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The cultural contradictions of the creative city

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Version: 5.6.11

Abstract

This paper is concerned with both what creative cities are imagined to be, as well as what they actually are. This is a challenge for policy makers. Overall, the paper seeks to create a platform for a more nuanced and subtle approach to creativity, culture and cities: one that is situated and not universal. It seeks to map out an approach that is concerned not simply with the growth possibilities, but also redistributive strategies. In so doing it questions whether can we can conceive of creative cities as a truly progressive field of policy and practice, in direct contrast to what we judge to be the socially regressive form they take at present. The paper is divided into three main parts. The first locates the creative city within the discourse of place marketing, but flags up the tensions between the universalism of place marketing, and the particularities of culture and creativity. The second critically examines notions of liberalism and creativity as they underpin the creative city. The final part takes the actually existing creative city and highlights many of the negative and regressive elements of policies that promote them. The paper argues for the need for more nuanced approaches, and for more attention to the (lack of) redistributive outcomes in existing creative city debates.

The cultural contradictions of the creative city

Introduction

This paper is concerned with both what creative cities are imagined to be, as well as what they actually are. We point out that in many ways the concept of creative cities fits in neatly with neo-liberal globalisation strategies, but at the same times presents them a 'human' or 'cultured' face. If this were an explicit aim I would disagree with the basic strategy, but argue that it was at least logical on its own terms. However, countering this view, we would suggest that our focus of argumentation perhaps might be better turned on what sort of trade off, and for whom, does the normative concept and settlement favour? This paper takes the debate even further, into the realm of cultural production as well as cultural consumption. This is something has been advocated previously (Pratt, 2004), although it is an approach that is itself beset with problems. In the current paper we want to add an equally critical perspective to this approach as well. Overall, the paper seeks to create a platform for a more nuanced and subtle approach of creativity, culture and cities, one that is situated and not universal; and, one that is centrally concerned not simply with the growth possibilities, but also redistributive strategies. In so doing make creative cities a truly progressive field of policy and practice, in direct contrast to what could be judged to be a socially regressive form at present.

It is that we explore this tension to escape from the limitations of 'cookbook' approaches to creative cities based upon narrow branding, or place marketing, logics and consider instead a more nuanced approach that is sensitive to local cultures and difference (Pratt 2010). The UNESCO (2001) declaration on cultural diversity is a challenge to normative approaches to creative cities: arguably most such strategies are enemies of diversity and promote sameness, for reasons that we explore in this paper. One potential vehicle for operationalization of the principles of the declaration on diversity is the UNESCO creative cities network. Contrary to the one size fits all mentality

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of the creative city 'manual' (the normative place marketing model) the UNESCO network is focused on local partnership building and the notion of examining shared experiences and challenges across cities. The UNESCO network also alerts us to the variety of types of creative cities; a point that we will return to later.

The paper's title is a self-conscious borrowing of Daniel Bell's (1978) theme: the contradictions between a particular economic and a specific cultural logic. It represents a tension that could easily characterise those of the creative city, a notion not dreamt of at the time. The paper has two objectives: first, to highlight philosophical freight (liberalism, creativity and culture) that concepts of creative cities carry; and second, to offer a clearer way of thinking about creative cities in situated ways that review actually existing creative cities as opposed to idealist and aspirational forms. Of course it is an irony that Florida (2002) draws heavily on Bell's (1973) earlier work to frame the notion of creative class. We do not want to follow Bell here, except to acknowledge that he raises a pertinent question, one that is directly challenges Florida's wider conceptual framework, one that merits further investigation.

Raymond Williams (1976: p87) famously commented that culture was one of the most complicated words in the English language; one might add that creativity and liberalism share some difficulties. The argument in this paper seeks to address the current assemblage that is represented by the interweaving of these ideas of culture, creativity and liberalism and their association with the city. There are two themes of the argument here. First, the concern that notions of the creative city are commonly freighted with a number of co-assumptions about romanticism and neo-liberal economics, as well as particular interpretations of social and moral liberalism. Our point here is to highlight these assumptions, and suggest other possibilities. Second, we want to take the creative city at face value and explore what the nature of life and livelihood is in the actually existing creative city; and by implication to contrast this with the more general rhetoric in favour of creative cities.

