

Creativity at Work:

**Is it possible, even advisable,  
to try to be interdisciplinary  
when studying the creative  
industries?  
A view from the edge**

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# Abstract

This working paper reflects upon the difficulties of being interdisciplinary when studying the creative industries. After outlining the basic premises behind the *©reative Encounters* research programme, it brings into play two editing activities in which the author has been involved over the past six months. One of these is a four volume set of readings in the creative industries which shows that, even though most writing on 'creative' industries stem from various governments' national policies promulgated from the end of the 1990s, there is plenty of material 'out there' from the late 1940s onwards. The other is an edited book on the role of fairs, festivals and competitive events in the creative industries which also revealed the extent to which history tended to be overlooked in a specific context by contemporary scholars in different disciplines. The paper concludes by asking what enables and what hinders interdisciplinarity, suggesting that institutional structures and the publishing industry in many ways are designed to prevent innovation in intellectual fields. It is these, therefore, that need to be reconsidered if we are to be successful in crossing over from one discipline to another.

# Keywords

Cumulative research, disciplines, history, publishing industry, journals, social sciences

# Authors

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**Is it possible, even advisable, to try to be interdisciplinary when studying the creative industries?  
A view from the edge**

The contents of this talk emerge out of two recent publishing activities. The first involved searching for, selecting, classifying, and putting together a set of previously published articles and book excerpts that might serve as critical readings in the creative industries (Alačovska and Moeran 2011). The second involved first conceptualizing and then putting on a small workshop focusing on fairs, festivals and competitive events in the creative industries, to which scholars from a variety of different disciplines contributed papers that were then rewritten and edited for publication (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011). What became apparent during each of these separate writing processes was that a not insignificant amount of research on the so-called ‘creative industries’ is characterized by a lack of historical depth. This in itself leads me to pose the questions: does such ahistoricity in large part derive from the multidisciplinary nature of current research on creative industries? To what extent is it advisable to engage in depth with disciplines other than one’s own? Is it possible, or even advisable, to be truly interdisciplinary?

I pose these questions because I am currently managing a research programme on the socio-economic organization of creative industries, called *Creative Encounters*.<sup>1</sup> One reason for adopting this name was to illustrate the different kinds of encounters experienced by people working in a variety of creative industries – between individuals working therein; between individuals and objects or products with which they worked; between individuals and the organizations in which they conceived, produced, distributed and sold their products; and between those producers, products and the audiences which consumed them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Creative Encounters* is funded over a four year and nine month period (April 2007-December 2011) by the Strategic Research Council of Denmark, under the more formal title of ‘The socio-economic organization of creative industries.’

But such ‘creative encounters’ were also intended to embrace the scholars who studied them. With a team of researchers representing a variety of disciplines that included anthropology, cultural geography, (cultural and institutional) sociology, the sociology of work, cognitive psychology, marketing, economic geography, and cultural economics, our cross-disciplinary research was bound to be ‘creative’, if we were prepared to release our hold on our respective disciplinary traditions and engage with our colleagues in other disciplines. In other words, each of us was inviting others to move from the centre to the edge of their disciplines and thereby to engage with interdisciplinarity at intersections where specialized subfields of different formal disciplines overlapped (Dogan and Pahre 1990: 1).

Has this experiment worked? The short answer is, perhaps, that it is still too early to tell, and that three and a half years of a funded research programme may not have provided researchers with sufficient time to move from multi-disciplinary to cross-disciplinary and thence to inter-disciplinary approaches to our field of study. After all, it is not the subjects that we study so much, but the preconceptions that we have inherited, the methods we use, and the conclusions we reach (Olson 1969: 139-140) that inform our research. Nevertheless, several of us are currently coordinating our research and collaborating across disciplines. Some of these collaborations involve neighbouring disciplines (like anthropology and institutional sociology, or cultural geography and branding/marketing); at least one other is more adventurous, in that it involves a sociologist, a sociologist of work and a cultural economist, who are making use of ethnographic and statistical methodologies to analyse more or less the same qualitative and quantitative data concerning the (lack of) career patterns among those employed in the creative industries. What is not yet clear, however, is the extent to which these different scholars will be able to weld their different methodological and theoretical viewpoints into a new interdisciplinary approach.

What I wish to do here is give an account of two projects in which I myself have been engaged in recent months, and use such reflections to

highlight some of the issues that concern me regarding the move towards a truly interdisciplinary research programme.

