

Module: Mapping the Creative Economy

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## How important are diversity and different approaches to the creative industries: an analysis of the work of David Bowie & Kate Tempest

*“The most important thing for an artist is to pick through the debris of a culture, to look at what’s been forgotten or not really taken seriously. Once something is categorised and accepted, it becomes part of the tyranny of the mainstream, and it loses its potency. It’s always been that way for me: the most imprisoning thing is to feel one self pigeonholed”.* David Bowie, 1998

Introduction of this piece of work aims to consider how much the creative industries rely on diversity and different approach as trademark. Two artists in two different times embody this attempt to frame the topic. They express two -perhaps even more- fields of the creative economy: music and poetry within the publishing sector. David Bowie - the most important influent pop-culture icon - and Kate Tempest - poet disguised by rapper - are meant to be the two paradigms in this journey by conceiving their career through lenses on few key circumstances of their work and life path.

The ever changing relationship between creative space and cultural movement can be the pointer to look at the concept of culture. The world's cultural values system has been constantly in flux. If it keeps in view this approach arguably the self needs space to forge, to share, to become inspired by the surrounding social ecosystem. Consequently the creative person potentially might want to behave in different roles within the society by crafting identities and question them. This background joins up the Creative Industry landscape, zooming in on creative clusters. Therefore it takes into consideration the concept of the geography of creativity.

By endorsing the Nesta's researcher shortcoming regarding the Creative Industry and its classifications, the analysis intends to scope the idea of creativity clusters. In the Manifesto for the Creative Economy which Nesta released in 2013, the statistics show that London and the South East UK account for 43 per cent of the UK's creative economy workforce. The new funding the Nesta's report proposes – a £ 200 million programme to develop the Creative clusters - will enable regional

and local partnerships to evolve their creative activity in a way that is required to their strengths and needs.

However, the London environment can be outlined as a “catalysing place where people, relationships, ideas and talents can travel in an environment that offers diversity, stimuli and freedom of expression, inter-personal exchanges that nurture individuals’ uniqueness and identity” [Nest report, 2009 the geography of creativity]. This document specifically analyses two artists that are both connected to the South East London. Bowie was born in Brixton. Tempest in Brockley. South London has become more diverse since Bowie was growing up there in the 1950s and 60s. The experiences of London of Bowie and Tempest are obvious themes in their work. It will be analysed contextually how diversity and different approaches have impacted different artists and generations.

The following Music and Publishing industry overview will put in the prospective where the two performers belong to. Music Industry is increasingly a paramount asset in the United Kingdom. A small island but a massive nonstop audio amplifier in the worldwide music. ‘Measuring Music’ is an annual report released by UK Music which assess how British economy benefits from music industry. The last one released in September 2014 shows that the total music industry GVA (Gross Value Added) contribution is £3.8BN in 2013. It is one of the most investment-intensive industries in the economy, with record labels historically investing upwards to 20% of revenue in artists and repertoire. Record labels and publishers invested more than £450 million in 2012. This data is a tool to the Government in order to invest more in such Creative Industries as Music. Always according to UK Music’s research, the core UK music industry has been estimated as £72 million in 2012. Previously to 2012 the Government bodies did not have such figures to fully understand the importance of the music sector for prosperity and employability.

For the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) the Publishing industry is on the list of the 13 creative industries. According to the 2014 DCMS report, the United Kingdom is home to some of the world’s biggest publishing companies. As stated by the most recent data released by The Publishers Association (PA), the value of the UK book publishing market dropped by 2.2% in 2013, despite observing growth of 5.4% in the previous year.

In the face of the growth of the digital market over the past few years, traditional printed paperback and hardback titles have confirmed to be the most popular formats among respondents. E-reader accounts for 40.7% and e-book is up to 24.3% of these kind of books purchased over the 12 months

ending December 2013. In comparison, just 17.7% purchased an e-book during 2013, with even fewer (3.2%) buying an audio book over the same time period.

The publishing sector includes the production of poems. Poetry can be defined as the art form of a poem. Borrowing William Shakespeare's quotation it can also be defined as : "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven; and as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name; such tricks hath strong imagination." Thus, the analysis of the two paradigms begins with Kate Tempest.

In 1985 Kate Calvert was born and grew up in Lewisham, South-East London, then the family moved to Brockwell, where she still lives. Her father was a builder who learnt new skills to become a lawyer. Early years of her life were fairly comfortable, nevertheless the area around her was diverse and complex. In the beginning the arty family's background fostered Kate's interests towards literature and art, thank to the epic stories from the Roman and Greek empires told by her father. Her involvement with education seemingly recalls Ken Robinson vision about how school kills creativity. In secondary school she totally rejected the learning system as she was interested in playing and listening music. So she found hip-hop and rapping outside the school environment, so that her inner need to learning by doing changed her life. Moreover, this passion blossomed in a sense of community as she built up positive and fruitful friendships to share ideas and interests. At age of 14, her curiosity weaved with a friend's family whose jamaican heritage was inspirational. Listening and seeing a very different kind of culture, of storytelling and music, this life experience became a source in her natural growth in the rapper career. Shortly she turned into Shakespearian name of Tempest.

