



Manufacturing and cultural production: Towards a progressive policy agenda for the cultural economy



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ABSTRACT

Urban policy-makers have largely treated the cultural economy as either an appendage of a larger creative or knowledge-based economy or as a means of enhancing consumption. The result has been a focus on programs to attract highly educated and skilled professionals often at the expense of attention to workforce inequality, manual workers and skills, gentrification, and the displacement of small, independent manufacturing businesses. In the context of growing labour market inequality and deepening urban cultural schisms, this paper seeks to redirect urban and cultural policy toward a more progressive research and policy agenda centered on material cultural production. Our point of departure is to focus on the nascent intersection between the cultural economy and small manufacturing. This paper first provides a brief summary of the current approaches to urban policy and the cultural economy and the factors that have shaped policy decisions. Next, we discuss emerging attention around an alternative urban cultural policy agenda geared toward the cultural industries, small manufacturing, and craft-based production. Finally, we explore the relationships among cultural industries and small manufacturers and discuss the key research gaps and policy issues that will affect relationships and development oriented to cultural production and manufacturing at the city-region level.

1. Introduction

Policies aimed at the cultural economy have come to play an integral role in the urban development strategies of cities around the globe (Grodach and Silver, 2013; Hutton, 2008; Scott, 2004; Van Heur, 2010).¹ Yet, conceptions of what constitutes the cultural economy remain polyvalent, meaning that policy imaginations, and resulting implementations, are fluid and divergent (Gibson, 2012). Urban policy-makers have turned toward and interpreted the cultural economy in two primary ways: as an appendage of a larger creative or knowledge economy or as a means of enhancing consumption (Evans, 2009). Over the last decades, such attempts have been part of strategies to assist cities to cope with economic restructuring, support the growth of professional jobs, and redevelop central city buildings, infrastructure and real estate markets. However, this has also contributed to the parallel development of largely lower wage service jobs for those without the skills and education to work in the creative economy (Davidson & Wyly, 2012), as well as gentrification and the displacement of residents and businesses from central city areas (Catungal,

Leslie & Hii, 2009; Davidson, 2007; Hutton, 2008). Creative industries and consumption-focused interpretations of the cultural economy have contributed to the growing polarisation of cities, culturally and economically.

Policy discourses informing such urban transitions have thus been widely criticized for implying that industrial and manufacturing workers and members of residual inner-city working-class and migrant communities are ‘outmoded’, or even ‘uncreative’, needing to be replaced by more ‘talented’ outsiders (Barnes, Waitt, Gill, & Gibson, 2006; Wilson & Keil, 2008). Moreover, the focus on the cultural economy as either consumption-based or as a facet of the knowledge economy has directed policy away from the employment and development opportunities related to cultural *production*—in the sense of the material prototyping, manufacture and assembly of physical goods infused with cultural or semiotic meaning.

At the same time that cities have sought to jettison manufacturing legacies and land uses, there is a renewed public and policy interest in ‘making things’ (Anderson, 2012; Berger, 2013; Westbury, 2015), encompassing additive manufacturing, bespoke making, and craft-

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¹ The cultural economy encompasses the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services based primarily on aesthetic or symbolic value (Scott, 2000). This covers a range of sectors in the visual and performing arts, music, fashion, design (e.g. architecture, graphic design), and media (e.g. film, television, radio, video games, book publishing).

based production. Opportunities abound to pursue urban economic development strategies that build upon, rather than eschew, industrial, migrant and working-class skills and legacies (Gibson, 2016), but they may be overlooked within constrained cultural economic policy-making overly focused on the so-called knowledge and creative industries.

In response, this paper seeks to redirect urban and cultural policy toward a more progressive research and policy agenda centered on material cultural production. As we discuss, key social and economic trends have positioned cultural and craft production as a significant but overlooked opportunity for more equitable urban economic development. Simultaneously, this is a chance for cultural policy to reinvent itself following a decade or more of consumption-based creative city strategizing. Our point of departure is to focus on the growing intersection between the cultural economy and small manufacturing. Research has recognized the changing nature and growth of urban manufacturing (Friedman and Byron, 2012; Helper, Kreuger, & Weil, 2012; Mistry & Byron, 2011; Sassen, 2010), but few specifically concentrate on the relationships with the cultural industries (Gibson, Carr, & Warren, 2015; Gu, 2012). Many have studied the cultural industries as a production system, acknowledging the cultural economy's links to material manufacture (e.g. Scott, 2000; Pratt, 2004) and there is growing attention to independent craft activity (Anderson, 2012; Jakob, 2013; Luckman, 2015; Thomas, Harvey, & Hawkins, 2013), but little work has been devoted to the ways in which cultural industries interact with and perform manufacturing functions.