### **Creative Industries**

Creative industries are generally defined as industries – such as advertising, architecture, art, computer games, crafts, cuisine, design, fashion, film, fragrance, music, performing arts, publishing, radio, TV, toys, and video games – that are based on individual creativity, skill and talent, and that include an element of design. They have the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing intellectual property, which is why they are sometimes characterized as constituting a ‘knowledge’ or ‘information’ (as well as a ‘creative’, ‘cultural’, ‘aesthetic’, ‘mixed’, and even ‘catwalk’) economy. They also tend to make use of particular organizational forms and work patterns that, partly at least, are seen to differentiate them from other kinds of industries.

In recent years, in particular from the beginning of the new millennium, it has become fashionable for politicians, corporate executives, civil servants and academics to talk about ‘creativity’, ‘creative hubs’, ‘creative cities’, ‘creative classes’, and so on as part of a discourse that focuses on the so-called ‘creative economy’. As a consequence of this recent top-down interest, we find that scholarly attention to, and explication and analysis of, *creative* industries really only goes back to the very late 1990s at the earliest – something that Ana Alačovska and I quickly discovered when trawling through journal databases in search of material for our four volume set of critical readings in creative industries. In part, this is not surprising. History suggests that those employed in industries now labeled ‘creative’ have not themselves always seen their work as such. For example, prior to the 1950s those writing about the American advertising industry rarely, if ever, used the word ‘creative’ as a descriptive of their occupations: ‘professionalism’, ‘skills’, ‘expertise’ and ‘experience’, yes;

but not ‘creative’ as such (Laird 1998: 314-315).<sup>2</sup> Rather, they described the jobs in hand: preparing copy and illustrations, or art work (Hower 1939: Chapter XII). It was only when a perceived ‘creativity crisis’ came about in American business generally that the advertising industry underwent its ‘Creative Revolution’ in the 1960s (Jackall and Hirota 2000: Chapter 3). Similarly, in the field of Japanese ceramics, the word ‘creative art’ (*sakuhin*) only came into common use in the 1960s with the boom in consumer demand, following establishment of a system of important intangible cultural heritage (*juyō mukei bunkazai*) by the Japanese Government in the 1950s (cf. Moeran 1987).

If these examples are driven by consumption, production processes also seem to have had their influence on use of terminology. The idea of ‘creativity’ in the fashion industry, although not entirely absent before the 1960s, appears to have spread with the adoption of outsourcing by French fashion houses – first within France and later externally to cheap labour markets in eastern Europe, parts of the Middle East, Central America, and most of Asia. Likewise, the current discussion of Danish fashion as a ‘creative industry’ has emerged during the past fifteen to twenty years after Danish fashion companies began to outsource all their garment manufacture to China and Southeast Asia. In other words, fashion houses’ loss of core competences in the making of garments has led to their emphasis on the creative processes involved in their design as a means of maintaining status and their power over subcontractors. A similar socio-organizational process has taken place in – for example – the electronics industry where outsourcing by Japanese firms to subcontractors in Southeast Asia has led to an emphasis on high-end technology as a means of asserting and maintaining head office control.

While it is clear that many of the discussions of ‘creativity’ and ‘creative’ industries have arisen from within specific industries like advertising and fashion, generated by organizational politics (in the case of advertising,

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to ignore the general adoption of the idea of ‘creativity’ in the industry itself from around the turn of the twentieth century as a means to deal with, and appeal to, clients (Lears 1994: 216).

‘courtiers’ versus ‘creators’ [Marchand 1985: 39-41]) and cost-cutting production strategies, we might also note that academics writing about what are currently referred to as ‘creative’ industries have not themselves always described them as such. Ralph Hower (1939), for example, in his business history of the advertising agency, N.W. Ayer & Son, written in the late 1930s makes no mention of the ‘C’ word, while Howard Becker (1951), in an early article about jazz musicians, unpretentiously categorizes them as members of a ‘service occupation’.<sup>3</sup>

The ‘creative turn’ in academic writing, therefore, has clearly reflected the trend initiated by government cultural policy makers in Australia and the United Kingdom, and thereafter in other countries around the world, whereby ‘creative’ industries became the focus of attention as a means of stimulating local economies and generating employment opportunities. In one or two countries, the phrase ‘cultural industries’ was preferred; in one or two others, ‘contents industries’; but for the most part it has been the notion of ‘creativity’ that has held sway.

