1. Geographies of creativity: inherited concepts, revised vistas

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MAPPING CREATIVITY'S TURNS

Given growing criticism in recent years against what might variously be referred to as the ideology of creativity, the hegemony of creativity, and enforced creativity, it might seem unwise to produce a book, let alone a handbook, about creativity. As far as conceptual fads go, the creative turn has itself taken such a diverse trajectory of 'turns', oftentimes in divergent ways that do not interact, that the term may justly be discredited in some quarters. Nevertheless, strategies and policies anchored on the notion of creativity remain enthusiastically adopted and adapted in many policy circles, perhaps particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, and scholars and research students continue to study creativity and its multiple manifestations.

Those who look askance at creativity and the ways in which the creativity discourse (McRobbie, 2016) has become intertwined with notions of culture do put forward important critiques. Mould's (2018) *Against Creativity* and Brook et al.'s (2020) *Culture is Bad For You* are part of recent publications which argue for a need to resist the ideology of enforced creativity that has captured the imagination in many parts of the world. Their concern is about the appropriation of creativity by neoliberalized capital, the co-optation of creativity for economic ends, and the hijacking of creativity for profiteering. As Mould (2014) puts it:

We are no more creative that [sic] we used to be; it's just that now, hell really has broken loose because people have become very good at channeling that creativity into creating hegemony, centralised power and injustice. Perhaps that is being creative? I sincerely hope not.

Why then should anyone persist with the belief that creativity might be anything other than an empty signifier all too easily co-opted by neoliberal interests, with oftentimes damaging consequences on both material and imagined realities of development, progress, and flourishing? To phrase the question more constructively, are there other geographies of creativity excluded or even silenced by the dominant 'creative turn' that have yet to be acknowledged, let alone mapped?

INTERROGATING CREATIVITY: REVISED VISTAS

Adopting a geographically diverse, theoretically rigorous approach, the Elgar *Handbook on the Geographies of Creativity* answers this question in the affirmative. The selection of 20 chapters offers a critical study of creativity as it has transformed in policy, academic, activist, pedagogical and sociocultural discourse over the last decade. While a handbook connotes a reference work collecting an array of essays offering ready insights into extant knowledge about a subject, we have the privilege of a set of authors who not only provide overviews of major themes relating to creativity, but have also pushed the boundaries and contributed cutting-edge thinking, and/or offered new empirical analyses. Further, the organization of the volume belies our conviction that this should not be an ordinary handbook built on the conventional organizational divides in creativity scholarship (for example, by sector, industry, region and so forth). We have chosen instead to structure the handbook into seven parts, each evidencing the shifting contexts of the creative. In particular, we invited our authors to interrogate creativity as Imaginary, Locality, Mobility, Labour, Culture, Intervention and Method. Through these key themes, we thread through shifting contexts of the creative in the arts, media, technology, education, governance and development. This curation provides a different lens to creativity. We make the case that scholars need to think of and imagine creativity as an essential human activity that has now become a significant site, for better or worse, for decisions that both symbolize and embody the lived realities of regimes of labour, value and capital.

Before we introduce the individual chapters below, we set out here the major commonalities across the chapters and parts. First, all the chapters adopt a sceptical stance towards any monolithic or mono-spatial depiction of creativity, favouring instead a complex and relational understanding that enables more contextually rooted and, dare we say, more creative, responses to the conundrum of its persistence. Second, and following from the rejection of the monolithic, the chapters all recognize the dual conditions of creativity – both the material and social. Third, despite differing in essential ways, the chapters together address key logics and tensions: around grassroots community action and state-led urban-economic development; community cohesion and identity politics; transnational connections and local neighbourhoods; and privileged participation and social equity and justice.

