



# Creative cities: Tensions within and between social, cultural and economic development

## A critical reading of the UK experience

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### ABSTRACT

This article offers a situated and pragmatic analysis of the state of the art of creative cities policy thinking regarding the governance of the relationship between the cultural and creative economy and urbanization. It argues for the need to pay attention to the context, history and regulatory forms of creative cities and be very cautious in our desire to draw wider lessons based upon policy transfer. The paper examines the UK case as illustrative of the organic and fractured nature of policy initiatives: and, advises against a single policy model. There are many instrumental uses to which creative city policies can be put; and critically, there are a number of intrinsic uses as well. This paper, and the literature more generally, supports the view that the balance of attention has been toward instrumental uses of culture and creativity. It is argued that we need to re-balance policy and academic concern to the intrinsic value of the cultural and creative field.

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### Introduction

The aims of this paper are both negative and positive. The positive ones are to plot a course, and to open up the field of study, of creativity, culture and the social and economic life of the city. However, in proposing a positive aim one must acknowledge the state of the art, and the dominant discourse, of the current debate. The paper has two negative premises. First, it rejects the simplistic association of the creative economy with a teleological representation of economic development, just one step beyond, or an elaboration of, the knowledge economy. Second, the paper is set against the premise that creative and cultural activities are simply forms of attraction for a mobile elite, or as an instrumental means of differentiating one place from another.

The paper highlights the value of acknowledging the subtleties of historical and locally specific practices of cultural and creative activities. It is argued that only by taking such an analytic step can we understand the pro-

cesses animating creative cities, and accordingly begin to develop a range of policy responses to them. This is not only a case of conceptual re-alignment and policy innovation (as will be discussed here); but, as is discussed elsewhere, it presents significant challenges to policy delivery and expertise (Jeffcutt & Pratt, 2002; Pratt, 2005, 2007, 2009b).

The paper stresses that the creative city policy field is a broad one including many objectives. There are sound arguments for the instrumental uses of culture and creativity other than those discussed here; this paper, however, argues that all policies should have clear and discrete objectives and that they should be evaluated on those terms. Failure to achieve policy objectives is unfortunate, but it can be learned from. Confused policy objectives and inadequate evaluation achieves no scientific end; and, as often as not simply serves to re-inforce existing prejudices.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prejudices which are commonly configured on the basis of an outmoded notion of culture and creativity as inherently market failures.

## Creative cities – the very idea

One of the major obstacles to analyses of creative cities is the term itself. There has been a significant upsurge in writings and debates about the notion of creativity, the creative class and the creative city (Bianchini & CLES, 1988; Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993; Currid, 2007; Florida, 2002, 2004; Florida & Tinagali, 2004; Hall, 1998, 2000; Hutton, 2004; Landry, 2000, 2006; Lloyd, 2006; Molotch, 1996; Scott, 2000, 2007; Wood & Landry, 2007). The problem is that these authors use the term in many different ways, and policies that are built upon assumptions rooted in these disparate knowledges, have diverse objectives. As these terms have filtered through to the popular media they have lost their precision and specificity and collapsed into more or less the same generic or bland idea (Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008a). Today the notion of a creative city stands as much for a political and social mantra as an urban, social or economic policy, or even an aspiration. Within the field of urban policy the notion of a creative city has spread like wildfire, but unlike a wildfire, it appears that everyone wants to have a creative city.

The objective of this paper is to step back from this maelstrom and take a more considered view of the issue. It is of course important to return to conceptual foundations; however, we have to acknowledge that a rather more vaporous version of creative cities is abroad, and it forms part of everyday policy discourse which has real effects in terms of the expectations that it establishes. Thus, any discussion of the terms must carefully engage with both conceptual as well as popular discursive articulations.

