City, Culture and Society xxx (2014) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

City, Culture and Society

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ccs

Making creative spaces: China and Australia: An introduction

Justin O'Connor *, Xin Gu

Media and Communications, School of Media, Film and Journalism, Monash University, Caulfield Campus, Room T2.13, Caulfield, Victoria 3145, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 7 February 2014
Accepted 11 July 2014
Available online xxxx

Keywords:
Cultural creative industries
Creative city
Cultural economy
Creative clusters
Creative space

ABSTRACT

This is an introduction to the special issue on "Making Creative Spaces". It gives an overview of the literature and key debates around urban space for the cultural/creative industries and suggests what the current problems are. It specifies the diversity of local solutions and details the challenges and responses occurring in parts of China and Australia. The paper then introduces the contributions.

Limits and contradictions of the creative city

In the last decades cities across the globe have promoted the arts and cultural/creative industries (C/CI)[1] under the rubric of the 'creative city' (Florida, 2005; Hall, 2000; Landry, 2000). Policy-makers looked to this set of activities as a significant source of employment, wealth creation, economic diversity and innovation; for 'brand' image and generators of 'buzz' to attract inward investment and skilled mobile workers; as magnets for cultural (and 'creative') tourism; and for their contribution to social connectivity, livability and sense of place.

Despite tendencies towards dispersion in the suburbs (Felton, Collis, & Graham, 2010), small towns (Gibson, 2012) and rural areas (Luckman, 2012) the arts and cultural industries are strongly represented in metropolitan areas (Pratt & Hutton, 2013; Pratt, 2012). Typically they have been concentrated in the metropolitan core, especially in older ex-industrial, inner-city areas where they have been welcomed and promoted as agents of urban regeneration (Bell & Jayne, 2004). Immediately adjacent to the CBD these inner cities have emerged as key learning spaces in the 'cognitive-cultural' economy (Gertler, 2003; Scott, 2007) of cities, and have been central to their continued resilience in the face of rapid economic change (Cooke & Lazzeretti, 2008; Hutton, 2010; Montgomery, 2007; Scott, 2008). These areas facilitate 'creative ecosystems', the complex co-dependence of large and small, profit and not-for-profit creative businesses/practitioners along with a range of public, private and 'third sector' institutions and agencies (Jeffcutt, 2004; O'Connor, 2004; Pratt, 2004a, 2004b). Creative ecosystems crucially involve a complex mix of cultural and economic dynamics, and are strongly tied to the symbolic 'texture' of the built environment (Hutton, 2006; Shorthose, 2004; Van Heur, 2010) and the wider socio-cultural dimensions of place (Drake, 2003; Helbrecht, 2003; Lloyd, 2006).

However, having actively pursued these goals for over a decade, urban cultural policy-makers are facing some important challenges.

The benefits of the arts and creative industries are unevenly distributed between and within cities, with many areas 'locked out' of these developments. Despite claims that this 'post-industrial' sector represents the future of cities, employment in this sector does not very easily 'soak up' redundancies in older industries, or provide careers for younger people who might have gone into these. A strong

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 0435951970.
E-mail addresses: Justin.oconnor@monash.edu (J. O'Connor), guxin2003@gmail.com (X. Gu).

[1] We don't wish to discuss these disputed terms in this introduction. We use 'cultural/creative industries' (C/CI) to signal its disputed nature rather than 'cultural creative industries' (CCI) which elides this ambiguity and confusion. The term designates for us the visual and performing arts, audio-visual sectors, new media, computer games, publishing, design and architecture. It includes large and small businesses and institutions, commercial, subsidised and not-for-profit actors, as well as the related services and material supplies that go with these.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.07.001
1877-9166/

Please cite this article in press as: O'Connor, J., & Gu, X. Making creative spaces: China and Australia: An introduction. *City, Culture and Society* (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.07.001

C/CI sector might sit comfortably with low paid workers commuting to the city to provide basic services in hotels, restaurants, shops, delivery companies and so on. Within C/CI cultural workers frequently experience low pay, long hours and precarious conditions. The many contradictions between the utopian claims for C/CI and their present reality suggest a systemic failure amongst policy makers to find adequate ways of managing both the fragmentations of the contemporary 'creative city' (in which the C/CI play their part) and the conditions necessary for the sustainable reproduction of the local C/CI sector (Pratt, 2012).

