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Burgess, Jean and Foth, Marcus and Klaebe, Helen (2006) Everyday Creativity as Civic Engagement: A Cultural Citizenship View of New Media. In *Proceedings Communications Policy & Research Forum*, Sydney.

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# Everyday Creativity as Civic Engagement: A Cultural Citizenship View of New Media

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**To be presented at the Communications Policy & Research Forum, Sydney, 25-26 Sep 2006.**

## **Introduction**

In the policy imagination, the practice of citizenship has conventionally been separated from entertainment, leisure and consumption activities. This interpretation is based on a traditional but narrow view of the public sphere that focuses on political and civic rights and responsibilities. According to this view, the cultural dimensions of citizenship are usually limited to the right and freedom to express one's own culture and beliefs, as well as the responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values. This also holds true for studies of e-democracy, where citizen engagement is measured according to participation in online deliberation and the 'rational' discussion of topics that are related to the traditional public sphere – that is, politics and current affairs.

However, we argue in this paper that contemporary media and communication studies can provide useful alternatives to this view, particularly in regard to the 'cultural public sphere' and cultural citizenship. According to these perspectives, bona fide citizenship is practised as much through everyday life, leisure, critical consumption and popular entertainment as it is through debate and engagement with capital 'P' politics.

The paper is divided into two parts. First, we review the theoretical framework surrounding cultural citizenship and the public sphere in order to highlight key interrelationships with recent developments in new media, social networking, and information and communication technology. Building on this framework, we argue that new media opens up opportunities for the greater visibility and community-building potential of cultural citizenship's previously 'ephemeral' practices. This is especially true in the context of new convergences between

social networks and consumer-created content, and the consequent formation of communities of interest and practice, focused around hobbies, entertainment, and everyday creative practice, at both local and global levels.

The second part of the paper draws on ethnographic and practice-based case study research around digital creativity to illustrate the significance of cultural citizenship and its contribution to new forms of civic engagement and participation in the public sphere. Examples are drawn from three research projects recently undertaken at Queensland University of Technology.

We conclude by suggesting some implications of cultural citizenship for communication policy. With the rapid uptake of digital technology by a broad base of amateur users, the technical means for generating significantly creative and innovative ideas and concepts are becoming abundantly available. However, we argue that if Australia is to maximise its ability to capitalise on these digital 'lifestyle' products, it needs to understand the link that leads to the creative application of these tools for the purpose of participation, education and innovation. Fostering human talent and digital creativity outside formal school or workplace environments will favourably nurture societal and cultural values – promoting a socially inclusive innovation culture and economy.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Cultural Citizenship and the Public Sphere**

Classically, the Habermasian ideal of the public sphere (Habermas, 1992) imagines a universal space where rational citizens engage in the political process through critical-rational deliberation. However, critics of this ideal note that its claims to universality are incompatible with the normative valorisation of a particular mode of discourse – critical reason – that is anything but universal in its inclusiveness (McGuigan, 2005). There is by now a substantial body of work informed by feminist perspectives that argues for post-Habermasian theoretical alternatives to the rational public sphere. Of particular relevance here is the argument that commercial popular culture and everyday life are literally as constitutive of cultural citizenship for particular social identity groups as are the spaces of formal politics (Cunningham and Sinclair, 2001; Felski, 1989; Hartley, 1999, 2004; Hermes, 2000, 2005; McKee, 2004; Warner, 2005).

In his later work (1996), Habermas has himself further developed the model of the public sphere:

*The public sphere cannot be conceived as an institution and certainly not as an organization [...] Just as little does it represent a system; although it permits one to draw internal boundaries, outwardly it is characterized by open, permeable, and shifting horizons. The public sphere can best be described as a network for communicating information and points of view (i.e., opinions expressing*

*affirmative or negative attitudes) [...] (p. 360)*

While it is still critical-rational deliberation that is the business of democracy, Habermas apparently includes popular culture and everyday life as possible *sites* of democracy when he refers to a 'substantive differentiation of [multiple] public spheres' that are not overdetermined by expert discourses but that are 'accessible to laypersons'. He lists as examples 'popular science and literary publics, religious and artistic publics, feminist and "alternative" publics, publics concerned with health-care issues, social welfare, or environmental policy'. (pp. 373-74)