These different terms have reflected different emphases. A country like Canada, for example, has, for reasons of its own, decided to stress its ‘arts and culture sector’, whereas others, like Japan, seem to be more concerned with the rights invested in film, musical and other digital content. Anglo-Saxon and European nations have preferred the idea of ‘creativity’, since it both emphasizes the rhetoric of individuality pervading their national ideologies, and seemingly democratizes what has until fairly recently been seen as an elite, high cultural capacity.

Given this comparatively recent trend towards emphasizing ‘creative industries’, then, it is instructive to realize that the term is imbued with more history than at first appears. More than half a century ago, soon after the end of World War Two, two leading scholars of the Frankfurt School, Max

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<sup>3</sup> He also anticipates by almost half a century Richard Caves’s (2000) distinction between ‘creative’ and ‘humdrum’ personnel, when he distinguishes between ‘jazz’ and ‘commercial’ musicians, on the one hand, and ‘musician’ and ‘square’, on the other.

Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1979), coined the phrase ‘culture industry’ to explain what they saw as the subordination of culture and art to the totalizing processes of mass culture and the entertainment ‘distraction’ industry. Their argument was that the culture industry intentionally integrated consumers from above by tailoring products for mass consumption and by manufacturing them more or less according to plan. In other words, the customer was not king, in the way that the culture industry would have us believe. Rather, as Adorno (1991: 87) later wrote, as consumers we were ‘not its subject but its object’.

The totalizing nature of Horkheimer and Adorno’s approach, as well as that of the singular concept of ‘culture industry’, soon provoked – and continue to provoke – further scholarly discussion. One strand in these intellectual conversations has looked back in time and found links with 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophical discussions ‘creative arts’, which derived from the philosophy of civic humanism espoused by the Earl of Shaftesbury and Sir Joshua Reynolds in England during the eighteenth century, and which came to be associated with an intellectual ideology of ‘public art’ (Hartley 2005: 6-7). In some ways, this may be stretching post-rationalizing processes and historical links to breaking point. Another strand has looked forward and recognized that the so-called ‘culture industry’ is made up of different industries, none of which completely resembles the others because they consist of networks of organizations participating in the production and distribution of a variety of cultural products. The key role of distribution and the importance of intermediate organizations in the manufacture and sale of cultural products like fashion, films, books, and music, led to adoption of the term ‘cultural industries’ in the plural (Hirsch 1972, 2000).

The very notion of a ‘creative industry’ is, as a number of scholars have noted, an oxymoron. ‘Creative’ usually implies some form of individual spontaneity, a spur-of-the-moment flash of ‘genius’ that generates something ‘new’, while ‘industry’ anticipates conformity to rules and dogged reproduction of work patterns. As hinted at above, in spite, or because, of their interest in the



economic implications of creativity, those concerned in the promotion of ‘creative industries’ nowadays rarely go beyond rudimentary, even banal, definitions of what exactly they mean by ‘creative’ or ‘creativity’ – or, indeed, of related words used in the context of creativity: ‘innovation’, ‘individuality’, ‘spontaneity’, ‘autonomy’, ‘originality’, ‘talent’, and so on. Instead, they often treat creativity as though it exists in a well-cushioned vacuum. All that is required to nourish it are the right kinds of people gathered in the right kinds of spaces doing the right kinds of creative activity (sculpting a block of marble into recognizable form, designing software for a computer game, writing a script for a theatre play or film, or designing clothes for a fashion show, among others). In this sense, most people in the worlds of business, education and political administration appear to believe in creativity as a form of what the art historian Arnold Hauser (1982: 18) once referred to as ‘immaculate conception’.

### **Fairs and Festivals**

If the editing of the four volume work, *Creative Industries: Critical Readings*, resulted in a general concern on my part with the historical development of research in the broad area of cultural production (Peterson 1976; Peterson and Anand 2004), Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen and my engagement with the subject of fairs, festivals and other competitive events in the creative industries led to our noting a number of particular instances of a lack of historical depth in research. One example of this that I will mention here was terminological; another was more broadly related to the phenomenon of fairs in themselves.

