

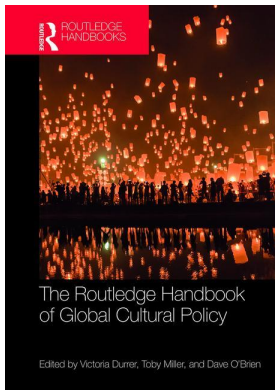
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From arts desert to global cultural metropolis

The (re)branding of Shanghai and Hong Kong

Kristina Karvelyte

Introduction

Since the late 1990s, an urban policy model of culture-led development has become increasingly “fashionable” (Kong 2009) and an influential trend in many cities around the world. A vast number of rapidly developing East Asian cities, irrespective of their political systems, sizes or locations, have also suddenly rediscovered their cultural resources and one after another started to pursue the titles of ‘creative city’, ‘cultural capital’, or ‘cultural and creative metropolis’ (Yeoh 2005; Kong *et al.* 2006; Pang 2012).

In broad terms, the policy script of cultural/creative city¹ is developed, mobilized and globalized on behalf of neoliberal rationalities and capitalist interests (Harvey 1989; Pratt 2009; Peck 2011b). It is commonly aimed at tackling a growing inter-city competition, boosting consumption and powering up the economy. Nevertheless, considering different political and economic settings of each city, it is evident that the primary objectives for the application of the creative city policy script, as well as the meanings attached to the script, vary from place to place. In other words, one model cannot fit all and certain adjustments always “need to be made in order for it to work elsewhere” (McCann and Ward 2010, p. 176; see also Peck 2011a).

To gain a better understanding of how the ‘imported’ discourse of the cultural and creative city is translated and adopted in different urban spaces, this chapter examines the rationale behind the ‘cultural turn’ of two Chinese cities, Shanghai and Hong Kong, where cultural development, until very recently, has been largely neglected and underfunded by governments. It is argued that the objectives and meanings behind the notion of cultural/creative city are continually re-adjusted to fit the dominant ideologies and political as well as business interests of a specific place. This chapter thus suggests that the concept of the creative city should be viewed as a floating signifier, which transforms in line with local politico-institutional specifications as it travels from one place to another.

The main reason for selecting Hong Kong and Shanghai for this study was a unique combination of the cultural and ethnic affinities that bind these two cities together and the historical and political differences that divide them. Both cities are predominantly Chinese and seem to share similar cultural roots and social practices. This means that cultural differences

should have a minimal impact on their understanding and interpretation of the ‘cultural turn’. On the other hand, due to the historical and political divergences, the two cities have developed different civic identities and distinct approaches to urban policymaking, thus providing an excellent ground for comparative research.

The study was based on the concurrent analysis of local policy documents and semi-structured elite interviews. A diverse range of documents, including annual policy statements, government reports, policy guidelines and research papers that deal with government research or policies directly related to the cultural affairs or cultural/creative city discourse were selected for analysis. In addition, a total of 21 interviews, including five written responses, were carried out between September 2014 and January 2015. The interviews were conducted with the key members of the institutions responsible for (or involved in) planning and supervision of cultural and creative development in Shanghai and Hong Kong, including government officials, policy advisors, academics and industry practitioners.

Globalizing discourse of the cultural and creative city

The idea of the cultural/creative city is centred on the utilization of cultural and creative resources in urban planning and management, which are argued to make a city more attractive for investors, businesses, skilled workers and visitors (Landry and Bianchini 1995; Landry 2000; Florida 2002; Cochrane 2007; Mommaas 2009).

The concept of the ‘creative city’ was first coined in relation to the application of culture and the arts for urban regeneration purposes (Landry and Bianchini 1995). However, due to the rapid technological advancement of and increasingly market-oriented approach to urban restructuring, the cultural realm was soon merged with the creative sector that entails more commercially appealing industries, such as design or advertising. As a result, today the dominant narratives linked to the creative city discourse include cultural as well as creative industries and initiatives (Landry 2000; Florida 2002; Comunian 2011).

Along with the expanding scope of the notion, the expectations attached to the concept of the creative city have also increased. Today, it is commonly associated with four major policy objectives. First, as noted before, the notion of the ‘creative city’ is used to attract and retain a talented and skilled workforce (Florida 2002; Sassen 2006; Grodach and Silver 2013). Second, it is employed to lure foreign investment and businesses (Zukin 1995; Mommaas 2009). Third, it serves to boost and sustain cultural production and consumption (Landry 2000; Mommaas 2009; Pratt 2009). Fourth, it is applied to differentiate the city in a global marketplace (Landry 2000; Florida 2002; Leslie 2005). An overarching role attached to the policy model of the ‘creative city’ that encapsulates all four objectives stated above is that of enhancing the image and reputation of the city (Zukin 1995; Yeoh 2005; Mommaas 2009; Pang 2012; Grodach and Silver 2013). This role, as will be shown further in this chapter, can emerge from both market-centred and state/city-centred considerations.

The idea of setting the city apart from others by promoting its cultural and creative properties has captivated the interest of many urban policymakers across the world, leading to the emergence of a vast number of self-proclaimed ‘creative cities’, all aspiring to “differentiate themselves, and to sell themselves as centers of culture” (Leslie 2005, p. 403; see also Gibson and Klocker 2004). Undoubtedly, one part of the success formula behind a global appeal and transferability of the cultural/creative city policy script rests on the unique competitive advantage it was believed to offer (Landry 2000; Florida 2002). However, the major reason for the contagiousness of this policy model was its conformity to the dominant neoliberal or ‘entrepreneurial’ approach to urban planning and development (Harvey 1989; Peck 2007).

