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## Introduction

Justin O'Connor

Lily KONG

Singapore Management University, [lilykong@smu.edu.sg](mailto:lilykong@smu.edu.sg)

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## Introduction

**Justin O'Connor and Lily Kong**

The cultural and creative industries have become increasingly prominent in many policy agendas in recent years. Not only have governments identified the growing consumer potential for cultural/creative industry products in the home market, they have also seen the creative industry agenda as central to the growth of external markets. This agenda stresses creativity, innovation, small business growth, and access to global markets – all central to a wider agenda of moving from cheap manufacture towards high value-added products and services.

The increasing importance of cultural and creative industries in national and city policy agendas is evident in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, Australia, and New Zealand, and in more nascent ways in cities such as Chongqing and Wuhan. Much of the thinking in these cities/countries has derived from the European and North American policy landscape.

Policy debate in Europe and North America has been marked by ambiguities and tensions around the connections between cultural and economic policy which the creative industry agenda posits. These become more marked because the key drivers of the creative economy are the larger metropolitan areas, so that cultural and economic policy also then intersect with urban planning, policy and governance. These intersections have given rise to the label 'The creative city' – an approach to policy and planning that recognises the urbanistic context and infrastructure within which creative industry innovation and growth take place. If the internationalisation of creative industry policy discourse, particularly its 'export' to many parts of Australasia, has given rise to significant debates regarding the need for 'imported' policies to be sensitive to different national contexts, then further localisation of creative industries within urban contexts only exacerbates these issues.

In short, though the promise of the 'creative industry, creative city' agenda has very real appeal, its implementation in the distinct contexts outside of European and North American cities in general is fraught with ambiguities, tensions and 'mistranslations'.

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J. O'Connor (✉)

Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, Creative Industries  
Precinct Z1-515, Musk Avenue Kelvin Grove, QLD 4059, Australia  
e-mail: [justin.oconnor@qut.edu.au](mailto:justin.oconnor@qut.edu.au)

An example of this last would be the application of Richard Florida's concept and methodology of 'the creative class' in the very different context of Chinese cities – which has been attempted with confusing results, to say the least.

This collection draws together 13 substantive essays which focus on Asian and European experiences, in order that differences between varied experiences might be foregrounded, and meaningful comparisons made. The contributions are divided into five sections, focusing on creative economy policies, creative clusters, creative class, the making of creative cities, and the politics of the creative city.

## **Creative Economy Policies**

In Part I, we explore the related issues of how very different policy contexts might be meaningfully compared, and some of the difficulties of policy transfer between different contexts. In Europe and East Asia, there have been growing expectations placed on the cultural and creative industries (CCI) to deliver new high skilled employment, stimulate a high-value service sector, provide ecologically sustainable growth, promote urban regeneration, act as catalysts for innovation, and so on. However, as Pratt (Chapter 2) argues strongly here, there is a lack of empirical evidence, confusion as to the potential role of the CCI, and a persistent imprecision as to how exactly we should characterise them. In particular there is ambiguity about the position of CCI between the traditional cultural policy object of subsidised public goods and the 'free' market. Given these confusions, Pratt argues that it is highly unfeasible to transfer CCI policies from one context to another. What is required is a closer analysis and understanding of the operation of the CCI and their relationship with the rest of the economy (and society). Tschang (Chapter 3) takes on the related task of trying to plot differences between different CCI contexts, using the computer games and animation industries as a case. In trying to compare the different trajectories and performances of this sector across East Asia, he also runs up against the issues of commercial industry and local cultural context. CCI products take time to emerge from a culture – they cannot simply be created by industrial policy – and they bear the mark of those specific cultures as they are most frequently created first for the domestic market. Tschang suggests that public policy has always been an enabler after the fact rather than an early stimulator; which might indicate that our usual sense of 'industry' policy needs to be supplemented by a more clearly articulated notion of innovation policy. Such an innovation policy needs to bear in mind Pratt's point about the ambiguous location of CCI between market and public provision.

## **Creative Clusters**

These issues are taken up in some detail in Part II where we look at creative clusters. Mommaas (Chapter 4) starts with a comprehensive overview of the conceptual and policy origins of the term. Located in a triangle of culture-economy-space, he

