

CREATIVE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

International Perspectives
and Approaches

*Edited by Linda S. Watts
and Patrick Blessinger*

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

- Appadurai, Arjun. (2013). *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. London: Verso.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. (2004). *A Thousand Plateaus Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum.
- De Lissovoy, Noah. (2010). "Decolonial Pedagogy and the Ethics of the Global." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. Vol. 31, No. 3, 279–293.
- Dolphijn, Rick. (2014). "The Revelation of the World That Was Already There: The Creative Act as an Occupation." In *This Deleuzian Century: Art, Activism, Life* (pp. 185–206). Eds. Rosi Braidotti and Rick Dolphijn. Leiden: Rodopi Press.
- Ellsworth, Elizabeth. (2004). *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.
- Farnell, Brenda. (1999). "Moving Bodies, Acting Selves." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Vol. 28, 341–373.
- Fernandes, Ciane. (2014). *The Moving Researcher: Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis in the Performing Arts and Creative Arts Therapies*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Halprin, Lawrence. (1970). *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment*. New York: George Braziller.
- Kochhar-Lindgren, Kanta. (2008). "Uneasy Alliances: Art as Observation, Site, and Social Innovation." *Working Papers in Art and Design*. Vol. 5. University of Hertfordshire. http://www.herts.ac.uk/___data/assets/pdf_file/0013/12424/WPIAAD_vol5_lindgren.pdf
- . (2013a). "Dramatizing Translation: Performance, Cultural Tourism, and the Transnational." *Journal of Contemporary Thought*. Vol. 38, 73–84.
- . (2013b). "Dramatizing Water: Performance, Anthropology, and the Transnational." *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 22–33. <http://rupkatha.com/v5n2.php>
- . (2014). "The Turbulence Project: Touching Cities, Visual Tactility, and Windows." *Performance Research International*. Ed. Paul Carter. Vol. 19, No. 5, 13–22.
- Loke, Lian, Astrid T. Larssen, Toni Roberts and Jenny Edwards. (2007). "Understanding Movement for Interaction Design: Frameworks and Approaches." *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*. Vol. 11, No. 8, 691–701.
- Mathur, Anuradha and Dilip Da Cunha. (2014). "Waters Everywhere." *Design in the Terrain of Water* (pp. 1–23). Eds. Anuradha Mathur and Dilip Da Cunha. Philadelphia: Applied Research+Design with the University of Pennsylvania.
- Oakes, Tim and Louisa Schein. (2006). "Translocal China: An Introduction." *Translocal China: Linkages, Identities and the Re-imagining of Space* (pp. 1–35). Eds. Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein. New York: Routledge.
- Rancière, Jacques. (2014). *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Ed. and Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London: Bloomsbury.

CONFIGURING INTERDISCIPLINARITY

The Common Core at the University of Hong Kong

Gray Kochhar-Lindgren

We all sense that we urgently need a decisive change in teaching, a change that will eventually have repercussions on the entire space of our global society and its obsolete institutions.

Michel Serres, Thumbelina (2014, p. 13)

We learn nothing from those who say "Do as I do." Our only teachers are those who tell us to "do with me," and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce.

Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition (1994, p. 23)

Interdisciplinarity: The Space Between

By activating the dynamic space of the *inter-*, the University of Hong Kong's (HKU) Common Core (<http://commoncore.hku.hk/>) provides a generative reflective platform for the *practice of interdisciplinary creativity* for all of its undergraduate students. Given the forces of globalization, technology, migration, and digitization that are so powerfully shaping the contemporary university, such a reconfiguring of interdisciplinarity enables students to prepare more fully for the knowledge and experience economy, to make connections between their majors and other areas of learning, and to begin to think about the meaning of ethics in the context of extremely complex dilemmas.

How might we understand the *inter-*: the space of the between? How might we most creatively activate it? For any learning to occur, the strange topology of the between must be constantly traversed as we develop assignments, courses, curricula, and university-wide initiatives. The term "*interdisciplinary*" will gesture toward curricula that explicitly moves between "established" disciplines,

ing recognition of the fact that all of these are themselves always in flux; that the disciplines have been historically cobbled together for a great many reasons which do not have to do primarily with the space of a “pure” intellectual inquiry; and that “traditional” departments, schools, and faculties remain the most powerful internal forces in the organizational chart of a university. The university, as an idea and as a set of interlinked practices, is now in tremendous flux, and reconfiguring interdisciplinarity as a form of student learning adds an essential dimension to the possibilities of making creative interventions in the flows of the local and the global.