Since the late 1970s, rapid deindustrialization coupled with a growing mobility of capital and labour has brought an intense inter-urban competition. In order to strengthen and boost their appeal in a global marketplace, cities were forced to engage in a number of entrepreneurial practices, including urban restructuring projects and place marketing campaigns (Harvey 1989; Hubbard 2006; Comunian 2011).² This does not mean, however, that cities became better places for *everyone* to live, because the primary focus of the entrepreneurial city has always been to serve the interests of global businesses and investors (Harvey 1989; Pacione 2009). Thus, only certain forms of urban experience that conform with expectations and resources of the middle or upper-middle class are encouraged in entrepreneurial cities. In this sense, as Harvey (2008) rightly observes, the quality of urban life, just like cities themselves, has been turned into a commodity for those with money.

The concept of the cultural/creative city not only complements the framework of urban entrepreneurialism (Peck 2005; Pratt 2008); it is, in fact, a product of it. Peck (2007) accurately depicts some of the major crossing points between the urban entrepreneurialism and creative cities:

whereas the entrepreneurial cities chased jobs, the creative cities pursue talent workers; the entrepreneurial cities craved investment, now the creative cities yearn for buzz; while entrepreneurial cities boasted of their postfordist flexibility, the creative cities trade on the cultural distinction of *cool*.

(par. 28)

This shows that a distinguishing characteristic between the entrepreneurial and creative cities is a strategy, not an ultimate objective. In a sense, being a creative city can be viewed as a strategy in itself, because ultimately, it assists in the efforts of becoming a more successful entrepreneurial city. As noted before, cultural policies and creative development are argued to differentiate the city in a global marketplace, to attract and retain certain groups of skilled labour and capital, to boost consumption and to improve the reputation of the place. In other words, like entrepreneurial cities, creative cities are focused on sustaining the power of capital and serving the interests of the middle class and elites. Furthermore, in a pursuit of displaying the attractive side of the urban core, like entrepreneurial cities, they tend to neglect vulnerable social groups “that do not fit this narrative of economic development” (Grodach and Silver 2013, p. 4), such as migrant populations, the urban poor and, ironically, artists whose work does conform to the envisioned format of the cultural and creative city. In other words, it is evident that there is nothing “revolutionary” (Peck 2005) about the policy script of the cultural/creative city: it does not challenge an existing policy framework and does not require any significant structural changes in urban governance models, provided a city is ‘entrepreneurial’.

Another important characteristic that strengthens a universal appeal of the ‘creative city’ is the assumption that a positive impact of culture and creativity on the city *can* be proved in numbers. A tendency to overly rely on what is perceived to be ‘solid’ quantitative data has emerged as a result of increasingly ‘evidence-based’ policymaking (Belfiore 2004; Peck and Theodore 2010; Prince 2014). Richard Florida’s Creativity Index (2002), which rests on the assessment of talent, technology and tolerance (3Ts), could be viewed as one of many examples of a commonly adapted practice to render the value of creativity and/or culture in quantitative terms. Although the methodology behind this index, particularly the direct connection between the 3Ts and economic growth, has been severely questioned in the literature (see Markusen 2006; Malanga 2004),³ a number of cities have embraced Florida’s

measurement criteria to enact and promote their cultural and creative turn. This has also enabled the cities to see where they stand in terms of their ‘creativity’ (that is, in fact, Florida’s version of ‘creativity’) in relation to other cities. However, rather than providing them with an assumed competitive advantage (Cochrane 2007), the ability to compare and contrast has only thrown the cities deeper into a vicious circle of more aggressive, zero-sum competition (Peck 2005).

Besides Florida’s Creativity Index, there are plenty of scales and ranking systems designed to measure the cultural and creative potential of the city, each with its own criteria and methodologies. Some notable examples include the Creative City Index developed by Landry and Hyams (2012) or the criteria laid out for the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. The absence of a singular framework for the cultural/creative city implies that each city can adopt somewhat different descriptions of what ‘creative city’ means. This enables urban policymakers to reinvent and manipulate the meanings, roles and focal points of the creative city in accordance with their policy goals and objectives.

Hong Kong’s attempt to transform from the ‘arts desert’ to cultural and creative global city

Since the late 1990s, urban policy models linked to culture and creativity have been gradually integrated into Hong Kong’s policy trajectories (Kong *et al.* 2006; Chu 2012). This section examines specific historical, political and socio-economic conditions that prompted, shaped and defined Hong Kong’s cultural and creative restructuring.

Historically, Hong Kong was often referred to as “an excellent current example” (Friedman 1981, p. 34) and a success story of *laissez-faire* capitalism (see also Rabushka 1979). The British colonial government in Hong Kong was praised for embracing a policy of non-interventionism that has transformed a small fishing village into a vibrant commercial centre (see Friedman 1981).

It should be acknowledged, however, that the presence of the government’s ‘non-interventionism’ has been repeatedly questioned in the academic literature. A number of scholars identified a vast number of policy areas, where the colonial regime appeared to be involved in the economic and social development processes of Hong Kong (see, for example, Youngson 1982; Ngo 1999; Ngok 2007). In other words, it is now evident that an allegedly ‘non-interventionist’ model of governance was (and continues to be) based on a selective interventionism, which is a common practice in neoliberal states (see Peck 2004; Purcell 2009). Through selective interventionism, the government is not only able to “facilitate the accumulation of capital” (Purcell 2009, p. 142), but it can also neglect those fields or areas that are deemed unprofitable or considered a poor fit for the policy agenda of the state. Take, for example, industrial development in Hong Kong that for many years was perceived as a potential threat to the interests of the British manufacturers (Ngo 1999; Ngok 2007). The non-interventionist model enabled British colonial rule to conveniently refrain from intervening in selected industrial sectors thereby delaying Hong Kong’s industrial development until the 1950s (Ngo 1999; Lee and Yue 2001).

