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I am a cultural policy expert, whose career spans diverse research, pedagogical and policy engagements in Australia and globally.

My work has always been policy and industry focused. Acting as public intermediary, I have attempted not only to give specific technical policy advice but develop the conceptual underpinnings – the ‘narrative’ – on which this is based. Sometimes one swims with the current, at other times against it, trying to change the ‘Overton window’ of acceptable policy framing. Both provide important public benefit, even if periods of opposition can appear less immediately successful.

I have published 8 books (1 forthcoming), 7 edited volumes, and over 120 papers, chapters and reports. My university career has been a mix of working directly on research projects, setting up and managing research centres, and developing and delivering masters programmes. All of this was done alongside developing close relations with the cultural sector and government policy making.

At Manchester Metropolitan University I led two Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research projects, along with EU-funding programmes, all in the field of cultural/creative industries (CCI) and creative cities. Between 1995-2006 I also led Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC), which at its height, employed 15 researchers on multiple projects. I also ran the MA in European Urban Cultures, a four-university programme focused on urban cultural policy. I was also actively involved in policy development, setting up a number of agencies and institutions in Manchester (such as the Creative Industries Development Service, and the Urbis Museum of the Modern City). Between 2006-8 I was professor at the University of Leeds, UK where I set up a new Masters programme in *Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship*, and began to increase publications. From 2008-2012, after relocating to Australia as research-only Professor at QUT, I had a more rapid publication rate, as well as conducting two ARC Linkage projects. From 2012-18 I worked at Monash University, setting up a Masters programme in CCI, and a research centre *Media, Culture, Economy*. During this period I was involved in two ARC Discovery projects, UNESCO work, and state and federal consultancies. The establishment of the CCI masters and the policy development work held back my book on China, which came out in 2020.

## Phase One (1990-2007):

I am globally recognised as a lead pioneer in the definition of a new field of research, now codified as cultural and creative industries (CCI). I combined work from postmodern sociology (especially that associated with *Theory, Culture and Society*), cultural studies (especially around British popular culture) and urban studies/ cultural geography. Research for Greater Manchester and Manchester City Council (1990-1998) involved the conceptual and statistical work of identifying a new sector, which extended policy concerning arts and urban regeneration into 'commercial culture' and 'popular culture'.

- In dialogue with other academics such as Andy Pratt and policy making bodies such as the Arts Council, I helped create a method for CCI data collection, helping to create a previously statistically invisible sector as a workable object of public policy.
- Applied the concept 'new cultural intermediaries', adapted from Bourdieu, to the transformation of urban milieu via new forms of cultural production and consumption, and to describe a new kind of creative entrepreneurs and micro-companies, along with new career paths and forms of subjectivity, embedded milieu (especially clusters). This found academic and policy audiences, and MIPC, gained a national, then European profile in this area of 'bottom up' creative activity.
- Embedded new urban entrepreneur/ intermediaries and milieus in long-term histories of urban cultures, folding in urban economic geographies concerned with local and regional development. This resulted in a more grounded account of the 'creative city', embedded in the longer-term structures and identities of the city, and focused less on economic development than the creation of a liveable city. My work was foundational to the critical approach to creative cities, which has been developed in numerous articles and public forums, and applied extensively in writings on Manchester and Shanghai.

## Policy

I helped to outline a new policy agenda in creative industries, creative clusters and creative cities, and was recognised as a global leader in this new field, brokering connections with the cultural sector and policy-makers (often in planning and economic development) to connect culture and urban regeneration. My research was successful in inserting 'grassroots' popular culture into the culture-led urban regeneration agenda and re-framing grass-roots popular culture as entrepreneurial small and micro-enterprises, a major contribution to the emerging UK creative industries narrative. This is evidenced by:

- Asked to co-organise the first conference on the 'Night-Time Economy' in Manchester (1994), sponsored by Manchester City Council (MCC)
- Appointed by MCC to a team asked to set-up a 'creative quarter' in Manchester ('Northern Quarter'), on whose management committee I sat for 5 years (1995)
- Commissioned by MCC to lead a team conducting an economic survey and strategic plan for the cultural production Sector (1997), a ground-breaking report which gained attention from the New Labour government elected in the same year.