Before embarking on detail, I should perhaps explain that I am by training a social anthropologist, whose geographical area of specialization has been Japan, and that I hold a position at the Copenhagen Business School as a professor of ‘business anthropology’ (a designation that I made up for myself a few years ago). Precisely because I work in what is often referred to as a ‘broad-based’ business school, I find myself liaising with colleagues who specialize in a broad range of disciplines, which includes economics, cultural economics, and cognitive psychology at one end of the social science spectrum; cultural

geography, discourse analysis, and cultural studies at the other; and, somewhere in the middle, marketing and various sub-fields of sociology. Quite a lot of these colleagues specialize in fields like management studies, organization, leadership, entrepreneurship, and strategy, so that I find myself reading across a broad range of journals that include not just the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (my discipline) and *The Journal of Japanese Studies* (my geographical area), but *The Journal of Cultural Economics, Human Relations, The American Journal of Sociology, Organization Studies, and The Journal of Management Studies* among others.

Needless to say, trying to keep up with intellectual and theoretical developments in such a broad range of disciplines is not just a challenge, but a challenge bordering on the impossible, if one is to be rigorous. So I dabble here, and I dabble there; and as I dabble I come across articles and discussions that both annoy and enthuse. Those that annoy me tend to be those that either state the 'bleeding obvious', or rehearse as new arguments with which I am already familiar from my own disciplinary readings. Such annoyances, however, together with ideas that relate in some way to my own research interests, can also enthuse me to enter into new fields of enquiry. This is why I personally believe that it is exciting not to be located centrally in one's discipline, with its networks of people and theorizing, but to sit on the edge of the disciplinary box.

One of the projects that was included in *Creative Encounters'* application for funding was a cross-disciplinary study of the many fairs and festivals that characterize the creative (and other) industries. Initially, several members of the team enthusiastically visited the Copenhagen Art Fair and the Copenhagen Fashion Week, exchanged their experiences and tried to find common theoretical ground to write about them. This led, eventually, to a working paper on 'the fashion show as an art form' (Skov et al 2009), but in an attempt to go further, Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen and I (who had both been conducting rather more extensive research on film festivals and book fairs, respectively) organized a workshop on trade fairs and festivals in September 2009.

Unfortunately, only two other members of the *Creative Encounters* team were able and willing to contribute a paper to this workshop (Skov and Meier, in Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011), and so we invited a number of prominent scholars in the field – from France, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA – whose disciplinary specializations included art history, history, management, marketing, organization studies, (institutional) sociology and strategy. A dozen interesting papers were presented on such diverse topics as art biennales, television programme fairs, film festivals and wine classificatory systems, and a good time was had by all as we engaged in intensive discussions over two and a half days.

In retrospect, it might be said that in the workshop theoretical attention and discussions came to focus on three themes. One was on ‘field configuring events’; another was on ‘tournaments of values’; and the third was on the ways in which different values were negotiated by different people taking part in different fairs and festivals. It is with the first two that I am here concerned.

I had already come across ‘field configuring events’ in my dabbling in *The Journal of Management Studies*, where a special issue had been devoted to the topic (Lampel and Mayer 2008). The articles in this special issue had led me back to other work, notably to an article by N. Anand and Mary Watson (2004), in which they referred to the Grammy Awards in the music industry as a ‘ritual tournament’. This term itself derived from ‘tournament of value’ – a phrase used by, and properly attributed to, the anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai (1986) who had used it when discussing the famed *kula* ring found in Melanesia. What disappointed me, though, was the fact that, although clearly well read, the authors had failed to mention an article that I myself had published more than a decade earlier, which examined competitive presentations in the Japanese advertising industry and suggested that similar ‘tournaments of value’ functioned in the Academy Awards, fashion shows, the Cannes Film Festival and ... the Grammy Awards (Moeran 1993). Needless to say, the workshop offered me an opportunity to blow my own trumpet and make others in

management studies, strategy, and institutional sociology aware that I had in fact beaten them in the intellectual fashion joust by more than a decade!