Culture-led urban regeneration, in promoting large-scale, 'iconic' buildings and the extensive refurbishment of 19th century inner city infrastructure for arts and creative industry, very much contributed to processes of urban gentrification through real (property prices) and 'symbolic' exclusions (Miles & Paddison, 2009). The 'creative city' agenda also parallels the insertion of contemporary cities into volatile global circuits of trade, finance and labour (Massey, 2007) which can destabilise and/or 'disconnect' local economies at the same time as promoting rapid employment growth, property development and cultural innovation. This process has created extensive opportunities but has also been implicated in new kinds of inequality, displacement and disenfranchisement. These include an unequal geographical and social distribution of creative employment and urban regeneration effects (Oakley, 2004), as well as more fragmented urban communities (Scott, 2007). Thus not all cities or urban areas benefit from these activities, and whilst some experience rapid rises in property prices, other 'disconnected' cities facing rapid inner city/CBD decline have actively pursued these 'gentrification effects' with varying levels of success (Evans, 2009). Areas of urban over-heating and disconnection are juxtaposed in quite complex ways, with high levels of vacancy in one area not necessarily of interest to those facing entry barriers in another. All of these undermine the cultural vibrancy and livability of the city, the economic viability of the creative sector, and indeed the legitimacy of the creative city project, so closely associated with gentrification and exclusion.

Planning for creative spaces

Local governments have long been aware of the 'elective affinity' of the arts and creative industries for the inner city, and have used this 'creative clustering' as a key policy concept to promote urban regeneration and deliver sector support strategies (Hutton, 2009; O'Connor and Gu, 2010; Van Heur, 2010). As is well known, Sharon Zukin (1982) first noted the paradoxical consequence that success in attracting arts and (what later became known as) creative industries drives up property prices, pricing out lower income residents and creative practitioners (Evans, 2009; Evans & Foord, 2005; Gertler & et al., 2006; Ley, 2003; Markussen, 2006; Rantisi, 2006; Waitt, 2004). At the same time consumption drives out production, as retail/leisure uses take advantage of a rising culture-based visitor economy, putting pressure on accessible workspace (Lange, 2005; Van Heur, 2010). These new retail/leisure uses are often not locally owned, leaching the benefits of urban regeneration outside the area and eroding public and 'third spaces' (pubs, cafes, independent book, clothes and other shops, small performance venues, etc.) with serious implications for the mix of uses and the 'feel' of the locality (Helbrecht, 2003). These displacements undermine the traditional dense, face-to-face networking and experimental spaces of the inner cities and the rootedness of the creative ecosystem within particular places. This makes the inner city more vulnerable to global downturns (with rapid de-investment a constant threat) as well as increasingly homogenous (Hutton, 2009).

Managing (or even identifying) the 'ecosystem' within which the C/CI operate has proved extremely difficult for urban policy makers. As Andy Pratt (2012) suggests, it is a new sector, frequently falling between the silos of established policy frameworks; and its fluidity and complex mix of economic and cultural dynamics presents challenges for governance that are currently far from being met. We would add that part of the problem is the narrative or 'imaginary' within which both 'creative cities' and 'creative industries' have been set. This will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion. In short, it might be that, as currently conceived, neither the 'creative city' nor the C/CI can be represented as objects of sustainable governance without raising wider, often unwelcome, political issues of urban governance.