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It is hoped that the argument advanced here will open up some space to think about the creative city more clearly, and more incisively, than has been done previously. More generally we want to argue against a universalist notion of creativity and the creative city, and in favour of a socially, cultural and economically embedded and situated one. Moreover, we want to highlight the asymmetry of power relations (and hence distributional consequences) that are embedded in all representations (plans, images, marketing) of the city, in favoured strategies, and economic sectors, but are particularly strongly found in creative cities. However, we also want to stress that at the same time such asymmetries are <u>denied</u> by the apparent universal gloss of liberalism and creativity that are commonly characterised as a universal and undifferentiated positive in creative city debates.

The general tenor of debates about Creative Cities has added a particular twist to the older neo-liberal discipline of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Simply this foregrounds a particular logic, and an associated set of expectations of how and in what ways a city must sell itself, its people and its culture, to attract exogenous investment (see for example Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Kearns and Philo, 1993). One outcome of this is the hard branding strategy that creates cultural icons that are generally acknowledged to attract decision makers and (cultural) tourists to cities (Evans, 2001; Evans, 2003). The innovative work of Richard Florida, drawing upon Ed Glaeser's (1998) arguments about human capital mobility, has sought to frame the types of city form that will attract the 'creative class' which is the object of desire of cutting edge firms (and urban managers). The picture is now familiar: liberal values of social and political governance and a particular type cultural consumption space. Put in this way, we may question: who would be unhappy with this? Not surprisingly, there has been a rush from many cities to put in place these components, and hence compete to be 'the most creative city'.

As has been pointed out elsewhere (Pratt, 2008a), there is another debate

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about the cultural and creative industries in cities that has addressed cities as new sites of cultural production, and implies a different set of assumptions and desiderata as to what comprises the 'creative city'. Moreover, there are yet other debates that frame creative cities as problem-solving cities, based upon novel forms of governance (Landry, 2000). Instead of simply counter-posing the two strands of creative city argument we seek, in this paper, to explore a wider terrain, and to examine the actually existing creative city (of production <u>and</u> consumption) that is quite different to that of the ideal type creative city of popular debate. Our aim is to both re-energise debates about the possibilities and limits to (production based) creative cities, and to offer a more nuanced reading of the creative city that might work as a corrective to what are by default neo-liberal celebrations of a particular manifestation of 'creativity'.

The paper is divided into three main parts. The first locates the creative city within the discourse of place marketing, but flags up the contradictions of the universalisms of place marketing, and the particularities of culture and creativity. The second critically examines notions of liberalism and creativity as they underpin the creative city. The final part takes the actually existing creative city and highlights many of the negative and regressive elements of policies that promote them. The paper argues for the need for more nuanced approaches, and for more attention to the (lack of) redistributive outcomes.

'Nice' Cities: for shiny happy people[1]

Before delving into critique we want to take the normative viewpoint, but we want to push it to its limits, and examine its consequences (rather than aspirations). The normative view is expressed by a city 'off the architect's drawing board' as represented in a city marketing video. This is the expression of modernity, rationality and progress, with a cultural inflection (that cultural hard branding is used as product differentiator). This gives up a vision of the best of all possible worlds. In many respects of course such a

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debate neatly undermines the easy criticism of globalization as the great leveller of taste and culture: here globalization is centred on differentiation and difference, the production of diversity to attract a particular type of investment and investor, and workers who demand/need a particular cultural milieu.