A similar logic was applied to the cultural sector. Until the 1970s, despite the relative economic prosperity of Hong Kong, the cultural realm together with other non-trade related public services was largely neglected by the government (Ooi 1995). Chinese intellectuals who visited Hong Kong during the 1920s and 1930s have severely criticized the city’s ‘cultural backwardness’, characterizing Hong Kong as a ‘cultural desert’ (*wenhua shamo*, Lu 1985 cited in Luk 1991, p. 660). Their impressions were undoubtedly influenced by strong

anti-Western and anti-capitalist stances and reflected elitist views of culture (Fu 2003). At that time, Hong Kong had a very small number of public cultural venues. Traditional forms of Chinese culture were neither supported nor encouraged by the colonial government, and its tertiary education was underdeveloped (Ooi 1995; Ngok 2007). However, a lack of public cultural amenities or the absence of certain forms of culture does not make a city less 'cultural', and most certainly does not make it a 'cultural desert'. Instead, this merely shows that the city's cultural development occurs through other means or forms of culture. In the case of Hong Kong, for many years it was defined through the realms of popular culture, particularly film, cartoons and comics (*manhua*), popular music and martial arts (see Fonoroff 1988; Wong 2002).

In post-1997 Hong Kong, the notion of the 'cultural desert' has been strategically rejected as the remnant of the colonial past. First, this has served to re-shape the post-colonial identity of the city (Raco and Gilliam 2012). Second, this has helped to justify the contrasting image of *new* 'cultural' Hong Kong and to firmly place it within a broader framework of the neoliberal urban restructuring agenda. In the Policy Address 1999, Tung Chee-Hwa, then Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG), clearly echoes the rhetoric of culture-led urban development practices:

Hong Kong's future development is not just a matter of pushing forward with physical construction. What we also need is a favourable and flourishing cultural environment that is conducive to encouraging innovation and creativity in our citizens. (...) I have proposed to develop Hong Kong into an international centre for cultural exchanges. This will help to strengthen our identity as a world-class city.

(HKSARG 1999, par. 164)

This quote serves as one of many examples indicating that by the early 2000s, Hong Kong had embraced a global trend, a seemingly 'new' urban philosophy, where cultural development is perceived as an important part of a 'model' global city. It should be noted that this 'new' urban development agenda was, in fact, not new to Hong Kong – similar ideas had already been spotted in the (see Ooi 1995). Creating the effect of newness, whilst "not being new at all" (Lawton *et al.* 2014, p. 193) is a common feature of 'creative urbanism' (Peck 2011b) practices. Coupled with what appears a 'universal character' (Prince 2014, p. 91) of the cultural/creative city model, it allows for culture and creativity to be neatly placed within a broader framework of urban restructuring projects (Peck 2005; Lawton *et al.* 2014).

Similarly, in many interviews and policy documents the adoption of cultural and creative urban development practices was often framed and perceived as a *natural* 'way forward' (industry practitioner A, personal communication, 15 Oct 2014). This is how the former Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Donald Tsang, describes the emergence of the cultural and creative industries discourse:

Globalization has brought about the rise of various cultural and creative industries. The markets for leisure goods, advertising, film, television, tourism, design, architecture and art are flourishing. These high value-added industries are environmentally friendly and compatible with the mode of economic development for global cities.

(HKSARG 2007, pp. 25–26)

By framing the cultural/creative turn of Hong Kong as somewhat 'natural' and 'positive' outcome of globalization that could boost the economic development of Hong Kong, just

like, as he suggests, it does in other global cities, Tsang escapes a deeper inquiry about the actual reasons behind Hong Kong's interest in the development of the cultural and creative sector. As shown below, it appears to be prompted by both global and context-specific factors.

The socio-economic impact of deindustrialization is among the most commonly acknowledged reasons behind the cultural turn of cities (see, for example, Hubbard 2006; Mommaas 2009; Communian 2011). Despite lacking support from the colonial government (Ngo 1999; Lee and Yue 2001), manufacturing industries in Hong Kong have been rapidly developing since the early 1950s. However, over the years, the economic prosperity and growth of the city led to rising labour costs, triggering a massive relocation of factories and industrial plants to China in the 1980s (Yeung 2002; Lee *et al.* 2013), forcing Hong Kong to reconsider its development strategies, or in Yeung's (2002) words, "to rediscover a new magic" (p. 5) for its growth. Like many other reindustrialising cities, Hong Kong has turned its focus from traditional manufacturing industries to the service sector, particularly financial services, trading and tourism (Yeung 2002; Ngok 2007). This transition required the government to increase public spending on education, social services and culture (Ngok 2007).

Until the 2000s, the value of culture and the arts in the city has been discussed primarily in relation to tourism. The tourism industry is one of four pillar industries in Hong Kong, accounting for 5 percent of Hong Kong's GDP (Census and Statistics Department 2013). Despite its rapid development in the 1980s, after the Asian financial crisis hit the city in 1997, the industry experienced a significant decline (Song *et al.* 2003). To boost the development of tourism, the government introduced a number of new civic 'boosterism' (Harvey 1989) strategies, including the promotion of Hong Kong as the "Asian centre of arts and culture":

In order to enhance our appeal as a tourist destination, we will promote new attractions, which will complement our unique flavour and provide for a wider range of events in Hong Kong. Our broader vision is to cultivate Hong Kong's image as the Asian centre of arts and culture, and of entertainment and sporting events.