Emblematic of the dislocation between the expectations and realities of both the 'creative city' and C/CI, along with the policy framework within which they are set, is the question of access to space. It is now a truth universally acknowledged that creatives in search of space are a sure route to driving up property prices and rents. This results in a subsequent displacement of small-scale C/CI, and a reduction of that diversity, vitality and sense of place that made it attractive in the first place. In bald terms, the long term governance of a 'creative ecosystem' is frequently in contradiction with the dominant priority of urban economic governance which is to maximise property and rental prices (and taxes derived from these)[2]. This has long structured the city, but it is exacerbated by new discourses of urban governance – let us say the entrepreneurial city – in which the creative city also played its part.

However, don't want to establish an essentialised contradiction between commodified space and creativity. It is a tension that weakly structures the field, operating at a different intensity in different locales. That is, these contradictions and dislocations of urban space play out in different ways and in different settings. But other dynamics and relations are also co-present and we should acknowledge these. Rather than shutting them down in advance we need to recognise that different places open up different possibilities for interventions and initiatives by citizens and local governments. Across the globe there have been many attempts to deal with this issue of 'gentrification' and the need to provide and preserve space for cultural/creative use. In this special issue we deal with some of these initiatives in the specific context of Australia and China: more particularly, in the larger cities of Australia and in the Chinese coastal cities of Shanghai and Shenzhen.

[2] On London, one of the key global creative cities Cf. http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/20/observer-editorial-london-preserve-rich

Please cite this article in press as: O'Connor, J., & Gu, X. Making creative spaces: China and Australia: An introduction. *City, Culture and Society* (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.07.001

Focus of this special issue

This issue will focus on problems and possibilities of interventions to promote creative spaces in the city. The creative spaces in this issue can be large-scale planned 'creative clusters' occupying new or refurbished buildings, often linked to spaces of socialisation and specialist retail. They can be 'organic' concentrations of creative activity drawn to cheap rents and the ambiance of a particular area of the city. Or they can be individual buildings housing a number of small, fast-turnover creative businesses. All of these creative spaces interact with urban real estate and urban planning regimes in particular ways. Whilst these creative clusters are essential for the cultural economy of the city they are frequently both catalysts for and victims of gentrification.

This special issue will take two specific regional (in the global rather than sub-national sense) cases in order to explore some of the different dimensions within which interventions in urban creative spaces take place. That is, China and Australia.

In the last ten years the 'creative cluster' has emerged as a central organising concept for creative industries policy in many major cities in the developed world, and increasingly so in East Asia and especially in China (Hui, 2006; Keane, 2007, 2012; Kong & Gibson, 2006; Kong & O'Connor, 2009; O'Connor and Gu, 2012). Historically creative clusters have been 'spontaneous' or 'organic', emerging from the interstices of the planning regime, property market and urban cultural dynamics, and this will no doubt continue (Mommaas, 2004, 2009). However, in the last ten years the scenario has changed considerably. The creative industries agenda has moved centre stage, closer to economic development, through its contribution to employment and wealth creation, and its links to innovation and R&D strategies. Equally the link between urban regeneration, property development and culture has now become a central (often disruptive) driver in strategic urban planning, making 'spontaneous' clusters less likely. Creative industry clusters are, therefore, increasingly being purpose built as part of a wider strategic vision (Mommaas, 2009). This is especially so in China, which is now in the process of constructing over one hundred creative clusters across the country, in a very heavily planned process.

In this issue we explore various dimensions of this process in China (Shan), with a focus on the two cities of Shanghai (Gu) and Shenzhen (O'Connor and Liu). Though very much driven by local state agencies as opposed to the 'spontaneous' or 'organic' developments often associated with the concept in the West, the result remains a highly complex process. For example, the state certainly has powers over land-use and allocation unavailable to many Western city governments, but at the same time it also acts as a real estate developer in its own right, thus reproducing many of the gentrification effects identified elsewhere. Again, its desire to form production-based clusters is constantly modified by its need for retail-derived profitability and to attract high-end, often international visitors who can create the 'buzz' of an 'authentic' cluster. Finally, though set up to attract small scale, new start creatives there is rarely the policy mechanism or even the will to provide any support to these; indeed the sense of surveillance can actively discourage such creative from entering the cluster. Thus although creative clusters have proliferated through a state-led process the effect has often been to remove available 'creative space' from easy access leading to an increased exclusion from the urban centres similar to that process identified in the West.

