**Article to supplement the Policy Forum for London: Next Steps for Growth in the Thames Estuary**

*Supporting the Thames Estuary Production Corridor Development*

Professor Janet Jones, Dean of the School of Arts and Creative Industries at London South Bank University has been working for five years to establish a campus to deliver education and enterprise for the Screen Industries at Purfleet, Thurrock. To this end we have undertaken foundational research and partnership building that will be useful for TEPEC, which we set out in this short article as a supplementary comment for the conference proceedings.

*Partnership Building*

We are working in partnership with Urban Catalyst, High House Production Park, The Backstage Centre, and the National College for the Creative Industries, Screen South, Canterbury Christ Church University, and have good relationships with the Universities of Kent and Essex. We have also developed two large European research and enterprise bids worth £11 million under the AHRC Creative Clusters bid (reaching the final bidding stage against competition from 65 Higher Education and Industry consortia). The second £5m project is currently at the final stage of consideration by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). We have developed close relationships with the Universities of Kent, Essex, and Canterbury Christ Church, and with industry partners such as Screen South, based in Folkestone, and Amazon Web Services.

*Baseline Study of SE LEP SMEs*

As part of our work we carried out a Baseline Study (2018) of 20 firms engaged in screen production within the SE LEP area and drew together existing strategy documents and industry studies. We found three elements that SMEs consider essential: 1. Access to skilled talent, 2. Access to state of the art studios and software, and 3. Access to fast internet and reliable cloud storage oriented to screen-based production, 4. A lack of networking and support to form partnerships for inter-firm working and collaboration, and 5. A lack of clarity on how to access grant funding.

*International Research*

Professor Lizzie Jackson (LSBU) and Dr Michal Glowacki (University of Warsaw) have just completed a three-year study (2016-19) looking at the factors for success within high technology firms working in clusters (<https://www.creativemediaclusters.com/>). The study draws on 150 interviews, 500 photographs, and ‘grey literature’ (city strategies, company reports, local and regional policy documents). The researchers looked at 10 successful clusters in Boston, Austin, Toronto, Detroit, Vienna, Tallinn, London, Warsaw, Brussels, and Copenhagen. The clusters had commonalities in their ways of working: selected findings:

* **Aggregation:** The importance of aggregating ‘catalyst’ organisations such as universities, co-working spaces of creative SMEs, or private firms such as regeneration specialists. This is often facilitated by community managers in high technology clusters, a complex role that includes running online/offline events, identifying influencers, and supporting knowledge exchange online/offline.
* **Fast decision-making:** New leadership and management styles fit for fast, agile working. Key skills include listening and adapting, fast decision-making, and acceptance of constant change. Acceptance of failure as part of the development process. Flatter management structures. Use of SLACK and other project management and collaboration tools for fast communication and decision-making during projects.
* **Entrepreneurialism:** Holistic cultural change towards an entrepreneurial culture that is open and collaborative with a high level of understanding of partnership working, R&D, and generating/protecting IP.
* **Dataification:** A high level of competency and understanding of data, databases, computer networks, and cloud working, and emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, and immersive media.
* **Urban regeneration:** Fast internet and reliable cloud services are a highly critical element in the growth of high technology firms and clustering.

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I was at the Policy Forum for London: Next Steps for Growth in the Thames Estuary (14th March conference, central London).

The last panel chair asked for a 600 word article of my research to be appended to the proceedings as delegates had expressed

Interest. See the attached.

The research has also been used by the GLA (meetings with Janet in the spring) for the development of the Thames Estuary

Production Corridor.