At HKU interdisciplinarity occurs across many domains—both at the undergraduate and graduate level—but I will focus on the Common Core. This was launched in 2012 when all eight publicly funded universities in the city transitioned from a three-year to a four-year undergraduate degree structure. Each university designed its own curricular structure to address the additional year, although all were mandated to organize some form of a general education program rather than simply extending the credits required for majors. HKU underwent an extremely intensive process of comparative review with international peer institutions, consultations with local and distant experts, and complex and iterative internal process of decision-making before establishing the Core.

The Common Core requires that students be given opportunities as soon as they enter the university, rather than waiting until they become sufficiently “expert” in a discipline, so that the two complementary practices of (inter)disciplining can develop hand in hand. An interdisciplinary set of approximately 160 courses designed by faculty members from across the entire university (including the professional schools), the Core requirement consists of six courses that for the most part must be completed within the students’ first three years of study. The courses are placed in one of four Areas of Inquiry (AoIs)—Scientific and Technological Literacy, Global Issues, Humanities and Arts, and China—and students must complete at least one course in every AoI, plus two additional courses of their choice.

The criteria for a successful course proposal—which must be approved both at the AoI and Curriculum Committee level—are that the course be inflected toward interdisciplinary concerns, organized around a topic of “profound significance,” and that engages students with the active learning methods of practices such as projects, fieldwork, media production, experiments, debates, and role-plays as the means of assessment. The courses are reviewed after two years in order to recommend continuation or discontinuation, and each year the teachers revise the courses after considering student feedback. In addition, external examiners, mainly from North American universities, review the courses in each AoI and across the program as a whole.

Like all curricula, the Common Core creates both knowledge and dispositions. As C. W. Mills (1959) so eloquently observed more than sixty years ago

(and we could of course go back to philosophical and religious examples from many millennia ago):

There is a playfulness of mind back of such combining [of ideas that were not expected to be combinable] as well as a truly fierce drive to make sense of the world, which the technician as such usually lacks. Perhaps he is too well trained, too precisely trained. Since one can be *trained* only in what is already known, training sometimes incapacitates one from learning new ways; it makes one rebel against what is bound to be at first loose and even sloppy.

(p. 212)

In the Core, there is certainly a type of training occurring—especially around the skills of collaboration, communication, and project-based exhibits—but there is also the “fierce drive to make sense of the world” and to change for the better, in a very modest manner, the quality of life for Hong Kong and beyond.

Reflective and Pragmatic Inventiveness

The Core seeks to be an inviting space of reflective inventiveness where the unexpectedness of new knowledge and new practices can emerge, where the “loose and sloppy”—also known as creative chaos—can be an aspect of intellectual rigor, and where the “playful” and the “serious” are able to move back and forth in a distinctive rhythm. It is grounded less in the development of abstract domain-specific knowledge and more in what Sullivan and Rosin (2008) have called a “pedagogy of practical reason,” which “requires moving back and forth between specific events and the general ideas and common traditions that might illuminate them, in order to interpret and engage the particular situation more fruitfully” (p. xvii). “Practical reason” combines a “know how to” with a “know what for” that is enacted around particular questions, and often around particular locales. This is the usefulness of students taking field trips throughout Hong Kong, from the Wan Chai Cut to film studios to geological sites, and even across the border to the nuclear power plant at Daya Bay.

Student and staff engagement, then, is not purely on a discursive or theoretical plane, but also on a plane of self-reflexive practice that requires movement between differences of locale, cultures, disciplinary formations, types of assessment, and learning goals for the courses and the program as a whole. The Common Core is a primary site within the overall HKU curriculum to foreground this activity for incoming and continuing undergraduates (including exchange students from abroad, who are able to sign up for a number of the courses). How, though, does this work more specifically in practice?