*Moreover, the public sphere is differentiated into levels according to the density of communication, organizational complexity, and range—from the episodic publics found in taverns, coffee houses, or on the streets; through the occasional or "arranged" publics of particular presentations and events, such as theater performances, rock concerts, party assemblies, or church congresses; up to the abstract public sphere of isolated readers, listeners, and viewers scattered across large geographic areas, or even around the globe, and brought together only through the mass media' (p. 374)*

For our purposes in this paper, the notions of 'episodic' and 'occasional' publics are of particular interest, because they appear to describe the ways in which the ephemeral encounters and connections that occur in and around everyday life and popular culture might have democratic consequences and effects beyond themselves. However, it is still necessary to develop an account of an explicitly *cultural* public sphere that is inclusive not only of multiple 'levels' of rational discourse, but also of multiple *modes* of discourse, including affect and pleasure.

Jim McGuigan's recent work (2005) represents an ongoing critical engagement by cultural studies with the dominant definitions of the public sphere. McGuigan argues that the exclusion of everyday life, affect, and pleasure from our understanding of democratic participation is a serious misrecognition of some of the most powerful modes of citizen engagement. By extension, this argument also problematises dominant definitions of citizenship.

*In the late-modern world, the cultural public sphere is not confined to a republic of letters—the eighteenth century's literary public sphere—and 'serious' art, classical, modern or, for that matter, postmodern. It includes the various channels and circuits of mass-popular culture and entertainment, the routinely mediated aesthetic and emotional reflections on how we live and imagine the good life. The concept of a cultural public sphere refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective – aesthetic and emotional – modes of communication. [...] The cultural public sphere provides vehicles for thought and feeling, for imagination and disputatious*

*argument, which are not necessarily of inherent merit but may be of consequence. (pp. 435)*

Similarly, Joke Hermes (2005) has moved 1980s British Cultural Studies arguments about cultural citizenship and the 'uses of popular culture' forward, from what she views as an earlier idealisation of 'pleasure and resistance' to a more critical and balanced view:

*...it makes sense, first of all, to give credit to Fiske and Hartley's notion that popular culture may be understood as democracy at work. But it also means that we should review whether popular culture is truly democratic in its effects: What kind of citizenship is (cultural) citizenship? And how does it exclude as well as include? (p. 2)*

Rather than being concerned with rights and representations, or being overdetermined by identity politics, Hermes is interested in how 'cultural citizenship as a term can also be used in relation to less formal everyday practices of identity construction, representation, and ideology, and implicit moral obligations and rights' (p. 4).

After a detailed critique of both Toby Miller (1993) and more recent work by John Hartley (1999), Hermes offers the following definition:

*Cultural citizenship can be defined as the process of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, that is implied in partaking of the text-related practices of reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticizing offered in the realm of (popular) culture (p. 10)*

However, such definitions require even more reworking if they are to be useful in any attempt to understand the transformation in 'popular culture' represented by the increase in consumer-created content in new media contexts. To be useful in an investigation of cultural citizenship in digital culture, the concept must also take into account the interweaving of everyday life, creative content production and social life that are characteristic of digital culture.

### **Cultural Citizenship and New Media**

Mark Deuze (2006) argues that the emerging practices of participation in new media contexts have three important implications for the extent and ways in which individuals engage with media; in fact reconfiguring the relations between media texts, producers and consumers. He summarises these three new configurations or modes of engagement as 'participation, remediation and bricolage'. First, Deuze argues, individuals become 'active agents in the process of meaning-making' (participation); second, 'we adopt but at the same time modify, manipulate, and thus reform consensual ways of understanding reality' (remediation); and third, 'we reflexively assemble our own particular versions of such reality' (bricolage) (p. 66).

Connecting these attributes of new media to the idea of cultural citizenship, then, the significance of new media lies in the shift from a 'common' cultural public sphere (e.g. public service broadcasting) where politics and identity can be dramatised and affect can be politicised, to everyday active participation in a *networked*, highly heterogeneous and open cultural public sphere. In discussing the implications for citizenship of the 'turn' towards participatory culture, William Uricchio (2004) argues that participation in certain P2P (peer-to-peer) communities 'constitutes a form of cultural citizenship, and that the terms of this citizenship have the potential to run head to head with established political citizenship' (p. 140). Uricchio proposes a model of cultural citizenship that directly incorporates the reconfigured relations between (formerly centralised) cultural production and consumption in participatory culture:

*Community, freed from any necessary relationship to the nation-state, and participation, in the sense of active, then, are two prerequisites for the enactment of cultural citizenship... And it is in this context that I want to assert that certain forms of ... participatory culture ... in fact constitute sites of cultural citizenship. I refer here particularly to collaborative communities, sites of collective activity that exist thanks only to the creative contributions, sharing, and active participation of their members. (p. 148, original emphasis)*

Uricchio is careful to point out that while some of these manifestations of participatory culture occur 'virtually', online, others occur face-to-face. Indeed, while of the case studies discussed in this paper are examples of such 'collaborative communities' that in various ways represent the 'participatory turn' in the contemporary cultural public sphere, each of them is constituted differently in relation to this online / offline distinction.

The use of information and communication technology and new media in the everyday life of citizens enables unconventional expressions of participatory culture; unconventional for the inherent difficulty in measuring the impact of such socio-cultural activity and artefacts on civic participation in society. For example, it is easy to count the number of members of church groups, political parties or volunteer organisations, but it is far more difficult to gauge the cultural impact of the collaborative communities Uricchio describes.

The concept underpinning 'community' in this context has shifted away from a simplistic dichotomy between online ('virtual cyberspace') and offline ('real life') modes of communication and interaction which were previously seen as distinct and unrelated. Computer mediated communication and mobile communication are just two forms of communication amongst many (Hampton, 2004; Rice, 2002). Castells' (2001) 'portfolios of sociability', that is, interwoven networks of kinship, friends and peers that may originate from online interaction, are taken into and continued face-to-face in the offline world and vice versa. Mesch & Levanon (2003) find that these social circles which individuals create and

maintain with the help of information and communication technology transcend from online to offline and from offline to online seamlessly.

What is referred to here as a collaborative community resembles less a homogeneous collective and more a social network. A view which regards community as *collective* sees the interest in the community and the public good as key. The dominant mode of communication is broadcast-style one-to-many and many-to-many, and interaction is formal, permanent and hierarchically structured. The perspective of community as *network* differs in that the individual and her personal social networks are the focal point. The preferred mode of communication is peer-to-peer, and interaction is informal, transitory and less structured (Foth, 2006). Wellman (2001) introduces the term 'networked individualism' to describe the hybrid quality that combines the communitarian nature of community with the 'strength of weak ties' which Granovetter (1973) found in social networks.

Quantitative measures to assess the collaborative potential of these types of communities are harder to produce than the statistical evidence which for example Putnam (2000) gathered in support of his argument that community values and civic participation are on the decline in today's society. Scholars such as Fischer (2005), Florida (2003), Watters (2003), Sobel (2002) and Pawar (2006) critique Putnam's narrow interpretation of his data. They point out that the interaction and collaboration found in what Putnam himself calls a "mosaic of loosely coupled communities" can be deemed civic engagement with a tangible impact on society. The fact that the mass of individuals may not coordinate their actions collectively or classify them as civic engagement does not decrease the civic significance of their actions. Some more popular examples are the Burning Man project ([www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com)) and Critical Mass ([www.critical-mass.org](http://www.critical-mass.org)). However, even the fall of the Berlin Wall has been attributed to the power of social networks and the collaborative nature of community participation (Opp et al., 1995). Rheingold (2002) examines other examples of everyday creativity and individual entertainment, leisure and consumption activities using ICT and new media which collaboratively contribute to a new appearance of civic engagement. In the following part of the paper we will add to these examples our own observations and findings of three projects that employ new media to foster everyday creativity.

## **Case Studies and Examples**

### **An online photo sharing site: *Flickr***

At the level of its premise and basic functionality, Flickr<sup>1</sup> is simply a 'photosharing' network – it is an online space where individual users can upload, share and collaboratively 'tag' their

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.flickr.com>

personal photographs. However, the openness of its architecture has affordances that go far beyond the publishing and viewing of images, and extends into a number of levels of social and aesthetic engagement.

The participatory turn in web business models that the business and web design communities refer to as 'Web 2.0' (O'Reilly, 2005) is characterised by the convergence of social networks, online communities, and 'consumer-created' creative content, a convergence which sometimes (especially in the UK) goes by the name 'social media'. Along with MySpace<sup>2</sup> and YouTube<sup>3</sup>, Flickr is one of the most well-known examples of this trend towards convergence between online social networks and creative content distribution. While 'user-generated content' portals like [www.mp3.com](http://www.mp3.com) and [www.garageband.com](http://www.garageband.com) were online 'record labels', and Friendster was an online space for meeting friends, Flickr is oriented around social networking which is ordered by logics of productive play.