Through addressing the geographies of creativities in these ways, the volume demonstrates how geographically attuned inquiry into creativity continues to offer a germane avenue for scholars to engage with larger debates that contemplate the politics and possibilities of culture, labour, capital and human flourishing. Perhaps the challenge lies beyond explaining its persistence – to instead explore its many robust afterlives in different elsewhere. To this end, this book proposes an agenda of inquiry to critically recalibrate the geographies of creativity, addressing questions of how, who, where and what.

First, *how* do we make sense of the large and diverse body of literatures on creativity? The volume foregrounds the need to articulate what has been justified and executed in the name of creativity, that should no longer be taken for granted, excused or

ignored. Three key programmatic essays from leading scholars in the field of creative and cultural industries research open the volume with updated and invigorated calls to demystify, deconstruct and decolonize creativity, exposing the significance of the western origins of the creative economy/creative city imaginary (O'Connor, Chapter 2) and critiquing its complicity with late-neoliberal conditions (Peck, Chapter 3 and Kong, Chapter 4). Indeed, the question arises as to how to defend the creativity credo in the face of widening inequality and escalating gentrification (Peck, Chapter 3), the utopianizing of creative labour and the neglect of genuine creativity/culture (Kong, Chapter 4).

Second, the book underlines the imperative of investigating *who* bears the responsibility for creativity in any given context of social, economic, urban and political activity, and indeed of interrogating the notion of 'responsibility' itself vis-à-vis creativity as a resource or ideal that is of significant societal, cultural and political import. The typical expectation is that creative workers and professionals possess the skills to be creative, and are thus responsible for their own welfare and development (Bennett et al., Chapter 11; Connell et al., Chapter 12), in addition to bearing the onus of promoting the value of creativity as cultural or economic 'capital' (as in the case of artists who represent national-cultural identities, seen in de Dios, Chapter 9; Rogers, Chapter 13) or moral-political value (Chan, Chapter 17). But this perspective alone is inadequate, as they and other authors also demonstrate, for, without the involvement and participation of 'non-creative' actors and institutions, the 'creatives' will, at best, be stymied in their ability to perform creativity for their own and collective benefit. A more useful approach would thus reflect on ways to distribute and diversify the notion of responsibility in ensuring, promoting or developing, creativity. Papastergiadis et al. (Chapter 15) and Leslie et al. (Chapter 19), for example, show how institutional actors are to be held accountable for some aspect of fostering creativity, by virtue of attuning to creative workers' and publics' experiences in various spaces and modalities.

Third, the book demonstrates that *where* creativity takes root (or flight) is a loaded question that must be reflexively addressed. Current theorizations fall short in the task of critiquing the Eurocentric and Anglophone biases of critical human geography in general. In the particular research context of the geographies of creativity, the scalar and contextual complexity with which communities and economies create remains yet to be accurately described and adequately understood. The issue of where is addressed here in two ways. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that the book contains grounded empirical chapters that interrogate the conditions of creativity in the East and Southeast Asia, Europe and North America. They lend critical complexity to basic concepts of creativity, putting front and centre the fact of social difference through immigrant communities, visiting artists and new media engagements, and dealing with questions of mobility, identity and locality. But more than the examination of different continents, countries and cities, new spatial metaphors and modes of inquiry are proposed in the task of reframing creativity, as seen in the focus on small/isolated/remote places (Gibson and Brennan-Horley, Chapter 6), and inter-Asian regional and cross-border dynamics (Wang and Zhang, Chapter 8; Keane, Chapter 18).

Fourth, the book recognizes *what* activities are commonly associated to be creative modes of practice. Certainly, the chapters evidence in-depth engagement with and understanding of a broad range of sectors and *métiers*: creativity is manifest in dance, music, craft, contemporary visual art, circus arts, creative writing and theatre, as might be expected. But digital technology and e-commerce (Luckman, Chapter 10; Keane, Chapter 18), cultural entrepreneurship by minority populations (Warren, Chapter 14) and social protest (Chan, Chapter 17) also find space in this book as forms of creativity that can be productively examined in conversation with the usual suspects in the cultural and creative industries. Further, the book also acknowledges the potential of creativity-as-practice to redraw the boundaries of academic, specifically geographical, knowledge production. In universities around the world, attempts have been made to introduce and gain funding for practice-based approaches to scholarly work. This has required scholar-researchers and practitioners to think through ‘creativity’ as constitutive of present and future geographies of knowledge: economic, cultural, social and political; but also symbolic, affective and material.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

As a preliminary guide to the diversity of responses to these questions – the how, who, where and what of the emergent geographies of creativity – the paragraphs below summarize the key insights of each chapter and their respective thematic parts.