As part of this introduction I will briefly point to some of the narrative strands that constitute the loose and often contradictory lexicon that is creative cities. It may help to separate these into five main themes. First, and foremost, is the notion of creativity. The way that this enters the debate is manifold. The notion has a humanistic root, in the valuing of individual creativity/ humanity. However, this has been powerfully re-articulated in recent years linked to economic innovation and competitiveness (Pratt, 2008b). Thus, creativity is now commonly viewed as a key economic characteristic. Loosely coupled these two factors make a strong underpinning for creativity as a universal positive aspiration (Pratt & Jeffcutt, 2009b).

Second, and related to the economic strand of thought already referred to is a teleological, developmentalist, or modernization, thesis that suggests that the knowledge economy, of which the creative economy is figured as a star element, is the highest point of economic development. Thus, all cities, regions and nations are encouraged to be more creative. Third, another articulation of this economic strand is that cultural activity is not of primary importance in directed economic value generation; rather, it plays a supportive or facilitating role: such as attracting, or differentiating cities, in relation to foreign direct investment.

Fourth, is the idea that the creative, or cultural, economy is somehow more inclusive: usually in the sense of a representation of non-capitalistic values; or as a humanistic counterbalance to economic accumulation. This is the field that we can see in the discussion of the nurturing power of neighborhood and social cohesion through joint endeavor of cultural projects. Fifth, and a mainly silent strand, is one that runs

counter to the latter. It focuses on the requisite skills and resources to produce the best, or most outstanding, creative and cultural output. Commonly this is considered as elitist, or self-serving, and certainly non-instrumental.

As discussed above, there is a fractured and loose web of justifying rationales for the creative city, just as there are a very wide variety of 'creative cities' in practice. Moreover, there is a complex and shifting matrix of justification and realities. Thus, it is problematic to assume a direct correspondence between aims and objectives, policies and impacts. Commonly, objectives are either unclear or undefined, processes are not isolated, and relationships between causes and effects not established, let alone evaluated. As is common in such policy making the fall back position is commonly onto the notion of 'best practice'. This is itself a problematic notion unless it is situated within a coherent framework of analysis that facilitates systematic comparison and contrasting of events. As is noted elsewhere, it has been common, perhaps as much for political justification and legitimization as that of policy results, to turn to the example of the UK as the best practice (Evans, 2006).

An uninformed observer might find such a state of affairs puzzling. Arguably, it is difficult to simply distill or identify a single UK model, accordingly there is no explicit policy template. So, what is being copied? Furthermore, policy transfer is commonly an exercise in wishful thinking rather than practice. Copying existing policy texts is reassuring, but it is doomed to failure as we know that the same policies produce different effects and impacts under various institutional and social, cultural and economic contextual situations. So, even if the model existed, was copied and implemented 'properly', it would still produce a range of different outcomes.

Such is the challenge; a problem that is by no means unique to the topic of creative cities. Furthermore, despite these issues it does not follow that all ideas of creative cities are flawed. Rather, it suggests the need for careful attention to what is particular, what is genuinely transferable, and what form it may take. One final aspect of this debate is simply the social and political popularity of the notion of the creative city. Populations are attracted to the idea, and politicians love it: who would want to aspire to be 'uncreative'? Hence, we can see how such a combination of circumstances can view evidence based approaches, or academic reflections, cast aside, or set aside as the impatience of implementation triumphs. Thus, we need to add a plea not to discard the idea of the creative city on the basis of the many actually existing 'examples'. Setting aside this meta-critique, the focus of the remainder of this paper is to look at practice and what is commonly taken for 'creative city' policy, and to offer both a critique on its own terms, as well as offering a way of thinking more critically about the whole concept.

## Why creative cities: the challenge

The notion of creative cities is not singular, but multiple; it has many overlapping roots and implications: some are complementary, and some contradictory. As I will outline in this section, the common approaches offer varieties of instrumentalism. But, what is lacking is a positive (intrinsic) cultural and creative industries rationale. Second, these

approaches have shifting, and simply inaccurate concepts of their object of interest, the cultural and creative industries, which they seek to influence.

