

Editorial

This edition of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management* emerged out of a series of events initiated through a partnership between the School of Culture and Communications, University of Melbourne and the Global Cities Research Institute, RMIT University, involved scholars from other universities, and in collaboration with the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance. Funded through the contributions from both lead institutions, an industry facing day-long symposium “Work & Life in the Creative Economy” (August 2014) brought together practitioners from across the arts and cultural industry. This was followed by a day-long publishing seminar “Precarious Labour in the Cultural Sector” (December 2014) which explored the research implications of the experiences outlined in the earlier symposium. A number of the research projects presented at the seminar were then further explored, developed as articles, submitted to peer review and now appear in this volume. While scholars shared theoretical framings for their research of precarity and the cultural and creative industries, the specific sectoral focus of each analysis provides rich and deep insights.

The volume commences with Brian Long’s *Forms of precarity and the orchestral musician*, what might appear to be a counterintuitive focus on the employment experiences of orchestral musicians. After all, as has been long understood from Baumol’s “cost disease”, orchestral musicians have relatively high levels of job security and many enjoy full-time employment. However, as Long’s article demonstrates, insecurity and precarity is experienced in its own way. Long draws attention to the complex gradations of precarity, the full spectrum of work related experiences are barely captured by a model which posits secure and insecure tenure of employment as at the margins of precarity. As he vividly conveys, orchestral musicians have high rates of work-related injury, extremely unsociable working hours, and engage in substantial amounts of unpaid labour so as to maintain a high level of skill, not only to obtain employment – but also retain existing employment. This is a form of self-governing precarity, a personal imperative in an industry for which there is rarely any other outlet for their skills. The necessity to maintain regular employment is reinforced by the fact that training for orchestral musicianship is long, arduous and increasingly expensive giving rise to substantial debts, which can only repaid through ongoing employment.

Kate MacNeill and Colleen Chen’s *Visual artists and creative labour: intellectual property rights as a basis for individual and collective interventions*, examines the opportunities for visual artists to pursue their moral and financial interests through collective interventions at particular strategic moments in the value chain of the production of visual arts. Visual art is widely regarded as an individual pursuit, and indeed the actual production of an artwork is frequently undertaken alone. However they note that the production of value is a more collaborative activity and rests on the circulation of the artwork, and increasingly the artist, in the field of exhibitions, art fairs, biennales and galleries. MacNeill and Chen identify the inclusion of art in an exhibition as an opportunity for artists to combine and represent their common interests. An example from Canada demonstrates the collective interest that can arise in the relationship between artists whose work is exhibited by a specific museum or gallery. In this instance, artists obtained the right to collectively negotiate with the National Gallery of Canada over the rate of exhibition fees. The 2014 Sydney Biennale is used to demonstrate the leverage available to artists selected to participate in the Biennale; sharing an objection to the value that their art would attach to the corporate sponsor of the event they combined to boycott the event, thereby

The Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management is available at: apjacm.arts.unimelb.edu.au
and is produced by the School of Culture and Communication:
www.culture-communication.unimelb.edu.au at the University of Melbourne: www.unimelb.edu.au

leading to the severance of the sponsorship agreement. These two events are presented as opportunities to rethink the way in which visual artists may find a common purpose through which to further shared ethical and financial interests.

The New Zealand-based production of *The Hobbit* provides a rich case study for an analysis of the power wielded by transnational film production and the importance of transnational labour organisation in Bridget Conon's article. *The Hobbit law: precarity and market citizenship in cultural production* is a forensic analysis of the New Zealand government's efforts to ensure that Peter Jackson's production company made "The Hobbit" in New Zealand. The International Labour Organisation had already observed the trend towards weaker worker protection as a result of transnational film production. In the case of *The Hobbit* the rights of workers were seen as antipathetic to the government's project of ensuring that the production occurred in New Zealand and, as Conon demonstrates, in effect compromised the working conditions of domestic labour through the passage of anti-union legislation. Comprising a package of financial support and stripping unions of the right to represent workers, the *Hobbit* law is now seen as the means whereby future projects can be accommodated with minor extensions to this legislation. One positive outcome of this action has been an increased awareness of the need for collective representation and an increase in union membership.

Structural change in the creative industries sector is most often seen as a consequence of the digital revolution, and the film industry is no exception as Maude Choko demonstrates in her article: *The impact of new technologies on the effectiveness of the Canadian Act Respecting the Professional Status and Conditions of Engagement of Performing, Recording and Film Artists*. In particular she highlights the fact that the expanding area of self-production lies outside the scope of legislation. Whereas a commercial producer, in their dealings with the film workforce, is subject to the Act, and negotiates directly with a distributor, self-production heightens the power imbalance in that the self-employed director/producer must negotiate directly with a distributor. Based on an argument that the founding principles of the Act are to redress the power imbalance between parties in the film industry, Choko argues that the increasing power of the distributor in relation to a self-employed producer necessitates a rethinking of the Act's provisions.

Holly Patrick and Kate Elks also examine the personal experience of precarity, but in an entirely different context – that of traditional media outlets – in their article: *From battery hens to chicken feed: the perceived precarity and identity of Australian journalists*. Basing their analysis on detailed interviews with journalists, they present a nuanced analysis of precarity as it is both understood and experienced by salaried journalists and freelance journalists. Among salaried journalists, three main causes of precarity were identified: the breakdown of the traditional newsroom culture, lack of opportunities to progress within metropolitan media outlets and job rotations that occur in large corporations across different geographic locations. As Patrick and Elks observe, the experience of these structural and organisational shifts leave salaried journalists with a sense of a continual threat of redundancy, a highly competitive work environment, and trading pay for location. Electing to work in a metropolitan city requires accepting a pay cut to do so, and in order to advance their career requires imposing a form of precarity on themselves. Frequent relocation gives rise to a lack of personal security in terms of a home base and solid relationships. In an original twist, Patrick and Elks observe that this perception of precarity is not universally shared. The research identified a number of journalists for whom this structural change has created opportunities and who are embracing the way in which widespread digital media alternatives ensure greater flexibility and more openings for those who can meet the ever-increasing demand for content.

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