The same can be said of the 'quality of life' indicators that are the nearest relative of creative city in applied place marketing (Rogerson, 1999). These share much the same character as the creative city initiatives – on the surface they appear to be a win-win solution: a nicer, safer, cleaner city and more jobs. However, the resources are generally focused on particular versions of 'quality of life' and are targeted at making the quality of life of the few rather than the many better (that is the middle or senior management, and /or cosmopolitan lifestyle migrants. The distributional consequences are not logically, or practically, progressive; in fact they are most likely to be regressive.

At base the creative cities debate, pace Florida, is a new iteration of FDI logic, a step beyond quality of life indicators. Many extant city branding strategies shade into this category as essentially hard cultural branding of cities; a variant itself of the heritage city (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000). City branding has become institutionalised in the form of 'city of culture' initiatives. Whilst all have their nuances the key aim is place marketing, in the case of heritage the unique selling proposition is a finite set of immovable built heritage, or locally situated cultural expressions. However, these are a limited set, so the next best thing (if one does not have a built heritage) is to create a new spectacle; and hence the phenomenon of cultural-icon branding has come into being. To be successful the building/s at the core have to be as unique and controversial as possible thereby generating their own media and 'USP[2]'.

City branding strategies seek to find or impose uniqueness; city of culture strategies whilst promoted as uniqueness and localness, can easily shade

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into normative hard branding strategies. The problem with all such approaches is that they are essentially consumption hubs, and as such unsustainable, without huge re-investment periodically (as fashions change). (Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008a). Soft branding, or culturally-led initiatives, are less common. In this sense we can characterise Florida's creative cities as hard branding with a soft edge. The hard branding comes by way of boutique/niche consumption spaces that are focused on establishing or encouraging a cultural milieu based around consumption. In this sense it has much to respond to the grey suited executives imagined of FDI as it is based on attracting those who like a funkier downtown, the appeal is not to the upper class mores of opera and concert halls, but of nightclubs and boutique galleries: the habitus of the creative class, or the information class. Who would oppose it?

Where the liberal gloss wears thin

So, we can see that there is a tension between the neoliberal project of industrial development at the lowest cost, and cities competing to provide resources to host highly skilled labour whom will act as bait for FDI. Florida's creative attempt to 'square the circle' is achieved though playing the trump card of creativity (very much like previous urban strategies and the use of quality of life indicators). Culture and creativity has gained a further resonance in that it has been posited as the driver of all innovation, and of the information society, on the back of a rhetoric driven by books such as Bell's (see Garnham, 2005 for a critique). This then, is a potent formulation, and one that seems to be a self-reinforcing perpetual motion that everyone can gain from.

This of course has led to the criticism of 'whose city, whose culture' (Zukin, 1995) as the prioritization of investment and choice are focused on those aspects that may deliver the most income, despite the fact that a whole population's taxes are being deployed. Moreover, it means that incomers and

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the creative class disproportionately benefit from this public and private investment. The standard responses are the skewed distributional effects and the regressive impact on taxation (the poor pay most and receive least in return). Added to which there is an implicit hegemonic project of favouring a particular type of culture (that appeals to a modern, or cosmopolitan, sensibility) over local or indigenous styles[3]. In many senses this is the classic cosmopolitan/international –local tension: played out very strongly via culture. Those in opposition to such a view are badly positioned as anti-cosmopolitanism and anti-liberal which leaves them open to a jibe: 'whom would oppose openness and diversity?'.

Of course, this plays out in quite different ways in various locations. In the West it may result into generating some cultural benefit for marginalised groups; but most commonly to the well-off middle classes. In the East it has quite other connotations. First the cultural imperialism is a little more apparent. Second, we can raise the even more tricky issue of culture/creativity and democracy. For many there is a presumed synergy in romanticism and liberalism between freedom of expression and great art; moreover, the point of view that attempts to corral and plan art and culture is a contradiction in terms. Art and culture – it is argued -flourish with freedom and no limits. If these ideal conditions were correct there would be no creativity or innovation outside the neo-liberal heartland, and they would only be sustained where the whole society bows down to the 'god' creativity. It is clear that creativity must be defined in relative terms: these terms are defined as responses to local conditions and hence take on unique forms.