Creativity as Imaginary

The book opens with three chapters that appraise the political-economic horizons against which creativity has been framed, and consequently critiqued, as a globally ubiquitous policy rhetoric over the last two decades.

Justin O’Connor (Chapter 2) analyzes the policy migration of creativity from the West to postcolonial Asian economies within a larger political-economic context of a ‘creativity-led modernization’, facilitated by the efforts and failures of Western developmental agencies in the wake of the Cold War, the subsequent dominance of neoliberal capitalism and the economic unravelling of authoritarian regimes in the East Asian region. Beyond that, he attributes the persistence of the creativity imaginary to its usefulness as a ‘creativity bundle’ of policies and projects that appealed to both government and grassroots actors (as the selection of chapters in the Intervention part clearly demonstrates). In certain instances, the collaborative interface between policymakers and the cultural sector emerged as ‘a kind of actionable democracy’. O’Connor contends that the global connotations of the creative city agenda brought with it a ‘deep-seated shift in subject positions’, one wherein a place-specific transformation of the creativity agenda became formative of an emergent cosmopolitan subject. Whether or not this subject position of the cosmopolitan creative simply reinforces the ‘benign modernization’ of global capitalism or develops the genuinely transformative potential of cultural intervention, however, remains to be seen.

In Jamie Peck's assessment (Chapter 3), there is no mystery behind creativity as a structural and symbolic discourse, only a 'rather surprising durability' which he ascribes to its capacity to 'conform with the underlying insecurity of the urban-managerial id, with late-neoliberal modes of urban governance and with the constraints of flex-labour markets, socio-spatial polarization, endemic interurban competition and gentrified housing markets – all of which the creativity frame endeavours, in effect, to translate into either necessities or virtues'. In its exceptional performativity as a 'fix', the creativity credo aligns with a larger shift in neoliberal urbanism towards 'fast-policy' development.

How must a critical engagement with creativity proceed, once the logic of its banality – its predominance as well as peril – becomes evident? One such avenue is demonstrated by Lily Kong (Chapter 4), who accounts for the multiple shifts between 'culture' and 'creativity', as they have played out in different arenas of knowledge production and policy legitimation. After tracking the theoretical and institutional influences that have transferred discursive focus from 'culture industries' to 'creative industries', Kong lists seven key areas of confusion and conflation where a geographical approach to creativity might be helpful in accounting for the plural entanglements of the creative turn. The chapter ends with a concrete proposal, to be enacted in both theoretical and policy circles of discussion, to revisit the designation of 'cultural industries'. Reanimating the category, Kong suggests, could rectify some of the extant problems attached to the creativity discourse: delineating the scope of relevant sectors, clarifying the terms of interaction between larger businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises, and weighing the balance between 'plugging into global cultural currency and developing local cultural idioms'. Only by following the currents of these parallel streams – theory and policy – can any discussion of creativity-as-imaginary move forward from the all-too-common rehearsal of its shortcomings.

Creativity as Locality

Place (and its associated processes of placemaking, co-location, clustering and agglomeration) has long been touted as the primary spatiality of creativity. However, this conceptual emphasis tends to privilege certain notions of the local that both flatten the more complex effects of creativity as policy imaginary (as we have seen in the first part), and ignore the material, everyday and on-the-ground processes which emplace creative activity. The chapters in this part each foreground these limits in specific sectors, and demonstrate the ways in which creativity produces repercussions and possibilities that become evident when approached from the perspective of stakeholders involved in the present and future conditions of their localities.

