

Rural Revolution through Digital Media: Denzil Monk
Joining the dots between geographically isolated communities: how digital media can empower young and marginalized people to have an equal voice in local and global communities.

Abstract: This paper explores the upsurge of interest and investment in *digital media* in Cornwall over the last five years paying particular focus to the expansion of collaborative work between creative practitioners and young people: contextualised by the current framework of economic & community regeneration priorities at regional, national and European levels.

It examines the role digital media can (does) play in the regeneration of rural economies, depleted by the degeneration of traditional industries, and in understanding and improving community cohesion (high on UK & EU agendas.)

As the technology needed to create media content becomes ever more accessible, with young people at the cutting edge of democratising content generation and consumption – it looks beyond the current cycle of short term funded projects, at how effective practices in developing more equal accessibility to the global media stage can be successfully and sustainably embedded in the delivery of community services in Cornwall, and how the best rural and urban models can be shared.

ROOTS

As a major producer of tin and important trading centre for thousands of years, Kernow (Cornwall) has been an outward looking, innovative and for much of it's history an economically wealthy land, with strong traditional industries of farming, fishing and particularly mining. The significance of Cornish Mining has recently been recognised by UNESCO's designation in 2006 of World Heritage Site status to the Cornwall and West Devon mining landscape.

“Cornwall pioneered the transfer of the British industrial revolution overseas and thus played a key role in the growth of a global capitalist economy.

Not only did the region dominate the world's output of copper, tin and arsenic, but the overall technological, social and economic contribution made by Cornish mining was crucial to the development of modern industrial society. The Cornish mining industry also played a leading role in the diffusion of both metal mining and steam technology around the globe.”

(Cornwall Mining World Heritage 2006)

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Metal ore production suffered from global market forces at the end of the nineteenth century, resulting in mass emigration, with nearly a fifth of the working population leaving Cornwall, many going overseas to escape the poverty that ensued, sending money to sustain their families back home.

Then in the twentieth century, fishing, agriculture and the dwindling extraction industries have suffered. In 1998 South Crofty, the last Cornish tin mine, closed.

“New manufacturing industry has been attracted and this has helped to diversify the economy, although the manufacturing sector remains much smaller than in England and Wales. As a result, the range of job opportunities is generally more limited than in many other parts of the country. The service sector has shown particularly strong growth in recent years and accounted for 75% of employees in 1998.”

(Cornwall County Council 2001)

Recently (2006) Cornwall’s largest private sector employer, the China Clay firm Imerys announced 700 job cuts– a devastating blow to the St Austell area.

A blind faith in tourism over shadowed any sensible economic transition from these traditional industries and has left a Cornwall struggling to keep it’s head above the waves of second homers, folk retiring or relocating, and an aging population.

The reality is that Cornwall currently has the lowest Gross Value Added¹ in the UK (GVA per head £10,400 compared with UK average of £16,500) indicating a low level of economic activity. Cornwall has recorded the biggest house price rises over the past 10 years with a 268 per cent gain in the average price from £53,081 in 1996 to £195,388 in 2006 (£232,624 in Penwith – compared with the average wage of £19,760) 13,500 of these are second homes (nearly 6% of homes, collectively worth about £3Billion.)

The lack of opportunities for young people presented by this situation creates a climate of low expectation, resentment and a steady migration of talent and entrepreneurialism out of Cornwall.

The frustration is expressed through graffiti on defunct shop windows, bridges and signs the length of Cornwall, calling for “Proper Jobs, not Tourist Jobs” and “Cornish Homes not Second Homes”. With such a dynamic, prolific and profitable history, one can’t help but wonder how things have got so bad and where Cornwall’s wealth has gone?



¹ Gross Value Added (GVA) is an indicator of economic prosperity.

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- A capitalisation of profit from the efforts of many into the hands of a few.
- A heavy burden of taxation, disproportionate to inward investment in services.
- A historic debt to the monarchic system of perpetual inequality.

The Prince of Wales' 'investment income' from the Duchy of Cornwall in 2006-07 was £15 million, making him one of the UK's highest earners. The Duchy of Cornwall's assets, from which the Prince of Wales derives his 'investment income' has been provided over the centuries (since 1337) by the blood and sweat of Cornish communities, particularly Miners, who until the mid 19th Century, being considered 'foreigners' paid double tax.