On the other hand, we think we can see some challenges to Florida's central notion of the idea of tolerance. Tolerance is a prime liberal notion. In Florida's version tolerance has a proxy of sexual orientation. It is interesting the view debates concerning the application of a <u>de rigour</u> notion of Florida's work in Singapore where there are questions being raised as to changing laws on homosexuality (or not). Did this mean that Singapore was not creative, could

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not be creative, unless is has a particular legal status for homosexuals? We do not agree with the Singapore laws banning homosexuality, but one has to question if this is a result of simplistic model application: that homosexuality, which is a proxy of tolerance, must be made lawful to attract economic development (Ooi, 2008). The key issue is not to change the proxy, but make it a society tolerant (if that is felt necessary and desirable – but is it? If we asked the question about tolerance of wealth inequalities we have a quite different formulation: we are happy to be cast as intolerant of inequality). The logical extension of Richard Florida's position is that we should be tolerant of neo-liberalism. This is patently not a good argument upon which to base the reform of laws about sexuality to make better capitalists. There are good arguments, but not this one. The logical end-result appears to be that creative cities must be neo-liberal cities and visa versa. This is, we think, not a defensible argument, nor one that is sustained by the facts; it is an elision of creativity, culture and liberalism with neo-liberalism: so, we need to think again.

Creativity, liberalism and culture

This section will question the deployment of notions such as creativity and moral liberalism as universals, and the challenges presented by the lay admixture of liberalism, creativity and culture. Our objective here is to problematise atomism and universalism and substitute them with a more nuanced situated perspective. We draw influence from writers such as Young (1990) writing about concepts such as justice which have been similarly characterised who have pointed out that the imposition of universals will, in a pre-existing unequal world, actually exacerbate inequalities. We are suggesting that we can discuss culture and creativity in the same light.

We begin by noting the prevalence of notions of liberalism that lie at the heart of many notions of society. Here a moral liberalism of individual freedoms and rights, and a sovereignty of the self. The particular articulation that we are

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concerned with here is the way that such notions are universalised, such that they become normative. We are not arguing against a political programme to universalise a particular point of view, rather than question it as an <u>a priori</u> state of being, that can be asserted to be the one best, or true, condition. The counter argument is one that, taking classic, liberal debate forward that recognises the rights and possibilities, and necessary limitations on those as a result of living collectively, and the resort of third parties for conflict resolution (state) that might offer a situated and conditional limit on rights and individualism. It is this version of liberalism, or another political or moral philosophy that will take particular forms in specific times and places: a situated account.

So, how does this apply to creativity? As we have noted a common, lay, interpretation of creativity is the boundlessness of action, and the will of the individual. This is the subjective position that underpins much of the debate about Romanticism, and gives us the subject of the 'artist' in Western society (Pratt, 2008b)[4]. It is, to be sure, a very particular and situated interpretation of art and creativity. We have a whole body of literature, especially that emanating from popular business studies and economics, which reifies this conception of education and posits it as a universal solution to economic growth. This debate is strongly interwoven, or meshed with, notions of economic liberalism, which view the atavistic entrepreneur in similar ways to which artists have been characterised in romanticism. Thus, creativity is read as creativity in the context of neo-liberalism; and that neo-liberalism is the necessary and sufficient home of creativity. Hence, the oft-repeated formulation that creativity and neo-liberalism are compatible, and the new common sense.

This paper argues that creativity neither is, nor is not, critical for social or economic change, rather, that the particular form that it takes and how it is fermented, is specific: in fact this very point highlights the contradictions between the (common) universalism associated with the notion of creativity.