By looking at her hectic commitment it might be assumed that Tempest is a former poet who turned to hip-hop. Her goal has always been to be a rapper. The latter started at the age of 16 and carrying throughout the Goldsmith university pathway where she also was a dedicated political activist and fundraiser. Disillusioned she was aware of the need to adjust her vision, by crafting the message's effort with different approach. She undertook the first shift by touring her spoken word for several years. But British hip-hop was not an easy field at all for Tempest who could not sign any record deal.

Yet, in 2006 a friend introduced her to poems and convinced her to perform. She appeared at a poetry contest and started playing her lyrics without her band ‘Sound of Rum’. In little place in Carnaby Street, the audience listened to something different, it was blistering. Suddenly her production begun through subjects, the lives of the gods and monsters of Greek mythology. Most likely it is not what you might not expect straight from an urban former rapper whose main influence is Wu Tang Clan. Kate Tempest became the youngest-ever winner of the Ted Hughes prize for innovation in poetry for her “spoken story” *Brand New Ancients*, combination or rap, poetry and storytelling. It is a play about empathy. In her poem the gods portait the intergenerational South London families. The characters from Greek myth that stand for education, childhood, politics are actualised into the present. In the other poem *Hold Your Own* the story of Tiresias, Hera, Zeus depicts womanhood and childhood. Her publisher, Picador Poetry, asked her to record an audio version, in the hope of reaching new Tempest fans who do not usually buy poetry.

Kate Tempest has a genuine burning passion. Her writing and performing process comes unwittingly in an incredible flow of enticing talent that takes the audience with her. She was named by the Poetry Book Society as one of the 20 Next Generation poets in September 2014. Additionally she was listed to win the Mercury prize 2014 for her debut album, *Everybody Down* where she describes the lives of three friends struggling with loneliness and insecurity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in London. Clearly in the poetry and theatre world she is known as one of the most exciting young writers working in Britain today.

Her debut novel *The Bricks that Built the Houses* is to be published by Bloomsbury, leading independent publishing house in UK, in 2016. Kate Tempest’s talent, at age 29, travels accross edges as a rapper, poet, musician, social activist, dramatist and novelist. This ability to move through many worlds mirrors the different approaches that are important to expand diversity in creativity.

The wizardry of the music latitude has always managed to capture a snapshot of symbols, behaviours, artifacts of any era and culture. Through artistic performance musicians nestle in their messages meaniful new codes of the culture. They empower the audiance, the common people to grasp what we would let slide away instead. This can be drawn in the everlasting ego of David Bowie.

David Bowie was born as David Robert Jones on the 8th of January 1947 in Brixton, London. At the age of six he moved to suburban Bromley, in Kent. During his youth in the outskirts, London was the perfect scenario for him to escape from the boredom in the capital's environs. His teenager rebellion was shaped by the crucial tension between British and American popular culture. The coming of mass culture was powerful around the mid-1950s: circulation newspaper, magazines and cinema, jukeboxe, television. This cultural movement alienated people and pulled them away from the sense of togetherness. The 'Americanisation' was the real push of Bowie's generation to react to the cultural imperialism. His revolution umbrella of personalities carried on throughout his life.

Just like the Marvel comics hero, Superman, Batman he designed a new cartoon figure, which was in his first stage Ziggy Stardust. With the same name of the album , Ziggy was on its peak with songs like "Starman" from the album "*The rise and the fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars*" in 1972. Ziggy Stardust and The Thin White Duke personas were the sides of his smart and flamboyant die to waken the society. In 1976 Bowie said about himself "Bowie was never meant to be. He's like a Lego kit. I'm convinced I wouldn't like him, because he's too vacuous and undisciplined. There's no definitive David Bowie". [David Buckley ( 2005) –Strange Fascination Davide Bowie: the definitive story pag.1] In the 1970's bisexual pop stars such as Edith Piaf, Janis Joplin and Little Richard did hide their sexuality away from the media. Bowie was the first gay British pop star. Culturally it was shocking for that time. The first bisexual pop star also created a fictional character to trigger an anti-rock ideology attack which he begun in *Hunky Dory* album in 1976.

His interest passed through different cultures outside the Anglo-American rock. Bowie's Ziggy elevated the Japanese culture because he was fascinated by Kabuki styles. He performed wearing that style to promote *Aladdin Sane* record in 1973. Therefore he helped with internationalising pop. That world itself required to be shaken and reshaped. Bowie teased the world of rock during those years. David Bowie disguised by Ziggy or the other way around, drifted into identities, sexualities and musical genres like a guru, a prophet. On and off the stage he introduced us how the popular culture meant to be in the next thirty years: a blend of ideas and styles, uncertainty with unpredictable directions in life within adaptive capacity.

