

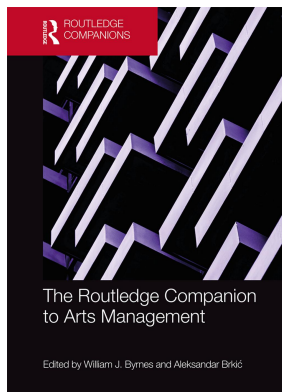
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William J. Byrnes, Aleksandar Brki

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Yong Xiang, Boyi Li

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THEORIZING CREATIVE CAPITAL IN CHINA

A multi-level framework

Yong Xiang and Boyi Li

Introduction

It becomes almost a cliché to suggest that cities provide favourable conditions for the cultural and creative economy. The thesis of “creative cities” (Florida, Mellander, and Stolarick, 2008; Markusen, 2006; Stolarick and Florida, 2006), for instance, taking creativity at the centre of the urban networks for entrepreneurship, regeneration, and economic competitiveness, has long been the focus of scholarly and public policy discussions (Cunningham, 2012; Florida, 2002; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Throsby, 2010; UNCTAD, 2016). However, inquiries on the other side of this urbanity–culture relationship, particularly the question of “how does a genuine appreciation of cultural productions and the associated local communities (networks) enable an alternative imagination of urban future?”, are rare and far from being well understood (Bingham–Hall and Kassa, 2017).

In the *Global Report on Culture For Sustainable Urban Future* (UNESCO, 2016), UNESCO calls for policy-makers, the business community, urban planners, and academics to place heritage and creativity at the centre of a sustainable urban future, particularly the communities of creative entrepreneurs. In a similar vein, *The Quito Papers 2016: A Manifesto For Urban Planning in the 21st Century*, by UN HABITAT III (Sennett, Burdett, and Sassen, 2018; UN–Habitat, 2016), calls for an approach to design and make urban space that not only facilitates cultural productions and cultural institutions, but also itself promotes a culture of openness, local improvisation (messy-ness), and public realm. This new agenda, aiming to articulate the reciprocal, more-balanced, two-way relationship between urbanity and culture, marks a paradigm shift of knowledge from the one that of a mixture of neoliberalism, industrial nationalism, and global projection of soft power, to a new one that unlocks the potential of meaningful interaction between traditionality and modernity, harmony and wellbeing, the East and the West.

For more than a decade, China has been promoting the cultural and creative industries as a new engine of growth and urbanisation (Keane, 2013; O’Connor and Xin, 2006; Xiang and Walker, 2014). The impressive growth of cultural and creative industries has been widely celebrated, albeit with mixed perceptions and judgements. This is in the context of a wider reflection upon the development since 1978 (the era of Reform and Opening-up, 改革开放), as well as the historical pitfalls of this period (notably, the environmental disasters, erosion of interpersonal trust and social morality, loss of faith, and epidemic corruption). China nowadays

mobilises great efforts and resources to foster a developmental model of sustainability, in which the economy, the environment, and the society can harmoniously work for each other instead of consuming at the cost of each other. Such transformation cannot be realised without a greater emphasis upon – and a more ambitious expectation of – cultural change and social progress. Cultural and creative entrepreneurship is the pivotal point of such ambitious expectations. The changing demographic, economic, and social patterns of cities urgently require contemporary, new approaches on the planning, provision, and regeneration of urban space, in which the practices of architecture, music and museums, performance arts not only play a part, but more importantly supply new ideas and ideals, new rationale of design and regulatory rules that help reshape the imagination of future sustainable cities (Bingham-Hall and Kassa, 2017; Sennett, Burdett, and Sassen, 2018; UN-Habitat, 2016; UNESCO, 2016).

This chapter addresses this challenge of the theoretical gap connecting cultural and creative economy with future cities by theorizing the notion of “creative capital”. We introduce the meaning of “capital” from the studies in economic sociology, in particular, Pierre Bourdieu’s work on the analysis of relational and cultural embeddedness in the cultural production sectors (Bourdieu, 1983, 1993, 1995). The theoretical discussions on “capital”, as a critical theory, are expanded in the second section. We then provide a detailed account on the theoretical framework of creative capital, highlighting the possibilities of discussing the spatiality of creative capital. The last section provides a case study of Beijing as the city is transforming itself by following the creative cities agenda.