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That is, creativity is a situated activity, not a universal one. What is creative in one situation is not in another. Thus a singular figure of the universal creative, or creativity, often used in debates about creative cities, falls foul of this logic. Thus, picking up on the last section where we discussed creativity and culture as a mask for neo-liberalism; we might better see it has become, or is being promoted as, a partner of neo-liberalism; or some even suggest that creativity requires neo-liberalism; and, as Florida seems to suggest, a moral liberalism.

We might follow through the particular inflection that this gives the creative class; a necessary vanguard that will be found in, and necessarily attracted to (hence legitimated), creative cities. We will not repeat here (Pratt, 2008a) a critique of Florida's creative class, and Bell's information class, that Florida's work draws upon; simply to point out that Bell's later book, <u>The cultural contradictions of capitalism</u>, neatly summarises the conflict between selfless work, and hedonistic pleasure. Florida, who does not refer to this, reflects instead Bell's earlier tract with an economically determinist logic. Bell points to an internal contradiction between production generally and the consumption of culture. So, if unlike Florida's focus on consumption we look to production, and a complex, and situated characterisation of it we can point to the double contradictions within <u>and</u> between creative and other sectors [5].

Be careful what you wish for: The creative city

It is precisely this debate that can be found animating – in various ways - a number of recent explorations of the internal tensions between creativity, organisation and knowledge (see Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Lazzarato, 2007; McRobbie, 2003; Thrift, 2005). There is no space to detail these debates here (but see Gill and Pratt, 2008), but it is sufficient to note that they range from notions that art and creativity represent work's 'other' and hence a space of individual freedom, to that of the idea that art and creativity are an example under capitalism of a total exploitation of body and brain that high Fordism never achieved (compare Burawoy, 1979). These debates have

framed a whole set of subsidiary writing about the relationship between creative work and management (see Bilton, 2007; Nixon, 2003). This a large and expanding field, that requires much more empirical investigation, and further reflection on the role of the urban situation. This paper represents an initial step in that direction.

The following section explores dimensions of actually existing manifestation of creative cities. We begin by pointing to the substantive literature on gentrification, which has recently become inflected to the particularity of art and artists. We highlight that this represents a negative aspect of the normative consumption model of the creative city. In the second half of this section of the paper we outline the benefits that a stress on production might offer; however, I equally provide a view of the negative social and economic consequences that it too contains.

Consumption

The aspirations and generally perceived positive elements of the notion of the creative class and the creative city have been well documented; but as has been suggested above, these accounts are inevitably partial; they are predicated upon the displacement of an existing population, or down-grading their demands and needs. A well-documented process of the influx of higher income and/or different cultural capital is the core of the generalised process of gentrification (Lees, 2000). Of course, a particular twist to gentrification is artistic gentrification well documented by Zukin in SoHo, NY (1982, 1991, 1995), and still alive and kicking in Hoxton, London (Pratt, 2009b), and elsewhere (Lloyd, 2006). The extent to which gentrification has become both a state sanctioned and state-enabled process (as the availability of redistributive funding diminishes) has also been debated. But it is clear that the promotion of the creative class must facilitate and legitimate the relocation of segments of the middle class (the creative class) to the inner city. A logical consequence is that existing residents will be progressively economically 'out

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bid'.

We do not want to examine these debates here, simply to note that gentrifiers would fit neatly in Florida's (2002) creative class. Promotion of the creative class, and its habitus, if not actively checked, is a _de facto_ support for a particular type of gentrification, and an implicit, or often explicit, (re-) ordering of social and cultural priorities at a ward and city scale (Lees, 2000). Of course, as many have also pointed out, gentrification, based upon the initial spark of cultural capital of art, often results in the demise of that very art and cultural practice. This is yet another inflection of the cultural contradictions of capitalism.