His first wife Angie Bowie, born Angela Mary Barnett, commented "David did a wonderful job of broadcasting sexual freedom and personal liberation. He shone his light into a lot of dark places in people and helped them see themselves - and maybe love themselves - a little better" [David

Buckley ( 2005) –Strange Fascination Davide Bowie: the definitive story]. Angie Bowie’s words seem to echo and paraphrase Hegel’s vision “A person must translate his freedom into an external sphere in order to exist as Idea”.

David Bowie’s career was disseminated by collaborations with many artists. In the early stage of his path the meeting with Brian Eno was importantly meaningful. In 1976 the recording session and creative process for *Low*’s record was marked by the Oblique Strategies cards. Brian Eno prototyped this idea with Peter Schmidt in 1975 after they met at Ipswich University. Each card – over the one hundred musical dilemmas – included a little aphorism suggesting a possible route to the next creative step. This random process was highly useful to Bowie. Mistakes, influences, were to be joined together in the making process to plan accidents and then react consequently during the recording process. Bowie said: “..Brian (Eno) really opened my eyes to the idea of processing, to the abstract of communication”. [David Buckley ( 2005) –Strange Fascination Davide Bowie: the definitive story, pag. 261]

Tony Visconti, Bowie’s producer for long time, stated about the artistic merger “Eno was Bowie’ Zen master”. As a poliedric artist, Bowie was a messenger of how to reinvent yourself through the unpredictable changes. Oblique strategies cards is an analogy of how Bowie’s career was focused yet on self-promotion but putting forward a whole philosophy along with the music. Bowie was living proof that our personalities are permanently in flux, consciously being made and remade, not fixed in stone by age, class, or gender.

Bowie’s production of records was boundless: 26 studio albums, 9 live studio albums, 26 compilations. Focusing on the first era until 1980, it propelled the adolescents to deal with their imaginary world as well as emotional crisis, especially when you are not a child anymore. David Bowie’s theatrical and extreme gestures allowed the search for identity - hugely unforgettable for those who grew in the 1970’s.

After ten years of silence, David Bowie, out of the blue and without any promotion, launched his single “*Where are we now ?*” on his website on his 66th birthday, 8th of Janury 2013. The lyric and the video itself expresses a mix of nostalgia and memories of his time in Berlin. The single is a self-reflective moment about his creativity path. The album “*Next day*” was released in March 2013. That was his last mysterious token of endless contributions in the fields of art, fashion, style, sexual exploration and social commentary.

Diversity is the cornerstone for creativity, it has had an influence on these two different artists - David Bowie and Kate Tempest - as well as on two different generations. The traits of their artistic production present similarities to using fictional characters in order to express various point of views about social and cultural contexts. In both performers the theatre is one of the creative environments where their approach has been shaped.

In the present reality in the creative industries the organisations try to figure out how to face the future. Tanuja Amarasuriya of Theatre Bristol said: "Believe that a successful collaboration is where your collaborator gets more from it than you do. Challenges facing theatres and theatre organisations in the coming months are very discouraging. Arts Council England funding is tight, and may get tighter after the election in May 2015". Also Rufus Norris, National Theatre boss, paves the way to a new challenge with the following statement: "In terms of gender imbalance and cultural diversity, it will be interesting to see where we can go". Creative organizations need to work on diversity in management and be open to different age, gender, skin and other entities which act in different spheres. This new approach would be essential to engage the community and get it involved more dynamically.

The diversity in creativity depends on styles and levels. The evolution of this concept in the last two decades faces new social and cultural problems. They might require more structure in our inborn creativity which can make ideas more palatable. Creative diversity means to encourage the ability to see through other creativity's people. The resistance to change in teams and organizations could be assessed in more valuable way by acknowledging this progress.

Kate Tempest, now 28 years old, has crossed boundaries as a rapper, poet, musician, social activist, dramatist and novelist. These different approaches recall the will to emerge into a natural multi-disciplinary artistic journey and career. Her works are used to teachers to introduce kids to Greek Mythology in school. She is triggering new ways to foster creativity with different approaches.

On the other side, David Bowie can represent a business model for Creative Industries growth. His everlasting wave of rebellion came from a forced cultural imperialism. Kate Tempest is inspired by life experience and such values as integration, community, diversity. She embeds the true and deep need to speak up your mind and ring the bell for the enticing battle of the people's power against the old power, restricted in static form avoiding human centered progress. If David Bowie was "the first

british solo superstar of the art school era” [David Buckley ( 2005) –Strange Fascination Davide Bowie: the definitive story] , Kate Tempest has been nominated as one of the 20 next generation poet. This document does not want to compare the two artists. From the analysis of their work it can be assumed that South London definitely could be one of the leading creative clusters. The creative industry more importantly needs keep allowing access to different approaches and diversity. Diversity is a huge catalyst tool to impact the present moment and the next generation.

*“We live in crazy times. You can’t tell a story without it feeling political. Things the government are doing worry me, but I don’t think standing up on stage and saying that will make a difference. And I don’t want to not talk to people who support David Cameron. I want to talk to those people. I want to talk to the people who don’t want to listen.” Kate Tempest, 2014*

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