In many respects the urban transformation of Junction and Junction Triangle in Toronto is a paradigmatic case study of the creative clustering model. However, Deborah Leslie and Shannon Black (Chapter 5) reveal important angles to the theoretical import of place that complicate both celebratory and cynical accounts of co-location in creative sectors. First, they show how the materialities of place – from

the historical-industrial environs serving as ‘a reservoir of visual cues and raw materials’ to the infrastructural affordances of large warehouse spaces for various forms of artistic and arts-managerial work – have actively shaped the practice of large-scale contemporary visual art in Toronto. Second, the social dimensions of clustering enable galleries to support rather than simply compete with one another through the strategic sharing of resources and promotion of their district. And yet, impending redevelopment, hastened by the opening of a major cultural institution (the Museum of Contemporary Art), inevitably leads to the contradictory impasse of creativity-led urban regeneration. The authors take urban policymakers to task for seeking to capitalize on the multiplier effects of creative clustering without accounting for the ensuing spatial fragmentation and displacement, nor planning for the sustainability of the district through protecting and supporting the ecosystem of creative workers and smaller arts institutions.

In a similar vein, Chris Gibson and Chris Brennan-Horley (Chapter 6) demystify the hallowed notions of locality and buzz with the aim of proposing alternatives to neoliberal spatialities of creativity. Rather than focus on locality-bound buzz, attention is given to the network topologies of creativity – the ‘wider geographies, topologies, and relational geometries of power’ – thus shifting critical attention and epistemological perspective away from urban creative centres in the West to ‘less likely places’ where one expects to find hallmarks of creative activity (aesthetic experimentation, technological innovation, tacit knowledge-sharing, and complex cross-border flows of capital and labour). Deconstructing locality also ‘[inverts] hierarchical geographies of creativity’ by foregrounding the import of peripherality, isolation and remoteness, as evident in centrifugal, networked and relational spatialities of creative activity. Such a strategy, Gibson and Brennan-Horley explain, more accurately accounts for the range of non-Western geographies of creativity outside the axiomatic list of urban (Western) clusters. Moving beyond the buzz, then, is inseparable from the broader task of decolonizing the geographies of creativity – which is itself inseparable from the ongoing challenge of finding broader and sharper imaginaries with which to comparatively understand the uneven connections of the global creative economy.

Audrey Yue (Chapter 7) offers a third moment in the shift away from top-down approaches to creativity and locality in her study of REFUGE, a 2016 public art event in Melbourne, commissioned by the Arts House, a key urban centre for community cultural performance. The immersive exhibit addressed multiple concerns around flood preparedness (such as food distribution, evacuation procedures and emergency relief and housing) through interactive art installations that invited participants to explore practices of building, wayfinding and belonging in everyday (rather than exceptional) circumstances of community life. Through this sustained engagement with placemaking, creativity-oriented practices help redefine urban resilience as dividend rather than risk, in two ways. First, the notion of aesthetic resilience harnesses the creative and mutually learned competencies of adaptability, flexibility and sociability to respond to the top-down knowledge structures of emergency management. Second, as artists and communities reimagine the state of emergency in embodied

and exploratory ways, a concomitant social resilience emerges to collectively envision a long-term ‘emergent adaptability’ of the urban system as a whole.

Creativity as Mobility

As we have seen, mobility is taken for granted as an important feature of geographies of creativity – whether it is in the widespread adoption of creativity as a policy fix, or in the circulation of styles, products, people and capital across varying scales of activity. In this part, the authors complicate this understanding further by analyzing how mobility (and its attendant spatialities of the global) works as an end or goal of creativity. In contemporary contexts of creative production, defined by ever-accelerating mediation and connectivity, mobility is not so much the opposite of locality or emplacement as it is a necessary spatial co-dynamic.