We begin by auditing the most common varieties of policy making that are focused on instrumentalising culture.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most familiar is that most closely aligned with traditional cultural policy that seeks to defend and ring fence from the market a particular local definition of high culture. The most common manifestation of this policy is outside of the narrow confines of the humanist informed argument of culture as a civilizing factor for all society, and is that of the promotion of the built environment, namely heritage. In recent years this discussion has focused on the role of heritage in attracting tourism and tourist income to cities; especially through the promotion of cultural tourism which targets upper income groups (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000; Law, 1992; Richards, 1996).

The second strand of policy making within which the 'cultural and creative' is figured is economic development, place marketing and place-based competition (Florida, 2002, 2004; Hall & Hubbard, 1998; Short & Kim, 1998). In the current round of internationalization cities and regions have competed against one another for mobile Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in growth areas of the economy. Usually targeted are the biotechnology or pharmaceutical industries. The argument most commonly used is that culture is the incentive that attracts investors and to 'compensate' employees for their re-location. Cities are commonly willing partners in this process building infrastructure that will specifically appeal to such audiences. Of course, the role of culture as product differentiation is a powerful one because it is unique to one place only. However, even this line is now blurred as all cities build galleries and concert halls to attract investors.

A third focus of policy makers is social inclusion. Again it overlaps a little with a humanistic cultural improvement notion; but in this case the betterment is not so much through high culture as through participation via involvement in cultural activities. Such approaches commonly focus on small scale and neighborhood projects whose purpose is to ameliorate social tensions, to improve the health and welfare of people (Bianchini & CLES, 1988; Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993; Bianchini & Santacatterina, 1997). There is a considerable body of evidence that such projects are effective on their own terms (DCMS, 1999; Matarasso, 1997). However, social inclusion is usually one objective common to cultural and economic forms of regeneration. Unfortunately, apparently similar objectives may have quite different outcomes founded upon either an instrumental, or an intrinsic, valuation of culture.

Fourth, and finally, is the intrinsic focus on the cultural and creative industries; this is the least explored avenue (Pratt, 2005). It is founded upon the notion of treating the cultural sector as a primarily economic sector, as an industry. As such policies seek to promote the cultural economy. In cities, the concern has been to highlight the importance of co-location, or cultural clusters. A common policy has been to focus on the provision of infrastructure, or modifi-

cation of planning to facilitate such co-location. In part, the cultural economy is valued for its perceived ability to re-use old industrial buildings found in many urban cores (Pratt, 2004, 2008c). It is less common to see arguments and policies that simply posit an intrinsic value of the development of the cultural and creative industries.<sup>3</sup> To be effective this would require a move beyond infrastructure provision and toward strategic governance and network facilitation (see Pratt, 2009b).

One of the products of the growth of interest in, and research on, the cultural and creative industries has been the development of a more subtle and articulated notion of the organization and nature of work, as well as the governance and innovation in the field. The headlines from this research are that the cultural and creative industries are in some cases as different from one another as they are from other industries. Why they are different from other industries is not simply because they produce 'culture', but as a result of the mode of organization of the production of culture. It is also clear that the traditional analytical divisions between public and private, formal and informal, for- and not-for-profit activities either break down, or are simply not helpful in understanding how the cultural and creative sector operates (Caves, 2000; Deuze, 2007; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Howkins, 2001; Pratt, Gill, & Spelthann, 2007; Pratt & Jeffcutt, 2009a; Vogel, 2001).

Accordingly, there are a number of challenges to exploring the role of cultural and creative industries in cities that make it problematic to just 'bolt on' an existing or generic policy or analytical tool kit. Most fundamentally, the existing approaches assume a primary role for consumption; by contrast cultural industries policies highlight production (although not exclusively). Second, there is commonly an assumption that the cultural industries will be amenable to a generic industrial policy approach. As we will see, this is problematic due to the uniqueness of the cultural and creative industries. First, due to their organizational aspects; second in their overlap with 'cultural policy' regarding their spillover across for-profit and not-for-profit activities.<sup>4</sup>

In the following section we shift from a conceptual/ analytical frame to one of a review of the actually existing policies that have been proposed for 'creative cities'. We highlight the deficiencies and limitations of such policy; and show how much more could be achieved. Our approach is, in line with the conceptualization outline above, specific to one place and time: the UK.

