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Hip hub? Class, race and gender in creative hubs

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Introduction:

Where questions of equality and diversity are concerned, the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) have had a good press. Creative workplaces are often described as open, relaxed and bohemian, while the people who work in them are identified as members of a distinct 'creative class' characterised by lauded qualities and sensibilities such as inclusivity, tolerance, and the assumption that rewards are based on a meritocratic system of hard work (Florida, 2002). These assumed characteristics are often used as the basis for enacting creative industries policy on a national or city level, and work policy and educational institutions alike promote the idea that the cultural sector offers intrinsically satisfying 'good jobs' that are available to all those who possess the right talents and drive (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Morgan & Nelligan, 2018)

In recent years, however, increasing numbers of scholars have pointed to an uncomfortable truth: that these qualities and sensibilities tied so habitually to the creative industries might in fact be inaccurate. Catungal and Leslie (2009:116) argue that far from being sites of inclusivity, the spaces of CCIs are more often than not sites of 'intense segmentation and hierarchy' along race and gender lines. Worse still, Gill (2014) argues, the myth of openness, egalitarianism and diversity, may in fact be part of the very mechanism that maintains significant exclusions and inequalities – moreover, rendering them difficult to identify, let alone discuss or address. A growing body of research points to the CCIs, then, not as exemplary workplaces characterised by diverse workforces, but rather as occupations that are markedly striated by gender, class and racial inequalities- as well as by exclusions related to age and disability.

This chapter builds on this work and the nascent body of research about inequalities in the CCIs focussing specifically on how creative and cultural hubs are situated in relation to class, gender, and race, thereby turning the lens of analysis and inquiry on the hyperlocal spaces of creative economic activity that are the subject of this book. Drawing on interviews, as well as secondary sources, previous work, and participant observation in three hubs in East London, we examine whether creative and cultural hubs contribute to greater diversity in the CCI workforce or whether they could be said to entrench privilege. It is apparent that work in this area is highly limited. Our analysis revolves around two interrelated questions: first, we ask what contextualises and constitutes inequality in creative and cultural hubs; and second does an emphasis upon, if curation is central to 'getting the community right' in these types of spaces contribute to a heightening rather than a diminishing of inequalities, particularly as decision making gets concentrated in the opaque process of 'curation'?

The remainder of the chapter is divided into two broad sections. In the first part we look at the literature about inequalities in the CCI in general. In the second we draw on our research in three

different hubs in East London to reflect on the processes that may contribute to persistent exclusions and inequalities. We conclude with a brief discussion.

Inequality and the creative and cultural industries

Employment in the CCIs is characterised by stark inequalities relating to gender, race, class, age and disability. As Dave O'Brien (2018) has argued 'the arts and cultural sector in the UK is currently not at all representative of the population as a whole'. Indeed, notwithstanding the myths of egalitarianism and bohemianism circulating within the cultural and artistic field, inequalities are often significantly worse than in other more traditional sectors. Numerous studies and reports exist documenting the lack of ethnic and racial diversity in the CCI (Arts Council, 2018; Gray, 2016; Hunt & Ramon, 2015; Smith et al, 2016). The class profile of the CCIs is also markedly skewed towards middle class and upper class workers, with certain occupational groups (e.g. in media and publishing) dominated by people who were privately educated (see Sutton Trust). In their report, 'Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the creative industries' Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor (2018) used the Labour Force Survey to look at the class origins of people working in various arts and CCI fields. They found that only 18% of people working in the arts had a working class background, and in publishing, film and TV this was even worse at only 13%. The same official statistics show that as a whole the working age population is comprised of 35% from groups categorised as working class.