June Wang and Luyue Zhang’s chapter on the movie co-production context of mainland China and Hong Kong (Chapter 8) applies the conceptual model of centrifugal and centripetal forces to unpack the mobilities of the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), a state-sponsored programme initiated in the early 2000s which merges investment capital and creative labour from both sides to create content for the mainland market. CEPA both reflects and deepens the shifts in the partnership in the last 15 years, which inaugurated the northward movement of Hong Kong-based director-producers and their teams for productions in the mainland. Since then, the authors argue, the flows of capital, individual cultural workers, and both independent and corporate production companies have become more complex, circulating within a context of ‘cross-border networking sociality’ where both centripetal and centrifugal dynamics of movement render (im)mobility both ‘state-powered’ and autonomous.

This conceptual tension likewise underlies the contemporary Australian craft industry, which Susan Luckman (Chapter 10) characterizes as a sector that ‘simultaneously privilege[s] both the hyper-local and a sense of the cosmopolitan global’. The findings of her research on the online selling platforms of Australian craft entrepreneurs suggest the primacy of place in imbuing craft products with authenticity. This primacy, however, can only be understood in two contexts of mobility. In the first instance, the ubiquity of global supply chains and standardized products increase the value of what Luckman identifies as the ‘niche authenticities’ of Aboriginal and handmade craft products in Australia. Second, the highly mediated nature of promoting products on Instagram and Etsy means that locality is ‘thickened’ by the mediated intimacies afforded by these and other social media apps, putting makers directly in touch with potential buyers and like-minded makers. In this way she underlines the ontological resonance contained within the concept of mobility itself, as ‘a symbolic oscillation between imaginaries of the local and the global, and how such a dynamic spatiality creates particular markets’.

The creative economy of performance and concert tours exhibits a comparable tension between cross-border mobility and place-based identity. Anjeline de Dios’s (Chapter 9) research with Aleron Choir and Daloy Dance Company, two elite per-

forming arts ensembles in the Philippines, demonstrates how perceptions of aesthetic and professional value are mediated through their tour mobilities of performing abroad. Choral music and contemporary dance are highly specialized aesthetic practices that fulfil two kinds of performance genres: a contemporary repertoire shared by a transnational community of practitioners from different countries and regions; and a folkloric repertoire where authentic or original representations of ‘evidently Filipino’ culture are expected by foreign audiences. De Dios explains how this stylistic dichotomy is echoed ‘backstage’ in tour-organizational processes (fundraising, securing visas, and liaising with promoters abroad) whereby performers learn to negotiate their status as touring artists marketed via their nationality while abroad, and their domestic stature as performers with international experience. The transnational circuit of performance tours thus imbricates symbolic and material tensions of mobility in distinct ways for creative ensembles doubly tasked with representing a collective cultural identity on the one hand, and financially sustaining their work on the other.

Creativity as Labour

The conceptualization of creativity as a distinct form of labour and livelihood has been instrumental in critiquing the excesses of creativity credo, thanks to the importance that such a focus places on the lived experiences of creative professionals which are inevitably patterned according to larger socioeconomic schema of privilege, exclusion and exploitation. For instance, although much has been written about the causes and features of precarity as a central feature of creative work, and worker subjectivity as a key site of its negotiation, more remains to be explored in the realm of how creative workers make sense of their own experiences of career uncertainty, and how their perspectives and aspirations might inform theorizations of creativity in a more relevant way.

The detailed study of creative workers’ professional identities by Dawn Bennett, Olivia Efthimiou and Scott T. Allison (Chapter 11) illustrates how such a grounded approach might work through their adoption of the mythic framework of the hero’s journey, a popular storytelling device for multiple forms of media and a common narrative structure used by creative professionals themselves. The framing allows scholars to attend to the autobiographical or biopolitical tempos afforded by a life-long framing of the creative career as a ‘fluid process of growth and transformation’. Neither is this process linear: the authors note how career identities are experienced retrospectively, as underlying motivations emerge through a reflexive reckoning with past career choices. Taking tenuous employability as a given, the chapter proceeds to investigate the interplay of agency and circumstance unique to creative careers, and the dual role that creativity plays as a descriptive category and an underlying professional ethos.

