



Community Uses of Co-Creative Media: User-Created Citizenship An Introduction

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This issue of *Cultural Science* emerges largely from research undertaken through the Australian Research Council Linkage project, *Community Uses of Co-Creative Media*. The project has sought to better understand how community arts and media networks – incorporating cultural development, heritage, arts, activist, broadcasting and Indigenous media sectors – can increase the capacity of communities to engage in participatory media culture. The research was motivated by a growing sense that, in an age of ubiquitous digital media, these various community-interest networks might be converging, and that there was significant potential for sharing of knowledge, skills and infrastructure (as well as major impediments to such cross-sector collaboration).

The articles in this issue of *Cultural Science* discuss different case studies of innovative experiments in co-creative practice, across a range of community-interest contexts. They also describe wider trends in how community-interest arts and media sectors are beginning to respond to pervasive participatory culture. The issue explores questions such as: How does the rise of digital media and video produced within community arts, cultural development and social justice contexts impact existing community broadcasters and Indigenous media organisations? What are we to make of public-service broadcasters and even commercial broadcasters moving into the space of community-driven participatory media? And, how might we share ideas, skills, information and infrastructure - that is ‘co-create’ useful networks and knowledge?

We open this issue with Christina Spurgeon’s contribution ‘The art of co-creative media: an Australian survey’. The article provides an introduction to the rationale, methodologies and key findings of the *Community Uses of Co-Creative Media* research project, which Spurgeon has been leading for three years. It discusses recent examples of co-creative media practice originating with community cultural development (CCD) organisations, community broadcasters, public service broadcasters, commercial broadcasters and community media. In the article, Spurgeon identifies CCD, community broadcasting and community media as intersecting networks that function as the ‘engines’ of participatory media culture.

Ellie Rennie's article 'Co-Creative Media in Remote Indigenous Communities' draws on a sample of nearly a hundred co-creative media projects that were in production between 2010 and 2013 and which originate from, or relate to, remote Indigenous communities in Australia. It provides an account of the organisations, sectors and funding sources routinely involved in this kind of community media production, as well as the types of stories that get told. Within the context of dwindling resources for remote Indigenous media organisations to produce their own content, Rennie argues that the proliferation of co-creative video production by non-Indigenous arts and development organisations reflects a wider trend in the nation's relationship with remote Australia, 'from self-determination to the caring industries'.

Pip Shea's article 'Co-creating knowledge online: approaches for community artists' explores how the concept of 'co-creativity', a term most commonly ascribed to collaborative modes of making artifacts, might also be applied to collaborative modes of producing new knowledge. The article draws directly on a booklet Shea recently produced – *Co-Creating Knowledge Online* – which is a 'field guide' for community artists wanting to make better use of emerging forms of participatory communications networks. Shea's article expands substantially on her 'field guide' by revealing in detail the ideas, theories and empirical research that informed the booklet's production. In doing so the article offers additional information for community artists wanting to improve how they use the internet to share, connect and build knowledge. At the same time, for scholars and researchers, it offers an insightful case study of the production of a participatory action research design experiment, from its original inception during participation observation at the Sydney-based community arts organisation CuriousWorks through to evaluating its impact on the sector (and beyond).

Finally, the articles by Maura Edmond and Sonja Vivienne report back on two major events that occurred in the first year of the *Community Uses of Co-Creative Media* research project, both of which actively sought to provoke new conversations and connections across community arts and media. The first was *Co-Creative Communities*, a symposium of scholars, practitioners and industry representatives from community arts, development, broadcasting and media sectors. It was held at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, in November 2012 and it explored critical issues and innovations currently shaping community-interest media. Edmond's article summarises the recurring themes from the conference, with particular focus on how community and public broadcasters are responding to the challenges and opportunities posed by emerging forms of participatory digital culture. It argues that despite widespread consensus about the need to harness the potential of participatory media, community broadcasters are also, paradoxically, engaged in an effort to reassert the importance of mediation, legitimation, craft and broadcast.

The *Co-Creative Communities* symposium was conceived as a research experiment. It sought to network a range of like-minded media-makers and organisations with the hope of seeding greater cross-sector awareness and collaboration in the future. This agenda found its fullest expression in the second major event, which took place the day after the symposium and was dubbed an 'exchange'. As Vivienne describes, the *Co-Creative Communities Exchange* was a one-day development workshop in which media-makers discussed their community storytelling projects with a range of experts from across cultural development, community arts and community broadcasting. Titled 'Networked identity work as project development among co-creative communities,' Vivienne's article considers the successes and limitations of

the 'exchange' as part of a broader discussion of how organisational / producer /project identities are collaboratively created and negotiated across networks.

The issue concludes with a guest essay from John Hartley, 'A Trojan Horse in the citadel of stories? Storytelling and the creation of the polity – from Göbekli Tepe to Gallipoli'. Hartley's contribution to the issue explores some of the key propositions about the centrality of storytelling to this research agenda. Hartley synthesises an extraordinary sweep of ideas in five micro chapters to make a compelling case for the centrality of culture and storytelling in human evolution. He points to a very interesting problem for the formal digital storytelling movement (and for human socio-cultural research more generally) in the crisis of 'we' communities that arises with the possibility of a globally networked polity. He proposes new guides to storytelling action and on-going research, and points to the opportunity that events such as the centenary of WWI present for this kind of exploration.