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Abstract

This paper introduces a novel method for investigating the interfaces between art work and managerial work in the creative industries. The method, which we are calling *dispraxis*, seeks to transcend the traditional divisions between the academic world and the world of practice. This particular *dispraxis* is a structured, iterative dialogue between an academic, a manager, and an artist on the themes identified in the call for papers. This dialogue, which is archived on email, is then analysed and salient themes are identified. In this *dispraxis* the following four themes were elicited. The first theme centred on the explosion of management discourse into the creative industries. This translation is not without difficulty and indeed the *dispraxis* suggests that management discourse may actually be imploding through this translation – a translation too far as it were. The second theme explored the difference between the creative industries and ‘normal’ business and introduced the metaphor of *chelation* to describe the primary need to manage and protect safe spaces for creativity to happen. The third theme was money and this theme explored how art is valued and funded, especially in a postmodern world where the notion of authenticity and Taste have been problematised. The fourth theme discussed how art is routinely identified as the highest expression of human achievement and yet is largely ignored in commercial discourse. One explanation for this is to consider artistic work as part of the *object*.

Answering the Call

This paper was originally presented at the Second Critical Management Conference in the “Management of Creativity and the Creative Industries” stream. That stream’s call for papers asked contributors to focus on the (contested and unruly) interfaces (a) in the Creative Industries, (b) in the Management of Creativity – especially between art work and managerial work, and (c) between analysis and practice, especially in the context of the creative industries. In particular, contributors were exhorted to use creative and hybrid approaches in studying these interfaces. This is important, if not crucial, because these interfaces are socially constructed. In particular, there is a real danger that the favoured epistemologies and methods of academic practice may merely re-inscribe existing categorical distinctions rather

than illuminate or modify them. For instance, the very notion of ‘studying boundaries’ is itself invested with a spectatorial epistemology through which subjects and objects are constituted – such as the analyst and practitioner, which, in turn, creates a prejudice towards some methodologies and excludes others. Moreover, the use of conventional methods means that the analyst – necessarily, if not intentionally – interprets, mediates, translates, and even silences the practitioner’s voice in the discourse about practice. This is the case with positivist, hypothetico-deductive approaches, *and* it is also the case with alternative methodologies, such as ethnography, the case study method, and grounded theory. Put another way, the traditional division between theory and practice, while it may be usefully retained for many purposes, should not be seen as primordial or essential. This is important, not only for reasons of ‘intellectual hygiene,’ but also because the theory-practice division is invested with a particular set of prescribed roles and power asymmetries that may not always be worth perpetuating. It seems especially important in an under-theorised context such as the creative industries, where there is the obvious danger that academics will merely cloak the empirical world with their own favoured theoretical carapace

Introducing *Dispraxis*

This paper introduces and uses a particular methodology, which we are calling *dispraxis* - coined from the words discourse and praxis - that seeks to transcend the traditional divisions between the academic world and the world of practice in a way that other micro approaches do not. Our objective is not to re-present the world of practice, or to analyse it in the conventional sense, but to let the practitioner and academic speak together and to represent their conversation together. Unlike action research, this approach is not focused on a parochial problem; rather, it is a forum wherein the academic and the practitioner can speak and debate, on an equal footing, about the more general issues and themes relating to their interacting worlds. And this, indeed, is the point: because unlike the natural sciences, the ‘double hermeneutic’ of the social world ensures that theory and practice are always and necessarily interpenetrating, reflexively informing, and changing one another. Thus, *dispraxis* is a focused conversation between a practitioner and an academic that, in the end, may reach the point where the appellations ‘practitioner’ and ‘academic’ become redundant, or at least not self-evident.

The particular *dispraxis* that this paper documents is an extended dialogue between an academic, a manager, and an artist. The academic (DK) researches in the fields of management and organisation studies; the manager (COB) is currently general manager of the Ark, a cultural centre for children in Dublin, and has previously held senior marketing

positions in the Irish pharmaceutical sector; and the artist (ML) has worked on both the creative and business sides of multi-media production.