More generally, we can see a parallel with an older account of urban redevelopment and the politics of economic development: the 'urban growth machine'. In the initial formulation, based upon US cities, Logan and Molotch (1987) pointed to the alliance between retail capital and urban politicians, and the consequences for the zoning of land, and political alliances, and social control. If one substitutes cultural consumption capital for retail capital, the concert hall, the museum, etc. which is the staple of US downtown regeneration (Clark, 2004; Hannigan, 1998), and is an exemplar of hard cultural branding of cities the world over, we can see how the priorities of a particular version of cultural consumption begins to structure investment and social and economic reproduction. One can point to the debates about gentrification in Bilbao (Plaza, 2000), or San Francisco (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Pratt, 2002), New York (Zukin, 1982), Sydney (Bounds and Morris, 2006) or London (Butler and Robson, 2003) as elsewhere. As has been noted elsewhere, this impetus has found an excellent partner in the proponents of the 'urban experience economy' where shopping and (a particular type of) culture seek to re-position the city as idealised consumption space (Pine II and Gilmore, 1999). In this case two types of exogenous development are targeted, the FDI normally discussed, and the more immediate US concern of the suburbs and the emptying inner city (and depleting its tax base).

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Thus the liberal city in its apparently innocent promotion of culture and creativity simply promotes one version, aside from the tendencies to hard branding, and its aforementioned shortcomings, and massive iconic infrastructure, and the general neglect of revenue funding, and support for cultural production. Moreover, there is a massive skew in whose culture and whose images are projected in and through such policies.

Thus, the consequence is of a particular city built for a particular audience, one that makes it easier for the privileged group's quality of life, and makes it implicitly worse for others (Jarvis et al., 2001; Pratt, 1996). If such debates rested upon a public sector cultural budget expenditure, and democratic/re-distributive decisions thereof, it might be more acceptable; however, there are numerous 'unintended consequences' of cultural funding driven by an externally referenced economic agenda. To be clear, the amount of money sustaining cultural projects in cities comes overwhelmingly for real estate and regeneration budgets, then from social inclusion budgets: intrinsic culture is very low on the agenda, or usually appears as 'icing on the cake' (see for example disucssion in the UK context Symon and Williams, 2001).

Production

An alternative to the focus on consumption spaces and places has been to re-examine the role of cultural production in cities, and to develop polices to encourage this (Pratt, 2008a). It is true that there is now a literature that provides clear evidence of the economic, social and political contribution of cultural industries to cities (Scott, 2000), that maps the scale and import of the cultural production economy in cities (rivalling many 'traditional' sectors such as Financial services (GLA Economics, 2004)). There is also a healthy debate as regards which types of policy either might encourage, or dissuade, such developers policies range from those that promote FDI to cluster, to single industry policies (Pratt, 2009a). Also, it is worth mentioning a very

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productive line of debate that seeks neither to locate itself in the production or consumption sphere, but looks at the potential transformative power of creative problem solving based on existing cultural resources in cities (Landry, 2000, 2006; Wood and Landry, 2007).

In line with the discussion advanced in the previous section, we do not want to dwell on the potential positives of cultural production; these have been well described in the normative literature (albeit neglecting the intrinsic value and concentrating on instrumentalism). The challenge is to examine some of the more difficult downsides as well, and to caution against a gestalt type shift from policies that promote consumption to those that support production. In fact, as has been argued, it is always about both, but also, our point here, about the situated and embedded nature of cultural production (in its broadest sense) in the city that matters.

So, what we want to examine is that if we are to favour the growth in cultural work, what sort of city are we creating? This section of the paper offers some snapshots from the cutting edge of the cultural industries, which themselves may be considered pictures from the future of creative cities (added to which many have argued that the creative economy is leading the rest of the economy in adopting these novel organisational forms). There is now an emerging body of work on the organisation of the cultural and creative industries, and in particular, about that nature of work in them. This literature seeks to counter-balance the simplistic and star struck optimism of many participants, and many policy makers, with a realism rooted in practice and evidence (Beck, 2003; Blair, 2001; Gill, 2002; McKinlay and Smith, 2009; McRobbie, 1998; Pratt et al., 2007).

