York hip-hop etc.) than common-or-garden commodities. Think also of the inexhaustible efforts to create ‘clusters’ and gentrified cultural quarters, and how cultural value is routinely shackled to regeneration initiatives (Evans, 2005; Oakley, 2009). Yet place also provides cultural workers with a source of political value, a form of community that acts as an ethical centre and impetus for action²². To give just one example, in their study of the Amber Collective, a thriving, forty-year project of community and co-operative film production based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, John Vail and Robert Hollands present the work of a group whose:

‘...collective ambitions were free of a calculus of efficiency and profitability but rather were predicated on solidarity, egalitarianism and a representational commitment to working-class culture. Unlike other cultural workers whose creative choices and work environments are primarily shaped by status hierarchies and rigid divisions of labour that grant them little power or autonomy, Amber’s members freely deliberated and participated in the strategies and practices that influenced their work lives’ (2013, p.339)

In their work, participants in the Amber collective demonstrated long-standing, concrete commitments towards serving the local and regional community, and providing a non-metropolitan cultural experience that provided a ‘public service’ outside of the ‘commercial film world’ (ibid.). If an (admittedly, often idealised) public service ethos continues to underpin much of the more visibly state-supported (and some commercial) cultural industries, so too it pervades a vast plethora of other, less visible, local and regional enterprises and experiments in cultural production, that might well attain an economic value, but more prominently foreground the necessity of a geographically-situated, and deeply politicised cultural value (Drake, 2003). It is in this kind of work that Jim Shorthose perhaps had in mind when he argued that

‘...culture is produced and responded to in an alternative, non-consumerist way, as a felt and intrinsic aspect of life, rather than as something supplied by official institutions and

²² Not inevitably of course. Place can of course often provide a focus for reaction in the case of regressive parochialisms and nationalist causes.

markets. These political processes of creativity are often intimately connected to underlying political values, to 'new sensibilities', new forms of cultural solidarity and conviviality' (Shorthose, 2004, p.5)

This sub-section has only scratched the surface of a set of cultural value relations in cultural work, which rely upon, but also sits apart from, a purely 'creative', instrumental or economic value. I would argue cultural industries work is a productive activity that ought to be (once again) more fully valued, not simply as a means to an economic end, or for somehow helping to manage the social, but *politically*, and through a revised calculus that extends the parameters of evaluation to accommodate a broader sense of what such work is actually good for. This good consists not just in resourcing and material sustenance, profit-making and individual 'creative' expression, but in forms of politics, social critique and in explorations of the contours of our common life. I have used this review to argue that cultural industries and cultural work have a particular cultural value that derives from the objective and concrete, situated, and ethical practice of labour and life itself; and as a 'limit case' (in Stahl's terms) perhaps invites us to focus on the values of *all* work and culture, and especially those values that lie beyond the compass of the instrumental and economic.

5. Conclusions

This critical review has reflected on the value and values of cultural work. It has argued that the cultural industries foundationally suspend on a productive tension between an 'economic' and a 'cultural' value, broadly defined. This provides the context in which cultural work – the organized production of cultural goods – takes place, which is itself a complex and value-laden process.

Increasingly, however, the economic imperative that underpins the cultural industries is becoming more pronounced, and now - under an advanced 'creative economy' logic –

appears to threaten or diminish the cultural and political values that are inherent to cultural work. The kind of economic thinking that tends to seek ever more efficient means of managing ‘creatives’ and creative production, now does so in ways that increasingly undermine cultural workers’ material conditions of existence, and their meaningful lives and ambitions – by advancing work’s precarity, inequality, informality and extensification. Yet, by necessity, the cultural industries must continue to provide an indeterminate context for culture as politics - for explorations of other worlds beyond the established and known – since this is not only the animated desire of the capable worker, it is also the best guarantee of future accumulation.

It is therefore this tension between two impulses – between the cultural and economic - that is played out in the context of cultural work; which is not meant to imply any benign harmony of the spheres, but rather a need for academic attentiveness to the concrete and objective conditions under which people now work in culture, and the ways in which the ‘art-commerce relation’ tends to oscillate in favour of some interests over others. As a broad context for the production of this duality of cultural and economic value, and despite all its troubles, the cultural industries workplace has actually been shown to be a site of some value plurality, heterogeneity and diversity. All of this now suggests some insights that might inform the broader explorations of the Cultural Value Project.

The key concluding points of this review are therefore:

- The general focus on cultural value in terms of objects and commodities, symbols and intangible assets, remains vital, but lacks a work-focussed or labour perspective. Cultural value partly arises from the contexts of production where ideas of value, quality, character, content and form are significant, and shape the subsequent value generated in circulation and consumption. The cultural industries workplace is therefore a significant source of cultural value, however this value is defined.