Kathleen Connell, Andrew Brown and Sarah Baker (Chapter 12) likewise demonstrate the value of [something omitted] through their typology of stages in careers in performing arts, which together comprise a ‘distinctive arc’ of turning points over

the course of a creative career. The distinctiveness lies, they argue, in the embodied nature of performance work, which accounts for the contradictory and time-bound nature of career transitions. Identifying patterns of career expansion and contraction, as the authors do here, offers a clear agenda for rectifying the generalized misunderstanding of the complex realities of creative careers – realities that are too often are glossed over in the romanticization of risk and talent as the only salient features of creativity.

Creativity as Culture

Although it is central to basic characterizations of creativity as a distinctive form of activity, culture occupies a peculiar position of invisibility in analyses that focus on the economic dimensions of creative industry and labour, as Kong (Chapter 4) has shown. The three chapters in this part reposition culture front and centre in the spatial politics of cultural representation, community formation and public culture.

Amanda Rogers's (Chapter 13) study of Chumvan Sodhaviy (Belle), a contemporary Cambodian dancer, considers the range of limits and possibilities that emerge for elite performing artists tasked with safeguarding traditional forms of Cambodian culture. Rogers considers how Belle reworks and pursues a 'plural relationship' between her career as a classically trained dancer and her pragmatic, experimental approach to dance as a mediated form of aesthetic exploration and economic sustainability. From regularly producing, performing in and uploading YouTube dance films to performing in private and corporate events, Belle's trajectory mirrors the multiple spaces of performance which define contemporary careers in the performing arts in other regions and cultural economies (see the part on Labour). Moreover, her perspectives reveal the significant interplay between national culture and everyday creativity even in performance contexts presumed to be dominated by the imperatives of the former.

A nuanced focus on culture enables researchers to interpret creativity as folded within quotidian contexts of identity and belonging, across different space-times of collectivity. Where Rogers reveals the temporality of Cambodian national culture as plural (that is, intertwining both 'contemporary' and 'traditional' modes of dance by its designated culture-bearers), Saskia Warren (Chapter 14) similarly brings her analysis of Manchester's cultural geography to bear on everyday and specialized sites of creativity: in the 'overlooked, marginalized, and peripheral urban spaces' to which Mancunian Muslim communities belong, as well as the formal institutional spaces of art galleries. The Muslim Lifestyle Expo, a community-based exhibit, fair and market highlighting the achievements and products of Muslim cultural entrepreneurs, is juxtaposed with the Whitworth Art Gallery's programme of events designed to foster intercultural understanding in an urban environment increasingly hostile to ethnic minority communities. Warren describes these two case studies as interconnected in spite of their variances in purpose and audience, and in so doing defines culture as an 'ecosystem through which creativity brings meaning to everyday lived experience'.

Attending geographically to creativity-as-culture foregrounds other socio-spatialities in which culture is designed to take place, apart from enclosed and institutionally demarcated sites such as museums, galleries and theatres. In their chapter, Nikos Papastergiadis, Stephanie Hannon, Scott McQuire, Danielle Wyatt and Paul Carter (Chapter 15) introduce the concept of ‘ambient culture’ to identify creative spaces that are open, mediated and increasingly networked environments of interaction. They present the arts precinct of Federation Square in Melbourne as a case in point. Rather than focus on the buildings which house key cultural institutions, their interest lies in the site’s open space in between the buildings – a spatial quality of ‘deliberate porosity’ which shapes the Square’s programming of free public events. The polyvalent purposes and ambivalent meanings of the Square enable a more complex range of audience engagement than is commonly assumed in demarcated sites of cultural and artistic experience: from attention to indifference to active aversion. As sites of ambient participation become central to urban policymakers’ strategies of global creative competitiveness, the authors stress the importance of protecting ‘the richness of creativity of publics’ against the appropriation of profit-driven commercial interests by acknowledging and studying the diversity of experiences generated by ambient cultures.

