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Book review

Universities and Publishers

Creativity, Innovation and the Cultural Economy, Andy C. Pratt, Paul Jeffcutt (Eds.). Routledge, London (2009). 280 pp., (hardback), \$160 publishers, £76 Amazon, ISBN:978-0-415-41975-8

Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries: An International Perspective, Colette Henry (Ed.). Edward Elgar, Cheltenham (2007). 215 pp., (hardback), £53.96 (Publisher's online price), ISBN:978-1-84542-610-1

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Recent years have seen several edited book collections on the creative, or cultural industries. Many of these feel obliged to justify the use of the terms and categories in rather apologetic and defensive ways. This is partly because there is an implied elitism, particularly in the “creative industries” term that some are uncomfortable with—as with the often-heard “Aren’t all industries creative?”. There is resistance to the pixie dust of creativity being associated only with the young, brash, designer glasses-wearing, cappuccino-sippers of sectors like advertising, new media and design. “There is creativity in manufacturing plastic refuse sacks.” Some would say. Having done research on all these sectors I can say that yes, there is creativity in bin-bag production, but it is of a different type to that shared by the aforementioned creative industries. There are similarities in process, in relation to innovation, and in relation to the value experienced by consumers in the products of these sectors.

A second dimension to the creative industries category is the political-policy aspect. Governments of the advanced industrialised countries have promoted creative industries as essentially forward-looking, high-growth sectors that are desirable, contemporary and cool. The suspicion here is of an unseemly alliance between politicians and parties trying to win votes among the young, and industries lobbying for special policy attention. There is also a concern about complacency, in that the emerging economies are fast catching up in many creative industries just as they have in manufacturing, as noted in the Cox Review (HMSO, 2005).

These types of issues infuse the collection edited by Andy Pratt and Paul Jeffcutt on Creativity, Innovation and the Cultural Economy. It is a thoughtfully designed collection, with six sector-clusters covered by two chapters each: advertising, music, film and television, new media, design, and museums/visual arts/performance. The sectors were chosen to give a variety across the commercial/non-commercial continuum, but the general argument is that the creative industries are a diverse set of sectors and heavily conditioned by their individual contexts. Having pairs of chapters on each sector-cluster acknowledges variety of methods and approaches.

Pratt and Jeffcutt top and tail the collection with introduction and concluding chapters. The approach they take is that creativity and innovation ought not to be thought of as inputs and outputs, but rather “effects” of the contexts that the creative industries reside in. The geography orientation runs deep in this collection—the editors and authors are interested in the places where

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creative industry activity occurs, including the institutions, networks, project-based ecologies that form “the cloud” in which creative professionals do their work.

While stressing the differences within the creative industries Pratt and Jeffcutt also find some similarities that contradict popular distinctions—for example that the increasing commercial imperatives being applied to the museums and galleries sector show similar tensions with a “culture as public resource” view in the film industry. This creative arts–commerce tension is found in the other sectors too.

The guiding brief that the editors have given their contributors is to discuss the meanings and occurrences of creativity and innovation in their studied sectors. Some stick to the brief more than others; Mark Lorenzen’s chapter on the film industry is a concise discussion that stresses the differentiation required in successful films, yet also the industry dynamics that militate against this differentiation, such as the growing reliance on stars and sequels to help offset the great risks of film-making.

Showing the geography bent, Lorenzen refers to film clusters, more than other units of analysis like countries or firms. This resonates with the following chapter on the London film region by Pratt and Gornostaeva. They point out that although Soho is still considered the heart of the UK’s film industry, all the actual filming happens in the suburbs of London. The same is true of Hollywood, in that film-shooting generally occurs elsewhere in Los Angeles. Partly this is due to the increased mobility allowed by digital technologies in cameras and equipment. Nevertheless Pratt and Gornostaeva assess the impact of digital technologies on the film industry as rather less important than factors such as regulation and public policies to stimulate the independent sector. Technology has had a more profound impact on television by contrast, not least because of the proliferation of channels. This proliferation reflects a shift away from centralised organisational forms to networks and spatial interaction.

Regulation and lobbying power also trump technology in David Hesmondhalgh’s chapter on the recorded music sector. Here, it is argued, transformations due to digitisation have led to the extension of copyright laws. This was in response to the presentations of digital technology as hostile to the creativity of the industry, by the industry. Hesmondhalgh is sceptical about the disintermediation promised by digital enthusiasts and predicts that the relations between rights holders, artists and consumers are unlikely to change dramatically.

The chapters on design consider the cities of Montreal (Leslie and Rantisi) and Stockholm (Power) and raise the importance of events, such as fairs, trade shows, Design Days and Weeks—these support the networking necessary to sustain the buzz and business. Power points out that contrary to some romantic regional theories this networking is not so much about sharing knowledge so much as finding your next job or project. This alludes to the fragility of the creative industries business, in spite

of their high growth, they tend to be “winner take all” in outcomes, as the editors argue. This inequality is not only horizontal but also in the value chain—it is not always the creatives who have the industry. Location also plays a part in the value chain, meaning that locations at the periphery of corporate capital are always threatened by takeover or closure, as indicated by Hutton’s chapter on new media in Vancouver. This effects a kind of “branch plant” status on peripheral firms, in spite of their creative edge.

The location of creativity within the organisation is the theme of Chris Bilton’s chapter on advertising. Bilton argues that creativity is no longer only offered by the creatives, but throughout the functions of the modern agency, as a result of the ascendancy of media planning. The “creatives” silo has been downgraded in effect, since key creative decisions are taken by the planners with the client in relation to overall strategy and brand, rather than individual creative artefacts like ads. Again this also appears to be a tenuous source of competitive advantage, as media planning relationships may be severed abruptly even if (especially if?) they have been successful.