However, this blanket characterisation hides a patchwork of different contexts and initiatives. Our Chinese papers have identified a range of initiatives from local government, cluster management, real estate development, local art worlds, architect-designers and so forth that have opened up different creative spaces in the city, or attempted to make official clusters work (or work better). Xin Gu takes three creative clusters in Shanghai in order to identify different processes at work and to highlight the complexity of the situation in large Chinese cities. 'M50', 'Tianzifang' and '1933' all developed in different ways – artistic community and sympathetic management; designers and local communities; and powerful policy and development agencies – which indicate the real challenges facing the control of and access to creative space in contemporary China. O'Connor and Liu explore a more or less successful intervention in the very different context of OCT-LOFT in Shenzhen – a city characterised by a rapid emergence from almost nothing to global manufacturing metropolis, a marginal and experimental position vis-à-vis the central state in Beijing, and a flexible, entrepreneurial, open-ended approach to urbanistic development. This wider context, as well the specific history of the large development group that owns OCT-LOFT (rather like synergies between Shang-Tex and M50 as discussed by Xin Gu), have allowed a more flexible urban space to emerge in a city which has barely recognised its cultural substance and possibilities. Shan Shilian puts these urban developments in perspective with an outline of some of the formidable tensions and contradictions at play in China's contemporary cultural policy visions.

In contrast to local governments in China, Australian local government interventions have been characterised by more the generic challenges facing cities in the developed world, working within an urban real estate market and with varying degrees of leverage and regulation at their disposal. In general cultural policy-makers have sought in various ways to make space available to (typically micro and small) arts and creative industries, either to sustain the diversity and vitality of 'overheated' areas, or to promote new kinds of cultural production and consumption as catalysts for regeneration in 'disconnected' areas. Cultural agencies have invested in live-work spaces and part-subsidised managed workspaces; encouraged landlords to offer short-term leases or licenses, or make available empty retail spaces; sought to include more flexible use and public display space in public and commercial developments; persuaded owners to develop appropriate buildings for cultural rather than other use, and so on.

In so doing they have faced four issues. First, they have struggled to provide the evidence and the language within which the appropriateness and feasibility of spatial interventions within creative ecosystems could be justified politically. Second, intervening within the complex urban field of property markets and the planning, services and regulatory environment, requires new kinds of knowledge,

Please cite this article in press as: O'Connor, J., & Gu, X. Making creative spaces: China and Australia: An introduction. *City, Culture and Society* (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.07.001

skills, initiative and organisational flexibility that are frequently missing at local government level. Third, linking the spatial to other forms of intervention (locally embedded virtual networks, training, public spaces, event programming, etc.), to wider planning and regulatory initiatives (licensing, property trusts, micro-finance, smart building codes etc.), and to regional ecologies (links to multi-polar centres, suburbs, peripheral and smaller cities) have also present complex, seemingly intractable policy challenges. Finally, building partnerships with a range of other agencies and stakeholders, requires a persuasive articulation of cultural policy objectives with good evidence and testable outcomes which are all too often lacking.

Australian local governments have faced specific challenges within this. Urban real estate has formed a highly organised lobby-group within cities giving it great power within planning agendas. In addition culture-led regeneration has been less driven by de-industrialisation than some other Northern Hemisphere places, and more concerned with global branding and image. Equally, it has been the provision of local amenities in the form of leisure and the arts (though these latter are highly contested) rather than an economically oriented creative industries vision that has driven much of the cultural policy in Australian cities. The four issues outlined above therefore have special and particular resonance, one that our Australia based papers seek to bring out.