Gender inequalities are also severe, and characterised by multiple different forms. On the one hand there are distinctive patterns of exclusion or underrepresentation- particularly in relation to tech-centred fields but also more generally – for example in terms of whose art is exhibited or which playwrights get their work performed; on the other there are marked patterns of horizontal and vertical segregation within fields or industries – such as within theatre or television or the music industry. In general women are much less likely to be seen in the 'top' creative roles - for example in Hollywood the most recent Celluloid Ceiling report reveals that women made up only 7% of directors, while in the category of writers, producers, executive producers, editors and cinematographers and directors they still only constituted 17%, a drop from the previous year. The gender pay gap is also worse in creative fields than it is in the rest of the economy (see ONS 2017)- a point highlighted in the UK by the recent scandals within the BBC, which showed shocking disparities in the amounts male and female talent earn, echoing earlier revelations about Hollywood. David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya's (2017) survey of Australian artists shows 'the income gap between women and men is wider in the arts than the average gap across all industries' at around 30%. In the US the gender pay gap is reported to be 32 % for freelance creatives (HoneyBook, 2017).

As Maura Edmond and Jasmine McGowan (2017) argue 'these reports make for grim reading, not just because of their conclusions' but also 'because of the dreadful sense déjà vu they provoke'. Gender, race and class inequalities remain troublingly persistent, despite decades of attempts to document and challenge them. Indeed in some cases things seem to be getting worse. The austerity measures put in place to deal with the effects of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 are widely understood as having exacerbated inequality, with women and BAME groups losing their jobs at disproportionate rates. In his speech at the 2014 BAFTA awards broadcaster Lenny Henry argued that over a six year period the number of BAMEs working in the UK TV industry 'declined by 30.9%... The total number of black and Asian people in the industry has fallen by 2000 while the industry as a whole has grown by over 4000. Or to put it another way – for every black and Asian person who lost

their job, more than two white people were employed (Lenny Henry quoted in Khaleeli, 2014). Henry (2017) has recently criticised what he calls 'fake diversity' in which broadcasters and regulators collude in presenting figures which present an unrealistically rosy picture about the numbers or proportion of BAME staff. In his important investigation into race in the cultural industries Anamik Saha (2018: 88) suggests that proliferating diversity initiatives may 'serve an ideological function that sustains the institutional whiteness of the cultural industries' while claiming to do something different. Saha argues that such policies increasingly draw on neoliberal rationalities to make the case for diversity. This is similar, it would seem, to Elisabeth Kelan's (2009) critique of the 'business case' for gender equality. Kelan points to the 'gender fatigue' that may be produced by the repeated mobilisation of gender inequality as 'an issue' requiring attention. We would argue that a further dynamic also occurs where the mass coverage of an issue makes it appear that 'something has been done' or a problem has been resolved, even when little or nothing has changed. On this note, after 18 months of intense and unprecedented coverage of feminist protests, initiatives and actions about women's employment and representation in media, it was sobering read a report from Directors UK as this book was going to press (August, 2018) which showed that the total numbers of TV programmes directed by women had actually declined over the period from 27% to 24% of programmes made.

Why so unequal?

The reasons for these obdurate inequalities are multiple and complex. They must be understood as intersectional, recognising the way in which different locations and identities produce distinctive experiences, shaped by intersections of gender, race and class- as well as by age and disability and sexual orientation. They also vary across places and across different kinds of work – from architecture to web design. Although inequality characterises the entire artistic or creative labour market, it cannot be assumed that it has the same dynamics across all spheres – for example there are major differences between large employers such as the BBC, the organizational forms of Hollywood, and the eco-system of small, temporary, precarious, reputation and network-based enterprises that mostly comprise the tenants or participants of the hubs we studied. All these complexities mean that there is a need to explore the specificities of what Joan Acker calls the 'inequality regimes' in the CCI: 'the inter-related practices, processes, action and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and race inequalities' (2006:443), and it is to this project that our examination of three East London hubs seeks to contribute.