The implicit theme of fragility and the shifting locus of creativity are raised again in Sean Nixon’s chapter on boozy creatives working in advertising in Soho, whom originally come from the provinces. In some ways these contextual place studies of social networks raise more questions that they answer. Many UK industries have a drinking culture, in and out of the creative industries—how much then is it a UK phenomenon, rather than an advertising one? Some creatives who do not drink greatly resent the alcohol culture in Soho and feel excluded from the network. Do they contribute any less, or more than the boozers? Is this true of ad clusters in New York and other countries? However these sector chapters are not research case studies explaining methods and analysis and cause and effect, but are better read as impressions, filled with informative anecdotes and insights by knowledgeable researchers.

Other questions that come to mind are about the opportunities for entrepreneurs and start-ups, in these exclusive networks of reputation? And with the focus on the UK and North America—a limitation acknowledged by the editors, which is understandable given that the book grew from a UK ESRC-funded seminar series—what about the emerging economies in an increasingly global economy?

Fortunately, these kinds of questions are tackled in another collection: *Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries*, edited by Colette Henry. There is less agonising here over definitions, the editors and most of the chapters simply accept the UK’s Department of Culture, Media and Sport, which defined the creative industries as the following 13 sectors in its 1998 mapping exercise: advertising, architecture, art and antiques, computer games, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software and television and radio (DCMS, 1998). This remains a popular categorisation, albeit associated with the New Labour government of Tony Blair. Chapter four of this book, by David Rae discusses the influence of this period in a UK perspective, pointing out some of the problematic effects of identifying the creative economy as different and non-mainstream. For example, Rae refers to the relatively poor standing of the UK in R&D expenditure and some other indicators of innovation, which stand in contrast to the high energy of the creative sectors in recent years, and calls for “cultural diffusion” to occur. This argument resonates with recent work by NESTA and the Queensland school on spillovers from the creative industries to the rest of the economy.

The “special” nature of creative people is discussed in the chapter by Ó Cinnéide and Henry, which argues that creative people have many qualities associated with entrepreneurship,

such as risk-taking, tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance and autonomy. The chapter raises the case of Irish music and dance, such as Riverdance, which was launched from Eurovision Song Contest success to a new genre of live and recorded entertainment. However, the chapter stresses the barriers to entrepreneurship and the fact that even with the Irish success story, much of the economic success is not captured within the country. Again, these themes deserve a longer treatment and particularly in drawing out the lessons for entrepreneurship from the Irish case.

The following chapter on New Zealand’s film industry has a similar structure with a brief page at the end on Peter Jackson, of *Lord of the Rings* fame. This chapter characterises national and regional policy as “state entrepreneurship”, while Jackson is an individual entrepreneur. There is excellent data and analysis of how policy in New Zealand has influenced the industry but it seems to me there is a problem with calling government activity entrepreneurship: governments are usually doing something and it cannot all be entrepreneurship. One would then need to take a tautological position of calling it entrepreneurship if it appears to have led to success. How about activity that turns out to be unsuccessful or does not add value? And the success story of Jackson the individual does not seem to have followed from the policies—rather referring to more traditional notions of entrepreneurship, like establishing businesses and high-quality resources to support his work.

Chapter 2 by Desmond Hui reviews East and Southeast Asian government policies and economic statistics where available for creative and cultural industries as they are variously defined with sections on Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong—some of the statistics are projection. Understandably these deal with differences of definition, which are helpful to bear in mind with comparison. The review gives a sense of how countries like South Korea and Singapore have had a succession of policies aimed at CCLs since the 1980s, while others like Japan only really embraced targeted policies in the 21st century. It concludes that Korea’s sustained policy attention seems to have paid off in terms of market success in TV, music and animation industries. However, this reader is left with a desire for more analysis of the impact of policy, with such a brief impression in the conclusion after a chapter presenting raw facts. Assembling the facts is important, of course, but there is still much to understand about development of CCLs in Asia.

The following chapter by Maria Aggestam on music entrepreneurs in Scandinavia again shows a refreshing perspective. While we know the importance of institutions like the Eurovision Song Contest for several Scandinavian musicians and bands; not only the most famous, Abba, I had not realised that the tango and its music was such a strong part of Finnish culture. According to Aggestam there is a lack of professional marketing skills holding back the international growth of Finnish tango, but most importantly its language. Lyrics are crucial and singers’ and songwriters’ insistence on the Finnish language ensure it remains a local phenomenon. Sweden, by contrast, has continued export success, notably with songwriting for American artists such as the Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears and Jennifer Lopez. The chapter contains data and narrative on important institutions.

The second part of the book focuses on supporting the creative industries, including a chapter by Tom Fleming reviewing the investment and funding issues associated with creative firms; Ralph Brown on promoting entrepreneurship in arts education and the dilemmas and paradoxes of increased throughput of graduates, yet with a talent shortfall perceived by industry. These themes are returned to in a chapter by Calvin Taylor, while Linda Moss provides a transition economy perspective with a chapter on the support of creative enterprise in Russia. There is another

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chapter on human language technologies by Kenny and Meaton, which is interesting but seems somewhat out of place in this volume. A concluding chapter by Collette Henry summarises the themes and insights of the book.

In summary, this collection whets the appetite by shifting attention to countries that are less well researched in the creative industries field. They are fascinating vignettes that hint at a richer research landscape. I recommend both these books for scholars and students interested in these sectors. There is also much to interest the general reader. As a pair they complement each other and when read together they leave a more complete picture of the range and reach of the creative and cultural industries.

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