(HKSARG 1998, par. 45)

Although since the late 1990s the cultural sector remains closely linked to tourism, it has been employed in a broader spectrum of policy programs. The 1997 Asian financial crisis, the SARS outbreak in 2003 and more recently, the global financial crisis have repeatedly threatened the economic stability of Hong Kong. Re-establishing the city as not merely a global centre of finance and business, but also as an 'International cultural metropolis' (Culture and Heritage Commission 2003) is now perceived as one of the means to maintain and strengthen the competitiveness of Hong Kong (see Lui 2008; Chu 2012). As stated in the Policy Recommendation Report issued by the Culture and Heritage Commission in 2003, should Hong Kong "neglect creative thinking and cultural education, it will lose its competitive edge, let alone become an international cultural metropolis" (p. 1). This quote clearly demonstrates how the culture-led urban development, as any form of urban entrepreneurialism, can lock cities in a zero-sum competition with one another. With a globalizing format of the 'cultural/creative city' impacting the policymaking processes in a growing number of cities, places that refuse to inject some cultural and creative 'vibes' in their policy agendas put themselves at risk of being viewed as losers in the competitive marketplace.

To what extent the cultural/creative city discourse can actually benefit the cultural life of a city is another question. Lui's (2008) study of the West Kowloon Cultural District project,

which was launched by the government to pursue a vision of the ‘international cultural metropolis’, suggests that the production of cultural value has never been among the driving forces for this project. As Lui (2008) explains:

[T]he emphasis was placed on competing with other global cities on the basis of building equally competitive infrastructure, rather than on a shared vision of Hong Kong’s future cultural development.(...) *It was simply an attempt to be strategic in global competition.*
(p. 222, emphasis added)

The last sentence could be easily applied to the whole policy model of cultural and creative urbanism in Hong Kong. Selective interventionism has enabled the government to support and facilitate primarily those cultural initiatives that are perceived as a good fit to the format of ‘international cultural metropolis’ and that are regarded as capable of standing out and competing in the global marketplace. For instance, interview data show that whilst the largest and the most reputable cultural events in the city, such as the Hong Kong Arts Festival or the Hong Kong International Film Festival, receive regular funding from the government, most other cultural groups and organizations are forced to compete with each other for one-off grants from the Arts Development Council (see also Lee *et al.* 2013). Moreover, until now, the Hong Kong government remains a chief landlord of cultural venues and facilities. This obstructs the development of private small-scale cultural initiatives (HKSARG official A, personal communication, 14 Oct 2014).

In neoliberal cities, the culture-led urban development agenda is often framed around a hyper-intense inter-urban competition and place marketing (Harvey 1989; Peck 2004). What makes Hong Kong’s case different is that for Hong Kong, the narrative of cultural and creative development means a lot more than just keeping in line with the global economic competition. For Hong Kong, it is also a way of coping with the consequences of the 1997 political transition, when the city was handed back to China. The handover, or ‘return’, was marked by widespread anxiety and speculations regarding the possible decline of Hong Kong’s global status and influence (Abbas 2000; Kong *et al.* 2006). An exposure to new political liabilities and the prospect of being placed alongside other Chinese cities threatened Hong Kong’s position in the region (Abbas 1997, 2000; Yeung 2000; Chu 2012).

In response to these concerns, the government decided to invest in a new city branding campaign. In 2001, it established the Brand Hong Kong (BrandHK) office, a strategic communication agency responsible for promoting Hong Kong as ‘Asia’s world city’. This branding strategy is designed to serve a dual purpose, that is, to help the city keep up with global competition and most importantly, to differentiate Hong Kong from other Chinese cities. As stated on the BrandHK website:

The idea of “branding” Hong Kong first emerged in 1997. At that time, much attention was focused on the return of Hong Kong to China, and there was concern in some quarters that Hong Kong might vanish from the international stage after reunification. Various strategies were considered, and the decision to develop Brand Hong Kong (BrandHK) was finally taken in 2000.

(BrandHK 2015a, par. 1)

The branding slogan, ‘Asia’s world city’, entails an overwhelming number of different catchphrases, including “international cultural metropolis”, “creative hub of Asia” or “events capital of Asia”. Clearly, it is all about the same candy wrapped in a different paper. Ultimately,

Kristina Karvelyte

they all reflect on the attempt to adopt a globalizing policy model of the cultural/creative city in order to create “a visionary unique identity” (BrandHK 2015b, p. 1) for Hong Kong. This aim has been further elaborated in the interviews with government officials in Hong Kong:

If we say we are a world city, then we certainly have to have something distinct, something to be proud of, in terms of cultu...in the cultural sense”.

(HKSARG official B, personal communication, 5 Sep 2014)

As a global city, you *need* now to have your sort of cultural identity.

(HKSARG official C, personal communication, 5 Sep 2014, emphasis added)

On the one hand, this feeling of necessity and “no one can afford not to do it” (industry practitioner A, personal communication, 15 Oct 2014) attitude stems from the global pressure to compete. On the other hand, however, it also reflects on a fear of being “merged and submerged into the national” (Abbas 2000, p. 779; see also Chu 2012).

It could be debated whether labelling the city the ‘international cultural metropolis’ or ‘creative hub of Asia’ is really intended to help to facilitate a ‘unique identity’ of Hong Kong or blend it with other global cities. Borrowing from Abbas (1997), these tags serve as representations of Hong Kong’s culture as a “culture of disappearance” (p. 7). In this sense, ‘disappearance’, as Abbas (1997) further explains, “is not a matter of effacement but of replacement and substitution, where the perceived danger is recontained through representations that are familiar and plausible” (p. 7). A portrayal of Hong Kong as an ‘international cultural metropolis’ could be viewed as one of many representations of that sort. Instead of creating a unique identity of Hong Kong, it conforms to what is generally perceived as a ‘global’ or ‘universal’ format of the cultural/creative global city. Thus, with other large Chinese cities, such as Shanghai, Beijing and Taipei adopting very similar policy scripts and formats, the cultural turn, rather than making Hong Kong ‘reappear’, seems to be directed at its ‘disappearance’.