It would be a fitting tribute to the demise of this great traditional industry of the Cornish, that the birth of a new one – Cornwall's Creative Industries – could be supported by such an investment income: £15 million in 2006-07.

Compared to the slice of Convergence¹ pie likely to be invested in the sector, this would provide a significant investment: stimulating innovation, sowing seeds of creative social entrepreneurialism to help achieve a more stable economic balance.

The Duchy could continue to manage the estate, as a social enterprise, with profits invested in the *most deprived communities*, rather the *single most privileged man*. Whilst politically this may be contentious territory, economically (and ethically) the argument is infallible.

OBJECTIVE ONE and Digital Media

The Creative Industries are acknowledged as a rapid growth sector in Cornwall where Film, Video & Digital Media – a key sub-sector, has been the focus of some investment from the pre-cursor to Convergence, Objective One.

When a proposal was put forward for the creation of a South West Film Studios, Cornwall County Council's Objective One programme director Bill Bawden said:

"This project has real potential to position Cornwall as a centre for filmmaking excellence, and will reinforce the opportunities being presented by another Objective One project, the Cornwall Film Fund, which is supporting film production in the county. This is all part and parcel of growing the arts sector in Cornwall."

(Bawden 2006)

¹ Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are eligible for Convergence funding as "a region with less than 75% of the EU average GVA (Gross Value Added). According to Eurostat Statistics published in January 2005 for the 3 years 2000-02, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly was at 70% of the EU average GVA." Objective One (2006)

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Unfortunately for everyone, it was a scam. The man behind it, Alex Swan, fraudulently obtained nearly £2 million of Objective One funding to set up the ill-fated South West Film Studios, quickly dubbed 'Aggieewood' at St. Agnes in Cornwall.

It's not like it wasn't anticipated though. Whilst an incompetent decision was made "for the good of Cornwall", many Cornish filmmakers predicted the fate of the Studios, as did the Cornwall Film Fund itself plus an Objective One panel set up by the County Council to advise on creative industry projects, (neither of which were consulted until after an offer of the grant was made) not least because of allegations, widely known in the industry, against Alex Swan's previous exploits.

Government Office South West (GOSW), which administered the Objective One grant said, "some members of the panel were consulted."

"An investigation by BBC Inside Out programme has revealed Mr Swan's previous firm Spider Republic was abandoned with the crew and suppliers owed more than £300,000. Director of photography Sean Bobbitt said: "It's fair to say that he misled the crew about the true financial state of the production."

Mr Swan was later cleared by the Department for Trade and Industry of wrongful trading and no action was taken. No charges"

BBC (2005)

In a statement issued by GOSW, they were obviously still under the charms of the conman when stating that, "Concerns about Spider Republic's collapse **were not considered sufficient to withhold the grant.**"

Cornwall Film Fund's Chair, Charles Denton, former BBC TV Head of Drama and Chair of independent producers' association PACT, who had just finished his term of office as Chair of the Arts Council of England Film Panel and a board member of its successor, the UK Film Council, personally appealed to GOSW not to grant the money on the basis that the project was not viable.

"GOSW were clearly minded to withdraw the offer but the threat of legal action by Swan to reclaim costs incurred since the offer was made caused them to stick with the grant despite knowing it was, in the opinion of industry experts, flawed."

(Rogers 2007)

Does this reflect the inefficacy of Government consultation, or just evidence that quiet words behind closed doors with selected individuals does not constitute a legitimate advisory panel! Who is speaking on behalf of whose interests?

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Fast forward to Truro Crown Court, Spring 2007. Alex Swan, 44, of Kensington Mall, London, admits to four charges of forgery and seven of obtaining money by deception.

Mr Thomas Kark, defending, said: "My client was not trying to line his own pockets but was motivated by a passion for film and a passion for this project."

But Judge Philip Wassall said: "You must have realised you would have to embark upon a sophisticated and deliberate fraud and you took that route from the start and everything that has stemmed from it was entirely foreseeable."

However, he concluded:

"I accept you did not do this to line your pockets and that the success of the film studios became your driving passion and obsession and drove a fundamentally decent family man to commit these serious criminal offences."