Scholarship indicates that firms in the cultural and creative economy have many differences from 'normal' firms. First, that organisationally, they have been tended to be organised in hetrachical forms, that are predominantly small and temporary: what has been termed project based companies

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(Grabher, 2001; Grabher, 2002; Pratt, 2006). Second, workers tend to be freelance and work on short-term contacts. Finally, individual skill and expertise, as well as reputation is often critical in getting a job, and as is forming and working as a member of a successful team. This leads to the unusually embedded nature of firms in relation to one another, and to the 'labour pool' and cities (and hence between the formal and informal/ work-non work) (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006).

On one hand, this vignette of 'creatives' is the attractive mirror image of the corporate enterprise, and seemingly commensurate with the 'artistic' lifestyle. Indeed, there is a sub-literature that celebrates the 'free agent' (Pink, 2001), or rise of the 'independent worker' (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999), the 'no collar' worker. This appears to be a liberal utopia. However, as a emergent body of work highlights, it also has its dark side (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Ross, 2003) in the precarious work conditions with no social support, where training, and all social reproduction is the workers' responsibility (Christopherson, 2002; Christopherson and van Jaarsveld, 2005; Neff et al., 2005).

Is this the future that was anticipated?

Views of the hoped for sunny uplands of creative work abound in the literature; as noted above, there is an emerging literature on the realities in particular the structures and organisation or creative work, and what the experience of creative work is really like. What is generally lacking is urban level analyses; there is good reason for this: it is an as yet emerging, and fast changing field of economic activity. Some snapshots of the creative sector as a whole can be gleaned from sectoral labour market planning agencies such as Skillset in the UK. These studies focus on the audio-visual sector, and it is clear that there are differences with other creative industries. But, given that so much regulatory attention and public sector funding is directed to this sub-sector it might be expected that it would present the most favourable picture of the sector as a whole.

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Looking in detail at 2009 survey figures (Skillset, 2009), the latest available, we can note that whereas there are more or less 46% women working in the UK workforce, the figure is just 27% in the audio visual sector. The picture is even worse for black and ethnic minority workers; the proportion of black and ethnic minority workers in London, where more than half of creative sector employees work, is around 24%, but in the audio-visual industries it is just 7%.

Skillset (2001), in a survey now over a decade old, recorded that one third of workers were on freelance contracts. As noted in research referred to the previous section, this has significant implications for gender and age discrimination, as well as creating uniquely unstable 'careers'. We know that the proportion of freelancers has increased over time. In addition, there is the pernicious practice of 'free internships', where those entering the labour market have to work for free in the hope of getting a job. Of course, the social norms and economic background that this implies is exclusionary. Some people have to work for up to two years for free before securing a paid job. In an industry where getting a job depends upon whom you know (most jobs are not advertised, but filled via word-of-mouth), education and social background are critical. If further evidence of the tight socio-economic filter on employment in the sector were needed, a survey by the Sutton Trust (2006), reveals that 54% of all news journalists attended non-state funded schools; and of those who had degrees, 56% had them from just two elite universities: Oxford and Cambridge[6].

Finally, if we turn our attention from the sector to the city we can see that these patterns are in fact typical of the creative workforce (Freeman, 2010). Most would agree that London is one of the premier creative cities in the world (London Development Agency, 2008). In London, whereas less than 15% of employment in all industries was on self-employed basis, the average for the creative industries was nearly 30%, with music and performance closer to

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65%. In London the proportion of female workers in all industries was nearly 45%, in the creative industries 35%: only fashion, art and antiques, publishing and advertising were above average[7]. Finally, looking to black and ethnic minority workers in London, the figure for all industries is just over 25%, but for the creative industries it is 17%, with publishing, radio and television, advertising and fashion languishing below even the creative industries average[8].