Many courses work on a number of different types of student projects, but one of the recent presentations that I visited comes out of “Journey into Madness: Conceptions of Mental Health and Mental Illness” (CCHU9022).¹ The students read material—targeted at an appropriate level of difficulty—from psychology,

anthropology, Chinese medicine, biochemistry, and social media as they explored the social and medical construction of mental illness across categories and cultures, with an emphasis on Hong Kong. Then, with the “use of experiential exercises, case student and film viewing” (Common Core Student Handbook, p. 76), they further reflected on their encounter with mental illness in their daily lives. Finally, in partnership with a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) centered around forms of social interaction with the mentally ill, the students were divided into groups. They were asked to do a field visit; create different interactions with the members of the community; do a reflection on the experience; make a short video; and present their work the class as a whole and to visiting NGO members.

This is a systematic reconfiguration of required undergraduate learning as it moves through the classroom and back; as it creates a new relationship between the ongoing dynamics of theory and practice; and as it uses student learning to conjoin with a social intervention. None of these curricular experiences is, of course, unique to HKU, and all of them have many instantiations around the world. But the systemic nature of such a change that emphasizes, along different axes, a participatory rather than a primarily receptive model for learning does serve as an index of the forces at work that are serving as the conditions of change for higher education.

Perhaps we could simply give them, for the moment, the abbreviated names of “globalization” and “technosociality.” The curricular networks that form a university are historical indices of a *zeitgeist* (one translation: “haunted time”). The contemporary university, a loosely organized ensemble of disciplines that tend to centrifugally move away from one another, is a dense node of a network of geo-, techno-, and social relationships that are rapidly changing shape. Since the founding of the University of Berlin in 1802, the comprehensive research university has always been (and always will be) beset by the tensions between teaching and research, between disciplines and the *inter-*, and between the production of knowledge and the formation of capacities for undergraduate students. The question, then, is how we might best activate these tensions toward creativity instead of allowing the tensions to freeze an institution, or even parts of the institution, into the stasis of the status quo.

The Crossings of Interdisciplinarity and Specialization

What will we make of the new institutional puzzles in which learning now occurs, which must find mechanisms to carry along selected traditions, cast off other traditions, and create the space for the “new” without the new simply being a space to be filled by capitalist production and consumption? Locally, how will these demands shape the *inter-* of the Common Core, and how, in turn, might the *inter-* reconfigure the long-term structure and pedagogy of a university? “Fundamentally, there are two logics,” Jacques Rancière (2011) has reminded us:

The one that divides thought into specific competences and domains for specialists, who fragment it into differences that are the small change of a

principled inquiry, or the logic that thinks it as an undivided power, similar in all of its exercises, shareable among anyone or whoever. My vision of philosophy is first of all a vision of thought as a power of declassification of the redistribution of territorial divisions among disciplines and competences. Philosophy says that thought belongs to all.

(p. 23)

Hedgehogs and foxes—to borrow Isaiah Berlin’s famous classification—all the way down and all the way across. Those with different priorities and angles of vision will always coexist and, however collegially, battle for resources, visibility, and prestige. As simply one discipline among others, philosophy *also* offers for Rancière a name that indicates a hope, a sign, and occasionally even another mode of thinking than the technoempiricism that currently dominates the research landscape. Philosophy, in Rancière’s sense, works at the redistribution of value, works across disciplines, and springs forth from an ontological equality of thought for all. But this is only if philosophy—or any other departmentalized discipline—addresses the constitutive nature of the *inter-* within its own structure. Where are the doors, windows, fire escapes, and trapdoors of the disciplines? In a program such as the Common Core, how might they not only communicate with one another but also, in a reflexive act of creativity, be changed by that encounter?

Interdisciplinarity operates, by definition, in the middle of the action. The middle, however,

[is] by no means the average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to another and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25)

The solution of the tension between Rancière’s “two logics”—and those of C. P. Snow that are even more familiar—is conceptually simple, but institutionally complicated: invite the foxes and hedgehogs to work on mutually interesting projects and create a proliferating bestiary on campus. See what foxes and hedgehogs might become as hybrids. Let them work together to co-create the Common Core and its analogues. Give it a shot; see what happens.