Re-establishing the past in the present: Shanghai’s path towards global cultural metropolis

Contrary to the culture-led urban development in the Global North or some Asian cities, where urban re-industrialization was among the major factors driving the development of culture and the arts, a decline in manufacturing industries has never played a primary role in Shanghai’s cultural turn (see O’Connor 2012; Gu 2012). Being an emerging metropolis in the midst of a real estate boom, Shanghai has enthusiastically embraced the process of deindustrialization as an opportunity for expansion (Zhang 2003). Empty industrial sites in the outskirts of and within the city were quickly demolished and replaced with modern office and apartment buildings. In other words, the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government (SMPG) did not need to establish cultural and creative quarters to boost a real estate sector. Therefore, as Gu (2012) argues, a cultural economy in Shanghai “was never intended to be part of the plan for the new economy of the inner city” (p. 195).

Yet, by the end of 2010, the city had 15 cultural quarters and 80 creative clusters (SMPG 2011a) established in line with a newly proclaimed vision of ‘International cultural metropolis’ (*Guoji wenhua da dushi*, SMPG 2010). In 2008, the city also submitted a bid to UNESCO

Creative Cities Network and after two years was awarded a title of UNESCO City of Design. If deindustrialization was not a primary reason for culture-led urban development initiatives to unfold in Shanghai, what provoked a sudden interest in the cultural/creative city policy script? This section explores some of the major political and socio-economic factors that contributed to the ‘cultural-turn’ of Shanghai.

It is important to note that Shanghai’s path towards modern and global cultural metropolis is strongly linked to its past. From the late 1920s to the early 1940s, when Chinese state power was in turmoil, the city occupied a very special position in the world. This period is commonly labeled Shanghai’s ‘golden age’, because of economic prosperity, booming international trade and cosmopolitan culture that co-existed with the emerging modern Chinese culture in this semi-colonial city at the time. Back then, Shanghai was largely disconnected from the rest of China and was openly criticized and condemned by both the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Communist Party for being too ‘foreign’ (Bergère 1981, p. 3).

After Mao took over the rule of China in 1949, the affluent cosmopolitan cultural life of the city was discarded as “bourgeois and decadent” (Abbas 2000, p. 776) debris of the past. In a few years, from a thriving international metropolis Shanghai was turned into the center of domestic industrial production, where its main role was to “finance the modernization of the rest of the country” (Abbas 2000, p. 776; see also Wu 2000; Gamble 2003). Although accounting for only one percent of the population, the city became a major contributor to the state’s budget, supplying around a sixth of the national revenue (Zhang 2002). Therefore, even after the launch of fiscal decentralisation reform in 1978, the Party was hesitant to cut off its major source of income and delayed the economic restructuring of Shanghai for more than a decade (Wu 2000; Zhang 2002).

The reforms finally took off in the early 1990s. In order to become an equal player in the world’s economy, China had to reposition its major cities from domestic to global players and to develop them into global nodes of agglomeration for international services and firms (see Sassen 2006). This meant it could no longer ignore the “infrastructure upgrading needs” (Zhang 2002, p. 482) of Shanghai. The city’s government was allowed to keep 25 percent of the tax revenue, to directly approve foreign investment, to issue and trade stocks, and to open foreign stores in Pudong New Area (Gamble 2003; Zhang 2002).

Since the 1990s, the official approach to the past of the city has also radically changed. Today the history of 1930s Shanghai is presented as a badge of honor and serves as a benchmark or a base for *re-establishing* the brand of modern, cultural and cosmopolitan Shanghai, capable of competing with other global cities in the region and beyond. As one respondent explains,

Now, we seek to embrace this glorious history, embrace this as a resource (...) we dream of revoking the glory of those years. Of course, it is impossible to completely go back, but Shanghai is always under... Other cities [in China] do not experience such pressure (...) [whereas] Shanghai has these high expectations. (...) On the one hand, the glory of the past, provides the city with a base and capital, on the other hand, however, it puts Shanghai under immense pressure.

(academic, personal communication, 17 Nov 2014, translated from Chinese)

This quote clearly demonstrates how much importance is now attached to Shanghai’s pursuit of its ‘glorious past’ in its attempt to build new imaginaries of the future. However, in this “city of remake” (Abbas 2000, p. 778), the ultimate goal is not to revoke the past, but rather to reinvent the past anew in the light of the present objectives of the Party (O’Connor

2012). Through the selective “demolition and preservation” (O’Connor 2012, p. 25) of the city’s ‘golden age’, the government chooses to retain only those elements that conform to the Party’s narratives of ‘Socialist modern international metropolis’ (*Shehuiizhuyi xiandaihua guoji chengshi*, SMPG 1991). Global fame and recognition of 1930s Shanghai, its cosmopolitanism, economic prosperity and cultural maturity, all serve to reassert ‘internationalization’ and ‘modernisation’ of the ‘new’ Shanghai. At the same time, the government conveniently dismisses the other side of the city’s past. The city used to be known for its strained and distant relationship with the central government, politically active middle class and somewhat revolutionary ideas that circulated among local “intellectuals on the loose” (Bergère 1981, p. 3). Such fragmented re-modernization of Shanghai seems to be set to integrate the elements of both an ‘entrepreneurial’ and ‘socialist’ city. This seemingly unlikely combination manifests the dominant ideology of contemporary China that Harvey (2005) once defined as “neoliberalism ‘with Chinese characteristics’” (p. 120).