## UK creative cities

There is no 'creative cities policy' in the UK,<sup>5</sup> or England. There is a long history of urban policy and of cultural policy.

<sup>3</sup> Of course such a position is very difficult to articulate because it has to negotiate the huge tensions between and within the cultural economy, and between and within the cultural sector (for and not-for profit; formal and informal).

<sup>4</sup> There is an important analytical issue here: traditionally cultural policy has been justified as an example of market failure, and hence the justification and approach has been one of welfare economics. This approach is bought into crisis if the cultural sector is not 'failing' but making a profit; or, is intertwined with profit making activities see Pratt (2007).

<sup>5</sup> We use the terms England specifically, although sometimes we use GB and UK to refer to relic initiatives before selective devolution of administration to the nations of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, as well as the regions of England in the past decade.

<sup>2</sup> This is not an argument for or against instrumentalism, simply to acknowledge the position (and the lack of debate of intrinsic versions). See further discussion Gibson (2008).

There is even a recent history (post-1997) of creative industries policy. Clearly, the history of urban creative industries policies, and hence, logically creative city policies, a synthetic amalgam, is one that has significant roots in the complex and diffuse development of urban policy in England from the 1960s onwards (Cochrane, 2007). For this reason we refer to creative cities initiatives as a field of policy, rather than a policy per se. Additionally, the label creative cities is one that takes its popular interpretation from recent US experience, in particular the work of Richard Florida. However, to confuse matters further there is also a semantic overlap with the older EU Capital of Culture and UNESCO Creative Cities network, as well as the popular usage initiated by Landry (2000). Our aim in this section is to acknowledge these markers, but to also plot the unique initiatives that characterize the English experience of emergent creative city policy field.

### National initiatives

Although all policies impact at the local scale, some have their origins in local concerns or institutions, and some have a wider scope. Many of the policies, organized in four themes, discussed in this section emerged at a local level and had a local focus. In fact, some were orientated to oppose national policy making at the time.<sup>6</sup>

We begin with perhaps the longest running type of 'creative city' initiative that of the 'festival' (Gold & Gold, 2005; Quinn, 2005). This local celebration and showcase of cultural making and consumption has deep roots. The irony is that commonly they have been based in smaller towns rather than cities. Without doubt, there has been a huge upswing in the number and scale of such festivals. In recent years the festival business has been characterized by huge events that have national and international significance such as the Edinburgh festival; we can add to this any number of arts, cultural and sporting festivals. Currently, massive music festivals such as Reading or Glastonbury have come to prominence; as have more traditionally focused, but increasingly large and commercial festivals, such as Hay (on Wye)<sup>7</sup> (literature) and Cheltenham<sup>8</sup> (music, science and literature). These festivals have as their primary focus cultural expression, and are locally based. Only in a secondary sense do they tend to figure as part of the tourist and place marketing industry; or, as part of a national place promotion.

A second theme of policy concern is a spin-off of urban regeneration. The UK experienced a massive decline of its manufacturing industries in the 1970s/1980s, many of which were urban based. This presented policy makers with three main problems: unemployment, re-use of property, and a fall in local tax income. Consequentially, major public investment was targeted at the inner city. Latterly, this investment has come to include a cultural aspect usually with either a social inclusion or social legitimization inflection; or simply as a planning response to remaking

civic space. However, the key point here is that cultural development has been primarily viewed as an appendage; not the main focus. A related, but one rationalized in a different way, has been the shift toward marketing and place promotion based upon new build prestige projects which are commonly cultural in function. Such policies have been criticized as appealing to sectional interest, and being infrastructure focused rather than addressing potential users needs, or the sustainability of such projects.