Audrey Yue, Nikos Papastergiadis and Scott McQuire situate Federation Square, a major new provision of open public space at the heart of Melbourne, organised around a cluster of publicly funded art and culture organisations, in the wider content of Melbourne's vision as a multicultural, global city. Here the traditional issue of cultural clustering and precincts is linked to attempts to integrate a transnational public sphere structured around a large screen facility. The authors bring together thematics of clustering, city branding, public space and the media city to open up new spaces for inquiry around the meaning of creative city.

Shane Homan takes us to the intersection of music policy and urban planning. He gives an account of how Melbourne has dealt with one of the major contradictions of creative space – the conflict between live music entertainment and the residential development whose occupants are frequently drawn to the urban 'buzz' only to complain about the noise. He also deals with the 'non-cultural' dimension of the creative city, in terms of the regulatory context in which music venues are expected to operate.

Kate Shaw gives a detailed account of the City of Melbourne's attempt to deal with the contradictions of the creative city central to this issue. That is, a decade of successful promotion of the central city area as a space for creative practice resulted in both a decline in available and affordable creative space, and a new round of central development, especially in the Docklands scheme, that targeted high-rental uses. The city's creative space initiatives was an attempt to secure space for creative uses on a long term basis rather than a temporary spur to development. Shaw contrasts this with the wider vision of neo-liberal urbanism and its continued failures, as well as other initiatives that attempt to work with developers to provide temporary spaces.

In both China and Australia then interventions into creative spaces continue to take place despite these difficulties, and it is to some of the practical challenges and the policy narratives within which these are framed and reframed that this special issue is addressed.

References

Bell, D., & Jayne, M. (Eds.). (2004). *City of quarters: Urban villages in the contemporary city*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Cooke, P., & Lazzeretti, L. (2008). *Creative cities, cultural clusters and local economic development*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
Drake, G. (2003). This Place gives me Space: Place and creativity in the creative industries. *Geoforum, 34*(4), 511–524.
Evans, G. (2009). Creative cities, creative spaces and urban policy. *Urban Studies, 46*(5–6), 1003–1040.
Evans, G., & Foord, J., (2005). Strategies for creative spaces – Phase 1 report: Report commissioned London development agency – creative London, city of Toronto, Ontario ministry of economic development & trade and ministry of culture.
Felton, E., Collis, C., & Graham, P. (2010). Making connections: Creative industries networks in outer urban locations. *Australian Geographer, 14*(1), 57–70.
Florida, R. (2005). *Cities and the creative class*. New York: Routledge.
Gertler, M. S. (2003). Tacit knowledge and the economic geography of context. *Journal of Economic Geography, 3*, 75–99.
Gertler, M. et al. (2006). *Strategies for creative spaces and cities*. Munk Centre for International Studies: University of Toronto.
Gibson, C. (Ed.). (2012). *Creativity in peripheral places: Redefining the creative industries*. London: Routledge.
Hall, P. (2000). Creative cities and economic development. *Urban Studies, 37*(4), 639–649.
Helbrecht, I. (2003). Bare geographies in knowledge societies. *Built Environment, 30*(3), 194–203.
Hui, D. (2006). From cultural to creative industries. Strategies for Chaoyang District, Beijing. *International journal of cultural studies, 9*(3), 317–331.
Hutton, T. (2009). Trajectories of the new economy: Regeneration and dislocation in the inner cities. *Urban Studies, 46*, 5–6.
Hutton, T. A. (2006). Spatiality, built form and creative industry development in the inner city. *Environment and Planning A, 38*, 1819–1841.
Hutton, T. A. (2010). *The new economy of the inner city*. London: Routledge.
Jeffcutt, P. (2004). Knowledge relationships and transactions in a cultural economy: Analysing the creative industries ecosystem. *Media International Australia, 2004*, 67–82.
Keane, M. (2007). *The new great leap forward*. London: Routledge.
Keane, M. (2012). *China's new creative clusters. Governance, human capital and regional investment*. London: Routledge.
Kong, L., & O'Connor, J. (2009). *Creative economies, creative cities: an Asia-Europe perspective*. The Netherlands: Spring press.
Kong, L., & Gibson, C. (2006). Khoo l-M. and Semple A-M. Knowledges of the creative economy: towards a relational geography of diffusion and adaptation in Asia. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 47*(2), 173–194.
Landry, C. (2000). *The creative city*. London: Comedia.
Lange, B. (2005). Socio-spatial strategies of culturepreneurs. *The example of Berlin and its new professional scenes, Zeitschrift fur Wirtschaftsgeographie, 49*, 79–96.
Lloyd, R. (2006). *Neo-bohemia: Art and commerce in the postindustrial city*. London: Routledge.
Ley, D. (2003). Artists, aestheticisation and the field of gentrification. *Urban Studies, 40*(12), 2527–2544.
Luckman, Susan (2012). *Locating cultural work. The politics and poetics of rural, regional and remote creativity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Massey, D. (2007). *World city*. Cambridge: Polity.
Markussen, A. (2006). Urban development and the politics of a creative class. *Environment and Planning A, 38*, 1921–1940.
Miles, S., & Paddison, R. (2009). *Culture-led urban regeneration*. London: Routledge.
Mommaas, H. (2004). Cultural clusters and the post-industrial city. *Urban Studies, 41*(3), 507–532.
Mommaas, H. (2009). Spaces of culture and economy: Mapping the cultural-creative cluster landscape. *Creative economies, creative cities*. Netherlands: Springer. pp. 45–59.
Montgomery, J. (2007). *The new wealth of cities: City dynamics and the fifth wave*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Oakley, K. (2004). Not so cool britannia: The role of the creative industries in economic development. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 7*, 67–77.
O'Connor, J., (2004). A special kind of city knowledge: Innovative clusters, tacit knowledge and the 'creative city', media international Australia, no. 112, pp. 131–149.
O'Connor, J., & Gu, X. (2010). Developing a creative cluster in a post-industrial city. *The Information Society, 26*(2), 124–136.
O'Connor & Gu, X. (2012). Creative industry clusters in shanghai: A success story? *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2012.740025.