Understanding creative capital

The notion of capital has often been narrowly defined on pure economic terms referring to the material means necessary to organize production of valuable goods for market exchange – i.e. land, machines, labour, financial assets, etc. Such conceptualization has been subject to serious critique in the field of economic sociology and cultural economy, where scholars from Max Weber, Karl Polanyi to Pierre Bourdieu and Raymond Williams suggested that social relations, and the meaning structure around which social relations are organized and instituted (family, religion, nation-state, cultural belief, etc.), constitute the essential explanations of how economic actors gain advantage over others in the economic competition of producing goods and market trade. For Bourdieu, the notion of capital needs to be defined simultaneously as economic and cultural/aesthetic terms. Capital as economic resources means it can be accounted using price signals of markets and made exchangeable with other means of production. In contrast, capital as social/cultural/aesthetic resources must be embedded socially and historically in a society where values emerge out of the common understandings – and aesthetic sensations – of certain aesthetics core, which are not immediately exchangeable but have to be learnt through living experience and education. We suggest any theoretical explanation of creative cities must have good elaborations on the non-economic forms of capital, and how such forms of capital can be appropriated, accumulated, and transformed into economic forms.

In his analysis of the Parisian circles of poetry, painting, and theatre performances of France in the late 19th century, Bourdieu reinvented the notions of ‘competition’, ‘advantages’, and ‘power’ in terms of the resources that economic actors manage to accumulate over time in social relations (social), educational and family background (cultural), and the symbolic values of being associated with prestigious institutions (i.e. artistic movements) (Bourdieu, 1993). He used the concept of “field” in order to make sense of the games of a power struggle between actors deploying various strategies of converting social, cultural, and symbolic resources but aiming for the same goals. Competitive advantages, in the field of cultural production, can be gained by

converting values between relational, cultural, and symbolic resources, and between these non-economic and economic resources. The accumulation of these critical non-economic resources cannot be possible by purely relying on the logic of *homo economicus*, instead by the social process of studying and acting collectively towards certain abstract ideals of artistic pursuits, “the art-for-art’s sake and pure theory” (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu’s work revealed that economic reasoning and artistic pursuit represent two opposite poles of the purpose rationality which permeates through every aspect of cultural production. This insight into economic-cultural tensions constitutes the theoretical foundation of creative capital.

We take the term ‘capital’ as a concept referring to the potential of cultural entrepreneurs in mobilising the relational, institutional, and cultural ‘assets’ to transform artistic ideas into ventures of either socio-cultural transformation or business development, or both. The theoretical root of this definition can be traced to the literature of economic sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2013; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012; Granovetter and Swedberg, 2018; Polanyi, 1957). The fundamental premise of ‘creative capital’ is that cultural entrepreneurs, situated in the dense networks of artists, educators and art critics, appraisal agency, collectors, and market-makers, governments, public audience and media etc., manage to accumulate capital available to them as they become embedded in the space of creative networks. Such non-economic resources (i.e. reputation, trust, aesthetic understandings, and cultural taste and cultural identity) provide the means with which the cultural entrepreneurs justify their social status of being a member of an exclusive club and can be further strengthened (reproduced) by continuously interacting with other members of society. In other words, creative capital can be approached by three forms of capital: the relational, the cultural, and the symbolic.

To handle the complexity in abstract theorizing, we hinge the essential elements of creative capital to three levels of cultural-economy practices: namely, the everyday practice (the micro-level, embeddedness analysis), the institutional arrangements (the meso-level, ecosystem analysis), and the intellectual milieu (the macro-level, historic analysis) (see Table 20.1).

The level of everyday practice asks how urban space enables or limits the process of cultural entrepreneurship by accommodating the mundane activities of networking, learning, and symbolic construction. Such inquiries are focused on the possibilities and potentials of urban space in facilitating the occurrence of the everyday practice of cultural entrepreneurs. One basic example of such possibility is to examine how easy it is for the local networks of creative-minded people to socialise (i.e. forming interest groups, surveying who’s who, making collective initiatives), exchange information, and co-work in the proximate locations.

