

ABSTRACT

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Thematic introduction: Whose experience, whose economy?

Dominant accounts of the experience economy stress the staging and performance process as a means to encourage consumption and drive competitive advantage. The lessons that are usually taken away from this concern the addition of engagement/ and performance in the sales process; and, the importance of urban context as a stage for such excitement. In this sense it provides another iteration of the creative city based on consumption as a means of competitive differentiation.

Quite a different perspective emerges from epistemic and ontological shifts within academic debates that have turned to explore 'performativity'. This work, which is an approach to the whole social world, has highlighted two important themes of work. First, the importance of consideration of 'affect' and emotion in social interaction. Second, that the social objects of analysis may be better understood as networks and flows. Clearly, at a superficial level, the 'affective' dimension could be coupled to a version of the experience economy. However, the ontological point is more challenging.

It is this angle that the paper explores. By conceiving cultural production as a totality rather than an act of genius, or an instantiation of consumption, process and interconnections are foregrounded. This has been the theme of much work on the cultural economy in recent years, and more widely in economic sociology. Second, other aspects of the performance of work (and in particular cultural work) have indicated the extra- economic field of reputation as critical in the understanding of value making. Third, the concern with the practice of work has been highlighted in relation to the rise of precarious labour, in particular within the cultural sector where emotional or artistic commitment to work lies in significant tension with the realities of getting and doing work (especially the workers of the experience economy); a process which is itself leading to greater inequalities in working life.