



Introduction

'Cultural Economies and Cultural Activism'

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The theme of this Special Issue was the research theme for the Warwick Global Research Priority in International Development [GRP-ID] for 2015. Its purpose is to explore critical issues in the study of the global creative economy, the influence of creative economy on policies for development, and the critical tensions identified by emerging forms of activism. The research theme lasted a whole year, and during that time evolved and provoked some unexpected debates, exchanges and presentations.

The contributions that make up this Special Issue thus reflect the intellectual diversity that characterised the year. This issue is divided into two parts, where the first part features three people -- two scholars and one activist playwright -- who played a formative role in our itinerary. The second part comprise papers from a range of disciplinary perspectives, mostly from younger scholars who either participated in the year's GRP-ID events or

who explored our theme elsewhere. For example, the two contributions from the Centre for British Studies at the Shanghai International Studies University (Qi Chen and Xiaozhou Zhou) emerged from two successive research seminars on cultural economy we organised together in Shanghai in July 2014 and July 2015.

Among the events of 2015 were some high profile seminars, a symposia, the GRP-ID International Development Annual Public Lecture, the the GRP-ID International Development Annual Photography Competition and the subsequent Photography Exhibition. The most intensive period of activities was during May 2015, on the occasion of a GRP-ID partnership with Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study, hosting as Visiting Fellow the celebrated South African playwright and UNESCO technical advisor, Mike van Graan. A highlight was the Global Cultural Economy Roundtable, which featured UNESCO Chair

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Wolfgang Schneider, as one of a number of distinguished guests debating current research, policy and strategy for culture at national, EU and UN levels. Professor Schneider remains the first external examiner of the MA in Arts, Development and Enterprise in the Centre for Cultural Policy Studies at Warwick, where many of the research themes in this special issue are routinely taught.

A similar event took place the following September, called 'The 2005 UNESCO Convention and the Cultural Economy: Ten Years On'. This time, the Warwick Institute of Advanced Study Visiting Fellow was Justin O'Connor (Monash University, Australia, and who initiated this event). 2015 ended with a symposium entitled 'A Sustainable Future through Development Policies for the Creative Industries'? The focus was on the city of Coventry, although special guests from the Shandong Academy of Social Sciences (China) offered some valuable comparative perspectives.

I would like to thank all speakers and participants for the intellectual stimulation of 2015 -- there were far too many to mention here. However, I must indeed thank the three people who invited me to lead the 2015 theme -- the GRP-ID academic directors, Professor Shirin Rai and Professor Ann Stewart, and Dr Rajnaara C. Akhtar, who until April 2016 was GRP-ID Coordinator.

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This Special Issue features a diversity of approaches to the subject of 'cultural economies and cultural activism', most of which focus on the role of culture and cultural policies in development contexts -- social and economic development. The use of arts and culture as components in development initially evolved in the West through four decades of attempted re-industrialisation, where the service and communications sectors gradually replaced heavy industry within the priorities of national economic development policy (Bell, 1974, etc.). Since the 1970s, design, fashion and entertainment-based retail have played an increasing role in national economic reproduction. This has been followed by the strategic deployment of arts and culture (particularly festivals and large art museums) within urban economic development, fuelled in part by the rapid rise of global tourism. More recently, digital media and the internet have introduced some

unexpected cultural dimensions to almost all economic activity. Unsurprisingly, sociologists and economists have attempted to define these changes in terms of both historical periodisations and structural mutations in capitalism and its labour markets, using neologisms like 'knowledge economy', 'creative age', 'disorganised capitalism', and so on. (Drucker, 1969; Offe, 1985; Florida, 2002)

A full history of the arts and culture as strategic components of international development aid, however, is yet to be written (for a contemporary overview, see Clammer 2014). It is only with the rise of the term 'creative economy' (promoted globally by UNCTAD: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) that the strategic deployment of arts and culture as a means of development has been widely acknowledged (UNCTAD, 2008). It has indeed been possible to talk of a 'global cultural policy' since the UNESCO Constitution of 1945 (and UNESCO's seven subsequent UN conventions on culture), and moreover, with the UN discourse on 'culture and development' that emerged in 1982 at the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mondiacult) organised by UNESCO in Mexico City. However, arguably, it was only with the rise of the 'creative industries' during and after the late 1990s that an affirmative global consensus on the functional role of culture in development emerged. It is now difficult to locate a major city in the world that does not favourably include the arts and culture in its strategic development policies, and do so in tandem (and often stimulated by) the creative industries.

While the arts and culture had been used in development for years, the 'creative industries' offered an entirely new cognitive framework within which to understand the potential interrelation of culture to social and economic life. The arts and culture, while deeply historical, became subject to new demands on playing a role in the strategic production of capital, followed by an obsessive scrutiny on their performance and success in doing so (in the form of official evaluation of value or benefits to society). The term 'creative industries' is a hybrid concept, and not entirely coherent. It includes crafts, design, media, communications, architecture, antiques, film, music, publishing and software, and in reality there is little that tie these industries together other than the market, economic or supply chain forces that also tie other industries together; and most of these activities are endemic to other

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industries. 'Creativity' itself is obviously said to be the common denominator, though it is never easily identifiable as an activity, capability, strategy or process. A power once considered peculiar to the arts, creativity has nonetheless been found to harbour a profound potential for industrial development, a finding seemingly confirmed by the proliferation of the 'industries' listed above. These industries (most of which, of course, were born out of positively ancient cultural practices) do indeed share some common features: they are often (not always, but often) small, flexible and low cost firms. They work under high levels of competitive pressure, with higher than average levels of young employees, whose creative productivity is intimately related to their experience of, and involvement in, the social and cultural life around them.