Industry expert Tom Coates captured this convergence in the following description of Flickr as an example of social media:

*On Flickr many people upload photos from their cameras and mobile phones not just to put them on the internet, but as a form of presence that shows their friends what they're up to and where in the world they are. Their content is a social glue. Meanwhile, other users are busy competing with each other, getting support and advice from other users, or are collecting photos, tagging photos or using them in new creative ways due to the benefits of Creative Commons licenses. (2006)*

Therefore, flickr is an online 'photo-sharing community' whose functions and cultural implications in practice extend far beyond these basic intended uses: Flickr is in fact an emergent and collaborative three-way articulation of social networking with individual creativity and communities of practice.

There are countless examples of the ways in which the open design philosophy of Flickr has enabled a range of unintended consequences that constitute the practice of cultural citizenship. One of the most important features of Flickr is the ability to create 'groups' – communities of interest and practice – within the network. There is one such group, Brisbanites, for uploading and discussing images of Brisbane. As well as hosting photos of everyday life, tourist images, and photographs of urban decay, recently the group became the locus of vernacular history when an Italian user known on the network as 'Pizzodesevo', now

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://myspace.com>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://youtube.com>



resettled in Italy but who had been resident in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, began posting scans of slides taken in 1959-1960 to the Brisbanites group<sup>4</sup>. A number of group members showed interest in the photographs by leaving comments that ranged from expressing appreciation to offering technical advice about scanning, to discussion of the locations of the photographs and how much they had changed in the past 46 years. The connections made between users as part of this discussion resulted in one Brisbane-based member of the Brisbanite groups spontaneously creating a kind of game around the images: he began going out specifically to capture images of the same locations as in the old slides, and uploading them to his own Flickr photostreams. 'Pizzodesevo' then combined some of these new images side by side with the old ones in a series of diptyches that reveal the often dramatic changes to the Brisbane cityscape, which in turn led to more discussion about the ways in which the city has changed, blended with nostalgia for a past that many of the discussants had never encountered themselves.

Members of the Brisbanites group have also begun organising regular offline meetups – opportunities for socialising combined with photographic expeditions in the city. The ongoing participation in meetups has several effects: the cultural practice of 'belonging' in the city, especially as the photographs of the meetup and other Brisbanites photos are circulated as vernacular representations of 'Brisbaneness' in the cultural public sphere; intensified and more meaningful everyday creative practice via the collaborative photographic excursions; and an intensification of the 'community of practice' (via comparing uploaded images of the meetup, as well as members giving each other technical and aesthetic feedback and advice) that recursively intensifies online engagement as well. The most active mode of participation in Flickr, then, is a convergence of 'offline' everyday life in a particular local context with 'online' participation in digital culture, using some combination of Mark Deuze's tripartite 'participation, remediation, bricolage' formulation (2006). This form of participation also has transformative effects on both photography as creative practice and vernacular creativity as a means of cultural participation (Burgess, 2006).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/globetrotter1937/195304137>

<sup>5</sup> It is important to acknowledge the ways in which the cultural economy of online social and creative networks or communities introduces relatively new issues around the politics of time. This is especially true where continuous, active participation is an ideal, or even a requirement of visibility to the network. In the case of Flickr, this is built into the architecture through functionality such as displaying the most recently uploaded photographs in a group pool first, through the daily updating of the 'interestingness' page, and through the hierarchical ordering of each user's contact list according to most recent uploads.

### **Kelvin Grove Urban Village *Sharing Stories* Project**

Individuals express opinions, debate issues that are important to them and their lives using new media tools. The communities where contemporary citizens are engaged are not only confined to their physical location, as digital technology and the internet allow citizens to also engage with a global community. However, as the Kelvin Grove Urban Village *Sharing Stories* history project demonstrated, physical communities are still important (Klaebe and Foth, 2006). The Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV) is a 16-hectare inner-city redevelopment project of the Queensland Department of Housing and Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Predominantly the land housed military and educational institutions that have shaped Brisbane and Queensland. These groups had their own history, but collectively their stories offered an opportunity to compose part of a multi-art form participatory public history project (Klaebe, 2006) that offered a range of participatory possibilities for individuals, including digital storytelling to construct a personal sense of place, identity and history.