Truro Crown Court [also] heard how, in a bid to help his ailing business, Swan set up an exhibition of famous movie cars, paying £100,000 for a part-share in the James Bond Aston Martin. Swan made £52,000 profit from selling the James Bond car - from *Die Another Day* - **and the money went into his personal bank account.**

(BBC News 24 2005)

I'm not sure how taking £52,000 of personal profit from a scheme intended to "help his ailing business" equates with *not* lining your own pockets? Perhaps this is what a "fundamentally decent family man" in our society is expected to do? If that is the case, bring on the revolution!

Whilst £2 million was wasted on a big idea with a rotten core, only half a million was actually invested in developing the Cornish Media Industry, through the Cornwall Film Fund (2002-04). A further £1.9 million investment of public and private funding in Cornwall's media industry has been stimulated since 2005, by the Cornwall Film AVIS-D project (the second phase of the Film Fund), but this falls far short of the potential for production development and industry growth anticipated. Several other media development projects never got Objective One funding simply because the lion's share had been given to the film studios.

Convergence & the KBE

Cornwall is in the unenviable position of receiving a programme of economic adjustment through targeted investments intended to bring it up to the level of its European peers. These ESF and ERDF structural funds constitute Convergence.

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With 'Aggiehood' down the swanny, how does the future look for support from Convergence for media developments in Cornwall, and what opportunities will any such investments generate for young people?

The South West Regional Development Agency (RDA) are heading the management of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's Convergence Programme, worth in the region of £440 million. Though Convergence only equates to 7 per cent Cornwall's annual GVA over 7 years (or approximately 1 per cent per year) it represents a significant opportunity for investment in activity to provide catalytic change. Thoughtful, strategic, visionary decisions will need to be made.

With the Lisbon Agenda, the EU set itself the goal of becoming "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy (KBE) in the world". On this 'fantasy island'* Her Majesty's Government dreams of Britain becoming KBE central and at the RDA, the Lisbon rhetoric permeates draft Convergence Operational Programmes (a target has been set that at least 60 per cent of investments must contribute to fulfilling the Lisbon Agenda.) Accordingly, strategic plans to develop an exemplar KBE in Cornwall abound.

Past plans for securing Cornwall's bright future from Tourism have matured into an economy over-dependent on a low-skilled, low-waged, low-prospects service industry. The Objective One Partnership concludes that "we do not have a skills profile of a modern and more competitive economy and this is a major constraint on economic growth." (Kelemen 2007: 1)

"In the future skills will be a key route to prosperity and jobs," explains Geoff Hale, Chair of the ESF Implementation Group. "The Convergence ESF programme will play a vital role in supporting the economic transformation agenda by helping people to change their lives through learning."

This means that there will be considerable investment, over and above the mainstream in the inter-linked skills themes of:

Moving the economically inactive of working age, whatever their challenges, into work; the voluntary and community sector should have an important role to play in helping people make the transition to work; Young people – focussing both on young people not in education, employment or training and the promotion of enterprise and entrepreneurship in the 14-19 year age group; Skills development in the workforce – raising workforce and business skills across all sectors – engaging with employers and employees in learning and training;

*Fantasy Island, by Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, published by Constable UK

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Higher education and skills – ensuring that the innovation agenda for the Cornish economy is driven from within the Combined Universities in Cornwall.”

(Objective One Partnership 2007: 2)

All well and good, but how does the rhetoric translate into reality? As far as developing the Cornish Media Industry is concerned, with decisions being made by an executive bitten by the Film Studios fiasco, the outlook is hazy, necessitating strong representation if the sector is to receive the support it needs to fulfil its growth potential. The RDA mentioned the word ‘film’ only once in their 144-page 2004 annual report (“Inward productions & film friendliness.”)

The entire agenda is driven by economic productivity mechanistically measured by short-term outputs hitting annual targets.

- **Is this an effective measure of growth for a knowledge economy?**
- **Is it really possible to record creativity on a timesheet?**
- **Or measure innovation in increased turnover?**

At the moment the call on local industry for work experience, placements, and eventually jobs, far outweighs the opportunities available. It is a case of selection or rejection – some people get through the door, others don't. This is currently what happens. In Cornwall the options are mostly either move ‘up the line’ or enter the badly paid, low job security, subsistence economy of the service industry, which underpins the Tourist Trade.