Dispraxis is based on a method originally developed by Brownlie and Desmond (1996). They used metaphors from the game of baseball to describe their approach and we have followed (and extended) their nomenclature. Essentially, dispraxis involves four steps that are repeated iteratively. First, one person asks one of the other two contributors a question, relating to the theme. We call this the *pitch*. The second person then responds to this question (the *bat*). The third person then comments on both the question and response (the *catch*). Finally, the person who originally asked the question makes a comment on the previous bat and catch (the *retrieve*). Together, the pitch, bat, catch and retrieve constitute an *innings*. After the first innings, it becomes the turn of another contributor to make their 'pitch.' The cycle would then continue until the exhaustion, or, in keeping with the baseball metaphor, until nine innings have been completed. The resulting dialogue, which is done via e-mail, is then jointly edited and structured according to the most salient themes that emerged. Our original intention was that the bat, catch and retrieve would each consist of about 300 to 500 words and that they would occur in strict sequence, as would the innings. In practice, it was a bit messier than that.

The method can certainly be criticised and we will discuss some of its limitations towards the end of the paper. Nevertheless, it does involve the Other in a quite unique way. Moreover, maybe the important issue in research is not how it was done, nor what question was addressed, nor what was said, but who said what and who remained silent. If this is the case, then dispraxis certainly offers a potent form of researching not only the creative industries, but also other contexts and social phenomena.

Making the pitch

Since this paper is as much about the method used as the 'findings' we are including as much of the raw 'data' as possible so as to give you an understanding of how dispraxis works in practice. In the following table we list the various questions (pitches) that were asked. (The actual questions did not quite follow the order shown in some cases a number of questions were included in a single pitch).

<u>Pitch 1:</u>	What's different about 'management' and 'managing' in the creative industries, based on your experience? [DK]
<u>Pitch 2:</u>	Do you believe that the different nature of organisations working within the creative industries affects how they're managed, with particular reference to the high concentration of women in management in the Creative Industries? [COB]

- Pitch 3: If a book is a bad book does it matter if it gets burnt? [ML]
- Pitch 4: Now that we're about half-way through the process, what do you think of it (the process, that is) and would you have any suggestions for improving it? [DK]
- Pitch 5: Do you believe that the different nature of organisations working within the creative industries affects how they're managed, with particular reference to (a) the high degree of 'R&D' activity without the real ability to test-market; and (b) the fact that managing in the creative industries is often like serially managing a high number of short-term start-ups (e.g. Each different production / artistic project is finite)? [COB]
- Pitch 6: Maurice, why are you so antagonised by the language I use and would you not agree that those functions - like R&D, marketing, etc. - no matter what you call them, are necessary? I also want to ask why one can't 'manage' a creative process, but that's maybe two questions [COB]

In formulating our questions, the three of us were very much guided by the 'call for papers' and the stream's overall theme. So, for instance, the first pitch more or less abbreviated an underlying question that ran through the call. Clodagh's various pitches followed in this vein by raising what she saw as issues and logics that distinguished the creative industries from other 'normal' industries. However, Maurice's mischievous pitch (pitch 3) sought to steer things in another direction "because," as he says, "I wanted us to talk more about the mindset and less about the management." Since we are continuing this dispraxis, we are still exploring the particular avenue that Maurice is veering us towards.

'Analysis'

Although the purpose of dispraxis is to move us away from the ways of thinking, talking, writing, and doing that are hegemonic in academia, this is at best only marginally achieved. We are, after all, submitting a paper to an academic journal rather than a magazine article and our audience is primarily academics. Thus, we have spoken a good deal about our 'method' and its merits, the 'data' that it produces, and now how we are going to 'analyse' the data. Scare quotes might indicate a degree of scepticism about the vocabulary, but the vocabulary of academic research, with all its positivist heritage, is retained. (Indeed it is arguable that we entrench the technical vocabulary even more when we mark off terms with scare quotes).

This concern with method and the vocabulary of management is not indulgent. Even a cursory examination of the data – the emails that were produced by the dispraxis – shows a considerable amount of what we might call *paradigm confusion*. We may have engaged in the exercise as a joint endeavour, but this barely hides the profound insecurity and unease that

befell each of us as we collided with one another's alien worlds. Here, for instance, is a selection of extracts from the emails:

“having already established that i am without doubt the weakest link let me cement that claim with my first question . . .” [ML]

“I'm wondering why you're asking this question.” [DK]

“God knows this might all seem like complete arse and I apologise if it does but the only way I could respond was by closing my eyes and going for it. It might yet qualify me for a seat at the counter in the Norseman . . .” [ML]

“I'm not sure what language to use at this stage...” [COB]

“I already feel like a sham and a charlatan. can someone explain how I got myself into this?” [ML]