Digital storytelling was the principal methodology for enabling direct public participation in the project. Although the term 'digital storytelling' has been used generically to describe the uses or affordances of new media for new or innovative narrative forms, as exemplified by 'hypertext fiction' and game narratives, here we use it to refer to the workshop-based process by which 'ordinary people' create their own short autobiographical films (consisting of their own voice-over soundtracks and images) that can be streamed on the web or broadcast on television (Lambert, 2002). In the case of this project, the digital stories were made available on the KGUV *Sharing Stories* website<sup>6</sup> and consistently attract more traffic than any other content hosted there.

One project participant, Graham Jenkinson, now in his 80s, was recognized in 1992 as 'Queenslander of the Year' for his dedication to community work in his local regional district, however old age and physical dislocation (through retirement to the city) prevented him from continuing to engage in ways he had previously. Digital storytelling helped him to re-engage with the community and bolstered his current activities as an active, engaged citizen. Graham was invited to participate in the KGUV *Sharing Stories* project and chose to make a digital story featuring personal photographs of a previously undocumented Japanese POW holding area. Graham's story has attracted great interest from history groups and the wider community since it featured online. As part of his ongoing involvement with the *Sharing Stories* project, he shared a substantial collection of documents and photographs of life in North Queensland (1890-1940) that had remained forgotten in his shed. The collection has now been donated to the University of Queensland's Fryer Library collection, a book of the collection has been published and both are now accessible through the library's database.

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<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.kgurbanvillage.com.au/sharing/>

Graham has also co-presented walking history tours of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village, publicly addressed his retirement village and spoken to school groups around Anzac and Remembrance Day.

Another participant, Teresa Mircovich, was the full-time carer of her invalid partner Igor. Both had come to Australia as refugees from an Italian internment camp after World War Two. Over the subsequent 50 years, they had stayed in touch with others from that camp (who were sent to various countries around the world) by a newsletter instigated by Igor. In 1987, Igor began producing *El Zaratín*, a newsletter for the former Italian residents of his hometown Zara (the former capital of Dalmatia, now Zadar) because, in his words, he “wanted to keep all the people together”, and to “keep the past in the present”. *El Zaratín* was distributed by post to some of the 43,000 former members of Zara who left the city for Italy as refugees after Zara’s incorporation into Yugoslavia (now Croatia) at the conclusion of the Second World War. These citizens and their families are now scattered around the globe, having settled via post-war immigration programs in Austria, Germany, Canada, Italy, and Australia. The diasporic community supported the newsletter with subscriptions and by contributing their own news, photographs, or historical material which Igor, as editor, incorporated into the publication, using a typewriter, photocopier, glue and scissors, with some assistance from his son, who had a photocopier at work. It was, in effect, a zine, but one that operated outside the subcultural aesthetic and political economy of ‘zine culture’. In the early 1990s, Igor learned to use a computer specifically for the purposes of making production of *El Zaratín* easier.

This is a pointed example of the practice of vernacular creativity (Burgess, 2006) in the service of cultural citizenship that predates contemporary digital culture by two decades. *El Zaratín* is designed to serve vernacular interests, using vernacular means and readily available technologies (the typewriter, the photocopier, the analogue database, the postal service). Over the period in which it was being produced, technological change transformed the economics and distribution possibilities of the publication. Due to a stroke in his 70s, Igor’s newsletters ceased to exist for nearly ten years. Teresa’s and Igor’s son brought his mother to the public screening of her digital story and said afterwards that he intends to write to the former readers of *El Zaratín* to let them know the web address for her digital story, believing it would be an opportunity not only to contribute to the collective memory of the former residents of *Zara* who had subscribed to the zine, but also to build interest and historical engagement with their new media literate grandchildren.

The KGUV *Sharing Stories* history project is a clear example of grass-roots civic engagement for people who have not readily had access to the public sphere, and it has allowed them to engage in ways that are meaningful to them. The digital storytelling process has helped to build a deeper sense of community among the residents of Kelvin Grove who participated in the workshops. It has also allowed the participants to choose the ways that they re-presented their own memories of their neighbourhood and the events that constituted a common past.

Digital storytelling and the internet are helping Kelvin Grove residents claim a place in the mediasphere, contributing to their visibility, their sense of engagement in their community and credibility among both policy-makers and their peers. The use of digital storytelling and the Internet works to complement rather than replace existing traditional activities that build civic engagement.