Cornwall County (*sic*) Council has recently been successful in its bid to become a Unitary Authority, creating a new system of local government which replaces the current one County, six Districts pattern. The idea of ‘One Cornwall’ reflects the old Cornish motto “Onen Hag Oil” meaning “One and All”, and may hearken the inevitable Cornish Assembly to a closer future. One and All certainly hope that the changes will rationalize the archaic systems that create unnecessary bureaucracy, and echoing the innovation of earlier centuries, create in its place a more efficient, dynamic, responsive and confident governance, rooted in the land and communities it serves.

So what opportunities can digital media offer young people entering the Cornish job market, trying to build themselves a life?

SHOOTS

The digital revolution has made media production accessible to children, young people and others who are economically disadvantaged. And there are a plenty

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of people who want their voices to be heard. Despite the loss of tin and copper, one commodity Cornwall still harbours is a rich seam of inspiration. Over the last five years there has been an exponential upsurge of digital media activity: shorts, features, youth media projects, artists moving image, documenting & archiving, for big screens and small, festivals, broadcast, installations and web.

This is by no means unique to Cornwall, however what is pertinent to this damaged rural economy is that the Cornish Media Community is growing significantly into a Cornish Media *Industry* with a huge potential on it's current trajectory for further growth. As the definition of media broadens and the potential of dispersed workplaces make Cornwall's geography a positive factor in establishing a new model of industrial growth (rather than being a barrier due to transport issues) the shape of this new industry is forming.

A feeling pervades the sector that retaining the sense of *Community* is essential. Having a strong community foundation is paramount for Cornwall to create a distinctive and sustainable industry, a vibrant and dynamic knowledge economy. It's about supporting an environment, a climate in which creativity can flourish.

Collaboration or Competition: Networking the networks.

If government, business and communities work together, we can open up increasing opportunities for young people to communicate directly with each other, sharing ideas and experiences globally, celebrating local distinctiveness and dreaming together of the world they will co-create.

Digital Media has an opportunity to play a major role in transforming the economic decline of Cornwall's traditional industries, echoing the innovation and dynamism of earlier centuries when mining was at it's peak.

An integrated approach is necessary between Media, Youth Arts and the intersecting Youth Media organizations – a 'convergence' to remove overlaps and plug gaps, to speak with a united and representative voice, to manage support and investments in the sector. I believe this can only work if we take a holistic approach, removing the socially conditioned barriers between the planning and delivery of youth media, community media and commercial media. Shifting from an economic to ecosophic¹ paradigm.

If Cornwall is to grow a sustainable Media Sector, an essential element in the proposed Knowledge Economy, then coherent, informed and substantial investments are required, based on the identified needs articulated from the ground up, not, as is traditionally the case, perceived needs informed by political agendas from the top down.

YOUTH MEDIA PROVISION IN CORNWALL

¹ Arne Naess, who coined the term, described Ecosophy as a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium.

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Digital Media is being used to tell stories, explore ideas, engage young people and their communities, document projects, give voice to campaigns and share experiences across a wide range of settings in Cornwall.

Supported variously by Creative Partnerships¹, First Light², Neighbourhood Renewal and other community regeneration, youth engagement, arts and heritage funds, the majority of this work has taken place with disaffected groups who for a variety of reasons are being failed by mainstream education. There is a strong social agenda driving this principle of 'inclusion', or 'reducing risk of exclusion' through media.

Recent surveys and mapping have shown an exponential growth in interest from young people in exploring their creativity through digital media. Accordingly, those whose remit is to provide services for young people have found media an immensely productive tool for engagement, for skills development and pathways to education and employment as well as to document and evaluate other provision in this and other sectors.

Two major pieces of regional youth arts provision research have recently been undertaken, in Cornwall by KEAP (Kernow Education Arts Partnership) on behalf of Cornwall Arts Partnership and a report commissioned by the Arts Council looking at provision across the South West for young people 'at risk'.

"Media is a new art form and there is a great surge in interest but there is a lack of organisational support except for the film festival. It is very splintered. There are developments now with Hi8us making an appointment in Cornwall and also Awen an emerging organisation which runs media projects with young people."