As we went about writing an Introduction to our edited volume, *Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries*, my co-editor noted that Appadurai himself, in a footnote, had drawn on an earlier work by Mariott (1968), who referred to ‘tournaments of rank’ in his analysis of Indian caste food transactions. What was currently ‘hot’ in the first decade of the new millennium, therefore, had already been lying around for more than three decades. As I continued my library searches for material on fairs and festivals, I then came across a reference to World Fairs as ‘tournaments of industry’ (Curti 1950: 833), published almost two decades before Marriot’s work and certainly more immediately pertinent to Appadurai’s discussion. Although database searches did not reveal any earlier references to this idea, it would not surprise me to learn that it has been existence, unnoted, for still many more years. Our current embrace of intellectual fads and fashions (whatever happened to postmodernism?) has, it seems to me, all but obliterated historical research (except by historians of one kind or another). As a result, there is a danger that research is no longer cumulative, but fragmentary. What is the latest can no longer be supposed to be the most thorough and up-to-date, in spite of disciplinary ‘myths’ (Barthes 1972: 109-159) to the contrary.

Which brings me to my second example. One of the obvious historical connections (though not one made by those currently working in the fields of organization, strategy, management and so on) with contemporary fairs and festivals is to be found in studies of medieval fairs and markets. We devoted part of the Introduction to our edited volume, therefore, to comparing and analyzing the two. It soon became clear that such work had in large part already been done, primarily by geographers, and that there was a wealth of material detailing the layout, functions, and practices of medieval fairs, which made a comparison with contemporary trade fairs and festivals both interesting and illuminating.

Moreover, by taking the term ‘tournament’ into account, we were also able to discover spatial connections between contemporary trade fairs, medieval markets, and jousting tournaments. In medieval times, tournaments and round tables were periodically held for a limited length of time, in (often circular) fields outside castles or towns, around which participants’ tents and pavilions were set up for the duration of the event in a form of ‘medieval court’ (Cline 1945: 211). Trade fairs, too, last for short periods of time, and tend to be located in a kind of no-man’s-land on the edge of nowhere between city centres and their airports (Skov 2006). Participants ‘encamp’ in hotels around the fair site and hold extravagant parties for selected ‘friends’ and competitors. In tournaments of old, some knights formed retinues under leading earls, who were themselves ranked in what Caves (2000: 7) would refer to as *A List/B List* (for instance, the Earls of Lancaster and Gloucester, or Warenne and Arundel), in much the same way as nowadays, for example, publishing companies are grouped together under the name of their owners (Hachette or Bloomsbury); while other ‘knights of the Commune’ attend singly (independent publishers like Earthscan or Cambridge University Press) (cf. Tomkinson 1959: 78-79).

Two facts emerged from this historical research. Firstly, when laying out the conditions whereby certain events ‘configured’ a field, Lampel and Mayer outlined five features of field configuring events. The latter, firstly, assembled in one place ‘actors from diverse professional, organizational, and geographical backgrounds’ – something I had learned of both tournaments and fairs in medieval times. Secondly, their duration was ‘limited, normally running from a few hours to a few days’. Thirdly, they gave rise to ‘unstructured opportunities for face-to-face social interaction’. Fourthly, they included ‘ceremonial or dramaturgical activities’ – in other words, rituals of the kind noted by Anand and Watson (2004). Fifthly, like regional town fairs in France (Maho 1980), they provided opportunities ‘for information exchange and collective sense-making’. And finally, they ‘generate[d] social and reputational resources that c[ould] be deployed elsewhere and for other purposes’ (Lampel and Meyer 2008: 1027) –

as was clearly the case for some knights who made strategic alliances at tournaments (Tomkinson 1959: 86-7).

What these conditions revealed was that the authors had in fact discovered no new principles, nothing that had not been written before about fairs and festivals. In other words, scholars in the field of what may broadly be termed 'management studies' were presenting as 'new' several ideas that had been in circulation since the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The wheel of intellectual fashion was reinventing itself.

Secondly, and now I can criticize myself rather than others, our own comparison, which made use primarily of the work of geographers, was also blinkered. Even though we had developed a set of spatial analogies which took into account the timing, location, and networks of fairs both now and in the past, as well as the structuring of locations within fairs, it was only several months later that I realized that I could have extended my comparison further, by looking into consumption studies and research on retailing and shopping malls. My own chapter on book fairs (see Moeran 2010), as well as other contributions on television programming fairs and London fashion week, had emphasized the importance of spatial layout. I myself had noted, for instance, that the most important stands at the London Book Fair were three blocks in on the main aisle – at the time oblivious to the fact that the best stores in a shopping mall are similarly never sited near the entrance, because entrance locations constitute a 'decompression zone' or 'transition stage' where people are not ready to make buying decisions (Underhill 2004: 31). Other features of shopping mall 'architecture-as-merchandising' (Csaba 1999: 225-228) that are similar to trade fair design include a rectangular structure anchored by industry big-name stands (Csaba 1999: 218), and the importance of circulation and adjacencies (Israel 1994; Csaba 1999: 227).