“The one part of Donnacha's answer I did understand is also possibly very relevant...” [ML]

“I think my last bat may have been a strike!” [DK]

“I'd have to say 'try' because both of you probably have better insight into the issues than I have. Anyway, let's proceed in maybe a disjointed manner.” [DK]

“I am so singularly unqualified to answer this question on so many different levels it makes me dizzy.” [ML]

“I don't understand the relevance of the question and I certainly don't understand the complexity of the answer and I'm left wondering if this makes me a sexist or a moron or both.” [ML]

Of course, this confusion is maybe not surprising. It is well-known, for instance, that the cabalistic language of academics makes their writings and conversations practically impenetrable to others. What *is* surprising, however, is that our communal perplexity did not easily map onto an academic-practitioner division. Instead, we each found it difficult to grapple with, never mind understand, the other's worldview and language. Maurice, for instance, seemed to be just as confused by Clodagh's questions and terms as he was about Donncha's answers. In turn, Donncha's indeterminate answers probably demonstrated his unwillingness or inability to engage with the Other – notwithstanding his protestations to the contrary.

Analysis, whether it be in scare quotes or not, is an intensely private activity akin to most other creative activities. It certainly is difficult to see how it could be done by a large team. While we did intend that the analysis of the emails would be a joint activity, this proved not

to be the case due to problems of location (space) and time. Instead, Donncha did the bulk of the analysis. In essence, the analysis consisted of identifying the more important themes that emanated from the emails and then structuring the paper in line with these themes. In the remainder of the paper, we will discuss what we consider the four most important topics that emerged from the dispraxis.

Theme 1: The Exploding/Imploding World of Management

In our introduction to this paper, we suggested that dispraxis might bring us to a point where the appellations ‘practitioner’ and ‘academic’ would become redundant or at least not self-evident. In reality, the practitioner-academic boundary proved to be less of an issue. Instead, the most troublesome boundary was the one around the domain of ‘management’. As Maurice put it at one point, “One major part of the problem is that we still have no definition of what management is, or at least what level of management interests us.” Likewise, Clodagh concurred that “we need to think about the word ‘manage’”.

In some respects, management as a discourse is exploding, colonising one domain after another, and therefore its expansion into the creative industries is predictable, inevitable, and inexorable. Clodagh, for instance, takes “a very traditional definition [of management] incorporating all the relevant functions: vision; financial; human; strategic; resource; marketing/sales; production; organisational etc.” From Clodagh’s point of view – and she worked for many years in the pharmaceutical sector –

management in the creative industries has many common areas with that in industry generally. Of particular importance in managing within the creative sector would be the following areas of management: vision, financial, HR, Production and resource management. While The Ark is unusually strong in these areas - Marketing, strategic management and organisational management often remain neglected and any attention to these areas is regularly reactive to a particular situation or crisis. [COB]

At the same time, she believes that “managing within the creative industries is an extremely complex process by comparison to general industry.” The reason why this is so, according to Clodagh, is because creative industry “at its heart is a high-risk, pure R&D process in the commissioning and designing of work.”

For Clodagh, the language of management seems to enable her to understand her world. She speaks of “functions,” “HR,” “R&D,” “resource management,” “production,” and “start-ups”. And while she recognises the unique attributes of the creative industries, these differences are cast within management’s linguistic architecture: “the producers are ‘artists’”

– and conversely the artists are ‘producers’ – and she speaks about “understanding and valuing the product of the creative industries.” Elsewhere she describes the creative process as follows: “Presuming this R&D process is fertile, the product then has to be taken through a full range of disciplines including production and direction, financing (often programme specific fundraising) and sales and marketing.” [COB]

Maurice, in contrast, is much more sceptical about the discourse of management. For him, “R & D in a creative world is another word for test marketing which is the very death knell of creativity. If they knew what they wanted they’d be looking at it all ready.” (Clodagh subsequently pointed out that Maurice simply misunderstands what R&D means, but this in itself is important.) More fundamentally, he questions the value of marking a boundary between the management and creative activities: “Do you even recognise the management role of the editor on any given project over and above the creative role he/she also plays?” Here, he makes the point forcefully:

Derek ‘Bagwan’ Bell, harpist, composer and Chieftain, has a good line about all of this. As a musician his least favourite part of the process is the start/stop act of recording, ‘Music should flow out and away like a stream, not be truck-chopped up into little bits’, is his mantra. All this talk of areas of management . . . vision, financial, HR (the dreaded Human Resources), production and resource management, marketing etc. etc. to my mind falls neatly into the realm of truck-chopping. The less than appetising view from inside the sausage factory. This is industry terminology but there seems to be a great confusion in the arts in Ireland as to what the ‘industry’ actually is. Is it the act of creation or the various systems that allow and pay for that creation? Is it the art or is it the Arts Council? Is it the film or is it the Film Board?