An unusual initiative that was pioneered by the UK Department of the Environment in 1984 was that of the Garden Festival. The first was held in Liverpool, and its aim was to reclaim derelict or contaminated land as well as to stimulate tourism. Four other garden festivals followed, the last was held in 1992. Although quite separate, the Millennium Dome (now the O2 arena) in London's Docklands is similar in that a massive cultural event effectively paid for the reclamation of derelict land (see below, the 2012 London Olympic Games follow this tradition).

A related, but different approach has been the policy of using cultural activities and investment to facilitate social inclusion. These projects have often been interwoven with urban regeneration schemes- in fact the urban regeneration funding package has often required it. Thus, the cultural aspect is doubly compromised, or confused: first, it is instrumental to achieve social inclusion; second, the social inclusion is offered as a palliative to the sometimes exclusionary economic development. However, the UK has driven forward such policies as a result of a post-1997 initiatives that sought to address social inclusion more generally in the UK; and, a related package of funding for social inclusion using arts and culture (DCMS, 1999).

Third, are cultural industries policies. Again, these have their roots in the urban economic restructuring experienced in the 1970s onwards but they represent a different response. They sought to primarily use the cultural economy as a driver for economic development. Initially, they were orientated to social inclusion, in the sense that it was economic opportunities targeted at otherwise excluded groups: the unemployed; or, in a later iteration, the politically marginalized. However, increasingly such policies sought to focus solely on the growth of the cultural economy. All of these policies were pioneered by urban authorities working in opposition to a national policy environment at the time. Only post-1997 did these initiatives find an echo in national policy. Yet, there was still no linkage, as national policy had no local dimension until the early 2000s, and even then it was a regional focus (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005; Pratt, 2005).

A fourth and final element is what might be best termed 'creative city policy making'. This approach was developed via action research by Landry and his colleagues (Landry, 2000): the clearest expression being the Huddersfield Creative Town project.<sup>9</sup> This approach is founded upon an inclusive and participatory city where arts and culture are a means and a practice of place making and living. Culture and creativity are 'ways of doing', set against the dead hand of bureaucracy or non-democratic planning.

<sup>6</sup> The classic example is that of the Greater London Council (see Greater London Council (1985)).

<sup>7</sup> Started in 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Cheltenham is a not-for-profit; its roots we laid with the Music Festival in 1945 and the Literature Festival in 1949.

<sup>9</sup> Funded through EU urban project monies.

## International initiatives

Outside the UK a number of initiatives have emerged that have awarded, or caused cities to compete for, the crown of 'creative city'. One of the tensions inherent in such policies concerns the balance between present and future benefits of investment and development that go beyond the signature event<sup>10</sup> and the development of a sustainable legacy (in the broadest sense of the term).

## Sporting events

Perhaps the longest running and most familiar theme of creative city making is that associated with sport, and in particular the modern Olympics. The increasing commercialization and popularity of the Olympics, especially in the television age, has made the hosting of the games a massive branding opportunity, as well as a boost for tourism. However, it is the legacy effect that has been an increasing issue for cities: primarily in terms of infrastructure, directly, or not, related to culture (Short, 2008; Waitt, 2001). Of course, other major events such as the Commonwealth games, and the World Cup are obvious members of this category.

There is now an emergent field of studies exploring the planning, impact and legacy of mega-events; most noticeably in relation to the Olympics (Roche, 2000). In recent years these mega-events have become, in part due to their enormous size, a significant part of not just urban regeneration,<sup>11</sup> but also national regeneration. Early examples of this linkage between sport and regeneration were athletics events in the UK were the Sheffield world student games, and Edinburgh and Manchester Commonwealth Games. The 2012 Olympics in London are seen by many as a mold breaking initiative that explicitly attends to legacy and local regeneration issues, something that previous initiatives, it is often claimed, did little to address (Girginov & Hills, 2009). Whilst there has to be national government support for such initiatives, they are primarily the financial responsibility of the individual city concerned. Hence, the strategic impact (long term, or regional and national) tends to be lower on the policy agenda, with the main emphasis placed on short-term and local concerns.