Broadly speaking, a number of different explanations have been posited for the persistence of inequalities with the CCI. Firstly barriers to entry into the CCI for those who come from ethnic minority or working class backgrounds are high. The issues seem to revolve around affordability and the need for what Eikof and Warhurst (2013) describe as 'economic capital' or capital that exists for those who come from more affluent backgrounds. This type of economic capital allows creative workers to weather the storms that come from work and income precarity - both of which are a characteristic part of life for workers in the CCI (Gill and Pratt, 2008), especially at an early stage (Randle et al., 2007; Hope & Figiel xxxx)). Regarding the TV industry Lee (2011) underscores this by stating the fact 'that it is largely an imperative to work for nothing in order to enter the industry [which] means that individuals who come from poorer, working-class backgrounds often just cannot afford to get into the industry' (p: 557). As a knock-on effect, if these familial funds are not available to the creative worker than securing an income from outside the CCI becomes a necessity. This often

takes the form of part time work in the service sector which can 'constitute a double disadvantage, limiting the time available for creative work and curtailing opportunities for networking and sourcing work' (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013 p: 500).

Barriers to entry take other forms as well through what Christopherson calls 'hard-wired' social and economic networks (2008, p.73). In her work on television and film production in the US she argues that these networks foster and reinforce labour segmentation among ethnic groups, as well as gender, thereby restricting access to job opportunities and careers. The case is not dissimilar in the United Kingdom where the TV industry is heavily segmented along racial lines but also along lines of class. Lee (2011) suggests that by focusing on 'cultural capital' uncomfortable questions about the social make-up of the labour market in the British TV industry is brought to the fore. He goes on to suggest that 'there is evidence of closed networks which are nepotistic and exclude outsiders' (p.557), a point developed by Thanki & Jeffreys' (2007) account of 'institutional racism' in the audio visual sector. Compared with other fields of endeavour, work in the CCI is much more likely to be allocated via personal networks and contacts, and less likely to be based on formal qualifications or records of achievement.

This informal contacts culture in which recruitment is routed via personal networks (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2009) produces decisions that are more likely to be based on (classed, gendered and racialized) judgments of worth and value such as 'he's a good bloke' or 'I don't know if she would be able to take tough decisions'. It is in such attributions – often warmly expressed – that discrimination is enacted, reproducing the predominantly white, male and middle class order. Inequalities are generated through homophily – the preference for interaction with others who are similar to oneself- and what Suzanne Franks (in another context) called Hansard's Law – the notion that the clubbier the context the more likely people are to recruit in their own image. Deborah Jones and colleagues (Jones et al, 2015) talk about these areas of practice as 'unmanageable inequalities' because they exist outside of the legislation and management strategies designed to challenge such injustices e.g. Equal Opportunities programmes, diversity policies and anti-discrimination law. Once within organisations the lack of transparent mechanisms for allocating work or achieving promotion can further exacerbate these inequalities.

Another issue is the way that creative roles are understood and represented. For instance, working in 'the media' is often perceived as a middle-class, white pursuit, echoing other research in this area (Holgate and McKay, 2007). This can often act as a hidden sign that others may not be welcome or 'need not apply'. Kelan (2007) found a 'male worker ideal' – but crucially one that was masked through gender neutral language – in the tech companies she studied. Similarly Nixon and Crewe (2004) describe how creative workers in advertising and magazine publishing are subject to, and feel pressure to, conform to the idea of the 'creative worker' through heterosexual and masculine lenses. This translates into 'particular forms of masculinity which shape the broader occupational culture of their jobs' (p: 145) thereby underlining a 'tightly regulated and circumscribed set of gender codes associated with these jobs' (p: 146). The authors also show that 'the flourishing of robustly masculine cultures within agency offices and publishing companies formed a considerable block to women's capacity to succeed in these occupations' (p: 146). Examples include the prevalence of creative workplaces in advertising in which table football, Sky Sports packages, social events on golf courses or in lap-dancing clubs work to exclude women. The 'youthfulness' of an industry where the average creative is 34 (Brodmerkel, in press), and in which those over 40

can be made to feel like 'dead wood', highlights the way in which ageism intersects with gender, race, class and sexuality here.

In relation to gender inequality another particular challenge may be the nexus of issues associated with motherhood. Industry surveys have repeatedly highlighted the challenge of 'balancing' children and work in creative professions. A number of practical issues make this difficult. The long hours cultures and bulimic patterns of working in many creative fields in which intense round-the-clock work is required for a deadline does not fit well with the social organization of childcare. Schools and nurseries do not operate for someone who has to leave for a shoot at 4AM and work until midnight. Mothers also report the intense workplace pressure they are under not to let their children – and sometimes even their pregnancies - 'show' for fear of losing out. Discrimination against all women (including those who are not mothers) seems to be a major issue, as organizations decide that men are 'lower risk' (see Fai et al, 2015). Another significantly gendered issue is sexual harassment – which has come to the fore in recent cases across the entertainment industries and beyond.