argues that the notion of cultural or creative clusters has given rise to an appealing policy agenda but at the same time hides ‘a confusing and tense complexity’. He argues for a much clearer differentiation of cluster types, with concomitant clarity about development agendas and criteria of success and failure. This detailed exploration of the concept and the unearthing of ambiguities and conflicts can also be seen in Kong’s chapter (Chapter 5), which looks at cultural clusters in Singapore. Different histories, different agencies and different objectives all make it difficult to lump all these initiatives under one developmental rubric. A more nuanced approach is called for, one where the cultural dimension is to play a significant role alongside the ‘industrial’. Finally Michael Keane (Chapter 6) takes up the cluster agenda in China. The PRC, after a late adoption of the concept, has forged ahead and created scores of different cultural and creative clusters in the big cities across China. Keane shows the provenance of the concept in the ‘top down’ model of China’s industrial and latterly, high-tech development policies, now being used to promote the creative industries. Keane shows how Beijing has used the notion of creative cluster as part of its modernisation policy, driving through many clusters whose size dwarfs such development in the West. Yet there is little understanding of the new challenges creative clusters present to policy and management, and some real problems with the wholesale imposition of a singular model on a diverse set of economic and cultural activities.

## **A Creative Class?**

Alongside ‘creative cluster’, the notion of a ‘creative class’ is one of the most significant forms of direct policy transfer seen in the last few years. From its use by US academic Richard Florida as a form of statistical civic boosterism tacked onto some loose claims about the ending of industrial society, it has gone on to enthuse urban politicians and planners across the globe. In Part III, we look in detail at how this idea has been received in the UK, Europe and East Asia, and the problematic nature of this easy policy transfer. All three find the idea seriously wanting in conceptual clarity. Hansen, Asheim and Lauridsen (Chapter 7) test the applicability of Florida’s thesis in the European context by a close empirical investigation of the relationships between talent, technology and tolerance relationship across 445 European regions. They seriously question that any easy conclusions can be drawn from the application of such a (for some) politically attractive guiding ideal. It is these conceptual and public policy questions that occupy Oakley (Chapter 8). Using particularly the case of Britain, she questions the very notion of a ‘creative class’ as well as the assumptions that it hides within itself – in particular the notion of a mobile labour force always ready to relocate – and the implicit endorsement of the gentrification of urban centres and its social consequences. Mok (Chapter 9) takes up some of these issues in his case study of Hong Kong and Macau, whose governments have become very much attracted to the notion of ‘creative class’ in recent years. However, Mok shows how economic development in these two cities has taken a very different development path than that assumed by the Florida thesis, and that

the notion of ‘creative class’ plays very differently in this context. However, he ends by identifying some common policy outcomes of the adoption of creative class rhetoric, including the further socio-economic polarisation of the urban spaces of post-reform China.

## **The Making of Creative Cities**

In Parts IV and V, we widen the view from creative clusters and classes to the notion of the creative city as such. In Part IV, we look at the resources available to particular localities for the mobilisation of the creative capacity of the city. Taylor (Chapter 10) notes the increasing popularity of the notion of creative industries as a new kind of local (city) economic development strategy since the arrival of Britain’s Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) in 1998. However, he argues that this popularity might have come at a price. Reviewing earlier policies around cultural industries and local economic development, he argues that questions of governance involved not just technical or industrial but wider political issues. As other authors in this collection have argued, to ignore the wider political and cultural policy issues is to ignore the contextual reality within which notions of creative industries must take their place. While Taylor focuses very much on the North of England, in the following two chapters, we examine Shanghai. Li and Hua’s (Chapter 11) account of Shanghai’s strategic vision shows how the creative industries have become central to its aspirations to become a leading global city. This provides the empirical context for O’Connor’s chapter (Chapter 12), which attempts to problematise the creative industries agenda as it is transferred from the West to Shanghai (Chapter 12). Through a critical engagement with Hutton’s *The Writing on the Wall*, he attempts to place the creative industries agenda in China in the wider context of theories of development, modernisation, anti-imperialism and post-colonial thought.

## **The Politics of the Creative City**

O’Connor’s chapter leads us to the final section which interrogates contemporary notions of the city and urban spatiality. Corijn (Chapter 13) situates urban governance within a post-national political and cultural space. Urban governance, he argues, ‘cannot be legitimised in the same way as representation (representative democracy) within a national context’. Culture, in the sense of the ‘imaginary constitution of society’ and the ongoing ‘production of social bonds and interactions’, therefore becomes central to urban governance. Here we find some responses to the questions raised by Pratt, Taylor, and others in this volume, as to the wider questions of urban governance within which any creative industries policy needs to be understood. Finally, Lehtovouri and Havik (Chapter 14) take

us down to the sub-urban level, to the interstices of urban innovation. Using case studies in Helsinki and Amsterdam the authors show how new forms of spatial management are being used to promote creative spaces in European cities. These spaces are deeply embedded in the complexity and diversity of urban actors and dynamics, folding in marginal and temporary uses alongside the more mainstream and economically powerful institutions. In this way, the final section begins to flesh out Pratt's call in Chapter 2 for an empirically situated creative industries policy which is aware of the wide range of factors and interests involved in the production of urban cultures.