## Capital of culture (EU): 1985

A particularly visible strand of policy initiative is that of the European Capital of Culture (European City of Culture 1985–1999). From its initiation in Athens in 1985 (as the European City of Culture; changing in 1999 to the European Capital of Culture) this has become a very popular event to showcase the cultural offering of European cities. Initially the premise was the promotion of history and heritage, underpinned by the local ability to finance the event.<sup>12</sup> The UK has been selected twice: Glasgow (1990), and Liver-

pool (2008). Arguably both events have generated new policy initiatives. The Glasgow event is widely heralded as a success,<sup>13</sup> and arguably presented a significant shift in the focus of the EU capital of culture initiative: placing the host city on a world stage (Booth & Boyle, 1993; Boyle, 1993; García, 2004). A review of the EU program, underlined the emergent role of regeneration and the potential for social-economic impact benefits (Palmer-Rae Associates, 2004).<sup>14</sup> From 2007 onwards the capital of culture title has rotated every 6 months. In an interesting development, reflecting upon the internal UK success of the selection competition for the 2008 award, the UK has launched its own version of the initiative: the UK capital of culture. The selected city – Londonderry/Derry – will host a year long program of events in 2013: the first holder of the award was announced by the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 2010.

## UNESCO creative cities network

A further initiative that has been growing in popularity in recent years is the UNESCO Creative Cities network first launched in 2004. In some respects this is like the (first generation) European model. However, it is not generic but based upon particular art forms that the city identifies with.<sup>15</sup> Like the European initiative there is a selection process, but as it is a *network* it is more like an elective college; there is a notion that the network is a community which may share experiences across member cities: there are currently 20 member cities. Again, there is little financial aid; and the initiative is explicitly focused on the creation of public-private partnerships and the development of small scale cultural and creative businesses. So far the UK has three cities: Bradford (film), Edinburgh (literature), and Glasgow (music). This is very much an international initiative based upon networking and currently has minimal connection with national actions.

## Evaluating the creative city

It becomes clear when we look across the multiple policies that impact upon the notion of 'creative city' that it is not possible, nor appropriate, to draw out a single 'model' from the UK case. There have been many individual evaluations of particular policies or initiatives. However, a review of these evaluations quickly reveals the use of various criteria, time scales and objectives. But, for pedagogic reasons we can perhaps draw out some common characteristics that highlight the approaches. Based upon the UK experience four types of 'creative city' can be identified; interestingly, not one of these fits easily into the mold of the most popular policy notion: the Creative City/Class discussed by Florida (2002, 2004).

The four types are: One off-mega projects, associated with a single event; Flagship developments, that are normally the building that is the cultural anchor of a wider

<sup>10</sup> Making the big 'splash' of the moment in the international limelight, commonly associated TV rights and advertising opportunities, as well as linked city branding and tourism opportunities.

<sup>11</sup> There is even a sub-literature on major infrastructure such as sports stadia on urban regeneration (see Thornley (2002)).

<sup>12</sup> Minimal funding is made available by the EU, the majority financial burden is borne locally.

<sup>13</sup> However, it is worth pointing out, as with many such initiatives the EU City of Culture was one of a series of initiatives to promote Glasgow. Hence, it would be inappropriate to judge the EU initiative as 'the' cause of any transformation.

<sup>14</sup> There is minimal financial aid from the EU for the Capital of Culture, most comes from domestic sources.

<sup>15</sup> The UNESCO list of forms is Literature, Film, Music, Craft and Folk Art, Design, Media Arts, and Gastronomy.

urban regeneration scheme; Social and cultural practice: based upon community engagement and practice; and, Innovation and critical exchange, linked to economic and cultural practice and excellence. One can map the various examples discussed in the previous section onto these categories.

