



SATSU Brown Bag Seminar Series

Summer 2010

Wentworth College, W/222

1:15 – 2:15

Tuesday 4 May 2010

David Hesmondhalgh (University of Leeds)

Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries

There has recently been substantial disagreement on the quality of work offered by the cultural and creative industries (Florida 2002, Ross 2009). This paper reports on research (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010) which aims to intervene in these debates by examining what kinds of jobs and occupations are really on offer in this sector. First, we have interviewed and observed creative workers across a number of cultural industries (television, music and magazine publishing) and genres, whereas most previous studies have been confined to one particular cultural or related industry. Second, we have focused on workers' reports of their subjective experience of the quality of their working lives, and our observations of their work, but we contextualise these 'subjective'

data by looking at the economic, political, organisational and cultural dimensions that shape and refract these experiences. While there is no space to offer a systemic account of structural causality, we draw on other work that would contribute to such an account, including our own previous research (for example, Hesmondhalgh 2007). Third, we seek to clarify the normative dimensions of creative labour. Put simply, in our view, neither the celebrants of creative labour nor the critical pessimists have been sufficiently clear about what constitutes good work and bad work, and this has inhibited debate and understanding about the meaning of contemporary creative labour. The result is a lack of political clarity about what forms better creative work would take, about what transformations and reforms are being implicitly argued for.

Friday 7 May 2010

Lucas Cornips (Research intern Maastricht University)

Performing Futures of Regenerative Medicine

In this presentation I will report on the research I carried out with Dr. Michael Morrison for the REMEDIÉ project. REMEDIÉ examines the commercial development of Regenerative Medicine (RM), an umbrella term used to describe a number of emerging technologies and practices, such as stem cells, tissue engineering and gene therapy. These technologies are united by the effort to not just heal the living body but to reconfigure it at the level of tissues and cells, using novel biomaterials to stimulate the human body's inherent capacity for self-repair. Biotech companies have taken up the challenge of innovation to turn basic science of RM into viable products. In doing so, they capitalise on the promise of these technologies. As has been argued in the sociology of expectations, the creation and dissemination of technological expectations and promises is crucial to the driving and shaping of technological innovation – particularly in emerging technological fields such as regenerative medicine.

Our research critically assessed the dynamics of expectations by investigating a set of news articles related to Regenerative Medicine. We collected and systematically analysed 200 articles from dedicated biotechnology industry news outlets over the course of 2009. These articles play an important role in performing and disseminating expectations, especially by translating the technical claims of regenerative medicine for an audience of potential investors. The analysis of our data set reveals how actors envision different directions for regenerative medicine, and it discusses perceived opportunities in the development of RM products and therapies, as well as potential barriers. Also, I will discuss how particular promissory and sometimes problematic futures are performed. This analysis aims to reveal how performing the future of RM involves the use of a number of rhetorical devices, such as a tendency to 'extrapolate', the employment of the 'pathway' concept, and the use of the notion of 'journey' and other metaphors.

Tuesday 11 May 2010

Vincenzo Pavone (and Flor Arias)

Pre-Implantation Genetic Testing in Spain: Beyond the Geneticization Thesis

In the past ten years, the genetic testing technologies associated with reproductive practices have experienced important scientific progress and have become widely used in a number of western countries. The case of pre-implantation genetic testing, for instance, is especially remarkable: a technique that was in the experimental stage in the late Nineties is becoming a routine practice in in-vitro fertilization processes. According to the ESHRE database, in 2005 nearly 6000 PGD had been performed in Europe, which correspond to around 5 per cent of all IVF cycles conducted in that year. The diffusion of PGD, however, is not homogenous across European countries, because some of them have prohibited its use, like Italy and Germany, and others, like France, do not show significant interest in their deployment. In contrast, Spain shows a remarkably different situation: 33 per cent of all the PGD performed in Europe in 2005 were actually carried out in Spain.

While mainstream bioethics addresses PGD from a patient choice perspective, emphasising reproductive autonomy, critical literature insists on the potential discrimination practices that this technology may encourage (quotes). Alternatively, other authors suggest approaching the diffusion of PGD from a different perspective, which insists on a process of geneticization currently affecting current research and medical practices (quotes). Yet, while general trends may exist, the diffusion of PGD shows remarkably different trends across European countries. As consequence, it seems that a number of national, legal, cultural, economic and political factors play a crucial role in the actual diffusion of PGD.

