Creativity Unbound – Policies, Government and the Creative Industries

By Can-Seng Ooi & Birgit Stöber

Creativity has been conceived as the currency for economic growth for many researchers, urban planners and policy makers (e.g. Caves 2000; Florida 2003b; Howkins 2001; Landry 2008). Countries from Sweden to Singapore have devised strategies to release the creativity in the people. The so-called creative industries have brought together different businesses, ranging from computer games to theatre plays, onto a common platform for spurring economic growth. The creative industries are considered central to a country's innovation system. As argued by Trüby, Rammer, & Müller (2008), there are three ways that the creative industries contribute to the whole economy. One, the creative industries is a major source of innovative ideas and contributes to an economy's innovative potential and the generation of new products and services. Two, creative industries offer services which are inputs to innovative activities of other enterprises and organizations. Three, creative industries are intensive users of technology and demand alterations and new developments of technology, spurring innovation impulses to technology producers.

The promotion of the creative industries is also a political project. Governments stand behind the vision, leading to society being socially and economically engineered to bring about the creative society. Regulations must be shaped to encourage the spurts and flows of creativity in the populace. Members of society must be convinced that the future lies in editing videos on a computer screen rather than putting together products along an assembly line, for instance.

The rhetoric of economic development from creativity is seductive to the public. It assumes a "democracy of involvement" (Neelands & Choe 2010: 288). Considering that most people consider themselves capable of finding solutions in their everyday life and they have ideas and opinions on issues, the discourse of creativity and the creative industries encourages everyone to aspire and become more self-directed in their economic participation. Creativity is seen to be universal and everyone – privileged or not – can take a shot at becoming economically successful by being creative.

The creative industries harness creativity and this means that creativity is assumed as manageable and productive (Bilton 2010). The idea that outcomes of creativity can be unpredictable and destructive has been replaced by the view that creativity can be harnessed and controlled. But creativity need not be an asset and can be rather destructive (Jacobs 2005). Some art works, for instance, are known to be annoying or even destabilizing (e.g. graffiti as street art, Salman Rushdie

and his book Satanic Verses). It is because creativity is now framed as manageable, it can also be exploited for wealth creation. The emphasis is on "productive creativity," meaning that it is a "more disciplined form of creativity with professionalism and purpose" (Jacobs 2005: 9). In other words, there is a disciplining effect from the promotion of the creative industries. This disciplining effect is also elaborated by Poettschacher (2010). He argues that the celebratory message on the creative industries introduces a language that respects the rules of economy, allowing creative individuals into the world of business, giving the impression that they could work within the realm of traditional economic rules. Famous creative entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates and George Lucas are celebrated as creative geniuses in businesses (Bilton 2010; Poettschacher 2010).

As creative ideas come from individuals, the talent pool must be expanded before a society can exploit the creative economy. Governments are at hand to build the talent pool and also offer possibilities for creative individuals to find work and enjoy life. One way to expand the talent pool is to educate its workforce. Education systems around the world want their pupils to become good thinkers and creative solution finders. For instance, even in authoritarian China, the Chinese government is reforming the country's education system to meet the challenges of the economy. Reflecting official views, journalist Li Hong writes:

> The entire national education system, from primary and secondary schools to colleges, deserves a reshuffle to keep with the times. […] Old shackles of thinking still depress creative ideas. From preschool pupils to graduates, students have to wage an unrelenting battle against towering homework assigned by their tutors. […]All in all, a flourishing country needs contagion of tradition-breaking and epoch-making minds to fire up. (Li 2010)

Regardless, there can be consequences when citizens are encouraged to break traditions and think out of the box. Tension can arise when a more experimental, vocal and independent population challenge authoritarian regimes. For instance in Singapore, the government has to find more nuanced sophisticated ways to manage a growing section of the population that wants even more space for social and political expression. The consequence is to back-track on some of its creative industries initiatives; instead of lessening censorship, censure becomes harsh on unflattering political messages (Ooi 2010).