Of course, this leaves Maurice open to claims that he is, as Donncha put it, “a desperate Romantic”. Donncha’s point is that Maurice’s pining for a pure space for the creative genius is little more than naïve nostalgia. Art – or more precisely the creative process – today is not the same as it was in the early 19th century. As Brian Eno argued in a recent edition of the *Irish Times*, Beethoven’s music is not the same thing as today’s so-called ‘music’, even if both are aural experiences. Eno’s argument is that these two types of ‘music’ are categorically different, just as paintings and film are two different media (although they’re both presented on rectilinear screens). Moreover, one should not be seen as an evolution or ‘natural progression’ of the other. And so it is with all ‘art.’ We can never return to a base point, or lay claim to an essential definition of what ‘art’ is – no more than we can with management – which is why any attempt to reclaim a ‘pure’ notion of ‘art’ is doomed to fail. Two theoretical contributions are worth mentioning here. First, there is Adorno’s ([1944]

1991) insight from 1944: that leisure and ‘art’ have been subjected to the same technologies of rationalisation and representation that had, by then, already transformed production into mass production. From Adorno’s point of view, domination by instrumental reason is a pervasive, subtle and insidious ideology that permeates not only organisational life in the form of ‘management discourse’, but also penetrates into the realms of entertainment, leisure, and art. Second is Donna Haraway’s ([1985] 1991) more recent contribution on cyborgs and gender. Haraway’s argument is that we live in a messy world – a world of cyborgs in her language – and we should abandon attempts to identify, reclaim or fix pure categories of thought, such as ‘woman’, ‘technology’, ‘culture’, ‘self’, ‘nationhood’, ‘natural’, ‘artificial’. And ‘art’. Art is an artifice. Or, to paraphrase Yeats, Romantic Art is dead and gone.

Indeed Yeats himself was briefly discussed in the dispraxis when Donncha pointed out that “Yeats often complained about commerce – ‘fingers in the greasy till’ and all that – and he paraded and celebrated the Romantic image of the creative genius, left alone from the world. But he was a dab hand at self-promotion and working the system to his own designs as well. We might even say he was brilliant at marketing (himself).”

In any event, Maurice knows that his appeal to the rhetoric of Romanticism is, on its own, inadequate:

“You can’t manage a creative process, you might as well dedicate your life to herding mice at a crossroads but what you can do is light the blue touch paper and stand back. Hmm. Dream on, Maurice. Falling to earth off my Utopian high horse I will happily cede that you can manage the environment in which creativity at any level and in any discipline can flourish.” [ML]

Maybe Maurice might have given the following answer to the first pitch: “that’s an interesting question, but I’m not interested in it”. In effect, this is the message running beneath his own question (pitch 3) - “*If a book is a bad book does it matter if it gets burnt?*” In his retrieve, Maurice explained that he asked the question “because I wanted us to talk more about the mindset and less about the management.” [ML]. For Maurice, the ‘management’ of art/creativity and the separation of artistic practice from management practice is not very helpful. The categories and distinctions, that Clodagh finds so helpful, do not speak to his world or his way of seeing. This, then, is why we say that the discourse of management may be imploding in the very sector – the creative industries – where its recent explosion has just sent it. That said, Clodagh quite rightly argued that the language of management *does* map usefully on to the creative industries – there *are* people so we can talk about HR, there *is* a creative process so we can talk about R&D, etc. etc. The counter to this is that the discourse of management is a *metanarrative*, a big story that can seem to ‘work’ in

virtually every context (akin to Freudian theory, Marxist theory, etc.). If this is the case, then the challenge is to invent a new language that better fits the context. In other words to theorise. Clodagh sought to do this by arguing that while ‘management’ in what one might call ‘normal’ industries is centred on *control*, in the creative industries it is, for her, centrally about *supporting* and *enabling* the creative process. But one cannot easily ditch meaning, and this only highlights the urgent need for a new vocabulary to help us make better sense of this context.