The level of institutional practice invites researchers to focus on the synergistic effects of institutional nexus surrounding creative economy. Some economic geographers referred to such synergies as the ‘regime of accumulation’. The level of institutional practice asks the question of how creative capital is formed, accumulated, and re-generated in the emerging networks of institutional ‘regimes of accumulation’ (Markusen, 2006). Cultural and creative economy is typically characterized by the dominance of small or micro-sized, agency-type organizations networked with each other, as well as a few large corporations operating in a dynamic environment of voluntary labour, short-term projects, and temporary employment. The turnover of human resources and capital are much faster as talents are working simultaneously for more personal ambitions and more social-collective ideals (i.e., the progress of society), which, either way, means little motivation or moral justification to serve one specific business organization.¹ As a result, the personal life space of creative workers is substantially different from the modernist cities of the managerial class. This transformation of institutional structures in city space means a substantial departure of urban ideals from the late 20th century modernist view of post-industrial city (car-friendly road networks connecting suburbs with CBD, spatially and

Table 20.1 Research framework of creative capital

Levels of space	A research framework of creative capital	Relational capital	Cultural capital	Symbolic capital
Everyday practice (Micro-level, ethnographic)	<p><i>Social Embeddedness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the creative networks geographically distributed? How is the interpersonal trust facilitated? • What is the future urban space like where it is easy to meet and network with each other? • And what does it mean to both public space (museum, university, street and traffic places, neighborhood etc.) and private space (office buildings, residential area, and family activity)? • What's the mode of connection between the public and the private space? 	<p><i>Cultural Embeddedness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The target is to have a well-educated, well-informed public in the city, from which a creative class emerge. • What are the places where people share ideas and learn from each other? Where and what art forms do creative people get inspirations from? • How to design a public space where new ideas are encouraged to be communicated and learning activities are rewarding (public library, bookshop, universities, museums etc.)? 	<p><i>Cognitive Embeddedness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a system of belief, mythology, narrative about the city's cultural life? How do cities establish and maintain a connection between their production of symbols and a unique cultural identity? • How do the cities spatially arrange socio-economic interactions through the heritage, tradition, and a specific way of framing 'good life' can be embodied? • How do the spatial arrangements address the socio-economic challenges facing the city (migration and integration, inequality, elderly/child care, leisure, environmental hazards, etc.)? 	
Institutional practice (Meso-level, ecosystemic)	<p><i>Institutions as mechanisms:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the cultural infrastructure? Is there a structural equivalent of Triple-Helix model creative ecosystems (Government – University – Industry)? • How do cities facilitate the interactions between key institutional players? The government, the cultural institutions, and the business community? (G-Art-B)? • What's the nature of institutional collaboration in this city? • What are key interests and motivations that enable or limit the interactions and collaboration between these institutions? 	<p><i>Institutions of knowledge:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the roles of pivotal cultural institutions that function as the nexus of cultural production? • How do people learn the cultural capital and share the insights? How do the particular meanings of cultural tastes take shape, become influential, and eventually become the cultural legacy of the city? • How do the cultural institutions provide educational functions to the society in art and aesthetics? • What are the role of the governments in promoting art and aesthetics education? • How do business community, benefiting from the rise of creative class and art-friendly urban environment, support the activities of cultural organizations? 	<p><i>Institutions as identity and heritage:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the important cultural organizations, cultural events, or heritage places that give the city a distinctive identity (a city brand)? • How do the experience of living and working in the relevant networks of the city give a distinctive symbolic value to the individuals or organizations (a university degree widely recognised and recommended)? • How do the cities create a unique, local solutions to address the fundamental challenges of development (civil rights and social justice, environmental hazard, caring for the elderly and children etc.)? • Generally, how do the social and economic injustice influence the spatial reality of the city? Are there any alternative solutions/suggestions that might address these challenges? 	