KEAP Youth Arts Mapping July 2006

The Arts and Young People at Risk Of Offending and/or Anti Social Behaviour report highlights a shift in Arts Council's focus towards support for arts provision concentrating on re-inclusion and cites many examples of digital media projects as a means of engaging young people and helping them grow in confidence and skills and providing signposting into education or employment, or at least to take steps in that direction.

Film Clubs are springing up in Extended Schools and youth clubs and more and more young people everywhere are making their own media and sharing it online with friends.

Between the social inclusion agenda, investment in the sector and passionate enthusiasm, there is a growing sense that Digital Media is an integral part of

¹ Creative Partnerships, active since 2002, is managed by Arts Council England and funded by DCMS and DfES

² First Light Movies funds and inspires film projects with five to 18-year-olds throughout the UK <www.firstlightmovies.com>

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Cornish culture and of growing importance to Cornwall's economic expansion. Nowhere is this cultural development more evident than in the emergence of Cornwall Film Festival – supporting and stimulating the Media Sector in an annual celebration of Cornish films.

SCREEN ACTIONS

Since its inception in 2002, the Cornwall Film Festival has supported young people's involvement in the growing media industry, and over the last five years has progressively handed ownership of the young people's events to young people to organise and manage themselves, with support from Festival staff and specialist mentors.

In 2005, young people from three schools (Falmouth, Newquay Tretherras and Mullion) organised, programmed, marketed, stage managed, presented, and evaluated the Young People's Film Festival.

In 2006, young people from schools, youth groups and motivated young entrepreneurs from across Cornwall, inspired by the previous year's event, formed a steering committee to take the idea of the YPFM being 'by and for young people' to the next level. They branded the festival as Screen Actions (SA06) and took control, led by a very talented young filmmaker – 17 yr old Luke Martin.

“The Young People's Film Festival has returned for another year, and it's going to be bigger and better than ever before!

Since 2003, the first day of the festival has traditionally been the Young Peoples Film Festival working in co-operation with young people - however - this year the young people have taken full control!

We're revamping and improving on previous festivals, spreading the event over two days and will include a full feature length film, guest speakers, hands-on workshops (previous workshops have included - blue screening, stop-frame animation, post-production digital effects, creating sound effects and making movies on mobile phones - this years workshops are yet to be confirmed), an award ceremony and party. The festival becomes a buzzing venue for - learning, creativity, networking, sharing ideas, film discussions, meeting new people interested in film, workshops, training, career research, new opportunities and experiences...phew! All this and films made by you!”

Luke Martin: Director, Screen Actions 2006

Screen Actions 07 is being organised by an even wider collective of young people, and as it becomes a stronger, more stable organisation, is branching out to meet other young people's media groups that are growing across the South West, like Club Flix (supported by Suited & Booted in Bath) the Young People's Film Council (supported by the Engine Room, Somerset) and ChewTV (supported by RiO, SW Screen, Cornwall Film, TwoFour and Hi8us)

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Together, this Youth Media Collective is working to raise aspirations, self esteem, a positive cultural presence, economic sustainability, community engagement; raising the holistic quality bar of digital media projects – expounding a sensitive, process led approach to production, distribution and marketing of youth media content.

ChewTV – *a communication channel for a connected generation.*

Chew TV is a pioneering youth broadband channel run by and for young people. This cutting edge project aims not only to provide exciting entertainment and communication possibilities for young people via the web, but also to enable further networking between young people, their peers and the media industry.

ChewTV is an internet TV channel for young people that is relevant (run by young people), quality (programmed and moderated) and has a conscience (socially responsible and proactive

RIGHTS BYTES

Rights Bytes is an ambitious project, with the simple aim of creating a cultural dialogue between young people across the world, using digital media to share perceptions and interpretations of their rights as enshrined in the International Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Children and young people work over four days of workshops with a specific article from CRC to explore how their rights are protected in their local community, region or country and what the article means to them. Filmmakers, digital artists and other creative practitioners support the young people to find creative ways to communicate these thoughts and feelings using moving image and sound.

Cornwall Children's Services are a key partner in the Rights Bytes pilot project, ensuring a dynamic and practical embedding of the convention in the services provided to children and young people in Cornwall. We hope to work with similar partnerships between local government, creative media organisations, and community workers in other parts of the world to make sure children's voices are articulated – the adult world communicating with, not at young people.