Theme 2: Pigs ‘n Space

Maurice’s understanding of ‘management’ is that it “is an exercise in restraint”. For him, this means that management is fundamentally at variance with creativity, since “True creativity cannot and should not be inhibited and the act of management is an imposition of inhibition” [ML]. Building on this point, Maurice employed a brilliant metaphor from the pig processing industry:

The creative process cannot be managed in the way that the food processing industry can be managed. In the one you start with a pig and end up with bag of rashers. In the other you can, very occasionally, begin with a sows ear and end up, if the Gods are truly smiling, with a silk purse.

For Maurice all you can do is “manage the environment in which creativity at any level and in any discipline can flourish.” This helped him pinpoint what, for him, is the essential difference between managing a rasher production process and managing a creative process: “So maybe that’s the difference – in one you manage the process and in the other you manage the space.”

Donncha picked up on this distinction in his contribution and related it to some earlier research he had done on film production projects. What’s remarkable about film production is that it is a highly structured process *and* a highly creative process. For instance, production is organised along functional lines with each function being led by a Head of Department. It is also highly unionised. Day-to-day production planning is done along military lines with call sheets specifying, down to the nearest quarter of an hour, when each character will be picked up from their accommodation, when they will be in wardrobe, make-up and when they will be on set. In addition, a complex network of management technologies operates to give the film producer a clear picture on cost and schedule performance. But at the heart of this managerial scaffolding is a creative space that is jealousy guarded. In other words, a military-like machine ensures that actors etc. get to the set on time, dressed and made-up etc. but then

an intimate and exclusive space is created around the actors and directors, where they could 'do the unimaginable', where they could 'play', 'act' and 'escape' from the mundane.

Donncha introduced the metaphor of *chelation* to describe these protected spaces that are to be found in the interstices of the organisational scaffolding. (*Chele* is the Greek word for claw, and in chemistry the term chelation describes how a metal atom, which one wants to protect, is surrounded by a larger molecule in a claw-like manner.) Another example of this practice of chelating – creating protected space – is what's called a "first look" deal in the film business, which are deals that the large studios have with actors, directors and producers. Here's how Steve Norris, managing director of the film production company Enigma Productions, described these deals.

a 'first look' deal in the business is where WB [Warner Brothers] provide money towards overhead etc. in return for a relationship which includes a first look at everything Enigma wants to do. This is a normal sort of deal in the industry. A great deal of talent, actors, directors and producers have these kinds of affiliations with one particular studio.

Crucially, what these deals create is *space*, temporally, spatially and economically.

The luxury of a housekeeping deal is that it helps us with that cost of running offices and salaries and the likes of that, and it allows the creative people to be more creative. Which is part of the intent - you don't want people who should be spending their days or evenings scouring theatre looking for ideas to be worrying about overdrafts and how they are going to pay the telephone bill.

Precisely the same phenomenon – of creating and protecting a 'safe' space – occurs with scriptwriters. Steve Norris again:

. . . the writer goes away and writes, and for 12 weeks which is the normal time to do a draft of a screenplay - particularly the first draft - you do nothing; maybe occasionally talk on the phone if the writer has a problem or if the writer wants to talk out on the phone a particular issue before pushing on, but in essence they get on with it.

In software design, which Donncha also studied, the same issue was also to the fore. Here, a manager talks about what happens in these multi-company, multi-site, multi-managed software projects.

. . . the minute there is any sort of problem it's at the top level, and there's table banging and international phone calls and nobody has any time to think, nobody

is in the position to sensibly sit down and discuss it because you're under pressure all the time. . .

Interestingly the construction industry, which is often seen as 'low-tech' or 'no-tech', has evolved its own set of practices to enable such 'chelated spaces' to be created and maintained. Here is an edited extract from one of Donncha's contributions.

One unintended consequence of the fashion for transparency and openness in Client-Contractor relations in the software and other sectors (supplanting the old, 'arms-length' relationship) is that the Contractor (i.e. the designer) isn't afforded the necessary space to engage in the design process. Moreover, new managerial technologies and accounting practices – which allow distant managers to 'see into' the project from afar – can also violate this creative space. Indeed, it is arguable that the manager's primary role should be to create and protect this space from, in particular, the technologies of management. Of course film and software projects cost money, and managers are justifiably worried about getting the project finished on time and within budget, and this issue won't go away you know. But this then maybe only serves to focus our attention on the selection, design, and operation of management technologies in this context.