In an interdisciplinary context, the very idea of 'transitional' space should have taken me in at least one of a number of theoretical directions. The first of these is in my own discipline of anthropology. Ideally, I could have brought in the work of Van Gennep (1960) and others like Victor Turner (1969,

1987) who combined studies of liminality with symbolic action and social drama, and whose concepts of anti-structure and *communitas* coincided well with Bakhtin's (1984) discussion of decontrol, transgression and the carnivalesque (which *were* mentioned in our Introduction). I might also have linked this anthropological literature with Burton Benedict's (1983) discussion of world fairs as being pervaded by notions of prestation and potlatch. Given the focus on place and space, I probably would have benefited from re-reading and integrating the work of Edward Hall (1966) and Marc Augé (1995) on proxemics and non-place, respectively.

This line of theoretical extension might then, like Fabian Csaba's (1999: 98-162) discussion of the Mall of America, have led on to appropriation of the insights of a number of French intellectuals, including Baudrillard, Foucault, Lefebvre and de Certeau, with regard to the social production, reproduction, and representations of space - which in themselves could have led on to postmodernist discussions led by Jameson and Harvey. But we did not enter into such theoretical discussions and, of course, our Introduction can be criticized for being the poorer as a result.

## **Discussion**

So where does this narrative of 'should haves' and 'did nots' leave us? I have argued for the importance of taking history into account when we write about contemporary phenomena, and for trying to move out of a single disciplinary approach to embrace other disciplines, other theories, other methodologies. There is nothing particularly 'creative' about either of these arguments. To fulfill them properly, however, is a little more challenging.

One factor inhibiting the incorporation of history and other disciplines in our own research is the structure of the education institutions in which we are employed to carry out, write about and teach that research. Almost all universities and other institutions of higher education are structured into faculties and departments. Researchers owe their primary allegiance to a department, which is itself grouped with departments deemed to be in one way

or another 'similar' into a faculty (or school). Thus we find departments of anthropology, sociology, and political science placed in a social science faculty; and languages, literatures, histories and geographies in an arts or humanities faculty. Such arrangements – in practice and/or by design – tend to coalesce and simultaneously differentiate researchers. Anthropologists are *not* political scientists (even though they may well study the political systems of – say – highland Burma); they are social scientists, *not* researchers in the humanities.<sup>4</sup>

When departmental divisions are based on disciplinary boundaries, as outlined here, cross- and inter-disciplinary research tends to be inhibited by structural factors. One way around this dilemma is to create cross-cutting regional or common interest research centres. These enable all scholars in a particular institution who specialize in – say – one aspect of Japanese society and culture, or the general phenomenon of – say – creative industries, to come together to discuss their research and plan future activities. The application for research funding that resulted in the formation of *©reative Encounters* came about because of just such an informally constituted centre.

Nevertheless, disciplinary and methodological differences still exist, as I made clear at the beginning of this talk, and it is these that must somehow be adopted and adapted if those involved are to move towards a truly inter-disciplinary research programme. Probably the only way to overcome disciplinary boundaries is by working together closely with colleagues from other disciplines, but this will only come about if those colleagues (including oneself, of course) are prepared to be flexible in their thinking and practices, and to move socially and intellectually from the security of the centre to the edge of their discipline, and physically away from the building in which their department is housed. Inter-disciplinarity is the long pole that a tightrope walker uses to maintain her balance on the high wire of the unknown.

Which then raises the question: should disciplines be maintained at all in this 'postmodern' world? Lewis Coser (1997: 349-351) remarks on the

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<sup>4</sup> Maybe this is not the best discipline to cite as an example. In some countries, like Denmark, anthropology is viewed as a humanity, and not a social science.



geographical fragmentation of intellectual life in the United States and suggests that its cohesiveness comes from an agglomeration of intellectual, art, media, political and cultural worlds. A similar argument can be put forward in favour of retaining disciplinary departments (although the Copenhagen business School has very few). The survival and continued development of clusters of ideas and practices associated with different disciplines are, as Ulf Hannerz (2010: 41) argues, 'best served by their having their own institutional power base'. Indeed, he goes on, one structural factor underpinning American universities' global pre-eminence in terms of academic excellence is that they tend to 'support *both* disciplinary departments and various cross-cutting formats for interdisciplinary encounters' (ibid.). Disciplines, then, are a double-edged sword.