Creativity as Intervention

The chapters in this part give full focus to the significance of creativity as productive of multiple modes of intervention. That variety of scalar contexts as well as political projects – from macroeconomic growth in the global neoliberal economy to postcolonial struggles for social justice – indicates the malleability of creativity discourse already noted above, but also highlights the value of situating this malleability in their respective contexts, to better understand the range of outcomes rendered possible and desirable by creativity.

In response to the dominant narrative of mainland Chinese creativity as derivative, Michael Keane (Chapter 18) shifts attention to the limitations of the common-sense (that is, Western-centric) conflation of creativity with the prevailing Romantic ethos of individualism and risk-taking. Nearly two decades since China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), the creative industries have become a key site through which China asserts its place in and approach to the world economy through the pursuit of Xi Jinping’s Chinese Dream, the massive cultural and economic rejuvenation of mainland China. Against this broader socio-spatial regime of value, the digital creative industries emerge as ‘a fertile zone of creative friction’ between the Chinese government’s unparalleled ability to intervene across all scales of creative-economic activity, and the disruptive tendencies of entrepreneurial risk by such quintessentially innovative technology giants such as Alibaba, Tencent and Wanda. For Keane, the Sinification of the digital creative industries is more than just a terminological adaptation of a fixed policy formula. Rather, the conceptual and empirical parameters of creativity are themselves re-patterned by the scale, style and intent of the state-led campaign of mass innovation.

Deborah Leslie, Norma Rantisi and Jessie Smith (Chapter 19) also weigh the import of creativity as state-led intervention with contradictory effects. In their chapter, they ascribe the success of the Montréal government's social circus model to its 'emancipatory potential' as a form of arts-based and community intervention specifically meant for the psychological, social and professional empowerment of marginalized and at-risk youth. Yet, the economization of creative practices and the withdrawal of public funding for community development has shifted the responsibility of supporting social circus programmes from the government to shadow state organizations, individual residents and corporate actors. An adequate recognition of social circus's benefits, they argue, should go beyond the valorization of creative workers' risk mindset, and shift responsibility back to institutions for following through with the long-term potential of such interventions.

The chapters by Heather McLean and Sarah de Leeuw (Chapter 16) and Stephen Chan (Chapter 17) round off the part with discursive analyses and grounded reflections on creative practices that work as sites of postcolonial remembrance and resistance. Drawing from their experience as creative practitioners, feminist geographers and activists, McLean and de Leeuw (Chapter 16) argue for the effectiveness of arts-based methods in supporting LGBTQ+, indigenous, refugee, sex worker and other oppressed communities and artists. In the same breath, they advise against 'naïve readings and doings of creative work being carefree or somehow beyond the confines of critical social science engagement'. They also note that otherwise well-meaning creativity-oriented interventions in the academe often lack the reflexivity to distinguish, let alone confront, researchers' own intersectional privilege within the very structures of these interventions. Any serious engagement with creativity as a site for critical knowledge production must therefore acknowledge the pernicious ways in which 'creative work exists in, and dialogues with, these oppressive spaces and contexts'.

Chan's chapter on the 'civic-creative process' of the thwarted 2014 Hong Kong protests (Chapter 17) reflects on this very issue of creativity as a complex site of intervention, insofar as it dialogues with 'the hybrid logic of capitalist reproduction and semi-authoritarian governance' characteristic of Hong Kong's political situation. He offers four notable grassroots interventions spawned by the movement: a 'mountaineering performance' by a group of protesters scaling the highly symbolic Lion Rock hill to unfurl a massive protest banner; a campaign video of popular pro-democracy candidate John Tsang by renowned director Johnnie To; a retelling of the contentious 1967 riots by journalist Connie Yan-wai Lo; and 'creative agent' Benny Tai, the law university professor credited with initiating the 2013–2014 Occupy Central movement. In Chan's reading, these social performances are clearly creative in a narrow sense (as aesthetic activity productive of meaning in embodied and affective ways), but even more so as a broad sensibility of counter-hegemonic moral action, involved in 'the making of alternative subjectivities and the imagination of a new world beyond the vacuum of hope they face'.