(Continued)

Table 20.1 (Continued)

Levels of space	A research framework of creative capital	Relational capital	Cultural capital	Symbolic capital
Modernity and aesthetics (macro-level, historical)	<p data-bbox="334 1304 357 1567"><i>Contemporaneity of art schools:</i></p> <ul data-bbox="379 1123 665 1567" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 1123 465 1567">• How do creative entrepreneurs understand and practice the notion of 'modernity' and 'good life' as aesthetic standard? <li data-bbox="465 1123 576 1567">• What are the spatial distribution of creative networks? How do creative entrepreneurs communicate, share, and co-create new styles of art creation? <li data-bbox="576 1123 665 1567">• How do cultural entrepreneurs practice the idea of tradition and heritage in modern daily life? 	<p data-bbox="334 870 357 1105"><i>Forums of (post-)modernity:</i></p> <ul data-bbox="379 643 576 1105" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 643 439 1105">• What are the core theoretical debates on modernity, contemporary art, and heritage? <li data-bbox="439 643 523 1105">• What are the main framework of ethics, justice, and social values that the society is striving to achieve or maintain? <li data-bbox="523 643 576 1105">• What are the discourses of social critique, or art critique? 	<p data-bbox="334 402 357 600"><i>Modernity as orthodox:</i></p> <ul data-bbox="379 96 694 600" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 96 439 600">• Are there theoretical authorities setting the tones of modernity and contemporary art development? How do the cultural authorities become orthodox? (historical perspective) How do the authorities exert their symbolic power? <li data-bbox="439 96 607 600">• How do the theoretical debates between different schools impact on the ways creative entrepreneurs gain brands and credentials in their networks? <li data-bbox="607 96 694 600">• What are the emerging consensus on "culture for sustainability"? Who are the main actors in this area? How do they become influential? 	

chronically separating work from life), towards a post-modern paradigm of future city with physical and cultural infrastructure for the 'space of flows' (Castells, 2004). Most importantly, we aim to elaborate the concept of creative capital in the light of modernism and its contemporary discourses in Chinese context. This level of analysis will focus on the historical debates around ideas of modernity and aesthetic ideals, and how these debates become embodied in the actions of contemporary creative networks, institutional relations and creative communities, from which an image of creative cities can be seen.

Relational capital

The relational capital refers to the capability that actors gain by being well-connected in clusters of social ties, to the extent that they can leverage the positions of high centrality, connectivity (transitivity), or "structural holes" as means to achieve desirable ends – the behaviour Fligstein and McAdam (2012) referred to as the "strategic agency" (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). The propensity to gain power and influence is high when actors occupy key *positions* in social networks, which can be seen by applying structural analysis (for example, by the network graph theories or complex network theories). While the modelling of tie structures is straightforward, given a universal definition of tie, the determination of key positions can be complicated and tricky in real-world social analysis, because the meanings of ties vary in different contexts and are notoriously hard to define on measurable terms.

The benefits of relational capital can be materialized by two categories of social mechanisms: interpersonal trust and cross-sectional synergy. The former is the basic condition for the formation of any social community. Relational capital in the form of interpersonal trust is accumulated and preserved on the basis of everyday life as community members share the same space of social interaction, work, and living struggles. The effects of high relational capital can take the form of embedded 'solidarity', where individual members of a community assume general interpersonal trust with each other and are motivated to collectively protect the community from behaviour of opportunism, malfeasance, or other kinds of anti-social behaviour. Such community structure is characterized by close-knit clusters of interpersonal relationships, which leads to the rise of sharing culture among its members. It has been argued that the urban conditions of cultural and creative economy in contemporary cities should place great emphasis on the community-buildings efforts between the artists, the business community, and other stakeholders, for example, by designing public spaces consciously promoting the culture of openness and transparency. The development of cultural and creative economy benefits from the urban conditions conducive to the general accumulation of relational capital of society, so that actors who manage to broker across different clans of social networks are capable of facilitating innovation that draw upon the ideas, talents and trust across the range of sectors, disciplines, and other institutional silos (phenomena referred to as the cross-sectional synergy, or the *Medici Effect*). Modern cities that place culture at the centre of its future development strive to become the space for complex social networking and for shaping a consensus/identity of artistic and moral ideals, rather than the space for arms-length marketplace, industrial 'growth poles', gentrification and social inequality (Harvey, 1992, 2013).

