

Editor's Picks

CONSTANCE DEVEREAUX

NOBOKU KAWASHIMA AND HYE-KUNG LEE (EDS.): *Asian Cultural Flows: Cultural Policies, Creative Industries, and Media Consumers*. Singapore (Springer Nature) 2020, 260 pp.

The future is Asian according to Parag Khanna, whose 2019 book is titled just that. If the 19th century was European, he argues, and the 20th is regarded as the American century, the 21st is quite notably Asian. Increased autarky in India, China, Japan, Korea, and other parts of Asia is one reason for his claim. It is an important one where such things as the creative industries is concerned. The more autonomy a nation enjoys and the less dependent, economically, on other nations, the more it can exercise the kind of decision making that leads to an expanded, and home grown, creative and cultural industries sector. The topic of this book is the growing influence and autonomy of creative sector developments in Asian nations, chronicling policies, and their various outcomes, as centralized power emerges or retreats, exercises a heavy or, alternately, a light-handed approach.

Asian Cultural Flows: Cultural Policies, Creative Industries, and Media Consumers, edited by Noboku Kawashima and Hye-Kung Lee, looks at the topics of national cultural policies and urban strategies in Korea, Japan, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore; Asian creative industries; and demand, reception, and engagement of Asian media consumers. The international roster of contributors, mostly Asian, makes the volume a welcome addition to the literature. Despite globalization, technology, and the ease of mobility our world, in general, has enjoyed (up until the current pandemic), there are still too few opportunities to encounter the scholarship of Asian colleagues on the topic of Asia's participation in the global creative economy. And yet, the influence of Asia is far more evident than ever in contemporary popular and mainstream culture to anyone with access to the internet. Dal Yong Jin (media studies scholar) discusses the reciprocal, and ongoing flows between east and west, and the role of social media, which has gained strength in the 21st century. His chapter, entitled "The Korean Government's New Cultural Policy in the Age of Social Media," explains how the control of cultural production has increasingly transferred from government to Korean artists, as

the “penetration” of Korean popular culture has expanded to pan-Asian, and subsequently Western markets (4). Changing habits in social media have contributed to the Hallyu phenomenon, or Korean Wave, that has spread far beyond its origins in South Korea. As evidence, who among us has not had Gangnam Fever?

Grace Gonzalez Basurto (economist) writes about Japan’s efforts at cultural branding in her chapter entitled “Asian and Global? Japan and Tokyo’s Cultural Branding Beyond the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.” Her gaze is through the lens of the policy document Tokyo Vision for Arts and Culture (2015-2025). An “ongoing” endeavor (37), the author sees a challenge for this policy as policy makers and cultural stakeholders endeavor “to strike a balance between using the country’s cultural resources and directly intervening or heavily curating the country’s image” (38).

‘Cool Japan’ and Creative Industries: An Evaluation of Economic Policies or Popular Culture Industries in Japan by Nobuko Kawashima (economist) examines the seemingly hesitant policies of a country seeking to expand its cultural flows in emulation of the successful cultural branding of the United Kingdom that took place in the 1990s, called “Cool Britannia.” June Chi-Jung Chu (museum studies) examines large-scale, blockbuster exhibitions that have developed in Taiwan since the early 1990s. In her chapter, “How Exhibitions Flow: Governments, Museums, and Special Exhibitions in Taiwan,” she notes that predictions for the demise of blockbuster exhibitions – since their advent in the 1970s – have defied expectations, continuing to occur, “and even expand” (95). In Taiwan, they have transformed from annual events, held in museums, to year-round fare hosted in non-museum spaces, as well, such as in the government created cultural districts of the island nation. Citing a series of critiques of the practice of blockbuster exhibitions (too commercial and commodified, too Western in origin, unequal power distribution and exchange of resources between the West and Taiwan), Chu notes, that scholars have not adequately addressed how these exhibitions are received by local audiences, and have “failed to account for the ongoing changes in the [...] market and the newly evolving dynamics between key actors” (96).

The overriding theme of the book is “cultural flows,” or the multi-directional global movements of production/consumption processes and products (TZANELLI 2011) that are now familiar. The phenomenon of such flows is not new. As long as there have been humans they have exchanged cultural goods and practices and they will continue to

do so. The dynamics of history tell us, however, that knowledge about the shape of developments and the policies that can determine these developments will serve us well. Whether newly discovering the effects of Asian cultural flows on world markets and consumer behaviors, or the practiced researcher already contributing to the conversation, this book is an important addition.

JAMES C. KAUFMAN AND ROBERT J. STERNBERG (EDS.): *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press. 2019. 778 pp.