This paper first provides a brief summary of the current approaches to urban policy and the cultural economy and the factors that have shaped policy decisions. Next, we discuss emerging attention around an alternative urban cultural policy agenda geared toward the cultural industries, small manufacturing, and craft-based production. Finally, we explore the relationships among cultural industries and small manufacturers and discuss the key research gaps and policy issues that will affect relationships and development oriented to cultural production and manufacturing at the city-region level. Our contention is that more progressive alternatives to existing urban policy for the cultural economy should explore the interface between small manufacturing and cultural industries, and acknowledge and build upon both industrial and cultural legacies, with their associated human capacities. This, we argue, is necessary not just to remedy the false ontological severing of manual and cerebral/creative tasks within conceptions of economy (Carr & Gibson, 2016), but to pursue more equitable futures for cities that seem now more culturally, economically and spatially fractured than ever.

2. Urban policy and the cultural economy: knowledge industries and consumption

Two dominant narratives have driven urban policy around the cultural economy. One narrative frames the cultural economy as a subset of a knowledge or creative economy. The other narrative treats arts and culture primarily as consumption amenities that will attract development and improve the city image. Both consist of urban and cultural policies that directly and indirectly target cultural activities and fail to account for the roles and values of cultural production, and of industrial places and people.

Under the rubric of 'creative industries,' the cultural economy has been positioned as a central part of a 'knowledge economy' defined by advanced services, information technologies, and a workforce high in human capital (Howkins, 2003; Potts, 2012). The rise of knowledge and innovation-driven industries has defined urban economic restructuring since at least the 1980s. This growth is typically framed as a response to the deindustrialization and loss of employment in older, heavy manufacturing industries in most OECD countries. It is also a specifically urban process. The high level of transactions and coordination necessary to manage the global dispersal of industry and trade necessitates that the intricate network of finance, legal, design, and other knowl-

edge and creative industry services concentrate in specific places (Sassen, 2012; Scott, 2006; Watson, 2008).

Policy around this narrative typically does not directly target cultural industry development, but is rather geared toward remaking the CBD for the knowledge industries and advanced business services more broadly. Cities have implemented an array of incentive-based, property-led development strategies through tax abatements, property write-downs, and land assembly to make their CBDs attractive to these industries and to enable large-scale redevelopment. These strategies are ubiquitous in global hubs as well as the 'shrinking cities' that continue to struggle with their industrial legacy, despite evidence that these strategies do not have a major impact on business location decisions (Grodach & Ehrenfeucht, 2016; Hackworth, 2014; Kenyon, Langley, and Paquin, 2012).

The rapid growth of CBD office development and the rehabilitation of buildings for knowledge economy activity in turn has generated demand for central city neighborhoods by professionals employed in knowledge-based services and corporate creative industries (Butler & Lees, 2006). Struggling areas in many cities have experienced a demographic shift and redevelopment by and for upwardly mobile residents. Homeownership in the urban core has increased as abandoned and historic buildings have been renovated and new retail and entertainment projects have been developed (Beauregard, 2005). With these shifts have come rising property values, lower vacancy rates and new sources of much needed revenue for cities. Meanwhile, in cities where vacancy rates are much lower (especially in Europe and Australia), urban land previously zoned for industrial purposes (and still sufficiently occupied by small manufacturing firms) has also declined, after being caught up in an accumulation strategy geared around developers and local municipal authorities working in collaboration to encourage a shift to mixed-land use designation (Shaw, 2015). The shift to mixed-land use zoning – frequently justified as replacing 'dirty' industry with more attractive, 'cleaner' city spaces and industries – has the effect of rising potential rent returns per square metre by demolishing existing low-rise industrial buildings and replacing them with higher-density residential apartment developments (Shaw, 2015). The result of this is the further gradual evacuation of small manufacturing from the inner city.

These trends warrant critique, not just for the missed economic opportunities that stem from the revival in manufacturing and 'making' cultures, but also for the degree to which they intersect negatively with urban labor market characteristics, exacerbating social inequalities (Leslie & Catungal, 2012). With the evacuation of manufacturing, lost are relatively well-paid jobs that build upon manual skills (Warren, 2015). While the growth of knowledge industries has enhanced urban economic development in many places, it has in turn generated demand for lower-wage services that offer few career opportunities compared to the lost industrial manufacturing jobs. In countries such as the US, African-Americans and other minority groups have been hit particularly hard due to the racial and ethnic stratification of urban labor markets combined with enduring segregation that created unequal opportunity (Wilson, 2009). In the United Kingdom the widespread promotion of creative industries as urban regeneration has overlaid existing entrenched class divisions, rather than replaced them – exacerbating social inequality (Davidson & Wyly, 2012; Hudson, 2005; Oakley, 2006). Framing the creative economy around primarily knowledge industries in these regeneration strategies across many places has thus contributed to a bifurcated and polarized economy of highly skilled professionals working in the knowledge economy and often minority and immigrant workforce in the lower wage services industries.

Related to this, a second policy stream looks to the cultural economy to drive consumption and play a role in place branding. Local governments now routinely approach culture as an amenity to attract tourists, increase consumption spending, and improve the city image (Grodach & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Oakley & O'Connor, 2015). Cities across the world have spent considerable sums of money to develop arts

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