Finally, it is worth noting the range of dynamic and changing practices of racism, classism and sexism that may operate within creative fields. Gill's (1993; 2014) research on 'new sexism' builds on discussions of 'new racism' to explore how discriminatory practices are becoming more subtle and agile particularly in the workplace. Her research shows that disclaimers are common, as are warm and positive endorsements of the under-represented group; this represents an evolution and mutation of forms of discrimination in order to take on board progressive ideas, and to anticipate and rebut accusations of bias. In an interesting new study that develops this work, Dave O'Brien (in press) looks at 'inequality talk' among senior men in UK CCIs, showing that recognition of structural barriers to marginalised groups is now much more common than denial of them. Nevertheless through the use of 'gentlemanly tropes' and the idea of their own career 'good luck' this seemingly enlightened or 'woke' approach serves to entrench rather than challenge inequalities.

Another related discursive move is what Sara Ahmed calls 'overing' – in which sexism and racism are safely to consigned to the past – located in the 'bad old days' from which we are assumed to have moved on. 'Progress talk' (Wetherell and Edley, 2001: 450) achieves a similar effect, disavowing the need for action to challenge inequalities, since this is assumed to happen inevitably without struggle. Optimistic assessments that things are 'getting better' may also be examples of what Ahmed terms 'happy talk' about diversity. Taken together, this work on the changing modes of (talk about) discrimination underscores the sheer flexibility and agility of sexism and racism in the current context- making it harder to recognise, and , arguably, harder to challenge. In the next section we turn to the question of how this may play out in the context of cultural hubs.

Methods and sites:

To explore these questions of equality and diversity we conducted research in three different sites in 2017. The sites consisted of a co-working space in Shoreditch and one in South Hackney - and one live/work artists' hub in Fish Island. Open-ended interviews that lasted from 25 minutes to over an hour were conducted with a total of 30 interviewees all of whom have a vested interest in creative and cultural work space. Participant observation through hot desking was also used at both of the co-working spaces once a week for six weeks in order to observe the role of the community manager

as well as the community of tenants. Informal conversations with tenants and others were also used. All three locations can be understood as creative hubs because they have specific characteristics that identify them as such: 'first, they provide both hard and soft services to creative sector SMEs, including micro-businesses [and freelancers]; second, they are aimed specifically at early stage creative SMEs, [freelancers] and micro-businesses; third, they are facilitated by trusted managers who retain a number of important roles such as managers, curators and network builders; and fourth, they have become critical to the existence of the local creative economy because they provide the tools necessary to sustain a business' (Virani and Malem, 2015, p: 22).

Table 1: Research sites

Hub type	**Hub location**	**Sector orientation**	**Funding**	**Interviewees**
Co-working space	Shoreditch	App developers, Fintech, Digital marketing, Health apps	Primarily private funding through growth equity firms, angel investment, super angels	Community manager, Tenants (10), Property developer,
Co-working space	South Hackney	Digital fashion, e -tourism, e - marketing, e – learning, Games development	Mix of private funding, product sales, and public funding such as EU funding, Arts Council Funding and Government funding	Community manager, Tenants (10),
Live / work space	Hackney Wick	Arts and crafts, studio centric work, sculpting, painting, carpentry, paperwork, wood work	Arts Council funding, product sales, other public funding	Hub director, Artists(4), Creative intermediary (2),