As a result, this study explores the role that these factors played in the emergence and diffusion of PGD in Spain. The study combines the analysis of juridical documents, national and local regulations, with semi-structured interviews to the past and present members of the National Assisted Reproduction Committee (CNRHA), which is in charge of PGD authorization in Spain since 1998. As a result, we come to the conclusion that the remarkable diffusion of PGD in Spain is strongly associated with the contingent interaction between the growing momentum enjoyed by embryonic stem cell research, which needs a growing amount of embryos for developing stem cell lines and a vibrant expansion of IVF business along the Mediterranean coast, whose new policy aims at offering IVF techniques to fertile couples with high maternal age or hereditary genetic mutations. In contrast to the geneticization thesis, genetic issues *per se* seem to play a minor role in the actual unfolding of the process, although the prevention of genetic diseases often constitutes the formal rationale for current extension of PGD from monogenic, early onset diseases to polygenic, late-onset ones.

Tuesday 18 May 2010

Paul Ellwood (Leeds University Business School)

“STIR” – Reflections on an Interdisciplinary Research Project

As a part of my PhD studies I’m participating in an interdisciplinary research programme called the Socio-Technical Integration Research (STIR) project (<http://cns.asu.edu/stir/>). Led from the *Centre for Nanotechnology in Society* at Arizona State University, this is a coordinated set of laboratory engagement studies to assess and compare the varying pressures on – and capacities for – nanotechnology laboratories to integrate broader societal considerations into their work.

The objectives of the STIR project as a whole include:

- To identify and compare external expectations and demands for laboratories to engage in responsible innovation
- Investigate and compare how interdisciplinary collaborations may assist in elucidating, enhancing or stimulating such innovation

The interdisciplinary focus of the STIR project is the one that exists between the natural scientists in nanotech labs, and the human scientists that make up the STIR group. As well as presenting my research-in-progress, I would like to offer some personal reflections on interdisciplinary research following my participation in STIR. I will also explore methodological issues that we have encountered in trying to make collective sense of our research.

Tuesday 25 May 2010

Liz Sourbut (University of York, Women's Studies)

The Ambiguous Property Status of Human Ova and In Vitro Embryos

My PhD thesis asks: 'Would the awarding of property rights in reproductive body parts be of benefit to the women who provide such body parts for the use of others?' Advances in medical technology mean that ova and *in vitro* embryos, amongst other things, can be used for research or therapeutic purposes and are becoming valuable commodities. Some feminist writers, e.g. Donna Dickenson, have argued that granting a limited set of property rights in their body parts would be of benefit to the female providers of such tissue, who frequently vanish from debates around the ethics of using ova and embryos in stem cell research. I argue that the property status of ova and embryos is determined not by their intrinsic properties but rather by context and the web of adult human relationships that surround them. The ova and embryos created in IVF clinics in the course of infertility treatment are not viewed as fungible objects by their progenitors. However, embryos used for research are much more fungible and as such look more like potential objects of property rights. Therefore I suggest that the current practice of sourcing ova and embryos from IVF clinics for research purposes should be re-evaluated. Contrary to the received wisdom that it is better to use 'spare' embryos that would otherwise be 'wasted' than to create embryos specifically for research, I argue that it is in fact more ethical for institutions to purchase ova, within a carefully regulated market, from women not currently engaged in their own family-building efforts and to use them in the laboratory to create embryos that have never been central to anyone's dreams of a family. In this context, property rights are appropriate, they should be deemed to exist from the moment the ova become separate objects in the world, and the oocyte providers should be entitled to a share of any profits to be made.

Tuesday 8 June 2010

Zeyi He (University of York)

Exploring Wikipedia via Analyzing Digital by-product Data

Social researchers, especially social researchers working on online issues have seen new opportunities to use digital by-product data to pursue their academic interests (Herring etc. 2005, Adamic & Adar, 2006); rather than transacting data from traditional interviews and surveys. Many scholars have emphasized the limitations intrinsic to using traditional fieldwork to explore online phenomena (Hampton, 1999; Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006). Other authors have suggested that a crisis looms in online research because such traditional methods for investigation may be unable to capture online dynamics (Marc. A. Smith, 1999; Savage & Burrows, 2007). However, there are few studies which actually demonstrate how digital by-product data can be used to complete our sociological hypothesis.