The lives of creative people are “rich and enviable; but not usually for material reasons,” according to Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, the psychologist known for the concept of flow (2019: xvii). He has penned the foreword of the 2019 edition of the *Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*. The first appeared in 2009, which was also the year that Csikszentmihalyi’s *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* appeared in its second edition. Csikszentmihalyi, who has made an industry out of flow, is not himself materially deprived, making it uncertain whether or not he should be counted among creatives. He is amply qualified, nonetheless, in the subject of creativity by virtue of his long research record and substantial publications. So, it is worth noting that he titles the Foreword, “The Rewards of Creativity”, followed by the claim that very few creative ideas result from “rational cost benefit analysis” (ibid). This may surprise many of us who have followed the rise of creativity in policy and entrepreneurship and have observed that cost-benefit calculations are too commonplace and are possibly the source of many urban policy problems. That is not to say that I doubt Csikszentmihalyi or disagree with his sentiments. Instead, I think it speaks well to this volume of explorations, and views on creativity, to lead with a positive picture. We continue – perhaps, in part, because of Csikszentmihalyi’s influence – to have great faith that creativity is the source of good for policy, economies, and individual empowerment. The truth of the matter is that we still know little about creativity and how, or why, it operates in human beings. The *Cambridge Handbook* gets us a bit closer. For the researcher interested in studying creative classes, cities, industries, or people, the volume may be indispensable as a veritable one-stop shop – in thirty-six chapters – on creativity’s role in human society, its underlying principles, and values. One can appreciate, in the wide choice of topics and approaches,

the many ways that creativity has come to define contemporary life in research and practice.

The first chapter is titled “Creativity: A Historical Perspective” by Vlad P. Glăveanu and James C. Kaufman. Despite being a “child” of the present era (9), creativity’s roots go back to antiquity. The difference is that back then, creativity was thought of as divine inspiration. Currently, we see it as the product of individual agency. The disparity is huge. A gift from the gods is something to be cherished, not monetized. In contrast, “our contemporary interest in, and admiration for, creativity needs to be understood in its social, scientific, technological, economic, and political context” (ibid). Yes, it does! Given that policies affect lives, greater understanding of creativity in the human context, could be of great help to cultural policy researchers and actors – another reason I find this publication valuable.

The first section covers core concepts and theories. It asks the reader to consider, “What Questions Are We Trying to Answer?” (27), acknowledging that creativity, “can mean so many things that simply cataloging the most cited theories would be as coherent as learning modern cinema by seeing a minute-long clip of every Oscar winning movie” (ibid).

The various authors in this section of the book, give broad treatment to the underpinnings of creativity from the biological to the cognitive and the affective. Another section, on creativity in the world, looks at its value in organizations, for leadership, education, and for bringing about urban revitalization. This latter, fans of Richard Florida will note, is penned by the author of *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Refreshingly (given his past claims), but soberingly, he explains that the most creative cities in today’s world are “the most divided and unequal” (323). He describes, at length, how the

same clustering of people and industry that drives creativity, innovation, and economic growth also leads to the sorting of people by class as the members of the creative class colonize the most economically functional and aesthetically appealing areas of the city, pushing the less-advantaged blue collar and service classes into the more disadvantaged and disconnected areas of the city or, increasingly, out into the peripheries of the suburbs, or far away from transit and jobs. (623)

His admission means that we have come a long way from the many claims, as noted by authors in this special issue of JCMCP, that creativity is the very antidote needed to bring about prosperity and end economic divisions. Given, as noted above, our continued faith that creativity can work wonders on economies and urban centers, Florida’s clear-headed words should be taken seriously.

In the final section, the reader is introduced to manifestations of creativity, from that of the creative genius, to the problems of malevolence that creativity might inspire, or that are inspired by creativity. It addresses the notion that creativity can be turned either to the good or to the bad. Another sobering view. And yet, we know empirically and anecdotally that creativity has its rewards. We only need to come to terms with its structures and processes. We need to know the right questions to ask as we craft policy solutions with creativity at their core. *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity* asks a lot of the right questions and poses some worthy answers.

CHARLES LANDRY: *Advanced Introduction to the Creative City*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019. 192 pp.