While they can all be understood as creative hubs they occupy different parts of the work space spectrum. The two co-working spaces are primarily concerned with innovative start-ups who occupy a number of digital-oriented sub-sectors including: financial technology (fintech), digital marketing, e-fund raising, health app development, e-learning, e-tourism, games development and app development more generally. Interestingly the co-working space in Shoreditch was far more 'techy' than the one in South Hackney. Many of the start-ups in both spaces, often times one or two person organisations, follow a specific type of growth trajectory much observed in the more creative digital industries. This includes seeking investment through angel investors, super angels, and growth equity firms as well as perhaps being involved in accelerator or incubation programmes and / or spaces. Recent literature has argued that this can be understood as an 'innovation field' of creative economic activity (Shiach et al. 2017). Both spaces are located in the London Borough of Hackney

which is at the forefront of this type of economic activity. It is home to Tech City, also known as Silicon Roundabout, embodying the urban economic processes associated with creative class theory and creative city policy making (Florida, 2002) which emphasises the importance for cities to become consumption sites for the creative class.

The artists' hub which is a live / work space is a different type of hub -more of an artist's space. Live / work spaces developed in this area of Fish Island (further east from Shoreditch) in around 2008 and are essentially old warehouses that have been converted into studios as well as places to live; hence the term live / work (Mayor of London, 2014). It includes a number of artists who work in fine arts, arts and crafts, carpentry, sculpting, woodwork, and paper work such as origami. The area also includes a number of co-working spaces however these are again more oriented toward cultural production as opposed to innovation type digital activities. This part of the east end is in the throes of gentrification processes associated with current urban area-based regeneration policy in London. It exemplifies well the 'creative tensions' associated with contemporary place-based renewal and megaproject legacy policy, in this case the London 2012 Olympic Games (see Chapter XX for more on this). These types of spaces belong to a different type of creative economy field, in this case the 'cultural' field (Shiach et al. 2017). This field is far more reliant on public-funding organisations like Arts Council England and are therefore more oriented towards public policy as opposed to the private sector. Thus the infrastructure of investment that exists for the innovation field mentioned earlier does not exist here.

All three hubs make up a spectrum of creative economic activity that spans everything from arts and crafts practitioners to software developers. Importantly, they facilitate and support creative economic work and cultural production. These hubs cater to early stage creative workers and therefore are critical sites for the CCI and for questions of inequality and diversity.

Curating inequality?

By spending time observing and hot desking at both co-working sites it was soon apparent that they were quite similar. The first co-working space, in Shoreditch, was more 'app-centric' whereas the second co-working space located in South Hackney had people working in a mix of sectors of the CCI such as fashion, tourism, and e-marketing. Neither co-working space was explicitly corporate-facing; they were not run by Office Group, Second Home, WeWork, or Regus – the four large office space companies in London. Through participant observation at the co-working space in Shoreditch it became apparent that the occupiers of the space were not diverse. Most of the thirty or so tenants who occupied desks were white and male. Of the people interviewed one was from a mixed-race background, although interestingly it was soon discovered that the company she worked for did not get along with the community and was soon going to be asked to leave the co-working space – she was effectively being 'curated out'. The second co-working space was slightly more diverse with more women than the first one; however most tenants were white. The community managers for both co-working sites were both white.

> *Getting the community right is really important in these spaces and it's important to work with people that are like-minded (Interview with community manager - Shoreditch*).

Much work on co-working has discussed the importance of 'getting the community right' (Merkel, 2015). Often times this narrative is applauded and elevated as recognition of the importance of the nuanced ways in which the social engagement processes prevalent in creative work spaces occur. Also as many of these spaces espouse the importance of collaboration where curating a community as an exercise in brokership between would-be collaborators becomes an important and attractive facet of these spaces – for many spaces it is their USP.

> *I've worked in a lot of places that didn't do the curation and this space definitely did and you can tell, and that's a good thing (Interview with tenant – Shoreditch).*

What is not often discussed is the notion of how easily 'curating a community' can falter and slip into the domain of subtle exclusion along lines of class, race and gender whilst in the pursuit of 'community'. This adds a further twist to the discussion of contacts culture and homophily above. When asked whether these spaces are diverse one tenant answered:

> *Oh yes, this place is really diverse we have people from everywhere: Canada, America, other parts of England, Australia, France, all over (Interview with tenant – Shoreditch).*

There are quite obvious 'versions of diversity' that occur in the curatorial process in many of these spaces and as one can clearly see from the statement above sometimes these versions can indirectly entrench privilege. The tenant quoted above clearly believes that the space where he works represents a diverse work space while some might argue that in actuality his version of diversity represents a rather lukewarm understanding of heterogeneity and hence quite a pronounced one of homogeneity, especially when it comes to Anglosphere countries from the 'developed' world such as many of the ones he listed. Getting the community and the peer-to-peer dynamics right is critically important for many co-working spaces, especially in the innovation field, however they can run the risk of entrenching privilege through the process of curation.