In the Chinese context, the studies of "guanxi" highlighted the complicated, subtle, situated interpretations of ties in Chinese society, which are impossible to be reduced to universal definitions and thus subject to structural analysis (Luo, 2008; Redding, 2013). The purpose of studying guanxi is not just to confirm the statement that the leverage of social ties can lead to competitive advantages of individuals or groups in economic terms, which probably can be found in all human societies. Instead, the studies of guanxi cultures reveals a set of distinctive rituals, norms,

contingencies, and personal strategies in Chinese society to generate the relational capital as well as to safeguard the investment of social labour, emotions, and time as the maintenance of relations. Such rituals, norms, contingencies, and strategies are functional not just in the sense of celebrating cultural identities, but in the sense that they provide a cover of meaning over the embarrassing consideration of money or other economic returns, and thereby conceal the purpose of economic reasoning. We know that, from existing studies of Chinese business networks, *guanxi* cultures have positive effects on the accumulation of relational capital because interpersonal trust is generally assumed, facilitated and accumulated through these rituals and norms. However, we don't know whether, empirically or theoretically, *guanxi* cultures can be obstacles or facilitators to the development of Medici Effects in Chinese fields of cultural production.

Empirically, we have yet to see research that reveals how cultural entrepreneurs manage to leverage the relational capital of *guanxi* by playing the rules of the distinctive rituals, norms, and strategies in Chinese society. Examples can be found in DiMaggio's study of art consumers, social stratification, and networks of cultural entrepreneurs in the US (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978; DiMaggio, 1982, 2011), as well as the American film industries 1895–1929 by Mezias and Kuperman (2001). The latter study discovered and explained the pivotal roles of social networks formed in an entrepreneurial community of Hollywood and revealed how the success of risky film ventures depends on the combination of the quality of artistic creations and management of "value chains", both of which are highly embedded in close-knit social networks.

Cultural capital

The cultural capital refers to the capability of individuals or organizations to interpret and communicate the meanings of aesthetic experience on sophisticated and theoretical levels. The definition of cultural capital stresses the tacit capabilities of people, organizations, and communities living in the urban space, which differs from the economists' understandings² (Throsby, 2010) and is not about any tangible or intangible asset to directly generate values of any kind. Possessing cultural capital means that the cultural entrepreneurs can (1) discover those opportunities of new or refreshed aesthetic perspectives that was invisible to those lacking such cognitive capabilities, and (2) develop a coherent and convincing account of art theories (article, talk, interview, lecture, etc.) that help others partake in this novel and transcendental experience of aesthetics. In his seminal paper "The Artworld", Danto argued that the very existence of art depends on the epistemic communities of theorists and art critics and the intellectual ways they extract aesthetic meaning from the material objects. Danto (1964, p. 581) used Andy Warhol's Brillo Box as an example to highlight the crucial connections between 'cultural capital', epistemic communities (relational capital), and artistic values:

What in the end makes the difference between a Brillo Box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain theory art . . . without the theory, one is unlikely to see it as art, and in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a great deal of artistic theories as well as considerable amount of history of New York paintings.

Cultural capital can be in the form of natural talent or human knowledge learnable and transferable across time and space and is best (co-)produced and shared in a close-knit community of artists, educators, critics, public audiences that develop a common identity of aesthetic movement. Like tacit knowledge or craftsmanship, the development of cultural capital takes time, patience, and most importantly, the space for everyday practice and interaction with people of the same worldview and sense of belonging.