One of the most common rationales for the enactment of advanced interdisciplinary expertise is that all of our contemporary conundrums are “wicked problems,” not amenable to solution within a discipline (although I in no way want to dismiss the wickedness of these difficulties as well, since in a certain manner “wickedness”—an insoluble complexity—belongs inherently to all the fundamental questioning of thought and experience). The world is not

simple bounded and with determinate solutions after which we can make a checkmark—but a composite of (quasi)intractabilities. Speaking of the natural sciences, a 1986 UNESCO forum noted that:

In the last century, science was geared to the solution of relatively simple problems lying within a field of homogenous relationships which could be embraced by a single discipline. Today, one of the essential features of the problems arising is their great complexity. The contemporary world poses problems involving a considerable number of factors in which social and technical aspects overlap, multiple and essential interactions abound, precision is mingled with a great of uncertainty, and the field of relationship is heterogeneous.

(D'Hainaut, 1986, p. 5)

Heterogeneity is the essential condition for creativity—difference gives rise to the difference marked as “the new”—and the pathways created *between* disciplines, zigzagging across the terrain of learning, enable students to more intensely practice their own learning. Recently, for example, Common Core student groups were out on campus making measurements in the streets, using portable blue solar spectrometers, and following a “129erive app” to test the boundaries of their freedom of motion on campus in places such as chemistry labs, administrative offices, and the faculty dining area. For undergraduates, who are early apprentices in the arts of the *inter-*, these activities serve as catalysts for questions, collaborations, and observations, a glimpse of a way of being that they are often noticing for the first time.

As the interdisciplinary team at the Future and Emerging Technologies reminds us, however, it is not simply a conceptual map that we are creating, but new means of *working together* across significant and often viscous differences of language, assumptions, methods, and values (not to mention time zones). While complexity does in fact drive interdisciplinarity,

what are often missing in such a construction are the pathways between the disciplines to really learn from one another . . . [such a process] at least initially, deconstructs more than it constructs, because everyone involved is forced to put into question the fundamental assumptions of its own view of the world. This is hard work and risky business.

(FET, n.d., p. 2)

This, too, is why programs such as the Common Core are invaluable even for beginning undergraduates, for they set students to work with one another across intellectual and dispositional differences on projects that matter to them.

The extraordinary precision of the most specialized expertise across all the domains of knowledge remains absolutely necessary—this is one of the central

powers of the sciences of whatever stripe—but there is an urgently relevant question that shadows this development of expertise: how do we establish creative and ethical *connectors* in and beyond the university?

As David Harvey (2011) has insisted, it is now essential for those with a

deep knowledge of how the relation to nature works need to ally with those deeply familiar with how institutional and administrative arrangements function, how science and technology can be mobilized, how daily life and social relations can most easily be re-organized, how mental conceptions can be changed, and how production and labor process can be reconfigured.

(p. 138)

Although undergraduates need to continue to develop a more densely layered knowledge in the majors, none of them will be truly “expert” after four years of study, and they are well served by the learning that assists them in becoming far more adept practitioners of the skills of navigating the *inter-*. We need to cultivate, as I say in my orientations with students at HKU, an *inspired pragmatism* for all of us so that we can not only learn how to *do* things more adeptly, but also how to *care* more deeply about what, how, and why we are doing what we are doing.

Globalization, Holistic Learning, and Creativity

“The space of the lecture hall,” as Serres (2014) has observed,

was designed as a field of forces whose orchestral center of gravity was the stage, with its focal point at the lectern, which was literally a *power point*. What was situated there was the heavy density of knowledge, which scarcely existed on the periphery. Now, knowledge is distributed everywhere, moving freely in a homogenous and decentered space.

(p. 34)

When the center can no longer hold, it is not necessarily the “blood-dimmed tide” of Yeats that ensues, but perhaps a fluidity of networks-in-motion. The disciplinary major—the figure for specialization, and thus, presumably from most students’ perspectives, simple linear success in the job hunt—has in North America long been supplemented by one form of general education or another, which has served, in its turn, as the figure for the connectivity of the whole.