Donncha suggested that there are a number of interesting paradoxes running around these chelated spaces. First, film and software design projects involve a huge amount of networking and interacting, but the product of all this networking is the creation of a protected and almost *isolated* space. Thus, the first paradox is that isolation is the product of intensive networking. The second paradox is that management technologies - which give managers much of their legitimacy and power, may, if their operation violates chelated spaces, destroy that which is being 'managed'. This maybe helps explain why there is so much confusion about management in the creative industries. The third paradox is to do with work and play. It seems to me that the creative industries involve an awful lot of serious work, but that the objective of this 'work' is that some people should be able to 'play' - to 'escape' as it were. For instance, a film set is "as boring as a wet day in Termonfeckin," as the writer and journalist Joe O'Connor once put it. But at the heart of this boredom, some serious play is going on.

Clodagh concurred with the paradoxical view of managing creativity (which is itself probably an oxymoron). One has to organise – "otherwise the children won't all turn up at the same time" – and this often calls for a "militaristic" approach. But this is purely to *create* that creative space, to *serve* the creators, who are, after all, "the most important cog" [COB].

Theme 3: Money

Art costs money and artists often find it difficult to obtain enough money to allow them to practice art. At the organisational and industrial levels this dearth of money is also an issue that captivates attention so it was not surprising that it featured in this dispraxis. Here, is an extract from one of Clodagh's contributions.

Today, many arts and culturally based organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the need to become more 'commercial' in adopting styles, theories and practices from regular industry, but do not have the resources. Indeed, in my area, working within a not-for-profit, the financial resourcing of the company takes up a huge amount of my time. Fund-raising is the order of the day and with many grant-making bodies awarding annually, planning for the future becomes difficult. This could partly explain the inherent weakness in strategic management. [COB]

Most creative organisations operate on restricted budgets and have insufficient resources. Their operational style is therefore very reactive. In today's labour market where costs are so high, many people who might in the past have worked in the arts are choosing more lucrative options elsewhere. The creative industries, mostly, cannot compete and human resourcing is quickly becoming a big issue for the sector, in my experience. [COB]

Maurice was just as concerned about the monetary side of his work and life:

To be allowed to create the artist needs time, space and, horror of horrors, money. To get the money he or she needs to spend that time and fill that space with the act and effort of raising that money. In effect the life support system is strangling the patient. The old way of judging and funding doesn't work or at the very least is totally inefficient. And if there isn't an inordinate effort to maintain this status quo then nor is there a concerted effort to find a new way around the course." [ML]

Donncha, however, referred to a recent article about W.B. Yeats and marketing by Stephen Brown (Aherne and Brown, 2000). Brown argued that even though Yeats constantly complained about commerce – “fingers in the greasy till” – he was a dab hand at self-promotion and working the system to his own designs as well. Yeats, like Maurice and probably akin to many other artists, paraded the romantic image of the creative genius, left alone from the world. Yet he was, as Brown showed, “brilliant at marketing”. Moreover, art has always needed some form of funding structure and while it's always easy to complain

about whatever structures are currently in place, the “more difficult task is to imagine new funding mechanisms.” [DK].

Maybe the first step in organising a new funding mechanism is to be able to articulate a good set of reasons as to *why* this funding is required. Allied to the rather obvious reason that creative work is inherently valuable – producing as it does a ‘social’ good – Clodagh was able, probably because of her background, to frame the issue within the language of management and industry.

“At its heart is a high-risk, pure R&D process in the commissioning and designing of work. Without adequate resources to spend on useful tools to reduce the risk, such as marketing research, the manager in the creative industries has to rely on generating energy to support a shared vision between the commissioner and often, sub-contracted artists. Presuming this R&D process is fertile, the product then has to be taken through a full range of disciplines including production and direction, financing (often programme specific fundraising) and sales and marketing.” [COB]

Clodagh also emphasised that the different nature of the creative industries had to be recognised.