Economic reforms in Shanghai boosted the growth of the city but proved insufficient in keeping up with increasing inter-urban competition. To bring Shanghai and other Chinese cities “in line with international practice” (Wu 2000, p. 1365), local authorities were impelled to adopt ‘entrepreneurial’ models of urban management. In an attempt to appeal to foreign businesses and investors, cities have started to actively invest in the infrastructure, local amenities, cultural facilities and city branding campaigns (Zou 1996; Wu 2000). In this context, the argument that in the past Shanghai used to be a ‘global cultural metropolis’ is evoked to reassert a unique experience and capabilities of the city, particularly in relation to other Chinese cities.

With other cities within China, Shanghai competes primarily for foreign capital and tourist inflows. However, outside China, at regional and global levels, its major goals and objectives extend far beyond the economic dimension. As a state-centered world city (Hill and Kim 2000), Shanghai does not fit into the conventional template of the ‘world’ or ‘global city’, where the city, and not the state, is recognized as a key node of command and control (see Friedmann 1986; Sassen 2006). Instead, Shanghai’s growth and development is largely guided by the nation-state and shaped by national rather than urban policy agendas. A state-led developmentalism adds a political dimension to the cultural turn in Shanghai. Therefore, the cultural/creative city discourse in this context should be examined not only as an entrepreneurial urban practice, but also as part of a broader national project.

Today China is recognized as the most likely world power to challenge the hegemony of the United States (Layne 2009). A rapid accumulation of economic capital has already helped the nation to achieve a leader status in the world’s economy. This position, however, does not guarantee global recognition and respect or, borrowing from Bourdieu (1977), ‘symbolic power’, which reflects on “a major dimension of political power” – the “power to impose the principles of construction of reality” (p. 164). As Bourdieu (1989) elsewhere explains, only “those who have obtained sufficient recognition”, and thereby, ‘symbolic capital’, are “in a position to *impose* recognition” (p. 23, emphasis added). It is evident, that China still struggles to ‘impose recognition’ in many areas of social life. Human rights violations, environmental issues, corruption and censorship seem especially to hamper the reputation of China (Ding 2007; Wang 2011; Creemers 2015). Therefore, despite rapidly growing economic might, China’s image in the Global North is still largely negative (Wang 2011). Subsequently, its ‘symbolic power’ remains relatively weak.

In its quest for alternative sources of influence, the Chinese government has discovered Joseph Nye’s (2004) notion of ‘soft power’, defined as “the ability to shape the preferences of others” (p. 5) through the power of attraction. Peck and Theodore (2010) observe that policies and policy programs tend to travel as “selective discourses” rather than as “complete

‘packages’” (p. 170). The notion of ‘soft power’ has also reached China as the ‘selective discourse’, and it has been greatly altered in line with political realities and imaginaries of the state. Nye (2004) based his concept of ‘soft power’ on the power of seduction and ability to attract, arguing that it is inherently relational and is not interchangeable with influence. However, in Mainland China, a subtle seductive aspect of ‘soft power’ is increasingly “eschewed in favor of a communications stance that seems passive-aggressive” (Creemers 2015, p. 12) with the word ‘influence’ (*yingxiangli*) time and again reiterated in the policy narratives of the ruling elites. As a result, in addition to Nye’s (2004) three major sources of soft power that entail culture, political values and foreign policy, the Chinese version of soft power accommodates a number of other deeply politicized practices that include global propaganda-oriented media production, membership in multilateral organizations, and even overseas aid programmes (Kurlantzick 2007; Li 2008; Creemers 2015). In other words, the Chinese model of soft power clearly departs from the original concept and rests on a perceived ability to accumulate influence and to gain “‘power *over*’ rather than ‘power *with*’ others” (Nye 2011, p. 90, emphasis added).

Culture, particularly in a form of traditional Chinese culture and values, is commonly singled out as a major ingredient of Chinese soft power (Li 2008; Creemers 2015). Not a surprising choice, given that the Chinese culture generally receives a high degree of respect and admiration from the foreign audience (Wang 2011). In 2007, the Chinese government officially instated the development of ‘cultural soft power’ (*wenhua ruanshili*) as one of the key national initiatives in a pursuit of making China “more *influential* politically (*yingxiangli*), more *competitive* economically (*jingzhengli*), more *appealing* in its image (*qingheli*), and more *inspiring* morally (*ganzhaoli*)” (Wang 2011, p. 8).

Following on the ‘cultural soft power’ policy strategy, many cities in China, including Shanghai, have actively started to promote their cultural properties. In the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011–2015), Shanghai outlines its aspiration to enhance the international influence and soft power of the city through its cultural and creative advancement. The plan strategically places the narrative of the ‘international cultural metropolis’ within the ultimate vision for 2020, which is, to turn Shanghai into the “International centre of economy, finance, trade and shipping” (*Guoji jingji, jinrong, maoyi, hangyun zhongxin*, SMPG 2011b). With culture now recognized as a ‘symbolic capital’ of Shanghai (Gu 2015), it is increasingly utilized to gain respect, recognition and, ultimately, influence in the global city networks. In this sense, the policy script of the creative city is transformed into one of the Chinese soft power strategies, where an ultimate goal is political influence rather than economic success. Accordingly, the cultural and creative development strategy of the city is strongly linked to the Party’s ambition for Shanghai to gain access to the elite group of ‘model’ global cities, specifically to reach and surpass two of the highest integrated world-cities, London and New York (GaWC 2012). The Shanghai Municipal Government sends numerous delegations to leading cities around the world, to learn what they consider best cultural policy practices and to determine ways to compete with them. As a senior government official from the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture, Radio, Film and TV indicates:

We aim to become one of the front-ranking cities in the world. World-class city. Particularly in the field of culture. In the field of culture, we are now learning from some other foreign... Some international world-class cultural metropolises serve as... as models [for us]. For instance, now our focus lies on studying London, also New York. In Asia, it’s Tokyo. These [cities] serve as certain benchmarks for us.