This is “whole-person education” for the “well-rounded” student, a model that has been going global for some time now. Both multinational and local employers realize the need for a different type of learning experience, preparing students for the knowledge economy rather than for the standardization of the

factory, the suburb, and the classroom where a kind of homogenized memory, repetition, and standardization reign. This has certainly been the case in Hong Kong, where employers' advocacy for different skills and ways of approaching issues was a major part of why the city decided to move to a four-year degree (which also aligns better with the degree structures in North America and mainland China).

In our historical moment of globalization, financialization, violence, and mobilities of all sorts—which has radically reshaped the university since the Reagan-Thatcher years—different experiences of “heaviness” are also close at hand. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) has noted, “We live in a world of universal flexibility, under conditions of acute and prospectless *Unsicherheit*, penetrating all aspects of individual life” (p. 135).

Work has drifted from the universe of order-building and future-control to the realm of a game; acts of work become more like the strategy of a player who sets himself modestly short-term objectives reaching no further than one or two moves ahead.

(p. 138)

Innovation, creativity, problem solving, communication skills, flexibility, and collaboration are the qualities in the highest demand by the workforce of global capital, which is very visible on the streets and across the skyline of Hong Kong. None of these offers “guarantees,” however, since there is no such thing as a guarantee in the high-risk game and casino world of global capital. Spin the wheel; bet on red.

It is, however, this same force, strangely aligned with the traditional discourse of “whole-person education,” that is driving much of the move, at least in Hong Kong and Asia, toward cross-disciplinary and actively taught curricula. In this age of globalization, then, “interdisciplinarity” is a mark of a reconfiguring of the disciplines, forms of assessment, and the understanding of the purpose of a university education. The Common Core at HKU, as it addresses this reconfiguration, provides an exposure to interdisciplinary experience—which impacts forms of learning as much as bodies of knowledge—that is built into undergraduate experience from its very outset. Some argue that this is pedagogically inappropriate and technically undoable, since students are asked to perform the *inter-* before they have really entered into, much less mastered, a discipline. How can there be a “between” before there are structures in place between which to construct the bridge of a between?

There are several responses to this argument. The students are entering into their disciplinary lives—whether in the professional schools or in the liberal arts at HKU—as they also begin the Core, so these experiences are constantly interweaving with one another. The *inter-* is complementary to the disciplines and vice versa. Second, the students will certainly *not* be masters of their disciplines

at graduation, after they have “finished” their undergraduate training. No one is master of any discipline, since the disciplines are always expanding and are always already too expansive for us to reach around in a comprehensive manner. This structural excess though, is the very essence of thinking, of coming toward knowledge, and so is both irresolvable and inevitable. That's a good thing. We do not master disciplines, but the disciplines—though in a sense broader than the departmental institutionality of the university—keep calling us back to do their own work in a labor of love that consumes us.

Finally, the interdisciplinarity of the Common Core is more about the development of *performative learning capacities* than about repeating already established bodies of knowledge. Learning always has an intellectual content, so the students are learning a great deal of content in all of their courses, which, emphatically, are *not* designed as “Introductions to X” but are organized around thematizable questions and problems that cross disciplines. Most are taught, however, by colleagues that are trained in a single discipline—that is, after all, what a PhD implies—and this training shows in the ways the courses are organized, although all courses, as I have mentioned, must inflect toward the *inter-*.

Let me give another example of a Common Core course that works to remodel undergraduate general education: “Shaping the Landscape: A Quest for Harmony between Nature and the City” (CCHU9023). The project for this year's course was entitled “Voices of the Water,” in which the students, with the facilitation of the instructor and the tutors, were to

create a series of land art works that can speak from the perspective of the natural resource of water and its associated landscapes. . . . Seldom do we listen to the voice of the land. Therefore, this project aims to treat elements of the landscape as the “first person” telling us their stories, and from their perspectives also tell their experiences and opinions of the water supply story. Through these “narrations” of landscape elements, we hope to collect and present information about the waterworks system to the audience, at the same time to allow participants and audience, through the medium of art, to imagine/interpret/dive in to the first-person experience of how the environment feels about all these ever-changing situations of fresh water supply issues.