The categorization we have chosen reflects the primary *objective* of the initiative, and it is quite clear that the balance is weighted more in favor of instrumentalist than objectives intrinsic to cultural promotion, or the promotion of the cultural and creative economy. If one was to look at the economic balance sheet, it would be revealing that even the 'cultural' projects are dominated by hard infrastructure; and critically, that the funding is skewed towards short-term, or one-off, capital projects, and not on recurrent spending. It is this tension that commonly blights cultural projects: where the building exists, but the 'content' of artists, performers, or producers is not sustainable, or funded, in the longer term.

More generally, a core issue with all policy making, is the multiplicity and non-complementary nature of objectives. As we have already noted, tensions between production and consumption, between foreign direct investment and endogenous growth, and between instrumentalism and intrinsic policy characterize this field. These multiple objectives need not be an insurmountable problem if projects are focused on their objectives and evaluated on these same objectives. So, a project that is meant to draw in FDI, re-develop derelict land and seed urban re-development should not be evaluated on the quality of art created, the value of its cultural economy, or how socially cohesive the neighborhood is. All of these items are potential members of the 'shopping list' of objectives, but few if any projects could hope to achieve all of them: even if they were all specified, then they would need each to be evaluated in relation to the specific context.

We can take a broader perspective by elaborating an overview of the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of creative city policies. First, their strengths: arguably such policies have the possibility to create conditions which promote and facilitate innovation, creativity, imagination and problem solving. However, second, there are many attendant weaknesses, such as multiple and conflicting objectives and a dominant focus on infrastructure/capital projects. Third, the opportunities are considerable: Showcasing creativity and culture, attracting investment, stimulating innovation, and inter-cultural exchange. Fourth and finally, the threats or challenges are also widespread: competition from other cities, or the adoption of what in the US is termed 'cookie cutter' policy (or a blind repetition of 'best practice').

The organizational ecology of the sector and policies necessary to support, sustain and promote it are complex, risky and unusual, much like the cultural and creative economy as a whole. Policies and practices are embedded in place and time; within local communities and practices, and social and regulatory structures. This is not, and logically cannot be, a 'one size fits all' area, nor one that is likely to respond to generic policy prescriptions. The development of a credible creative city strategy is a field that will rely upon a sound evidential base of understanding about the operation and environment of the cultural and creative industries, and a clear and concise evaluation of policies.

## Conclusions

In this article we have offered a situated and pragmatic analysis of the state of the art of creative cities policy thinking: founded within the relationship between the cultural and creative economy and urbanization. We have argued that it is necessary to pay attention to the context, history and regulatory forms of creative cities and to be very cautious in the desire either to draw wider lessons, or to prescribe alternatives. We have provided evidence as to why, in particular, the UK case has for various reasons been taken as either best practice, or the first example, or the most successful example of its kind.<sup>16</sup> However, on reflection, it serves none of these purposes.

Shifting to a more synoptic mode, what can be learned? We would argue that the notion of a creative city is somewhat compromised if the word creative is used as an adjective. If however, creative is used as a noun we have more sympathy, in that it suggests a city that is based upon, or dominated by, the processes and activities of the cultural and creative sector.<sup>17</sup> On the definitional issue there are a number of tensions in the literature about 'whom' is a 'creative'. Hence, the atavistic analyses based on a select group of occupations. We would argue against this notion as it removes the creative person or organization from their context: hence, the compromise of using sector or industry, network or institution as an analytic foundation. This sort of analysis is vital, we argue, if we are to make satisfactory analytical linkages between social and economic production and reproduction: culture, societies and economies, must be reproduced if they are to be sustained. Clearly, policies should attend to the challenges of governing the processes that link production and reproduction. This aspiration carries a heavy burden of information, and insight, into the cultural and creative sector; one that, despite the upsurge of analyses that have occurred in the last quarter century, is still broadly inadequate for the burden placed upon it by an ever more enthusiastic policy and political communities.