To be able to attract and retain adequate human resources to deliver on this package in a financially restrained environment is key to successful management in the creative industries and involves uniting permanent and sub-contracted individuals to be energised in pursuit of a common vision. This requires a grasp of a more 'ephemeral' management style than traditional target and goal-setting which operates within the 'for profit' world of general industry. [COB]

For Clodagh, what is so different about the creative industries is that Taste is central, while in other contexts it is much less so. Here, Pierre Bourdieu ([1979] 1984) provides some interesting theoretical insights. For instance, Bourdieu argues that Taste plays a crucial role in maintaining social distinctions and shaping class identities. Although tastes may seem natural, universal and eternal to those who share them, alternative tastes, which might even be considered deviant by some, can seem just as ‘natural’ to their proponents. Thus, even though boundary lines between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ taste are routinely drawn and patrolled, they are always illusory. This feeling of ‘living on quicksand’ means that Taste is in perpetual crisis, invoking feelings of liminality, insecurity, and even death. This, perhaps, partly explains why Maurice might be so concerned that the life support system would “strangle the patient”. It also possibly explains the general feelings of insecurity that ran throughout the dispraxis and maybe more generally the insecurity that we tend to find in the creative industries.

This brings us back in some ways to Maurice's enigmatic question about book burning. As he explained, the

Art sucks most when society's having a party. Art needs an edge to live on and the price of your telecom shares isn't really edgy enough I don't think. The great Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times", springs to mind here. No Spanish civil war – 'no Guernica' etc.etc. The greatest pleasure coming as it does not from the absence of pain but from the release from pain. I don't know what all this means. Ask God.

Later in the same contribution he explained that the reason he asked the question was "Because I was attempting in a cack handed way to lead us into the territory of selling the arts to people who consider it all a luxury we can ill afford while there are kids sleeping on the streets." [ML] And at the end of this contribution he wondered: "Maybe a better question would have been, "What do you do when having taught a man to read you find him reading the Sun?"

In essence Maurice is questioning the earlier assertion that creative work is inherently valuable, which raises more profound questions about the need to fund it. As he put it himself,

Art is a precious thing - at its best it can embrace and enhance, at its worst it can at least decorate. It is to be cherished and I believe it deserves to be nourished. But it must also and always be accountable to its audience. Art without accountability can quickly veer towards indulgence. [ML]

Likewise, Donncha had this to say on the issue:

What struck me about the Irish film industry was how many people within it bought into an artistic-commercial dichotomy: if a film was 'commercial' then it wasn't 'artistic' and if it was 'artistic' it would not be 'commercial.' And if a film lost money then ergo it was 'artistic'. I was always uneasy about this argument. That said, it's difficult to avoid the art-commerce (or art-accountability) axis; maybe all one can do is not be blinded by it. One option is the elitist model: allow an elite to dictate what should be considered 'art'. Of course, the ideology of elitism is not fashionable in liberal democracies – even if, paradoxically, it is pervasive in practice." [DK]

On this question, Donncha referred to a recent interview with Jean Baudrillard in the Irish times:

In last *Saturday's Irish Times* there was an interview with Jean Baudrillard, in which he spoke about the contemporary world where 'You cannot judge; you're inside it. What is lost, what is disappearing, is secrecy. Everything has to be rendered visible. Nothing exists unless it is hyper-visible... We no longer need meaning. Things function. Full stop'. His worry is that we're living in a meaningless, tasteless, valueless, world, where nothing matters (in more ways than one). So maybe your worry about the burning of bad books is really a metaphor for your larger worry about the abandonment of meaning and value? How can we have authentic Taste in an inauthentic, meaningless world?

En passant, Donncha noted that

What you're saying about art can also be said about knowledge. Accountability is the new word running around the Universities, although it seems ironic that Media Labs was given £85 million by the Government with very little accountability in sight, or so it seems to me.

Another tack on this issue is the question: "why was academic research not included in the very broad definition of the creative industries?"

Theme 4: Art and the Object

Art and creativity are routinely identified as the highest expression of human achievement. Paradoxically, producers of art – both individuals and organisations – tend to be ignored in commercial discourse. This, at least, is Clodagh's experience and she has extensive experience in both the pharmaceutical and creative industries. For instance, Clodagh's experience is that she and other 'managers' in the creative industries are not really considered to be 'managers' in an 'industry' at all, in for example, her dealings with banks, etc. In other words, producers of art are, or at least feel they are, alienated from the practice of business, and, in the extreme, creative organisations are often not seen as being businesses at all. The phenomenon whereby business appears to treat art as its Other suggests interesting theoretical parallels between art work and sex work, as recently explored by Brewis and Linstead (2000). For instance, it was interesting that Clodagh routinely referred to other industries, such as the pharmaceutical and creative industries as 'normal', suggesting that the creative industries are in some sense 'abnormal'. The concept of the object captures the idea that in human self-understanding there is always some aspect of the self, some aspect of our desire or our past experiences, that we find unacceptable. We seek, with greater or lesser success, to reject this unacceptable part of the self but it always comes back to haunt us and often draws us towards it in fascination.

