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Editors' Preface

Welcome to this *Handbook of Creativity at Work*. Our aim in bringing together this interdisciplinary compilation of forward-looking and critical research-led articles has been to provide authoritative and up-to-date scholarship and debate concerning *creativity at work*. The volume provides a timely opportunity to re-evaluate our understanding of creativity, work, and the pivotal relationship between them. It is all too easily forgotten that the word "creativity" only appeared in common usage in the early 20th century, though, of course, there is nothing "modern" about creative activity or ability *per se*. Though creativity is today most readily associated with artistic, aesthetic and cultural activity – "work" in the context of the "creative industries" and the wider "creative economy" – its value in society was contingent upon science and technology, which revealed human independence as being *possible*, and the introduction of free-market economics, when constant innovation became inescapably *necessary*. Far from being a new arrival on the scene, the context of "work" has always been a place shaped and sharpened by creativity, as well as a site that determines, where, when, how, and for whom creativity emerges.

An opening premise for this publication is that creativity is a universal human capacity; we are all creative; furthermore, we are also (more or less) creative at work, regardless of our job title. In keeping with this, the Handbook provides 30 chapters that are distinctively broad in their analytical focus. Research interest in *creativity at work* cannot be circumscribed by an interest in the creative labour of the few, e.g. the specialist context of creative and cultural production. Nor should our understanding of creativity in a work context be limited to a particular form of problem solving technique that can be applied instrumentally to meet market-focused objectives. By emphasizing the opportunity to bring creativity research (in all its diversity) together with focused scholarship on creative labour, creativity in an organizational context, and the commercialization of creativity, the Handbook offers a new resource to help us research and practice creativity in new and beneficial ways.

There is however a history of thought considering the universal nature of creativity, accepting this principle does not mean all of those we study will use their creative potential fully, however, it guides researchers to consider the contextual barriers to employees when creativity is enacted. A sensitivity to social contexts, not only requires understanding the use of specific creative capabilities (musical, visual, written etc) but also the social, economic, political, technological and cultural conditions surrounding creative work. This requires an open approach to what creative processes might look like and to widen our search for factors involved within creative production. The question of how social values and biases in recognition practices can influence creativity research has provided a challenge to knowledge production and this had led to research practices that prioritise recognised creative action. To address this theory needs to explore ways in which creativity theory can identify creative work outside of these recognition parameters. Throughout the handbook, we have commissioned chapters that have tackled these issues and seek to develop both theories and research techniques that enable creativity researchers to move beyond a reliance on recognised creative workers within their theorising.

This means, over and above providing an accessible, comprehensive and authoritative single-volume, this handbook is motivated and framed by the need to ensure that there is consistency between theory and practice. This need is all the more challenging, of course, when we acknowledge the extraordinary range of work, workers and workplaces across the globe (we have purposefully included contributions from authors from many different international backgrounds in this volume). The lack of theory/practice consistency within creativity research is perhaps no more evident than when it comes to our focus on the "what" of creativity, which is most often cast in terms of novelty and value. Defining "novelty" remains problematic as in some way all things, events, people and products are novel. Similarly, "value" and "usefulness" are riddled with issues of power and politics, and recognition by appropriate judges can dissolve creativity into the pronouncements of a privileged minority. The chapters in this Handbook engage critically with these topics from a wide variety of perspectives, including discussion of professionalization, regulation, gender, power, political economics, education, entrepreneurship, technology, digitization, sustainability, and globalization. In practice, creativity has all too often been reduced to what the prevailing definition of creativity tells us it is in theory – that is, an assessment of value by groups of legitimized people. In addition, much of the understanding developing around the creative process has been based upon laboratory studies of undergraduate students. A key goal for this volume has been to include chapters that encourage critical reflection on these theory-practice links.

Commercially motivated interest in creativity has also mushroomed, and there is now a global industry dedicated to enhancing, fostering, enabling and developing creativity in the workplace. But with this increased demand to "get creative" comes renewed responsibility for research to get it right. This is not simply about satisfying the market's insatiable appetite for innovation; nor is it applying a set of tried and tested heuristics that can enable better problem solving in a business and management context (helpful though these might be); it is also about challenging preconceptions and taking a critical eye to the types of outputs, outcomes and innovations we want to see for ourselves, our organizations, industries, and communities. This handbook is being published when global sustainability challenges have made the need for developing creativity within the workplace even greater. Researchers have made significant progress in our understanding of exactly what creativity is, what enables successful creative work, how to develop creative potential and the organisational and cultural conditions that enable creativity to flourish and this handbook builds on this wealth of knowledge but explicitly seeks to answer the question: What is the future for creativity research given contemporary sustainable development challenges? Human creativity has undoubtedly brought progress but not without cost, especially to the natural environment. To argue within a new handbook on creativity that research should continue with "more of the same" would therefore be problematic.