Charles Landry's name is well represented in this special issue on creative cities exactly because he was one of the early launchers of the creativity movement. His 1995 publication with Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, was one of the first to position creativity as a remedy for ailing cities. In Chapter Three of the latest book, he poses the question, "what is an uncreative place like?" (17) and asks the reader to "imagine the uninspiring places" (ibid) that fall into this category. I have to admit that my mind immediately conjured Winchester, Virginia and Fort Collins, Colorado – two cities I once inhabited, and which I found distinctly uninspiring. I know, however, that "uninspiring" is in the eye of the beholder. Both cities are much appreciated, by many visitors and residents, for their quaint artiness and quasi-bohemian appeal. Similarly, while many people may have found Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, in the pre-Iranian revolutionary 1970s, anything but artsy and quaint, it was, to me, a place of great inspiration. I was much taken with its contrasting sand and sea, its exotic (to me) alleyways snaking between broken buildings, where scents of coffee and spices shared airspace with sheep dung odors and car exhaust. Without a doubt, "the great variety of Taste [...] which prevails in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under every one's observation" (HUME 1757: 266). That is why it would serve Landry's argument well to provide examples of the uninspiring variety of cities that have "unfortunately become complacent [...] losing energy and maybe just hoping that luck will come their way" (18). Otherwise, how are we to make the kind of

comparisons he suggests, or know what to aim away from in our pursuit of creative cities?

I selected this book as one among the editor's picks because Landry, now an institution, is a must read. His continued influence in the world of the creative – city, place, and industry – is unquestionable. And so, those of us interested in the same should continue to read him. A great deal of the book, however, uses sweeping bromides in place of concrete, or “advanced” strategy or advice. Illustrative examples did not find their way into this volume.

Landry writes, “at the core of the creative city is the notion that imagination and inventiveness are crucial in keeping a city alive, alert, adaptable and relevant to the problems that matter in the world today” (2). And “crucially” that it is “now recognized that creative inputs add values to businesses which are not normally creative, such as engineering, facilities management, city development, or the hospitality industry” (73). Such claims read more as truisms than wisdom.

Landry wants his readers to know that he is no Richard Florida, though their respective work (along with John Howkin's) is often conflated. Landry's interests are “specifically not about a ‘creative class’ and not only about the creative economy but more about the ‘creative ecosystem’ of a city and how it can empower people's potential” (40). Fair enough. It is an important distinction to make. The ideas Landry set in motion in the 1980s were intended to address the significant problems, in nations and the world at large, that had brought about economic and political disparities. Empowerment is a noble aim given the many disempowered, marginalized, and impoverished people in the world despite the best efforts of policy makers to remedy them. Florida, Howkins, and Landry are connected by their research into creativity, but also by a common critique that their work serves a neo-liberal agenda. To this Landry responds, I do not recognize myself here” (40). But we are, indeed, here. Although creativity has been a boon in many cases (some illustrated in this issue), in other ways, it is decidedly not. Neo-liberal agendas have co-opted creativity for their own, and we are hard pressed to wrestle it back to do the work that Landry may have intended when he began his creativity career.

The prospective reader of Landry's latest book is cautioned not to be put off by my own critique. If you have yet to read him, the current volume is the overview you need to get up to speed, bromides and platitudes notwithstanding. For those already familiar, the “advanced” Landry is

the book to give policy makers you know who are newly exploring what creativity has to offer.

References

- CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, Mihalyi (2009): *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- FLORIDA, Richard (2002): *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.
- HUME, David (1757): Of the Standard of Taste. – In: Ibid., *Four Dissertations*. London: A. Milar.
- KHANNA, Parag (2019): *The Future is Asian*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- LANDRY, Charles/BIANCHINI, Franco (1995): *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London: Demos.
- TZANELLI, Rodanthi (2011): Cultural Flows. – In: Southerton, Dale (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, <<http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/consumerculture/n145.xml>> [4/25/2020].

Constance DeVereaux

OLI MOULD: *Against Creativity*. New York (Verso) 2018, 240 Seiten.

Against Creativity (2018) belongs to a specific publication genre in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In ways that are similar to Paul Feyerabend's *Against Method* (1975), a book that groundbreakingly, and controversially, proposed a political historiography of sciences, or in ways that remind us of the more recent *Against Management*, by Martin Parker (2002).

Oli Mould lectures at Royal Holloway, University of London and in previous work he tackled issues of urban activism, social theory, and is now focusing on creative resistance. His book is a statement piece; it is an invitation to pause and reassess the place that creativity has come to occupy in the public discourse. According to Mould, the public understanding of creativity has evolved over time, and "Being creative in today's society has only one meaning: to carry on producing the status quo" (Mould 2018: 3). Creativity is a duplicitous notion. According to Mould, the social history of creativity has departed from its origins as a collective/socialized process for imagining and constructing social, political, and economic alternatives, to a process that values the status quo. According to Mould, "Capitalism attempts to stop us from believing in