CHEAD

CHEAD Annual Conference 2018

Creative Ecologies and Sustainable Industries

The UK's creative sectors are facing many challenges in the years ahead. Increased global competition, Brexit, international mobility, concerns about the skills pipeline, regional development priorities, the resurgence of a focus on just two economically high-performing creative sectors in the Industrial Strategy, Higher Education regulatory reorganisation and the rise of metrics are all playing out simultaneously. Educating for creative ecologies and sustainable industries feels perplexing in the midst of this. Teaching and researching in Art and Design in such a moment is challenging on many levels:

- Firstly, how do we define a creative ecology or a sustainable industry, for that matter? Is it a UK ecology, or wider? How do we address the creative ecologies that operate within devolved parts of the UK, where cultural policy is more consciously and, possibly, confidently linked to community consciousness? Do we focus upon a technocratic definition, emphasising the added value of the creative industries and the broader creative workforce? Do we accentuate conversations about the importance of the social wellbeing facilitated by culture generation at all levels of our society, interlinked through webs of creative action? Or do we find creative ways of going around the seemingly insurmountable obstacles, encouraging students and colleagues to be the agents of possibility in preferable futures? Or, indeed, do all of these questions together compose the heart of the creative ecology?

- Secondly, given how elusive our outcomes can be in a world increasingly depending on 'big data' and metrics, how do we comply with, redefine, and develop a data-measurement base that allows us to demonstrate to funders the impact of such an ecology, at the same time as creating new forms of evidence which engender confidence amongst creative practitioners? How might the concept of *boundary crossing* enable the articulation and possibility of more connections between Art and Design education, publically funded arts, the creative industries and everyday creativity in a sustainable manner?

- Thirdly, how do we make new creative ecologies out of insights drawn from the interdisciplinary research that has been emerging over the last decade? Is STEAM fundamentally a creative ecology imperative? Will sustainable industries emerge from it? How might fine art as well design weave threads of criticality and empathy amongst the specialist foci.

- Fourthly, what happens to our existing creative ecologies as technology and automation disappear hitherto traditional jobs?

This conference aims to facilitate exploration of these questions and more. It is a timely intervention that cuts across overly simplistic definitions of the creative industries, recognising the importance of soft power and the role of creatives in driving social, political, and economic imperatives.