A second factor working against inter-disciplinarity is the academic publishing industry, which is linked to department structure in the sense that individual departments tend to nurture distinctive 'cultures of production' (Clemens et al 1995: 462). The marketization of the education system initiated by the Thatcher Government in the UK from the mid-1980s has brought about a revolution in academics' thoughts and practices. Two of the latter strike me as pertinent to this discussion of inter-disciplinary research. Firstly, the focus on the quantitative measurement of academic achievement has led to our publishing far more than we once did in academic journals. In certain social science disciplines like sociology, it has been the norm for scholars to write both journal articles and books. However, in recent years, there has been a trend whereby where once we wrote monographs, or chapters in books (still a norm in anthropology), now we are called upon to publish articles in journals. This trend may well be connected to the kinds of educational institution in which we are employed - public or private, elite or otherwise - as well as to our individual career paths and genders (Clemens et al 1995), but journal publication is fast becoming the norm because of the development of the citation index as a further method of quantifying and measuring perceived 'quality' (although precisely who perceives what kind of quality is a moot

point). Journals and the citation index are mutually constitutive and mutually reinforcing.

Secondly, the publishing industry has taken advantage of the government-inspired demand for quantifiable and measurable research outputs by increasing exponentially the number of journals it publishes.<sup>5</sup> This enables researchers of all kinds to find an outlet for their published work *somewhere* (even if it is not in journals ranked as 'top' by committees of academics in different disciplines).<sup>6</sup> Back in 1990, at the beginning of the explosion in journal titles, it was estimated that there were 100 journals relevant to sociologists; and that if each published an average of five articles an issue over four issues a year, those in the discipline could read 2,000 articles a year or 50,000 over a 25 year period (Dogan and Pahre 1990: 27). No wonder we cannot keep up with developments in our own discipline, let alone in those of our colleagues!

At the same time, however, precisely because they take the form of *articles* published in *journals*, most academic writings nowadays are obliged to follow a specified stylistic form which demands, broadly speaking, a problem formulation, literature review, specific research data input, discussion, and conclusion. Because many of these journals in one way or another adhere to a disciplinary or regional perspective, the articles that they publish have to fall in line with that perspective.<sup>7</sup> This leads to two tendencies. Firstly, submissions that might appeal to both management studies *and* anthropology, or economics *and* organization studies are unlikely to be accepted for publication, since journals tend to address readers in *either* one *or* the other discipline. Secondly,

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<sup>5</sup> In 1990, the *World List of Scientific Journals* alone listed close to 100,000 titles (Dogan and Pahre 1990: 164).

<sup>6</sup> Precisely because their researchers are publishing in all sorts of different journals, university and other higher education institute libraries feel obliged to purchase these journals. Publishers have taken advantage of this feeling of obligation to increase library (and, to a lesser extent, individual) subscription rates at least three fold, and in some cases, tenfold, over the past two decades, and thereby make a handsome profit. As one of my informants in the publishing industry put it: 'academic journals are a licence to print money.'

<sup>7</sup> And if they start to encourage the use of jargon, of course, they immediately cut off one scholarly community from another (Dogan and Pahre 1990: 31).

submissions tend to address issues that are central to the discipline, rather than 'views from the edge'. As one editor of *Sociological Forum* once pointed out:

'It appears to me that if an author writes an article on a relatively narrow subject, uses commonly accepted methods, and does not try to attack major theoretical issues, the chances of the article being accepted are significantly greater than if the author is more ambitious.' (Cole 1993: 337)

This is not to say that crossover by, say, an anthropologist into management studies is impossible; just that it is very difficult. Neither university organizational structures nor journal publications, generally speaking, encourage inter-disciplinarity. Yet there *are* hybrid journals (the *Journal of Economic History* and *Business and Society* come to mind). It is towards these that we need to direct our attention. In the area of creative industries, for example, those of us doing sociological, historical, psychological or other disciplinary forms of research on fashion can submit our papers to *Fashion Theory*, and others of us interested in the production and marketing of pottery, carpets and musical instruments can approach the *Journal of Modern Crafts*. Similar avenues for publication are available in art, design, film, music, theatre and other creative industries. This is possible precisely because the study of creative industries is not (yet) confined to a single disciplinary perspective, but is seeking to define itself – in exactly the same way as some of the objects of its research ('film studies', for example, or 'fashion-ology' [Kawamura 2005]).

