University of Sussex 50th Anniversary Conversations

Digital and Social Media Sussex Conversation on "Global Transformations"

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*1. Is the digital revolution producing a new cultural cleavage between arts and sciences?*

The digital revolution, like the erstwhile scientific revolution, is a heuristic approximation, a model and metaphor for far-reaching transformation. It is about ideas, and their material and non-material realization. Such revolutionary ideas, where they are encouraged and rewarded, can spread throughout society. There is a beginning, but no end to them.

I do not think that the digital revolution leads to new cultural cleavages between the arts and sciences. The young generation and its digital life-style provides the fertile soil, be it for taking part in scientific discovery games or feeling part of a ‘creative milieu’.

But a revolution does not necessarily bring equality: economic and political divides are currently aggravating. The promise of ‘freedom’ in and through the net and of equal access to it still exists, but has to be earned, re-defined and defended. This is the reason why the thorny issue of Open Access cuts across the arts and sciences, waiting for robust solution.

*2. What kinds of convergence can be, or should be, developed - both to address questions of public culture/public knowledge and in relation to research and learning*

Convergence between the arts and sciences is emerging in many different places and modes. Examples range from music (acoustics, architecture, neuroscience, sound-tracks to visuals) to physics and dance (motion and space), the study of emotion (from a neuroscientific perspective compared to theater and other forms of expression), the science of images (Gestaltung, design, drafting, entwerfen) and to aesthetic innovation. These kinds of convergence result in creating a multitude of objects or assemblages embodying novel experiences that travel across established boundaries while profoundly transforming previous ways of experiencing time, space, the environment or the Other.