Educating creative people and building up the necessary infrastructure to foster creativity takes time. Another strategy to ensure a large supply of creative workers is to import such workers. Creative workers are highly mobile and these creative individuals supposedly want to live and work in places that are culturally vibrant, tolerant of diversity and technologically advance (Bille 2010; Florida 2003a). As a result, cities and countries are branding themselves accordingly (Dinnie 2011). For instance, since 2004, Berlin has an avowed gay mayor who actively promotes the city as a creative, diverse and tolerant place (Ooi & Stöber 2010).

As governments attempt to shape their creative economies, the results have been mixed. The papers in this special thematic section deal with creative indus-

tries policies and their consequences. A number of salient and exciting areas are addressed. The creation of the creative industries, for instance, has consequences for the arts and culture. Ooi examines the case of Singapore. The arts are considered the essential core in the creative industries in the city-state however he demonstrates the fine arts are systematically being subjugated under the other more lucrative and economically productive creative industries. As a result, fine artists are embracing market logic into their practice and changing their conception of aesthetic quality.

The film industry is a promising creative industry. Strandgaard Pedersen and Mazza in this collection examine the Copenhagen Film Festival and the Festa del Cinema di Roma. Their case shows why film festivals are similar around the world, and each new festival is desperately looking for their uniqueness. In this context, while authorities may want to promote the film industries, players in the game are learning from one another, film festival organizers are picking up best practices and seeking legitimacy from their peers. Governments may throw money into creative industries, industry players however anchor themselves with their international peers.

Urban planners are pimps! Ek starts his paper with this provocative statement. By examining the urban regeneration project in Helsingborg (Sweden) H+ and SHIP, he argues that the public has little influence in shaping their own environment, in spite of the claim that the regeneration process is democratic and for the people. Given the authority and resources by politicians, urban planners construct and present their ideas on renew spaces in systematic and yet overwhelming ways that leave little space for influence from the public. The creation of the creative physical space means managing the infinite creative impulses of people and insidiously pushing a tacit agenda across.

The city of Berlin has a fast growing creative industry that has become the object of the city's development policies and place marketing. Lange uses Berlin as a reference case to articulate the gap between "state-led planning" on the one hand and the organisational practices of self-governed creative scenes on the other. His vital question is: What are the spatial-organizational driving forces of creativity in Berlin – can they be steered by public administration? In the course of his paper Lange demonstrates that creative industries are characterized by growing culturepreneurship embedded in a distinct urban environment. This is mainly a way of self-governance, he states.

Also in Denmark, the creative industries have emerged as a legitimate concern in national cultural and economic policy. With focus on the fashion business Riegels, Skov and Faurholt Csaba explore the way in which that particular industry has been enrolled in the cultural industries policy in the country. Inspired by Actor Network Theory, the authors analyze the Danish fashion industry as a mobilization of resources and institutions. The authors' argument is based on the observation that there is considerable slippage between fashion understood as cultural

phenomenon and fashion understood as clothing-derived industry. This ambiguous situation can be seen as productive. In sum, the authors argue the Danish cultural industry policy is eventually "compelling" because it manages to transform the Danish apparel industry and eventually putting the nation on the global catwalk.

Stöber reflects on the question of strategic development and region building through culture and creative industries. In her paper, she argues that in region building processes, "culture" often gets instrumentalized in order to strengthen the economic (regional) projects. This tendency seems to get even more intensified in the context of framing "the cultural economy as [a] driving force in many urban and regional economies" (Pratt 2009:272). In her paper, Stöber focuses on two examples from Northern Europe, the existing Danish-Swedish Øresund link and the planned link between Denmark and Germany across Femernbelt. Even though there are some clear differences between these cases, a strong link between the physical link and an official regional and cultural discourse is exposed.

The paper by Holst Kjær with the title "Meaningful-Experience Creation and Event Management" focuses on the management and organisation of the Copenhagen Carnival 2009. The Copenhagen event is, according to Holst Kjær's analysis, not only a co-creation by voluntary culture workers and service staff, but also a co-creative space for sponsorships, small enterprises and a scene for artists, students and grass-roots. As ethnologist and folklorist Holst Kjær discusses the carnival as Post-Colonial Edutainment and examines the link between the low-budget, annual event Copenhagen Carnival and the recent debate within cultural policy and experience economy in which events are perceived as essentials when adding value to a city's image.

This collection of articles points to the importance of government and policies in promoting the creative industries. The papers also point to the futility and limitations on what governments and policies can do.

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