FILMSCHOOL

Film school is an acclaimed annual project running at Cornwall College with first year students on the BTEC National Diploma in Media Studies. It gives students an opportunity to work with and be part of a professional production team. This unique project runs for ten days in which students are challenged to their limits. Each student has to create an original idea to pitch to the group. The most popular (and achievable) idea is developed by the group into a step outline and then

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script. Once the script is written the group designate roles and move into production. Post begins after the first day of shooting, one team logging and capturing, whilst others shoot remaining scenes. A rough assembly is cut on a



bank of computers reading from a server and compiled onto one timeline for completion. Music students create a soundtrack and sound effects, and journalism students put a write up in the local paper as the production is happening. The completed film, supported by a range of marketing tools, is then screened and pitched to a panel of media professionals. This project is invaluable in providing students with a realistic experience of working on set, in a

team and to deadline.



These are just a few of the many examples of projects, which have been running over recent years. What began as disconnected single film projects has grown into thematic series, linking schools through intergenerational projects, exploring interactive and live performance digital expressions as well as music videos, documentary and dramatic forms.

“Creative Partnerships is exploring the potential of young people led activity especially in the medium of film and digital arts. This is raising expectations and opportunities, which would have been unheard of ten years ago. However, Creative Partnerships as a government research programme is unlikely to be funded in Cornwall after 2008 and yet their legacy needs to be sustained and the learning disseminated to a wider audience.”

KEAP Youth Arts Mapping July 2006

RIO is a Community Interest Company¹ (CIC) which has grown out of Creative Partnerships, who are investing in creativity and change in communities and schools; Hi8us Cornwall is providing expertise and connectivity between young people and industry, local and global, engaging and supporting young people, through creative and entrepreneurial media projects; M-MAD in North Cornwall and awen productions in the West (both also CICs) are working on the ground with communities, using digital media to promote social change – empowering marginalized voices and widening participation in media.

¹ Community Interest Companies (CICs) are limited companies, which conduct a business or other activity for community benefit, and not purely for private advantage. This is achieved by a "community interest test" and "asset lock", which ensure that the CIC is established for community purposes and the assets and profits are dedicated to these purposes. Registration of a company as a CIC has to be approved by the Regulator who also has a continuing monitoring and enforcement role. <<http://www.cicregulator.gov.uk>>

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Young people's expectations heighten with each experience, and the emerging professionals of a decade from now will have been making films and animations, and sharing them online since they were five years old.

There are many fantastic opportunities in education, from Penpol Primary School, where the Year Sixes learn Final Cut Pro and Flash, green screening, stop-frame animation, storytelling and performance skills – to University College Falmouth offering esteemed under-graduate and post-graduate courses in broadcasting and production.

It is essential that provision is also provided for those who are not fortunate enough to be in the right place or at the right time in their lives to benefit from these exemplars and to have a coordination of opportunities outside of mainstream education as well as better signposting within.

Hi8us Cornwall and Media Centre for Cornwall supported fifteen trainee placements on two micro-budget features funded through Cornwall Film's Target Talent scheme in early 2007. These combined opportunities raise the profile and the skills level of the local industry, helping nurture new talent and future entrepreneurs.



What is needed now is an integrated youth media service offering opportunities for young people to engage in media projects, learn new skills, express creativity and explore pathways into the media industry through work placements, signposting to education and training and through individual mentoring support. If this service can be closely tied to industry, this will vastly increase opportunities for progression into work.

DIGITAL SEEDS

It is an exciting time and an expressive time, a time for change and a time for reflection. It's also a long movement. Short-term mechanistic valued targets not only fail to see the bigger picture, they destroy it even before it's begun to form.

Gordon Brown is "trying his utmost" to provide meaningful Education for All, so if the offer to our youth is to connect with and grow into enterprising industry, if these learning opportunities are to turn into jobs, if the creative stimulation is to bring about real economic transformation, then substantial, timely and accurate investments will need to be made. This will require decision makers to 'think out of the (media)box'.