(personal communication, 19 Nov 2014, translated from Chinese)

Clearly, the adoption of the ‘best practices’ from the developed cities in the Global North, which seem to be accepted as flawless and impeccable policy models, is viewed as a major contributing factor in Shanghai’s efforts to catch up with other world cities. As the same official further maintains:

We can’t claim that Shanghai and England’s London are the same now, that Shanghai has reached those standards yet. We have not reached those high standards yet. We have not reached that level yet. However, we are working hard to learn from the UK, to learn from London, [we] strive to turn Shanghai into the ‘creative city’.

(personal communication, 19 Nov 2014)

For Shanghai, reaching ‘those high standards’ equals acceptance into the elite global community. For China, this equals more power and influence. Therefore, in this context, the ‘influence’, encompassed by both ‘international influence’ (*guoji yingxiangli*) and ‘reputational influence’ (*zhiming yingxiangli*) becomes a crucial indicator in assessing the value of cultural activities in ‘globalizing’ Shanghai. Research data suggest that opting for ‘the best’, ‘world-class’ performances and generating influence through their presence is a key reason for the large-scale cultural events in Shanghai. As one respondent explains in relation to the Shanghai International Arts Festival:

This is so important for Shanghai to make a statement. The outer appearance, the surface is very important to Shanghai. (...) What is important to them, the number of performances that they have, the number of high level artists that are in. Again, it’s the report that they put together to send to [the] Ministry of Culture. It’s a major, major focus for the [Arts] Festival. Because this is how they are judged, this is how they are evaluated.

(industry practitioner B, personal communication, 17 Nov 2014)

A desire to generate more international influence also resonates with another clear tendency in the cultural turn of Shanghai, that is, an increasing ‘internationalisation’ of the events content, where local Chinese culture and cultural production is accommodated and adapted to what is perceived as ‘foreign taste’. As a staff member from the Shanghai International Arts Festival indicates, “Chinese elements need to be expressed using the world’s language” (industry practitioner C, personal communication, 23 Jan 2015, translated from Chinese). Such ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell 1973) assists in creating a ‘global’ identity of the events that subsequently conforms to the image of ‘globalizing’ Shanghai. Local artists as well as audience, on the other hand, tend to be largely discounted from cultural display sites because gaining ‘local influence’ (*difangxing yingxiangli*) is deemed of a little value for the international image of the city (industry practitioner B, personal communication, 17 Nov 2014).

In sum, it is evident that the cultural turn in Shanghai’s urban development satisfies the needs and objectives of both the state and the market. It is perceived to reflect on the advancement and re-modernization of the city, to connect it with other cities through a global model of a cultural/creative city and to stimulate the middle class consumption and investment demand. However, similar to Hong Kong, it appears that this strategy is adopted to assimilate Shanghai with other global cities rather than to assist in the emergence of a unique model of modern socialist metropolis.

Discussion: tracing connections and disconnections between cities

This chapter sought to demonstrate how globalizing policy patterns of culture-led urban development pervade the policy agenda of cities, and how cities translate and alter the meanings of these patterns in accordance with their historical, political and socio-economic settings.

Both the colonial government in Hong Kong and the communist government under Mao in Shanghai did little to encourage cultural development in the cities. This by no means indicates the absence of cultural or creative practices; certain forms of culture and the arts have always been there. However, the cultural realm has never before been utilized to address such major political and economic issues as it is today. By adopting very similar, at times identical, narratives of cultural and creative development, both cities adhere to a neoliberal framework of a 'new' urban development. Their 'cultural turn' is undoubtedly influenced and powered by inter-urban competition for talents, investment and tourist inflows that, as a global trend, is commonly associated with neoliberal or market-oriented practice.

Nevertheless, it appears that the adoption of the same policy narrative does not necessarily derive from the same policy objectives. Due to the different governance models and policy interests of the cities, the 'creative city' script is deeply contextualized and continuously reframed to pursue specific policy agendas. For instance, in Shanghai, it reflects the attempt to enhance global influence and power of the state, whereas Hong Kong's 'cultural turn' has been directed at boosting tourism industry and assisting in the city's efforts to maintain its 'global city' identity. In other words, the notion of the cultural/creative city seems to be approached as a currency or a floating signifier, disconnected from any specific signification and imbued with meaning by contextualized policy discourses.

Clearly, political systems and governance models have a huge impact on the way cities attend to their cultural and creative development. Under state-led developmentalism, local authorities in Shanghai have very limited decision-making power. Therefore, the city's 'cultural turn' is shaped predominantly by national interests. The narrative of the 'international cultural metropolis' has also been established to, first and foremost, fulfill the ambitions of the Party rather than to assist in Shanghai's re-industrialization efforts. In this context, cultural development is perceived as Shanghai's ticket to the elite group of global cities. As a result, the government gives preference to large-scale cultural groups or initiatives that are perceived as more likely to generate a global impact.