A significant feature of the creative industries is the way they mediate (in part as they are largely service providers, but are also particularly vulnerable to) the economic forces of capital and its perpetual need for consumable, novel, content. They effectively 'industrialise' what was historically endemic to culture (stylistic expression, vision, imagination, the production of new ideas, and so on) and do this by inventing and developing the means to instrumentalise fundamental cultural competencies (design skills, aesthetic knowledge and experience). They re-form culture for the purposes of enterprise, business and economy.

Culture is therefore a principle resource for the creative industries, but culture itself is neither a clearly delineated sphere of life, neither static nor pure. It is ideology as much as lived practice. It emerges out of lifestyle, values and beliefs, traditions and sensibilities, and is also a means of expression, identity and representation. These are historical and formed through material conditions of labour and capital, and so they are bound up in broader political discourses of self-determination, equalities and rights (Forbes, 2010). And public policies for culture -- as attested by the papers in this special issue -- are invariably responding to the political as well as economic function of 'creative industries' as they have been re-framed within the new economy of creativity. The construction of a public policy concept of 'creative economy' is significant for two reasons: firstly, the creative industries are no longer understood as just a generic range of connected if discrete industrial sectors, all of whom offer goods

and services to the 'real' economy outside; rather, they are part of this broader economy. Secondly, as an 'economy', creativity is no longer understood as just a peculiar species of production -- it is trade and markets, Intellectual Property, employment, capitalisation and financial flows, and so on (cf. De Beukelaer, Pyykkönen, and Singh, 2015).

However, the use of the term 'economy' is also problematic. It can be assumed that creative production is subject to all the same conditions of any other kind of industrial production (and thus can be shaped with the same policy instruments, or conversely, can act in the 'free market' without special policy support, subsidy or protections). A strong concept of 'economy' can also blind government and other state actors (or even the creative industries themselves) to the cultural basis of creative production, and the extent to which culture is dissipated through exposure to markets constructed for other, very different, types of goods and services. The priorities of advanced capitalist economics can be deeply corrosive of culture.

As Justin O'Connor maintains through the opening keynote to this special issue: 'the economy' has gained a hegemonic power over social and cultural policy fields, but this has not happened because of the superior explanatory power of 'economics' alone. We need to understand how the political imaginary of states and state coalitions have become invested in global capital accumulation, and how this process of investment devalues aspects of life once constitutive of social realm -- community participation, union or civic association. Less obvious is the equally important ways that the operational advantage of a 'public' realm has been devalued. As a realm of governance and vital protection for culture, the 'public' realm is now so fatally compromised that an appeal for a return to a total state subsidy of all culture, for example, is not the panacea that it seems. In our own time, an emphatic concept of 'public' ownership is difficult to wield in arguments about development, as functional efficiency and operational cost cutting is the *sine qua non* of any significant actor or role in the economy of contemporary society.

And few would argue for the return of the parochial days of the 'organic' culture of closed communities and the shared values provided by state dominated national monoculture. Nor can one argue that markets are intrinsically reductive -- some

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cultural production cannot function without markets (pop music, for example) and indeed markets existed before corporate capitalism. The recent rise in new local markets, the so-called 'sharing economy' and 'collaborative consumption', are surely symptomatic of both the need for vibrant markets and the current restrictions wrought by corporate domination within the so-called market economy.

Our primary concern in this special issue is more to do with the way that culture itself – its facility for unique expression, meaning-creation, sensory enjoyment, identity-construction, and place-based allegiances – has been divested of its productive capability. It is used as a powerful resource for industry and economy, but in ways that divest its ability to generate new local, regional and national economies of value through the empowerment of individuals, the political agency of cultural organisations, and the social interconnection of sub-cultural groups.

The GRP-ID research theme for 2015, and so this Special Issue, was in part inspired by the groundbreaking UNDP/UNESCO *Creative Economy Report 2013 Special Edition: widening local development pathways*. This report (the previous two, managed by UNCTAD, focused on international trade and Intellectual Property) is indicative of a trend within international development discourse to empower the creative potential of local actors, and find creative ways for development agencies to engage with 'the local'. The report raised some crucial questions: how does the 'creative economy' concept make the very concept of 'economy' problematic? What social forces, regulatory frameworks, financial investment, enterprise management or public goods are required for 'culture' to become an 'economy' -- and how can they be configured? More specifically, "What is being made and consumed? By whom and for whom? What kind of culture is being produced today and for what kind of citizenry?" (UNDP/ UNESCO: 30). This raises questions for cultural policies that provide strategies for development. For in the emergence of a creative economy, the 'economy' seems always to detach itself and prevail over the cultural in perverse ways, and culture can radically change as a result. These changes, of course, can be productive and liberating; they can also divest the subjects or citizens of that cultural space any real or future ownership or participatory role in the evolution of

their own culture, particularly the culture of everyday life and social community (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, and Pascual, 2016).

The *Creative Economy Report 2013* positions sustainable development as a critical alternative to the hegemonic concept of 'economic growth'. It argues for a priority on production and the contexts of production, and in so doing, it assumes that the overwhelming demands and power of international market capitalism and its patterns of consumption can be re-balanced by a re-investment in the creative agency of public institutions, local people and their immediate urban, social or community life. This is the approach of this special issue.

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