Clearly curation is not an open and unconstrained process. Sometimes the work space provider is in a position where they cannot afford to curate the community due to spiralling rent costs dictated partly by location but primarily by the landlords to whom they are beholden. In this instance, often what happens is that community curation becomes something that is tokenistic and part of the rhetoric of selling these spaces to would-be renters and in many cases large companies and corporates. In actuality what really matters according to one interviewee is 'bums on seats' (Interview with workspace provider). Here the last thing on the work space providers mind is building a community since they are preoccupied with the cost of running the space. This can lead to a cycle of exclusion as desk rental rate increases usually follow, especially in sites close to hotbeds of innovation activity like Tech City in Shoreditch. This then has an additional knock-on effect that reinforces barriers to entry by preserving the unaffordability of the work space. The rental increase essentially blocks access to the space and only large-sized companies and corporations who can afford it begin to move in – the work space provider either accepts this or the space is forced to close its doors. This happened to one of the co-working spaces at the time of this research as the landlord increased rates by 400 percent causing the space to choose to close its doors instead of hiking the rate rental. Interestingly Second Home moved in to that building as work space providers shortly afterwards. In this case corporations usually end up occupying a large number of desks (sometimes over 20 desks in a single space) thereby placing it out of reach of smaller creative businesses and / or freelancers who do not have the economic capital to deal with the increase in

rates. This also disrupts the 'community feel' that is supposed to be a hallmark of co-working. Thus a lack of curation, and a purely market-oriented approach to desk rental, results in exclusion as well – for everyone except those who can afford it who usually work for large creative firms that have proven diversity issues as seen earlier.

Another issue that effects curation is when a space starts to scale; in other words when it starts to grow exponentially.

> *When a collaborative space begins to scale curation gets thrown out of the window because it's too difficult. I mean curation can work with 30 – 60 desks, you can micro manage it; fill it with the right type of occupiers. When it starts to scale it's really difficult to do because you need to fill those seats (Interview with property developer).*

In this instance the work space provider is again primarily concerned with filling the desk space in order to cater for increased demand. This demand usually happens as a result of medium and mostly large-sized companies moving into the space. When curation is dispensed with at this stage the community becomes dictated by the number of large corporate sponsors the space has signed an agreement with. This then has the knock on effect of both reducing access to SMEs, micros and freelancers sometimes allowing businesses with problematic records on equality and diversity full access to these work spaces. The notion of collaboration is then truly dispensed with as each large company moves to protect its intellectual property and reduce collaboration as much as possible.

The final crucial component that affects the curation of community is the role of the community manager in these co-working spaces. As discussed earlier in the chapter there is a risk that community managers recruit 'in their own image', thus reproducing a tendency towards largely white, middle class and often male spaces. Our research also foregrounds some of the challenges hub curators face, and thus how low a priority a diverse tenant group may be:

> *Being a community manager is mainly about practical things like watching noises levels, making sure the communal areas aren't being places where people park themselves. But management is an issue; it's hard to do the things you want to do and do it properly (Interview with community manager – South Hackney*).

The two community managers interviewed also stated that there were issues with how they themselves were being managed due to the costs associated with running these spaces. This usually manifests itself in a precarious existence for community managers, which in turn affects how these spaces are run and how communities within them evolve. While most interviewees view their community managers in a positive light, the managers themselves have to negotiate a position in-between curation and being economically viable. In other words whatever community they end up managing is a community that they may not have had a hand in curating (if curated at all), and this can be problematic leading to tensions within the space. This is especially true when these spaces scale, as mentioned earlier, or when these spaces need to fill their desks in order to make ends meet.