Alternatively, Clodagh's feeling of alienation may be due to her gender and this is implicit in her question (pitch 2: Do you believe that the different nature of organisations working within the creative industries affects how they're managed, with particular reference to the high concentration of women in management in the Creative Industries?). However, both Donncha and Maurice were somewhat uneasy about the assumption that underpinned Clodagh's question (maybe because they're both men!). Donncha, for instance, observed that it was

worth making a distinction between (a) the high concentration of women in the creative industries, and (b) the high concentration of women *in management* in the creative industries. We need to be careful that we don't attribute causality to the latter when maybe the former (or some other factor) is the real driver of difference. [DK]

Maurice made much the same point: "Could the higher female concentration in the management sector be to do with an industry-wide overall higher female population or is that just being simplistic." [ML]

The lower percentage of women in management in other industries may be because MNCs are more of a feature in these 'other' industries and MNCs, perhaps, have a more robust glass ceiling than the creative industries. In other words, maybe the relative dearth of MNCs in the Irish creative industries is what is most salient.

Donncha speculated that Clodagh's three questions (pitches 2, 4, and 6) were related because the issue of 'time' runs across the three questions.

Women's time is different to men's time (men don't talk about the "clock ticking", and women's time is punctuated by menstrual cycles, pregnancy, childbirth, etc). Likewise, R&D doesn't follow the neat tick-tock process that is the hallmark of the bureaucratic machine – instead it goes in jumps and starts, stalls and stops, then sprints. Similarly, a series of short-term start-ups is characterised by temporal discontinuities: when a project begins or ends so does its own local sense of 'time' (i.e. the collective understanding of the meanings of the past, present and future and the relevant rhythms of work).

In other words, the linking hypothesis is that women's 'disjunctured temporality' might be suited to R&D and startup/projectised contexts while the more masculine 'tick tock' temporality is suited to the bureaucratic machine. In short, if Fordism constituted a 'masculine' temporality – and was therefore more suited to men – then post-Fordism is constituted by a 'feminine' temporality. Maurice partly agreed and noted that "it is possible to

work on a very full time basis in the arts while only putting in what might appear to other industries to be part-time hours.” [ML]

Reflections

This particular dispraxis project was quite experimental and therefore any conclusions must be provisional. One lesson that we learned was that just as the most potent ideas often emerge towards the end of brainstorming sessions – after the rather obvious ideas have been elicited and abandoned – a few initial practice rounds of the dispraxis can help to ‘bed things in’.

The approach is not without its drawbacks. For instance, it makes no claim that it is presenting the Truth about the world, and positivist researchers would most likely dismiss it for this. While one should not necessarily be in the thrall of positivists, one should also be concerned about the tendency towards self-indulgence that this approach may inspire. Moreover, there is the added danger that the approach may be used to present opinion and prejudice as profundity. An important bulwark against this is to choose the members of the dispraxis carefully and to forestall such tendencies whenever necessary.

Notwithstanding some of these difficulties, we hope and believe that the approach has demonstrated its potential to engage in a novel and interesting way with individuals working in the creative industries. All of us were enthusiastic about the method and would encourage others to experiment with it and develop it. Clodagh, for instance, said that practitioners usually tend to be intimidated by academics and are cautious about volunteering information. The engaging nature of the dispraxis makes it an excellent way of eliciting information and beliefs that other more formal methods might not reach. In particular, this dispraxis has presented some interesting insights into the oftentimes conflictual interface between the manager and the creative worker, and how the various roles delineated by this boundary are constructed, managed, and negotiated. One interesting observation was that while this research was premised on the idea that there is a significant division between theory and practice, the dispraxis indicated that the more important division seemed to be between the discourse of management and alternative discourses such as the discourse of romanticism.

Maybe most importantly, the dispraxis seems especially apposite to the creative industries given the dearth of theory that has been developed in this context. In this situation, it is imperative that we do not fall into the trap of applying ready-made theories to the creative industries. Rather, we must make sense of the world by developing theory, like the early Greek philosophers, *in media res* – in the middle of things. We believe that dispraxis can prove to be an important and fruitful way of doing just that.

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