Please cite this article in press as: O'Connor, J., & Gu, X. Making creative spaces: China and Australia: An introduction. *City, Culture and Society* (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.07.001

Pratt, A. (2004a). The cultural economy. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 7*, 117–128.
Pratt, A. (2004b). Creative clusters: Towards the governance of creative industries production system? *Media International Australia, 112*, 50–66.
Pratt, A. (2012). The cultural and creative industries: Organisational and spatial challenges to their governance. *Die Erde, 143*(4), 317–334.
Pratt, A., & Hutton, T. (2013). Reconceptualising the relationship between the creative economy and the city: Learning from the financial crisis. *Cities, 33*, 86–95.
Rantisi, N. (2006). Placing the creative economy: Scale, politics and the material. *Environment and Planning A, 38*, 1789–1797.
Scott, A. J. (2007). Capitalism and urbanisation in a new key? The cognitive-cultural dimension. *Social Forces, 85*(4), 1465–1482.
Scott, A. J. (2008). Inside the city: On urbanisation, public policy and planning. *Urban Studies, 45*, 755–772.
Shorthose, J. (2004). Nottingham's de facto cultural quarter: The lace market, independents and a convivial ecology. *City of Quarters: Urban Villages in the Contemporary City*, 149–162.
Van Heur, B. (2010). *Creative networks and the city*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Books.
Waitt, G. (2004). Pyrmont-Ultimo: The newest chic quarter of Sydney. In D. Bell & M. Jayne (Eds.). *City of quarters: Urban villages in the contemporary city* (pp. 15–36). Aldershot: Ashgate.
Zukin, S. (1982). *Loft-living: Culture and capital in urban change*. London: The John Hopkins Press.

Please cite this article in press as: O'Connor, J., & Gu, X. Making creative spaces: China and Australia: An introduction. *City, Culture and Society* (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.07.001