- In focussing on the workplace, we see that the values of cultural work are most often made concrete in objects. In most (if not all) cases there is some relationship between the internal work process and the values of the cultural object produced. For example the craft good is valued intrinsically, as a product of the maker's hand, and this is what accretes its external value. Similarly, the music produced authentically by an artist under conditions of relative autonomy has a particular kind of value than the engineered corporate song-hit. The ethical intentions and practices of the net-worker are significant in the final evaluation of the integrity of the software good. The ethical connection between the work and the object are significant in many cases, but tend to be overlooked in cultural value discourse. In this way, we recognise that the cultural value of objects can be related to the conditions and intentions of the labour invested them – and not just their price.
- This labour (still) predominantly takes place in the cultural industries; those organized worlds of symbolic production where two schemes of value broadly pertain – an 'economic' and a 'cultural' value. But the 'crisis of value' has reinforced that values are always relational and intersectional. In the cultural industries the economic values of instrumentality, measure and calculation exist in tension with the cultural values of aesthetics, ethics and politics – this is foundational and cannot easily be effaced or wished away. Instead, focus should be placed on the productive tensions embedded in the 'art-commerce relation' – the challenges and advantages, rather than disadvantages, of value relations and their contradictions.
- In this respect, while establishing economic value for the cultural industries sector continues to (quite legitimately) preoccupy different interests, the pursuit of a robust economic analysis is only one part of the story of value. Neither is promoting the 'creative economy' in its own right – divested of any sense of the necessary tensions between culture and economics - the best way forward. This is because such efforts not only serve to misrepresent the foundational dynamic of the relationships between culture and economy, and narrow the debate about value, they tend also to exfiltrate the political and cultural questions that must necessarily arise in the context of any

cultural industry evaluation. It's been suggested here that work is a primary locus of much of this tension between cultural and economic value.

- In this respect, the work process can be seen as both intrinsically and extrinsically valuable – it makes generates both internal and external goods. It is a concrete and situated practice, that can enable people to live well, and it generates value for others, in the form of commodities and profit. But both these goods need to be considered as part of the overall value of work, and given their own equal value and priority. This is part of a broader necessity to reconsider the quality of work, to interrogate the conditions for both ‘good work’ and ‘just work’ across societies more generally (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Muirhead, 2004).
- Work has the capacity to provide people with material sustenance and fulfilling and meaningful lives; but the question of how to attain this value is almost entirely neglected in creative economy thinking. There is instead a bland and misguided assumption that *any* kind of work is valuable, and that cultural work in particular is inherently good. Evidence has shown repeatedly that this is not the case. A more critical discourse around work in cultural policy making would go some way to beginning to address the consequences of ‘creative economy’ instrumentalism (see for example UNESCO, 2013). And if cultural work is the ‘limit case’ for work as a whole, as has been argued, then any intervention here may have corresponding effects in other sectors and domains of production.
- Cultural work, despite its’ many problems, does remains ethically-rich and value-laden – and continues to nurture diverse sets of interests and a plural politics. But however inherent and vital, this should not be taken for granted, and may well be further compromised by the continued expansion of many of the neo-liberal assumptions now underpinning the ‘creative economy’ project. The wider political value of work in the cultural sector needs to be recognised and appropriately valued –

not least for its potential to challenge many of the assumptions that underpin creative economy thinking.

- The (cultural) value of cultural work is thereby judged to exceed the price paid for it in the marketplace (as waged or otherwise compensated labour), since it provides a vital context and resource for the cultivation of a political sensibility beyond instrumental calculation; one that might invite and demand a more critical orientation to the goods and purposes of cultural work, and perhaps even to work in general.
- Culture as we understand it today, cannot be said to exist outside of the market system which grants it recognition and legitimacy; crucially, however, this does not rule the possibility of some relatively autonomous action which can ameliorate the effects or transform the quality of that system – cultural workers are at the vanguard of that exploration of political possibility, and this has its own value.

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External Links

This project has a webpage hosted here:

<http://www.cresc.ac.uk/events/cultural-workcultural-value>

A symposium was held at The Open University on February 25th 2014:

<http://www.cresc.ac.uk/events/cultural-workcultural-value>

The findings of this project are currently being disseminated, the first publication, based on a section of this report will be:

Banks, M. (forthcoming, 2014) The Value of Cultural Industries in Oakley, K. And O'Connor, J (eds) *The Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries*, Routledge, London.