Those researching creativity today, who are also concerned with sustainable economic, social and environmental development, do so with an understanding that the overwhelming evidence of history suggests the products of human creativity, whilst bringing many benefits, have also directly and indirectly caused significant threats to sustainable development. We discover uses for oil and create energy systems that damage the planet, we create antibiotics and face threats from resistant bacteria, we unpick the inner workings of the atom but can now envisage nuclear armageddon. The intended and unintended negative consequences of human creativity are manifold. To now call upon creativity to mitigate the risks associated

with the threats from previous creative work, such as those associated with climate change, a loss of biodiversity, and growing inequality, would seem to be a mistake for the future of creativity research.

There is then a need to research creativity in way that enables both the release of more creativity but that also seeks to understand how to constrain it in ways that prevent these unintended negative consequences for future generations. As an example, the United Nations Paris Agreement on climate change contains provisions for, amongst other things, the invention of carbon capture technologies by the middle of the century. The question is, can our current understanding of creativity enable these discoveries to happen without further risk of unintended consequences? Subsequently, how creative processes can be better understood and developed so that creativity can be used more sustainably is vital to the future of creativity research and has guided the commission of many of the chapters within this handbook.

Creativity research therefore needs to understand and explain not only how creativity works within contemporary neoliberal economic systems but also what it is able to become, as well as the conditions that could enable a transition towards using our creativity more sustainably. For example, Wilson (2010) identifies that creativity is, by definition, a social process. Yet, the predominant legal, cultural and management frameworks within which creativity is enacted, prioritises and rewards individual action over and above social or group action. Establishing that creativity is fundamentally a social process enables the importance of social contexts for successful creative production to be identified, specified and understood. Yet, there remains a paucity of research exploring the wider context of creative behaviour and this handbook contains work that specifies how such research can develop a deeper understanding of what creativity can become.

The Handbook asks many critical questions, including – Why is creativity important at work? What can we learn from creative labour in the context of the creative economy? What do we need creativity for? How might creativity be different from innovation? How should we understand the ethics of creativity at work? We agree with other commentators, particularly those working in the field of education, that it is increasingly important to ask such searching questions of creativity. For example, one of the distinguishing features of the capitalist system is its tendency to give rise to relentless accumulation – of profits, of credit, of waste, but also, perhaps, of innovation. With the advent of the fourth digital industrial revolution this drive for ever-increasing innovation is at risk of clashing directly with the drive to ensure a more sustainable society. Is it time to question this logic of using our creativity for achieving more, or better? Is it time we got more creative about *creativity at work*?

Accepting the fact that human creativity is a universal capacity, and a potentially unsettling and disruptive one at that, the aim of this handbook is to challenge us to think critically about how this capacity is developed into an advanced capability (which is where much of the research on creative "genius" has so far resided), especially in the workplace. The Handbook provides a welcome space for new directions, regardless of disciplinary, meta-theoretical or ideological starting positions. To understand *creativity at work* we must understand the physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, politics, philosophy, art, aesthetic, business and practice(s) of its existence. Creativity, after all, is an emergent human quality that extends

across all our scientific, philosophical and artistic interests. Developing explanations of how to make creative work more sustainable, interrogating the role of context and understanding how creativity exists outside of its recognition are important issues to tackle as creativity research progresses. Whilst this handbook offers a wide range of contributions to our understanding of creativity, these themes are explored throughout this work.

The handbook is divided into four parts:

Part I: Working with Creativity (introducing key theoretical perspectives)
Part II: Putting Creativity to Work (developing understanding from practice)
Part III: Working in the Creative Economy (exploring tensions and challenges)
Part IV: Making Creativity Work (raising opportunities for the future)

In the opening Part "Working with Creativity" contributing authors provide a wide-ranging introduction to the field. The chapters present key theoretical perspectives, explore debates surrounding what creativity *is*, particularly where we are struggling to understand creativity in practice, analyze creative identities, and provide a preliminary contextualization of creativity at work. Part II "Putting Creativity to Work" develops our understanding of creativity at work through consideration of situated practice – across a range of educational, commercial, workplace, and marginal contexts. Attention falls on the organizational nature of creativity, and the implications ("good" and "bad") for those involved. The third Part "Working in the Creative Economy" takes the disputed context of the "creative economy", where creativity has been synonymized with innovation, as its focus. Chapters explore a range of tensions and challenges influencing the creative labour of everyone – not just those labelled "creative" or working in the cultural and creative industries. The concluding Part "Making Creativity Work" is explicitly future-focused in order to respond to the question "creativity for what?". Chapters in this final section are wide-ranging, and include discussion of "value-based innovation", everyday creativity, the role of social media, sustainability, and ethics.

We are very grateful to the internationally recognized scholars, researchers, and practitioners who have contributed to this *Handbook of creativity at work*. As editors, we have encouraged "risk taking", and it has been wonderful and enlightening to read the many new insights, paradigms and perspectives they have provided within these pages, which collectively question where we must go next, and what still needs to be done. We hope very much that you will find this handbook inspiring and insightful, as you develop your own *creativity at work*, wherever that might be, and in whatever form it might take.

Dr Lee Martin
Dr Nick Wilson

January, 2018.