There is one very bright sunspot on the ever approaching horizon and that is electronic publishing. Already libraries purchase e-journals rather than paper copies, so that it is possible to conduct data base searches – in the way that Ana Alačovska and I did for our four volume set of readings in the creative industries – which reveal all kinds of unexpected journal titles publishing information relevant to one's research. For example, we found articles on some aspect of creative industries in such journals as *American Anthropologist* and the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography; Theory and Society, Poetics*, and the *Journal of Philosophy; European Societies* and *New German Critique; Area, boundary,*

*Emergence, Fibreculture, Kenyon Review, and Phi Delta Kappan; the Journal of Economic Perspectives, Economic Development Quarterly, and Capital & Class; Industrial and Labor Relations Review and Work, Employment and Society; Consumption, Markets and Culture and the Journal of Consumer Culture; Cultural Studies, Media, Culture & Society, International Journal of Cultural Policy and Journal of Cultural Research; American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Current Sociology, and the Sociology Quarterly; American Behavioral Scientist and Organization Science; and a few more 'odds-and-sods' like Geografiska Annaler, Global Networks, Information, Communication & Society, the Journal of Arts Management, Law & Society, Journalism Studies, the Library Quarterly, Popular Music and Social Text. Three dozen journals publishing on creative industries (and there are others like Human Relations, Journal of Management Studies, International Journal of Cultural Studies, and so on from which we chose not to select articles for one reason or another) cannot be all bad. But it does raise an issue: should there be a journal dedicated to the field of creative industries where all those in different disciplines make contributions and feed off one another's ideas and practices?*

There are arguments both for and against such a development. One argument against such a journal would point to previous history of journal publication and note that journals tend in the long run to become the focal point for a few who address issues deemed to be 'central' as a result of articles previously published therein. Views from the edge will, then, become views from the centre. This in itself will lead to the customary paradox that areas deemed central to a potentially emergent discipline ('creative industries studies'?) and accorded intellectual prestige by those publishing (or trying to publish) in that journal will be 'those least likely to connect with other disciplines and audiences' (Clemens et al 1995: 481).

Given that 'what we write and where we publish may be taken as signals of who we are and how we think' (Clemens et al 1995: 433), I would propose that journals are not the answer here. Rather, we should aim to write more

*books*. Books allow us to introduce more qualitative data;<sup>8</sup> they also allow us to explore subjects outside or on the edge of central disciplinary interests. As a result, books tend to reach wider audiences and to move beyond the policing of evaluation standards employed by journals. And yet, at the same time, those who by (gendered) inclination or by training prefer to write books rather than journal articles find themselves at the mercy of government-instigated research assessment methods which belittle the importance of books *vis-à-vis* refereed journal articles.<sup>9</sup>

So where does all this leave me? As confused as where I started this talk. There are no clear answers to my quest for inter-disciplinarity, except, perhaps, that which says that I am aiming too high and that there is ultimately no such thing. All I can aim for is a fusion between two, at the most, three fairly closely related disciplines. In other words, we should, perhaps, consider whatever intellectual enterprise in which we engage (anthropology, geography, sociology, economics) not as distinct disciplines, but as overlapping fields of practices nested in multiple educational and publishing institutions.

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<sup>8</sup> Paradoxically, however, it is books that present *quantitative* data that tend to attract the attention of people outside a particular discipline (Clemens et al 1995: 474).

<sup>9</sup> In Denmark, it is currently being suggested that single-authored books are worth 8 points, and an article in a refereed journal either 5 or 3 points (depending on an 'independently constituted' committee's rating of every journal as of first or second rank in single, or groups of related, disciplines). All academics employed in tertiary education institutions, therefore, will, like combatants in the Eurovision song Contest, have their scholarship reduced to a system of combined points upon which they will be judged and compared. If extended to an international comparison, this could lead to such likely, though somewhat ridiculous, results as *Latour 10 points, dix points; Williamson 3 points, trois points; Moeran 21 points, vingt-et-un points*. In this way will a Nobel prizewinner succumb to an 'edgy' anthropologist!

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