- Lead advisor for the creation of the UK's first Creative Industries Development Service (CIDS), jointly funded by MCC and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (2001). I was Co-Chair for 5 years.
- Awarded over GBP 1 Million ERDF funding on creative clusters, digital networks and advancing the participation of women in CCI (1995-9)
- Appointed by MCC as lead academic advisor to the new build Urbis-Museum of the Modern City (2000-3)
- Awarded GBP 0.5 Million by the EU TACIS to create a Manchester-Petersburg Creative Exchange partnership (2000-4), resulting in two bilateral city to city trade fairs and the establishment of a creative industries agency, supported by the Leontief Foundation, with a group of key cultural industry partners.
- Hosted major European conference on creative clusters, seen as benchmark for development of creative industries/ creative cities agenda across the EU (1999)
- Co-founded FOCl, a network of local authorities, academics and consultants, a platform for policy learning and sharing, and dialogue with national government on importance of regional development (invited to Downing Street on two occasions) (2001-7)
- Recognised as a leading academic expert on 'creative clusters', advising local governments in Europe, Russia, South Korea, China and Taiwan.
- Invited by MCC to host a delegation from Shanghai in 2003 creative clusters and urban regeneration, their visit a direct inspiration to set up the Shanghai Creative Industries Centre in 2006 (I was invited to its opening).

**Phase Two (2008-2019):** based on my growing reputation, I was appointed capacity building professor in the Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology.

The CCI agenda to whose development I had helped establish, became globalised – and my own research with it. Work outside of UK and Europe (in Russian, Ukraine, the Balkans, China, South Korea) led to a more critical approach, 'provincializing' CCI's claims to global applicability.

- I questioned the transferability of the CCI agenda. My work on China especially (2020 book *Red Creative*) argued the CCI agenda was ill-suited outside 'the west', and that other paths were available, such as the high-investment 'developmental state' approach of South Korea, or the various 'folk arts' approaches in Indonesia, non-metropolitan China and in developing states, such as Vietnam, Mauritius and Samoa (all places I have done work).
- In my UNESCO work I encountered deep-roots scepticism about western-centric development models by Global South Experts. I applied these insights to CCI, establishing myself as a global critic of the CCI or 'creative economy' agenda being led by UNESCO and other international agencies (Discovery project on UNESCO).
- I framed an internal critique of CCI and creative cities agendas, shifting the narrative from modern/ post-modern and industrial/ post-industrial to take in the broad set of political, social and economic transformations launched by 'neoliberalism'. I also made a specific connection between CCI and the re-invention of 'third way' social democracy, in Australia and elsewhere.
- I developed a critique of 1990's Australian cultural policy studies and subsequent 'creative economy' agenda associated with QUT and with NESTA in the UK. Whilst a

champion of grass-roots popular cultural activity outside the subsidised sector, and of their inclusion into a broad 'all of government' policy for cities and communities, CCI increasingly seemed to be the straightforward reduction of culture to 'industry'.

- I kept open the emancipatory moment of 1990s creative industry/ cities, whilst highlighting its absorption into an overly economic framework represented by 'creative economy'. In work with Prof. Mark Banks, I also established myself as theorist of cultural work, now shifted from 'entrepreneurship' to a much more precarious freelance version of that ideal – as exposed in the pandemic.
- I also opened up new ground in tracing the connections between growing inequality, the marginalisation of the less educated, and the implication of the 'creative class' in this process. Articles in this area (e.g. *Griffith Review*) suggested that as well as 'victim' of neoliberalism, the cultural sector has also been complicit in other forms of social marginalisation and exclusion.

My industry impact was threefold.

#### China:

- British Council and the Asia-Europe Foundation funded O'Connor and Prof. Lily Kong (now Provost of Singapore Management University) to host the first academic CCI conference in China, with the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (2008)
- ARC Linkage project in 2009-12 involving a partnership with QUT, Arup, Sydney, a private sector creative cluster in Qingdao (managed by an ex-PhD student) and Shanghai Jiaotong University.
- Numerous invitations to advise cities across China on creative industry clusters, and, in Qingdao, on the city's application for UNESCO creative city status.
- Invited to address inaugural Shanghai Creative Cities network conference, 2018
- Co-Hosted UNESCO sponsored conference in Shanghai on Global Cultural Management involving UNESCO experts from North and South America, Eurasia and Oceania (2019).
- Published *Red Creative: Culture and Modernity in China* (Intellect, 2020)

#### Clusters:

- Invited to become a board member of Renew Australia (2008-2020), a not-for-profit agency which matched creative businesses with vacant properties.
- Led China Linkage research team in a series of industry and policy-facing seminars in Melbourne, on creative spaces (2016)
- Ran design workshops, with Dan Hill, now Director of Melbourne Design School, at Collingwood Yards, a major creative cluster development by Creative Victoria, and led by Marcus Westbury (2018)
- Invited to speak on clusters to national conference of local authorities in Ekaterinburg, Russia 2017.
- Team member consulting to establish a creative cluster in Ballarat (2018)