So, the new work that is being created so quickly, which is presented as the saviour and future of cities and nations is some of the most unstable and precarious work, that reproduces the most regressive social and economic structure. Far from the creative city and the creative worker being the meretricious and liberal solution to urban change and future growth, it looks more like a neo-liberal hell.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to take a critical look at the notion of the creative city. We took our lead from Bell and framed the argument around the contradictory nature of the creative class and thus the creative city. Bell's internal contradiction was a central problem in post-industrial societies; it is a debate that has resurfaced under different formulations in more recent debates (see for example Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Gill and Pratt, 2008). This paper took its conceptual lead from these interventions, as well as those of Ross (2003) all of whom have sought to re-direct otherwise theoretical debates on the actually existing nature of cultural work, and its internal, as well as external, contradictions. Here we have sought to articulate these concerns to the Creative Class and the Creative City.

In this paper we have highlighted two types of contradiction, and confusion: first, the nature of creativity and its linkage to liberalism the 'good society' and universalism. Second, we have pointed to the need to explore, and provided some examples of, the outcome of a 'creative city' (both in the consumption,

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and in the production modalities). In this sense the paper is a salutary caution of 'being careful what you wish for'.

The conclusions that we draw are the need for a more nuanced and reflexive and evidence based analysis of the creative city. We have argued that situated analyses reveal that creativity is relative and situational, not universal or independent. Moreover, the relationship with liberalism is far more complex and nuanced that it is commonly characterised. This has a number of consequences in terms of academic research and policy advocacy. It means that in academic terms that there is a need for a far more nuanced analysis of the relationships between and spill-overs across production and consumption, the formal and informal economy, and attention needs to be paid to the varieties of cultural work, and to the difference in conditions in various industries; clearly, there are differences between places as well. In policy terms, debate needs to be founded upon the aforementioned understandings, and not on a simplistic repetition of the universal 'good thing' that the creativity and liberalism is. They have as many downsides as there are upsides to this issue; more nuanced policy information, policy-making and evaluation is needed if any of the hoped for outcomes are to be achieved, there will not be a simple magic bullet fix-it; policies will need to be developed and managed in relation to their own particular situatedness. This does not mean that everything is different everywhere; what we are arguing is that the local conditions require of policy makers a more inventive, or creative, response based upon hard evidence rather than hope and rhetoric.

Perhaps these reflections should begin to cause us to think beyond the creative city, and not to be constrained by what has gone before. As noted above, we need to appreciate the diversity of objectives and practices that constitute creative cities, and for this diversity to become the foundation of a learning process. One way to encourage this process and outcome might be to become a member of the UNESCO creative cities network. However, network participation should not be simply about the prize and prestige of

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membership, but an encouragement or license to think in creative ways. As with other networks in the cultural and creative industries attention will need to be paid to the governance of this network, in the sense that participation and learning is more effective if it is curated and facilitated, and lessons learned – failure and successes - and archived and reflected upon. A particular challenge at present is to move beyond the tourism, heritage and consumption focus of many initiatives and to embrace the full cycle of culture making that includes cultural production.

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Footnotes

[1] A reference to REM's (1991) 'Shiny happy people' from the Out of Time album.

[2] USP: Unique Selling Proposition

[3] See further debates on cosmopolitanism and the city Hannerz, U., 1996. Transnational connections : culture, people, places. Routledge, London. See also Smith, M.P., 2001. Transnational urbanism : locating globalization. Blackwell, Malden, Mass., Oxford. And Robbins, B., 1999. Feeling global : internationalism in distress. New York University Press, New York ; London.

[4] There are also counter interpretations of romanticism and modernism that have sort to challenge what is essentially the normative viewpoint related here.

[5] The cultural and creative industries are contested, and in some interpretations meaningless. If we take them to be based in production and a noun that labels that activity this is satisfactory, however, the common usage where 'creative' is used as adjective modifier of industry is not helpful.

[6] Thanks to Doris Eikhof and Chris Warhust for alerting me to this study.

[7] Other work suggests that female employment in these industries is over-concentrated in lower level grades and 'non-creative' work.

[8] The figures are different from those cities above for BME workers as the basis of the two surveys was different.