(Course Assignment, format revised)

The project landscape elements were “Water as Commodity (Commodification of Nature); Employed Materials at Waterworks (Operations); Forgotten Changes to the Natural Landscapes, *past and present* (Memory); Sound of Waterworks, *past and present* (Sound)” (Course Assignment, format revised). This kind of project—which involved a great deal of reading, writing and on-site research—resulted in a temporary art installation on the sites of the Pokfulam Reservoir, the Tai Tam Reservoir, and the Bowen Aqueduct. These sites are essential aspects,

either historically or in the present, of Hong Kong's water-management system. Students roam about the world—intellectually, emotionally, and physically—and make a project together which they then share in multiple ways. This is the power of integrated learning that occurs in the *inter-* of both disciplinarity and of the campus-city network.

Since the encyclopedia of attained knowledge is available today at a swipe across our electronic devices, what does tertiary learning contribute to individual, cultural, and economic development? What distinguishes us from the increasingly capable robots and the emergence of ubiquitous computing that more and more closely mimics artificial intelligence (AI)? It is the capacity, still, to symbolize differently than in the past that is being negotiated, often brutally but sometimes only with the necessary violence, which is the least violent option, of discourse.

The Common Core, with its interdisciplinary topics and projects, works out of a practical reason—a *phronesis* rather than a *theoria*—that

aims at a kind of synthetic knowing that links self-conscious awareness to responsive engagement in projects in the world . . . The agenda of practical reason could be said to be about re-grounding the ideals of the Enlightenment. This agenda grounds the meaning of critical rationality in human purposes that are wider and deeper than criticism, in part inherited and in part constructed in social relationships.

(Sullivan and Rosin, 2008, p. 104)

Practical reason—a tradition that draws upon (among others) Aristotle, Kant, and Dewey—includes multiple opportunities for “critique,” but these extend beyond the areas of theoretical discourse and a traditional “hermeneutics of suspicion.” Critique is creative. In addition, for Kant—where this distinction is most thoroughly articulated—practical reason provides the opening for freedom, which is required if there is to be knowledge, ethics, inquiry-based learning, debates that lead to conclusions, or discovery through experimentation.

We are all now responsible, as modest designers but not as masters, for inventing the future. “Find something new to hook up with and you’ll have a desire, make something different,” Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have reminded us. “It’s recombinations; it’s random acts of assembling. It’s LEGOs and tinker-toys. Metaphors; academic trainings and disciplines; different floorings in the chemistry and the philosophy building; the architecture of computers, buildings, or of reason. The logic of the dream” (p. 14). Try new things; combine and recombine; hook up the everyday to the everyday and the unexpected will emerge. Ask physics to talk to anthropology or mathematics to talk with painting and see what happens. That which manifests will teach and delight us, as well as prove useful for finding solutions to perplexing problems.

The Common Core at HKU is one of many examples across Asia of experimenting to establish a different, more creative learning experience for students.

The responses by students and staff to the creation, implementation, and refinement of the Core has ranged from enthusiastic participation to deep resistance, but the central thrust of the administrative and pedagogical work has become to enhance the experience for everyone involved. This will be accomplished through a continual assessment of courses; the formation of an advisory board with student ambassadors; and a number of structural changes within student enrollment, the types and timing of the courses, and ongoing development workshops for tutors and teachers.

Through an array of different methods, there is an ongoing system of assessment of the tutors, teachers, courses, and program as a whole. We ask international external examiners to review collections of courses across the four Areas of Inquiry as well as the whole enterprise; we have a number of surveys for students and staff around their specific and general experience of the Core; and the Curriculum Committee has a schedule for reviewing courses in detail and recommending continuation, improvements, or discontinuation. Finally, the Hong Kong University Student Union recently sponsored a formal debate on the motion, “The University should abolish the Common Core,” which the popularly elected councilors roundly defeated. In their defense of this still new curricular experiment, the students were quite eloquent about the purpose of a university education and about how the Core supported such a purpose by broadening their perspectives, providing a site for them to come to know friends across the faculties, and complementing their majors as they looked beyond their graduation to what might come next.

Constellations of Rivers: Re-stitching Transversal Creativity

Serres (2014) has asked how disciplines might be “re-stitched” to create an experience that gestures toward the whole:

A river, for example . . . but how can we unite these classifications, dissolve these borders, gather together the already cut and formatted pages, superimpose the designs of the university, unify the lecture halls, pack up the departments in one suitcase, and make all the high-level experts—each of whom thinks they process the exclusive definition of intelligence—listen to each other?