Due to majority of participants in online communities are anonymous or using “online name”, it is difficult to transact sample data by accessing individual participants. This paper exemplifies how to use digital by-product data to visualize the development of online communities, a task which cannot be completed through survey sampling. To test this methodology, author adopts the popular online community Wikipedia, which is generously offering its entire storing data free for academic research.

Wikipedia has been shaped by the work of millions of volunteer contributors and the development of information and communication technologies. It has become a significant example of mass collaboration as organizing information sharing amongst its millions of members. More importantly, all participations and contributions in Wikipedia can be traced and analyzed through its digital by-product data, which has been created as back-up by internet technologies.

This study attempts to investigate Wikipedia by analyzing different data produced in technological process. Through this process, author not just describe Wikipedia in quantitative, but also offers an overview of what is the normal trend for producing an individual article through mass collaboration. Through this study, author also discusses the advantages of using digital by-product data to explore online collaboration, and addresses the difficulties of adopting this data as a social scientist.

Tuesday 15 June 2010

Ilke Turkmendag PEALS (Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences Research Centre)

Providing and Acquiring Human Reproductive Tissue for Stem Cell Science: Socio-Ethical Issues from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

Reproductive tissue (e.g. eggs, embryos, fetal material) is crucial to developments in stem cell science. The balance between achieving effective protection of the providers of that tissue and achieving scientific goals has been subject to growing socio-ethical consideration (Haimes & Taylor, 2010).

The use of reproductive tissue raises a number of issues that are central to socio-ethical debates in different disciplines. For example, the impact of acquiring tissue (which mainly occurs through IVF clinics) on the clinic-patient relationship and the potential conflict of interest between treatment and research (Wainwright *et al.* 2006). Other, emerging, issues in this field are equally important, such as: 'intercorporeality' (Weiss, 1999) and fragmentation of the body; the contestability of the ontological status of human embryonic stem cells (Eriksson & Webster, 2008); the meanings and status of reproductive tissue and of new biological entities created by stem cell science (e.g. parthenotes, pseudoclones, cybrids, Watt, 2007); the relationship between embodiment, emotion and tissue (Shaw, 2008); questions about the global bio-economy in human tissue (Waldby, 2008).

This paper reports on progress in an ongoing project, 'IDARTSS' (Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Uses of Reproductive Tissue in Stem Cell Science) which is a constituent of a wider international research network, PARTS (Provision and Acquisition of Reproductive Tissue for Science). The project is addressing the above issues from an interdisciplinary perspective, whilst asking whether such an interdisciplinary approach enhances or dilutes our understanding of the core issues.

Tuesday 22 June 2010

Sandra Appleby-Arnold (Institute of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology at Goethe University, Frankfurt)

Cord Blood Socialities

During the last two decades, umbilical cord blood (CB) has been increasingly recognised and become accepted as a stem cell-rich source which can be used in, primarily, leukemia treatments as an alternative to bone marrow. Since then, there can be observed a worldwide development of public and private CB banks who either store donated CB units for allogeneic non-directed use, or, at a fee, for potential autologous (private) family use. Both public and private banks, however, do not only depend on the influence of political environments, legal frameworks, and medical systems, but are also embedded in the respective social environments and societies they act within, which may represent divergent public discourses about (professional) roles and accountability as well as personal attitudes and practices towards healthcare and biomedicine. In this contested field between continuously increasing biomedical knowledge (and ignorance) about CB, cognitive uncertainty, different role ascriptions, and putatively contradictory responsibilities between public donation and private storage – between “bio-cosmopolitanism” and “gift economy” – the various social actors (parents, doctors, midwives, CB bank employees etc.) develop specific strategies of (non)-knowledge management, reinvent or transform “traditional” values and practices in new biomedical contexts, and develop specific individual and collective identifications at the various stages of CB banking: from information gathering, decision-making, birth and extraction, processing and storage, to transplantation. My comparative study with Germany and the UK as societies under research – because of their contrasting difference in the individual perception and institutional construction of healthcare responsibilities and healthcare itself – is, thus, aiming at the resulting specific cultural productions. As a preliminary result, the most remarkable aspect of CB is, perhaps, its “mobility” and its potential to test and blur the boundaries between putative antipodes on a variety of levels, coordinating and representing the transformation processes that surround healthcare and biomedicine.