In Hong Kong, policymaking is deeply rooted in neoliberal 'non-interventionist' ideology. Its 'cultural turn' was launched in relation to the commonly acknowledged market-development needs of the post-industrial city resulting from growing global competition and the rise of service industries, specifically tourism. Hong Kong's handover to China has not only accelerated the pace of the culture-led urban development but has also altered its scope and direction. A growing concern about being "merged and submerged into the national" (Abbas 2000, p. 779) has prompted the government to embrace a global policy script of the cultural and creative city as an opportunity of 'display' (Williams 1984). As a result, it has been incorporated into the broader branding strategy, designed to maintain a 'world-city' status for Hong Kong. In this context, the title of the cultural and creative city once again entails more than just economic interests. In Hong Kong, it is also about preserving an *international* identity of the city.

A number of crossing points between the two case studies pinpoint four important implications. First, this comparative study demonstrates that the adoption of cultural/creative urbanism practices is not optional: every city that seeks to be part of a global network has to

fit in the frames of what is broadly defined as a cultural/creative city. Originally, the notions of ‘world’ and ‘global’ city were coined and discussed in relation to the world economy and international division of labor (see Friedmann 1986; Sassen 2006). However, it seems that in the last decade, a new, cultural/creative dimension has been added to this concept (see Krätke 2006). Framed along neoliberal lines of economic restructuring, inter-urban competition and a commodified notion of ‘quality of life’ (Harvey 2008), the narrative of cultural development is now perceived as a necessary component for any city aspiring to fit in a format of the global city. Hong Kong has been labelled a ‘cultural desert’ since the 1920s, and yet this has never stopped it from being very successful on a global stage of finance and trade. However, with an increased pressure to compete for investment, skilled workers and tourists coupled with an arguably weakened position after the handover, Hong Kong was forced to take the ‘cultural turn’ in urban development and to seek for the recognition as ‘international cultural metropolis’. Shanghai, on the other hand, is a re-emerging global city and simultaneously a re-emerging ‘international cultural metropolis’. Thus, it has lot to prove, as both a global and a socialist city. The ultimate goal for Shanghai is to access the elite group of the two highest integrated world cities, London and New York. To assimilate with those and other cities in the global city network, Shanghai is now also impelled to follow and emulate their strategies of culture-led development.

This brings us to the second major implication. It appears that in a non-western context, the policy script of the cultural/creative city is adopted as a tool for *convergence* rather than divergence. With a rapidly expanding number of international cultural metropolises around the world, the narrative of the cultural/creative city is no longer a novelty, but a common characteristic. It has clearly lost the scent of uniqueness that was originally used to promise a competitive advantage for cities (see Landry 2000; Florida 2002). Ironically, the ‘commonness’ of the script is now part of its appeal for many marginalized cities. It is approached as a guarantee of a certain status at the international stage and reflects on the “belonging to a particular type of global city” (Pang 2012, p. 136). As noted above, the policymakers that guide the ‘global city making’ process in Shanghai and Hong Kong seem to share the same belief that in order for their city to become (or remain) a ‘global city’, it must be established as not only the central hub for finance and trade, but also as a cultural and creative city.

Third, it is evident that a globalizing policy model of the cultural/creative city escalates the pace of the inter-urban competition. Although it often leads to a zero-sum game (Harvey 1989), cities cannot escape the somewhat vicious cycle of continuous monitoring, assessment, comparison and at times imitation of their counterparts. In a sense, they all seem to be playing a classical “Simon Says” game, where one inaccurate move or failure to repeat the actions of the leading player leads to an immediate defeat.

Fourth, it is important to acknowledge that the ‘cultural turn’ in the cities seems to benefit only *selected* cultural groups and organizations. The distribution of funds is unbalanced and correlates with the perceived advantage rather than with the actual need. In order to be recognized as cultural and creative cities, municipal governments throw large amounts of money in the development of ‘flagship’ cultural and creative industries, cultural landmarks and large-scale events. As several interviewees have suggested, the policymakers in Shanghai and Hong Kong often fail to provide a platform for local artists and smaller-scale cultural initiatives that cannot guarantee international impact or commercial success (see also Lui 2008; Chu 2012; O’Connor 2012; Lee *et al.* 2013). This, in effect, further increases the segregation between larger and more influential cultural groups and those smaller, locally based organizations.

This study only begins to reveal the role of the ‘cultural turn’ in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Considering that it has focused predominantly on the policymakers’ approach to cultural/creative city ‘making’ as well as the major rationales behind it, further studies are needed to determine the full spectrum of implications of this process, particularly in relation to local citizens and individual artists. Future research could shed some light on this question by examining the perceptions of local artists and/or citizens about the ‘cultural turn’ in their cities. How do they feel about it? How are they included in and excluded from this process? What opportunities and challenges, if any, does the ‘cultural turn’ bring to them? Such and similar studies would help to link the context with the actual experience. Overall, it seems that there are more connections than disconnections between the cultural and creative trajectories of Shanghai and Hong Kong. Culture-led urban development has now become a vital part of the brand for both cities. Nevertheless, different adoption patterns and contextualized objectives indicate that this trend is not uniform and cannot be generalized. Therefore, another important task for future research could be to investigate the rationales for the ‘cultural turn’ in cities in the region. Such studies would help to refine and further elaborate on the findings of this research by providing a more definite view of what being a cultural/creative city in East Asia now really signifies.

Notes

- 1 In this chapter, the terms ‘creative city’, ‘cultural city’, ‘cultural and creative city’ and ‘cultural/creative city’ will be used interchangeably.
- 2 Although urban entrepreneurialism has originated in the Global North, in the last two decades, it has also been widely adopted in many developing cities across East Asia (see Yeoh 2005; Pratt 2009).
- 3 Recently, the author himself has also recognized some limitations in his methodology (see Florida *et al.* 2015).

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