(p. 38)

Interdisciplinary undergraduate education aims at a dynamic vision of the whole person and of the whole world, as well as toward a variety of articulations of the interconnections between the parts. The whole, however, is not an accumulation of knowledge from across all the disciplines that will then *add up* to a totality. The whole is not an attainable empirical accomplishment based on a quantitatively achieved sum, but instead serves as both an a priori assumption

of the possible experience of the good—the world is an essentially differentiated one—and a regulative ideal to strive toward: from the fragmented *toward* the fully lived.

Creative learning, in this context, is an interactive multiscalar practice that actively constructs connections between sites, questions, capacities, materials, methods, and experiences that, incrementally shaping collective and individual dispositions, creates a tendency *toward*. It is an experiment in motion that moves between the classrooms on campus and toward the huge new engineering dig creating the train link between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, toward an eco-village in the New Territories, or the Museum of the Monetary Authority in the IFC Tower. Creative learning crisscrosses the streets in Kennedy Town that are constantly changing under the pressure of the new MTR station and the arrival of greater capital investment, the traditional Pokfulam Village, and the CAVE where students can enter a 3D virtual world. Learning of this sort is always contextually oriented and transportable across multiple boundaries, and, as a force for (re)configuration of relationships, it transforms the world in ever so modest but nonetheless important ways. It requires professors to be facilitative translators rather than the focalized point for the transmission of knowledge.

Whether active in the Common Core or in other sites, the *inter-* activates, infinitely. It cannot be contained since it creates unexpected relations between always emerging domains of knowledge. The question is how we, always provisionally, organize the *inter-* into programs, classes, experiences, and on occasion, degrees. The suitcase—full of equations, masks, ocean ridges, galaxies, paintings, pathogens, tribes, buildings, laws, robots, plankton, and poems—clicks open and out spring the most marvelous surprises, the most unexpected constellations of contact. For all of us in the contemporary globalizing university, this is an experiment in motion, creativity in the mode of its most serious play.

Note

1. I am extremely grateful to Paul Wong and Vincci Mak, the instructors of the two courses that I use as extended examples, for permission to use their class material. The courses were also very adeptly supported by the tutors in the respective courses: Martina Rehnu Ambrose and Gizem Arat in the first, and Maxime Decaudin, Andrea Palmioli, Bryan Woo, and Viola Yucong Zhang in the second.

Bibliography

- Bauman, Zygmunt. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press. *Common Core Student Handbook 2015–16*, University of Hong Kong. <<http://commoncore.hku.hk/files/CC2015-low-p.pdf?150720>> Accessed 7 December 2015.
- Deleuze, Gilles. (1994). *Difference & Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- D'Hainaut, Louis. (1986). *Interdisciplinarity in General Education*. Paris: UNESCO, Division of Educational Sciences, Contents and Methods of Education.
- FET [Future and Emerging Technologies]. "Living Interdisciplinarity," *Digital Agenda for Europe*: 1–3. <<http://ec.europa.ed/digital-agenda/en/news/fet-living-interdisciplinarity>>
- Harvey, David. (2011). *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mak, Vincci. "CCHU9023 Shaping the Landscape: A Quest for Harmony Between Nature and the City," University of Hong Kong, Autumn 2015.
- Mills, C. W. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rancière, Jacques. (2011). A Politics of Aesthetic Indetermination: An Interview With Frank Ruda & Jan Voelker, *Everything Is in Everything: Jacques Rancière Between Intellectual Emancipation and Aesthetic Education*, Eds. Jason E. Smith and Annette Weisser. Pasadena, CA: Art Center Graduate Press, 10–33.
- Serres, Michel. (2014). *Thumbelina: The Culture and Technology of Millennials*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sullivan, William M. and Matthew S. Rosin. (2008). *A New Agenda for Higher Education: Shaping a Life of the Mind for Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wong, Paul. "CCHU9022 Journey Into Madness: Conceptions of Mental Health and Mental Illness," University of Hong Kong, Autumn 2015.