Creativity as Method

The last part of the handbook engages with creativity as research methodology, as a necessary counterbalance to the predominance of creativity as a discursive object of study. The two chapters draw from the authors' extensive experience with employing arts-based methods in institutional research projects to lay out the intertwined theoretical and empirical concerns generated by the adoption of creativity in critical scholarship. Drawing from different artistic practices (visual art and dance) and theoretical approaches (ethnography and non-representational theory), the authors arrive at a twofold conclusion: 'doing' creativity as a research method can diversify the foundations of knowledge production beyond scholarly preoccupations with expertise; but this recognition must resist the tendency to utopianize (to use Kong's phrase in Chapter 4) creative work.

The recent enthusiasm for the creative '(re)turn' in geographical research, Charlotte Veal and Harriet Hawkins (Chapter 21) argue, has reached such an extent that there is now a troubling 'fetishized facade of creative methods'. (This is not so different, in fact, from the trajectory of the creativity discourse in policy circles, as discussed in the Imaginary part.) To avoid throwing the baby out with the bathwater – that is, eschewing creativity altogether as a rubric for innovative methods of critical knowledge production – the authors emphasize a systematic and reflexive approach to creative methods at specific stages of the research lifecycle: from accounting for the various 'mundanities of labour' and skill which precede entry into the field, to the continual self-evaluation about the kinds and levels of creative training that are appropriate for the theoretical aims of such projects.

Janet Banfield's in-depth research (Chapter 20) with her artist-interlocutors speaks to the benefits of co-locating visual-artistic practice on the one hand, and geographical research on non-representation on the other, in three respects. First, fundamental questions of scale are usefully explored through art-making's material and embodied dimensions: making decisions about and playing with the material and physical aspects of art (such as studio space, canvas size, paint colour and viscosity). Second, thinking geographically through and about art practice offers an anti-essentialist view of creative subjectivity that might otherwise congeal in unquestioned assumptions about skill or proficiency (seen, for instance, in harmful dismissals of 'inexpert' or 'amateur' artistic practice). Banfield introduces the concept of 'boundary understanding' to both describe and engage with her participants' experiments with their taken-for-granted media and practices, as they deliberately adopt an exploratory and even novice approach to their craft. Finally, creative modalities of informal art-making allow researchers to interrogate, 'both intentionally and incidentally', the basic theoretical dichotomy between symbolic representation and the 'somatic entanglements' which precede and exceed verbal articulation.

CONCLUSION

In proposing a revised vista of geographical questions and framings, we offer the handbook despite (and in dialogue with) recent dissatisfactions with the (over)use of creativity. In their critical engagements with creativity, the chapters delineate shared perspectives that would otherwise remain sequestered in their respective silos of disciplinary or thematic analysis. By this token we hope that the volume will be useful to scholars interested in the ‘creative turn’ in the humanities and social sciences, those researching contemporary debates in the economics of culture, media, design, mobility and cities, policymakers and professionals in creative and cultural industries (CCI) sectors, and cultural workers and activists for equitable creative and cultural industries.

More importantly, we are hopeful that readers will use the book as intended – as a companion to their respective projects of dynamically responding to creativity in their particular research contexts, enabling them to connect the dots between fields of investigation and imagination that are not commonly considered in the same frame. Such analyses offer productive and unexpected conjunctions, and our hope is that the adoption of creativity discourse by different contexts of economic and social activity across different scales and locations makes possible an expanded comparative frame of analysis that does the crucial epistemological task of decentring the field’s theoretical and conceptual biases.

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