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Abstract (150 words)

The opportunity to join a University holding a vision of becoming The Connected University, leading a collaborative 2021 City-of-Culture bid, has allowed me to renew my reflections on a research theme that for the last 10 years has occupied me in practical and theoretical terms. Public/academia partnership models have been given a new focus within present-day policy contexts. The current terms relevant for this debate are 'triple and quadruple helixes', 'Open Innovation 2.0', 'Mode 3 research' and 'connected curriculum'. In the arts, we have also seen an increase of public appetite for process (rather than product), and the 21st century has witnessed a new phenomenon, that which Pierre Luigi Sacco (2014) has labelled Culture 3.0. This paper will explore these concepts in relation to fulfilling visions for truly connected universities, and in my case, in a locality that specifically utilises its own creative sector communities to regenerate itself.

(148 words)

Short Paper (1000 words)

As an academic within the arts who is passionate about the concept of the public university and who perceives these institutions as regional hubs and anchors, the need for creative interfaces between academia and society raises also questions about how we support our current and future talent to be impactful to society with creative means. This paper, using an interpretative and reflective methodological approach explores the questions of how do we in academia 'get connected' and how do we facilitate this in the curriculum. University art schools are some of the biggest patrons of creative thinking and practice, recognised even by the Arts Council when suggesting that

"Higher education institutions are playing an increasingly vital role as custodians and champions of arts and culture in towns and cities across the country. They support the development of young talent. They lead on research of national and international significance. And their investment in arts and culture helps to build a sense of place. Universities, colleges and conservatoires have come to be powerful investors in their local areas, in the knowledge that a strong cultural offer makes our towns and cities great places to live, work and study." (Henley, in Arts Council England 2016)

Universities themselves carefully position various interfaces between different levels of learners, different types of communities and different disciplines. This careful positioning is

also a process of curating interfaces, with the facilitation of learning being at the heart of this process, rather than the acquisition of knowledge itself. This nuanced distinction is one that Douglas and Brown (2011) have written about in their “New Culture of Learning”, which (oversimplified here) suggests we, in the universities, need to focus more on developing and specifying environments in which learning happens, or is afforded, rather than knowledge content with specific learning objectives.

And these environments will need to become more permeable between University and external sectors, to allow universities to remain a key element in benefiting our knowledge economies in the future. I wrote in 2016 (Boehm) that it might be useful to consider formalised partnership models that allow the barriers of these different spheres to be negotiated more effectively, to afford the ‘ivory tower’ to become more permeable. Etzkowitz’s model of university-industry-government partnership, the triple helix (Etzkowitz 2008), was expanded in 2012 (Carayannis and Campbell) to include the third sector, and with it universities’ own civic engagements. Watson (Watson 2009, Watson 2014, Watson 2011) has foregrounded this latter role; his concept of the ‘engaged university’ proposes that social enterprise and the not-for-profit sector should be considered within the helix model. These quadruple partnerships are evidenced to better support innovation, but they also allow innovation to happen in a non-linear, collaborative manner with overlapping processes of basic research, application and development, creating what has been called a ‘socially distributed knowledge’ (Gibbons 1994) or a (Mode 3) ‘Innovation Ecosystem’ (Carayannis and Campbell 2012). Within the undergraduate learning frameworks, these ideas have been comprehensively explored and conceptualised within a undergraduate and postgraduate context in Fung’s Connected Curriculum (Fung 2017).

And this is where arts in the academy have it inherently more easier, as they have already encultured practices that could be seen to fall into innovation ecosystems and connected curricula (Boehm 2016a). There is a long tradition and high critical awareness of co-production, authorship, co-ownership, immersive arts. All these elements are traits in Sacco’s Culture 3.0 (2011) but furthermore it points towards an understanding of art as not a distinct, but rather an immersive everpresence of art all around us. This to such extend that the creative industries is suggested to even disappear as a distinct sector.

Similar movements have happened with other sectors, the IT sector has become almost indistinguishable from other industries, as IT have become pervasive and innovation draws more often from the novelty of how communities are connected (through technologies) but less on the novelty of the technologies being developed. And this connectivity, often through art and technology, paves the way for Culture 3.0 with its heightened potential for large-scale cultural participation.

Cultural participation has a demonstrable but indirect effect on Innovation, Welfare, Social Cohesions, Entrepreneurship, Local Identity and the Knowledge Economy. But when art norms and value systems for the arts are still prioritising a Culture 1.0 patronage model, with small audiences, value absorption and its own gatekeepers, it provides a barrier to achieve these indirect effects on society. Europe is still hung up on Culture 1.0, suggests Sacco, and this stifles our innovative potential. Art has a large part to play here, especially because:

“Culture is not simply a large and important sector of the economy, it is a ‘social software’ that is badly needed to manage the complexity of contemporary societies and economies in all of its manifold implications” (Sacco 2014)

And this is where our universities come in, providing we can move our own academic practices from a culture of specifying learning objectives, devising constructive alignments, specifying in terminologies of Bloom, quality assuring every single knowledge within a curriculum and validating its specific mode of assessment, to a more open consideration of learning environments, and how these need to be designed in order for learners to tap into their own passion of learning and drawing themselves from the knowledges that are all around them, both within this academic environment and from outside. These environments will need to be designed to be permeable themselves, have both the academic dimensions with its deep knowledge domains and the applicability and cross fertilisation opportunities of the world outside.

In the innovation context, this matches concepts coined under the term of Open Innovation 2.0 (Curley and Salmelin 2015), but as facilitators of learning, we will need to consider what this paradigm shift actually means for our learning frameworks.

The move from formalised and structured learning objects to formalised structured learning environments has only just begun, but there are examples where this has always happened in practice, specifically in the arts. The presentation will explore these and see if there are lessons to be learned for those universities who truly want to be connected.

(998 words)

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