### **The Youth Internet Radio Network Project**

Another project that has attempted to articulate offline communities with participatory new media production and online networks is the Youth Internet Radio Network project (YIRN). YIRN is an Australian Research Council funded research project based at QUT and led by John Hartley and Greg Hearn that aims to engage young people in an investigation of how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be used for interaction, creativity, and innovation (Hartley et al., 2003). The project has created partnerships with urban, regional, and indigenous communities at ten different sites and has undertaken digital storytelling workshops at each. The fifty-one digital stories produced at these workshops are included with other content young people have produced on a streaming media website ([www.sticky.net.au](http://www.sticky.net.au)) which launched early in 2006.

The digital stories produced by participants in the YIRN Digital Storytelling workshops reproduce recurrent themes that relate to feelings of boredom, lack of opportunities and isolation, alongside 'aspirational' ambitions for the future, passionate evocations of enthusiasms and interests, as well as a strong sense of place-based cultural identity. In one story, the author tells us that her mother is Waima from Papua New Guinea and her father is from rural Queensland – her story is both exploration and explanation of 'the blood of two cultures' that, she says, runs through her veins. One story grapples with the storyteller's ambivalence about her outer Brisbane suburb, discussing the problem of '[paint] sniffers' and the benefits of being forced to confront both good and bad 'choices' at an early age. As an indication of the impact digital stories can have, this particular film led to discussions at the local Community Centre and a meeting to discuss with young people how paint sniffing is affecting them and what they thought needed to happen to improve the situation (Notley and Tacchi, 2005).

### **Conclusions**

As our examples demonstrate, everyday creative practices like chat, photosharing and storytelling can have both intended and unintended consequences for the practice of cultural citizenship that, to borrow a metaphor from Hermes (2005), constitute the threads from which the social fabric is knit. Such participation, both 'online' and 'offline', can and does take the form of what Habermas (1996) terms 'episodic publics' – the ephemeral everyday encounters in taverns or trains where citizens negotiate (or, in rationalist terms, 'deliberate') matters of

shared concern; or, 'occasional publics' – where groups of citizens gather for particular occasions (the rock concert, the public funeral)<sup>7</sup>. Further, our analysis reaffirms Uricchio's call for notions of 'electronic' democracy and citizenship to encompass some of the richness and complexity of current shifts in cultural citizenship in the networked public sphere (2004, pp. 159).

The examples presented in this paper suggest that communication policy around networked media should not only be concerned with ownership, content regulation and controls, but should also try to 'do no harm' to, and even support, platforms, technologies and practices that enable the flowering of the unpredictable forms of everyday and ephemeral creativity and engagement that make up active participation in the networked cultural public sphere.

Acknowledging and actively supporting these practices is also advisable on the basis of another rationale which draws on the Australian Government's formal recognition of the significance of the creative industries. The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) introduces the background to the Digital Content Industry Action Agenda as follows:

*Digital content is increasingly shaping the communication modes of the 21st century. The digital content industry is of strategic value to Australia. It is the digital content industry and its capabilities that allow digital communication with pictures, sounds or virtual realities to happen. Their innovations are essential to our future prosperity as a nation. Digital content products and services are helping to drive the take-up of technologies across the economy in sectors as diverse as health, defence and training. (2006)*

As we have discussed above, the distinction between producers and consumers in a digital content environment is increasingly blurred (Bruns, 2005; Deuze, 2006). Supporting the digital content industry must not stop at the level of the firm but must extend to the individual. Our examples illustrate a rapid uptake of digital technology by a broad base of amateur users. The technical means for generating significantly creative and innovative ideas and concepts are becoming abundantly available. However, if Australia is to maximise its ability to capitalise – in both economic and social terms – on these digital 'lifestyle' products, it needs to understand the various dimensions of cultural citizenship and support the creative application

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<sup>7</sup> While this article has focused on positive, 'community-building' consequences of everyday participation in the networked cultural public sphere, we note that the new configurations of media and cultural politics that we gesture towards can be profoundly tied up with far less benign cultural events; indeed, Hartley and Green (2006) have made similar points in relation to the 2005 Cronulla Beach 'race riots' in Sydney, Australia.

of these tools for the purpose of participation, education and innovation. Fostering human talent and digital creativity outside formal school or workplace environments will favourably nurture societal and cultural values – promoting not only an innovation culture and economy but an inclusive society.

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