A further uncomfortable point of view is that we need to interrogate the notion of creativity more keenly. The common and banal usage has no place in the high stakes of policy, social and economic development that it is increasingly being inserted into. The view that creativity, like genius, is somehow in one's genetic code, or is a sole and individual preserve has been roundly criticized. The social notion of creativity, whereby creativity can be enabled or disabled by social, economic and cultural institutions and norms, is one that is sustained by academic analyses. This insight carries with it many consequences. The first is that the field of governance of culture and creativity is critical, and it is a competency that it is appropriate for public agencies, private agencies and civil society agencies to develop (Pratt, 2007). Second, creativity is not an absolute that can be measured internally: it is, and can only be, a relative measure. By relative we are not discussing competition, but

<sup>16</sup> As will be clear from the above, I would dispute the possibility of making such judgments. But, I acknowledge that the UK is an example that has been followed and used to inspire policy makers. Therefore, the aim of this paper, to offer a more critical insight into what might constitute the 'model'. See also Pratt (2009a).

<sup>17</sup> We don't want to get into the definitional debate here: however, our usage implies that the sector cuts across formal and informal and for profit and not for profit boundaries.

what is and is not creative, like innovation, is dependent upon the context. One might argue that the ‘me-too’ nature of many creative city policies is a fundamental contradiction in terms.<sup>18</sup> More significantly, what is deemed as creative is so context specific that what may be creative in one place or time may not be creative in another context.

The creative city is clearly not a ‘solve-all’ for every urban problem. This needs to be stated clearly. However, there are many instrumental uses to which creative city policies can be put; and critically, there are a number of intrinsic uses as well. This paper, and the literature more generally, supports the view that the balance of attention has been toward instrumental uses of culture and creativity. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century we should consider a step-change: to re-balance policy and academic concern toward the intrinsic value of the cultural and creative field. In the narrow field of economic value we already have plenty of evidence that the cultural economy is playing a significant role in world cities. For example in London it is the third largest sector of the economy (GLA\_Economics, 2004). Furthermore, cultural economy has a growth rate that is outstripping more conventional sectors of the economy (KEA\_European\_Affairs, 2006), and recent evidence suggests that it even may be less prone to recession (Pratt, 2009c). Now, more than ever, we need to turn our analytical attention to the intrinsic value of the creative and cultural dimensions of urban life.

Clearly, there are a number of challenges to developing evidence, policy and analysis of the culture and creativity of cities. There is considerable potential benefit both sectionally, and generally, for society. Neither debates about cultural policy, industrial policy nor urban policy offer readymade, or indeed appropriate starting points. As the cultural and creative industries are embedded in place and time, policies need to be sensitive to, and derived in relation to, particular contexts.

Yet there are a range of benefits that ‘creative cities’ could offer: but only if such a label is carefully understood and used. Overall, what is clear is that the range of potentialities offered by creativity cannot *all* be achieved in *every* place at *each* time; indeed, many actions are mutually contradictory. Thus, when evaluating policy and initiatives it is critical that aims and objectives are clearly understood and appreciated. A policy focused on excellence in a particular cultural form may not help other forms, and will generally not assist social inclusion and vice versa. A cautionary note is to recognize the value of diversity not only of organizational form and process in the cultural and creative field, but also the diversity of policy making and outcomes.

We may go as far as to suggest that the major prize is the exploration of diversity, in terms of both forms and process: in particular what such diversity can add to innovation and creativity and to the ongoing development of cultural forms, social development and economic activity. We have thus far only just begun to explore the benefits of such interaction (Wood & Landry, 2007), such a perspective could lead the way beyond mono-culturally, economically, or from socially reductionist approaches. Such perspectives commonly drive the narrowly instrumentalist

approaches that, as a result, squander opportunities for learning and genuine development. In many senses, we might argue that cities have always been a ‘melting pot’; however, we have tended to view cities from an economic perspective. If nothing else the creative city debate should offer a corrective to this and re-inforce the social and cultural partners of urbanization: not that these factors will be always, or ever, in harmony. In fact, it is the shifting tensions between these factors that are the ‘grit in the oyster that produces the pearl’ that is the future city.

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<sup>18</sup> Landry (2006: 335) advocates the use of creative cities *for the world* as opposed to creative cities *in the world* (as in the most creative city in the world).

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