## Strategic Cultural Policy:

- Appointed as one of 50 global experts under the UNESCO 2005 Convention Expert facility programme, co-financed by the EU and the Swedish government.
- Commissioned by ACOLA for the cultural section to *Our Competitive Advantage* document (2018).
- Commissioned by DFAT to prepare a paper on creative industries and soft power (2018)
- Commissioned by the Department of State Growth, Tasmania to conduct a survey and strategic development of cultural production and producers, launched at a major conference in 2017.
- Strategic CCI development reports for the governments of Mauritius (2012) and Samoa (2016).
- Invited by UNESCO South Korean on how on strategic approaches to the 2005 Convention (2018).
- Organised a conference on Global Cultural Management involving UNESCO experts from North and South America, Eurasia and Oceania, sponsored by Shanghai Jiaotong university and UNESCO, 2019.

**Phase Three (2020-):** Setting a new Agenda. From early 2020 I sought to push the boundaries of the established 'Overton Window' around CCI in a more explicit manner –made more urgent by the Pandemic, which hit the cultural sector particularly hard. Building on this critical work I attempted to construct an alternative to CCI as an organising cultural policy concept.

- Developing work for ACOLA and Tasmania, I reconceptualised culture as part of public policy, alongside other public service sectors – health, education, welfare, infrastructure. This mixed economy would include the whole ecosystem, bringing art, culture, media and creative industries under one rubric.
- Using insights from my historical work China since 1978, I expanded the disciplinary boundaries of cultural policy studies rather than remain internally focused, understanding it in relation to wider political developments.
- I have undertaken a critique of cultural economics and creative economy approaches, drawing on the Foundational Economy and other forms of heterodox economics to help provide a cultural policy discipline with new operating concepts, leading to a commissioned book *Culture is Not an Industry* (MUP)
- In conceptualising a way out from 'culture as industry' I have found productive grounds on which to engage with long standing critiques of culture as elitist, compounding inequalities and exclusion, and complicit with colonialism, and to reposition cultural policy as able to contribute to overcoming the challenges of the present.
- This strategy informed the Reset Collective in 2021, a collective of academics, industry peak bodies, administrators and practitioners. Reset ran series of 8 publicly facing seminars in 2021 included speakers from heterodox economics, social policy, green politics and urban planning. These aimed at providing a new vision for cultural policy both in Australia and at global level. The combination of collaborative research and learning, and local, national and global levels is central to this project.

- Convened, with Arts Industry Council SA, a large conference in November 2021 which was attended by professional cultural sector people, including (then shadow) government speakers— Hon Tony Burke MP, Hon Mark Butler MP – and Greens (Senator Sarah Hanson-Young).
- With Reset members I have published over 30 media articles in Australia and overseas, including The Conversation, The Guardian, Pearls and Irritations, Arts Hub, InDaily, Loudmouth, Tribune Magazine and Griffith Review.
- Reset published a widely disseminated Manifesto and a submission to Australian National Cultural Policy.
- Reset co-organised a three-day conference in November 2023, on Bodies of Work: Art, Culture, Labour.
- I authored a free access working paper which has been published in Dutch and led to a commission for by Manchester University Press (*Culture is Not an Industry*)
- I have been part of the campaign to include a cultural goal in the Sustainable Development Goals, convening online seminars with leading campaigners, the UNESCO Expert Facility, and (face to face), two international seminars in Berlin and Brussels leading up to the UNESCO Mondiacult conference Mexico, late September 2022.
- I was invited as one of three guest speakers to the UN's senior management group meeting in August to discuss 'culture as a global public good'. In September UNESCO adopted the call for a Goal for Culture and the strategic vision of culture as a 'global public good'. I will continue to help define these in the light of a radical remaking of cultural policy in the lead-up to next year's UN *Summit for the Future*.
- My call for a radical remaking of cultural policy led to invitations to address the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture ten-years CCI retrospective conference in September 2022, the South African Cultural Observatory's conference in November 2022, and the United Cities and Local Government conference in Izmir, 2022.
- I have worked closely with UNESCO to insert culture within the new United Nations 'Global Compact for the Future', which underpins their forthcoming September 2024 Summit of the future'.