Phil McVey, Head of European Programmes, in the 'Towards Convergence Newsletter 19' outlines the RDA's priorities as "a focus on making those

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investments that will bring about real economic transformation across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. In this prioritisation process the key question for us all will not be 'Is it eligible?' but 'Is it good enough?'" McVey (June 2007: 2, 3.) But what does investing in 'real economic transformation' really mean? And what criteria are being used to determine what is 'good enough'?

Time will tell, and history will no doubt judge with the benefit of hindsight.

Trading on it's eco-lifestyle brand, Cornwall should become a leader in sustainable media production – and young people's media is where the future lies. I would like to see brave, risky ideas supported – innovation that breaks the mould of investment models based on extending airports, widening roads and erecting big buildings; experimentation that surprises the world and makes it a better place for everyone to live; communication networks which strengthen communities.

Cornwall suffers from geographical isolation because of its distance from centres of economic power, which control models of investment that were designed to fit an urban model of regeneration. In Cornwall, as with other rurally dispersed regions, you cannot point to a singular place, building, city or village and say, "this is the heart of our industry, the centre or hub from which spokes of activity radiate". Rather, threads of communities dispersed across the whole region, connecting like an invisible mycelium,¹ weave a tapestry of activity, which amounts to a far greater whole than the sum of its parts.

In an urban-centric digital world, it is imperative that young people growing up in rural communities are given the same opportunities as their city dwelling peers to express themselves and participate in the shrinking cultural e-scape and to bridge the rural divide.

I believe it is time for the approach to communication between 'those identified as in need of support and 'those who find themselves in a position to administer this help' to evolve to a more directly organised approach. The current hierarchy of administrative systems which attend first to self-preservation, then to meticulous examination of auditable systems, and eventually after a long list of priorities, to analysing distant data which has been accumulated along the way is no longer relevant to the world we want to live in.

On another planet, real people are trying to help other real people fulfil their dreams and contribute to the life of their community, whether that community is local or global or any defined region in-between.

'Cultivate' is a grass roots change programme being piloted by RiO in East Cornwall with the aim to "demonstrate how meaningful cultural infrastructure can be created from the ground up, increase recognition of the importance of creative and cultural value and develop new models of governance and

¹ Mycelium is the vegetative part of a fungus, consisting of a loose network of branching, thread-like hyphae. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycelium>> (accessed 3rd August 2007)

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resources for this activity [to] develop stronger, more connected and better quality creative and cultural opportunities for young people.” (Smith 2007)

Self-determined young people, supported by equally determined professionals, are already organising their own film festivals and other events, opening doors to progression paths, making contacts with industry operating locally and globally, they are running a webtv channel (www.chewtv.com) making and sharing content, hosting workshops, marketing themselves and networking with a global community / marketplace (depending on your perspective.) These exciting developments have struggled into existence through a fragmented, disingenuous and practically un-navigable system of funding. We owe it to the efforts of future generations to wise-up to what is working and support it whilst the opportunities are there. Our future’s history will be a collaboratively authored wiki, originated by it’s users – we are writing it now.

Remember the Lisbon Agenda, to become “... the most competitive and dynamic KBE in the world.” What about, ‘the most *cooperative* and dynamic KBE in the world’? Well, ‘most cooperative’ is by definition an oxymoron. So maybe we could aim to become simply ‘a globally cooperative and dynamic KBE’? This is surely moving towards “*an inclusive and environmentally smart business model.*” (Kelemen 2007: 2)

A WISDOM BASED ECOLOGY

And if we are to integrate the traditionally antagonistic Economic & Ecological priorities into a sustainable carbon neutral strategy, then ecosophically thinking the economic concerns must be subsumed as an essential element of our social ecology. And if this paradigm shift happens, then knowledge can be applied with wisdom and we could truly begin to live in a Wisdom Based Ecology.

Digital Media certainly has an important role to play in communicating this future shift through peer to peer synaptic pathways, unrestrained by the congestion of centralised filtering, a neural network connecting like-minded people, on-line or off-grid around the world. The intelligent network learns from itself and grows accordingly.

Maybe it’s a revolution, maybe just devolution. As generations grow up in a Global Community, asking questions, demanding equality, co-creating balance, communicating effectively beyond a restricted mainstream media paradigm, there grows a natural, anarchic awakening, a mycelial movement of cultural change, evolution.

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