In conclusion, it is important to note that there are many co-working spaces that do not curate their communities instead opting in for the purely market oriented option. This said they can curate in other ways, such as through the provision of speakers and workshops. For many co-working spaces

curation is an important piece of how to make these spaces work. The role of curating communities is intimately tied to issues of inequality in co-working spaces; and this is inextricably connected to how these work spaces attempt to negotiate the urban financial landscape that underpins them.

Gentrification and artistic cultures

Turning to the third site of our research – the artists live-work space - the issue of inequality is different at this end of the creative economy spectrum and manifests itself in two overarching ways; first, it is closely tied to gentrification processes; and second, it is more evident along lines of class.

The creative hub in Fish Island is an artists' hub nested within an artists' cluster in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. According to Pratt (2004) artists began to populate disregarded industrial buildings resulting in artistic/cultural clusters around Shoreditch and Brick Lane in the 1990s. There is also evidence of considerable artistic, and especially musical, activity happening in the Shoreditch area back in the mid-1970s. Through the all too familiar processes of land remediation and rising property values linked to gentrifying processes artists began to move further east resulting in the artist cluster that exists in Fish Island today. According to Rosner (2010 p: 15) 'the first colonizers of Fish Island who broke out of its traditional strategic industrial land use were independent artists, designers and craftsmen looking for cheap and abundant studio space'. Since the first studios date to 1980 (Acme, 2011), it is not unlikely that the area had a healthy number of creative people there until around 2005 when plans for the area were consolidated with Olympic legacy plans (see chapter xx for more on this). Where there is consensus it shows that, the biggest influx of artists happened in and around 2008.

> Because Fish Island is so isolated it allows this community to exist, you don't come here by accident…All the people here are of the same mind-set and interest, a community is quite inevitable (Fish Island Live/Worker since 2009 from Rosner 2010, p. 25)

Fish Island had a lot of attractive qualities for those wanting to move there in 2008. It afforded artists and would be new live / work residents ample space, attractive space, the 'feel good factor', and a guarantee of no complaints from neighbours. This revolved around the existence of abandoned warehouses. These warehouses quickly became creative and cultural hubs in their own right and in the early days had an important community role as well:

> *In 2009, when we originally started, people walked by our space from a lot of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and we would help them with a whole bunch of things. We were a small group then and we helped with all sorts … like knocking down walls or putting up shelves for some of the elderly who lived in the area. There was no hierarchy, all very equal. Then when other people started moving in and driving up the costs then we saw a different type of face move into the area. I would say we were a very diverse area back then but not so much anymore (Interview with Fish Island artist).*

The question of inequality in artistic-oriented hubs is closely linked to the gentrification story in this area. According to the interviews the area started out as quite diverse due to the resident population as well as the artist hub itself but changed over time as a consequence of the changing demographics of Fish Island.

> *We were very participatory with local schools and local community groups at the beginning. We need to reach all aspects of communities anyways because it extends our reach. It is unfortunate for everyone that because you do something, you make it better, and then sadly you drive up the costs and lose that grass roots diversity or genuine diversity. We are by the sheer fact of being here creating our own downfall (Interview with Fish Island Hub Director).*

What is evident through speaking to those who occupy the live / work space in Fish Island is that the level of genuine neighbourhood-scale diversity was negatively affected by their moving into the area; they acknowledge this and also reiterate how this is part of the gentrification story that has engulfed the east end of London since the early 2000s. Another interesting aspect has to do with the hub itself. On the face of it the space is genuinely diverse with a number of different ethnicities working and living in the area and with a large number of women being part of the local ecology of arts and crafts practitioners:

> *We have always tried to be as inclusive as possible, you know we're not elitist in any sense of the word and it was always important that we hold on to that from the beginning when we actually started (Interview with Fish Island Hub Director).*

However, just as we noted above that diversity could be glossed as the participation of people from different countries (mainly Europe, the US and Australia) rather than seen in terms of a deep rooted power relation regarding race and ethnicity, so too there was often a loose understanding of diversity in terms of an everyday cosmopolitanism. The following interviewee offers a critical reflection on this:

> *You know the whole thing about a counter culture moving in to cheap parts of town to do artistic things is a very western thing. So actually it's no surprise that artist's clusters are more cosmopolitan then they are multi-ethnic (Interview with Fish Island Artist).*

Cosmopolitanism in this respect is understood in terms of the history of artists moving into derelict parts of cities in order to take advantage of the rents and the spaces afforded to them. It is steeped in counter cultural history and enacts the story of one large community bound together not by ethnicity or gender but by a communal language and moral understanding. Rather than challenging classed and racialized inequalities, this can quickly turn into an exclusive life style making the spaces themselves inaccessible to outsiders. It is heavily influenced by gatekeepers primarily concerned with keeping the community together. This very much chimes with the example of co-working spaces trying to curate communities although in this particular case it is about how a cosmopolitan identity evolves as a result of what these warehouses and neighbourhoods afford the artists and what they practice. This is essentially what Lave and Wenger (1991) have identified as 'communities of practice' as well as 'communities of interest' thereby making them difficult to break in to. Interestingly the division between cosmopolitanism and multi-ethnicity speaks to the strength of bonds within communities , in other words multi-ethnic communities do not necessarily equate to community cohesion (see Amin 2002), however communities that have shared ideals, such as a shared interest in perpetuating cosmopolitanism, seem to fare better – although this might not always be the case.

> *You know just down the road is Westfield Shopping Centre and you know there are people in there from all over the world, different ethnicities and the face of globalisation, but whether or not that equates to community is a different thing (Interview with Fish Island Artist).*

This leads to another aspect which is that of class; many in Fish Island expressed the view that the issue of inequality there is more about class then it is about gender or ethnicity – especially at the level of the space itself:

> *It is more about class then ethnic diversity in this area. I'm from quite a poor background, never any money and you know it's easier for people from lower classes to recognise traits of people from an upper class because you know they don't really get the value of things which as an extension would be value to communities. A lot of people in the early days came from a background with a harder life, now it's a little different* (Interview with Fish Island Hub Director).

One problem is the lack of accessibility to these spaces for people from working class or lower class backgrounds due to the classed nature and practice of artistic culture.

> *When I was younger going into an art gallery I had no idea what to say…but you know we wanted people to engage with the art. The language can exclude people….less well-off people may and do find these spaces intimidating (Interview with Fish Island Hub Director).*

Thus in this specific creative hub inequality seems to stem from: gentrifying processes that force out existent diverse working class communities and creates an influx of largely white, middle class inhabitants, the perpetuation of inequality by class through what are perceived as intimidating art community spaces.

Conclusion:

In this chapter we have begun an analysis of some of the factors that contribute to inequalities in creative hubs. The analysis presented here is preliminary and by no means exhaustive, however, we suggest that it offers some indications of the complex of issues that contribute to hubs becoming more exclusive spaces than their proponents believe, and in some cases hope. Building on a growing literature on inequalities in the CCI more generally, we have flagged some additional issues relating to gentrification, increasing rents and market forces; the inaccessibility and exclusiveness of artistic culture; and questions of what it means to 'curate' a co-working or live-work space, particularly when curators or managers are often themselves precarious subjects. We have highlighted the way that 'curation' becomes a site of tacit and unaccountable decisions about who belongs in a creative hub, with the risk of heightening inequalities along lines of gender, race and class (and also age and disability). We have also highlighted the tendency for slippage between a loose notion of cosmopolitanism and questions of patterned social, economic and cultural power relations. Clearly the case-studies are specific, and they are focussed in a fast-changing area of a metropolitan city (east London) however our analysis highlights two areas where policy can contribute to reducing inequality in creative and cultural work spaces such as hubs. First there is a need for hub managers

and/or curators of hub communities to *actively promote diversity* if creative hubs are to avoid becoming predominantly white, middle class spaces; and second, there is a need to stem the displacement processes tied to gentrification as it also contributes to a reduction in diversity and an increase in inequality.

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