Gaining cultural capital is a tacit, interactive, social learning process. It is common sense that when some ideas emerge from the creative landscape (writing genres, film styles, musical performances, etc.), the importance of theories and cultural theorists (gurus) is evident since it is necessary, for the sake of market logic, to explain what is going on, how to appreciate the creative value, and how to capture and reproduce the discovered values in appropriate manners. Such necessity and demand further drive the re-use and re-creation of cultural values (i.e. the effect of standing the giants' shoulders), which in turn generate more opportunities for business development (i.e. the periphery effect of cultural products, the network effects, the long tail, etc). Cultural capital is an important resource of creative entrepreneurship which is simultaneously existing on the level of individuals, the level of communities, and the level of regions (cities). Cultural capital is accumulated when there is a dynamic social process of teaching and researching, networking, relationship-building, and tacit knowledge sharing. None of these social processes is possible without the existence of appropriate spatial conditions that accommodate the social life of actors and institutions in these interactive networks, in particular, the institutions of education and knowledge production. Inquiries on the spatial conditions that make possible such dynamic process of cultural capital accumulation – the conditions of possibility – are not new in the manufacturing and technological innovation sectors (Amin and Robins, 1990; Cooke, Gomez Uranga, and Etxebarria, 1997; Saxenian, 1994). Recent discussions on “creative cities” also shed lights on the spatiality of cultural entrepreneurship, particularly the US cities (Stolarick and Florida, 2006; Throsby, 2014). Little is known on the spatial conditions of creativity in Chinese cities.

Symbolic capital

Symbolic capital refers to the capabilities of individuals and organizations to create or re-discover new associations between symbols and cultural meanings, to the extent that such associations become widely unchallenged, almost taken for granted, even ritual (if not religious), things of the mundane yet taken for granted among members of communities. Anthropologists have long argued that the cognitive capability of creating and interpreting symbols is human nature and that human society is constituted by historical layers of symbolic meanings (belief, ritual, language, art, etc.). In cultural production fields, symbolic significance such as reputation, fashion brands, school of art/thoughts, academies or universities, is often equivalent to social status, and thereby of paramount importance to actors operating in the fields. As we previously argued, the uncertainty in determining artistic values is relatively high, in comparison to other economic sectors, due to the nature of the evaluation process that is highly dependent on ‘cultural capital’ of epistemic communities (i.e. social movements) with common theories and interpretations of history. To tackle such uncertainty, economic actors usually reply on the ‘social structures’ of art communities to proxy the potential values of art objects: the higher status of recognition an artist or a work of art gains in the communities, the higher values being conferred upon this person or work. Symbolic capital functions to display and communicate social status in a deliberately unequal way that serves to indicate the potentials of cultural productions convertible to economic values.

On one hand, symbolic capital, as the means and medium of signaling and representing cultural capital and artistic ideas, can help keep the fields of cultural production economically efficient and accessible to outsiders (not just market speculators, but also public audience with genuine cultural interests), because one does not always need to fully understand or appreciate the meanings of culture (or quality of cultural products) before making decisions to participate, to invest one’s time, money, or collaborative labour. Symbolic capital, typically exemplified by

academic qualifications, are functional instruments to indicate quality, trustworthiness, risks, and considerations which are essential to business decision-making. On the individual and organization level, the accumulation of symbolic capital can bring benefits to the brand values and positive recognitions from the society, which can be converted into opportunities of economic profits. On the regional level, such benefits can be in the forms of cultural heritage and cultural identity. Symbolic capital can be seen as the objectified interface, the medium of conversion between cultural capital and economic capital, which provides what Bourdieu referred to as the “profits of unconsciousness”. For example, as the travel industry demonstrates, the attractiveness of travel products is most likely to be associated with the symbolic values objectified by those buildings and places of historic figures, residences and palaces, places of art collections, and landscapes, all of which are organized by a grand narrative about the historical change of politics and artistic tastes.

On the other hand, since symbolic capital is capable of reproducing itself symbolically as long as the message it contains can be apprehended by human beings, it gives rise to the vicious circle of self-referential, inflationary self-promotion, to the extent that the symbolic message becomes detached from the substantial meanings it claims to represent.³ Symbolic capital is not something cultural entrepreneurs create out of thin air but instead is rooted in the accumulation of cultural capital being communicated and maintained by cultural networks. Critical theorists have long used the concept of ‘symbolic violence’ to discern the injustice in modern society (whether in gender and feminism issue, the religious freedom issue, or Marxist class-struggles), where schemes of cognitive categorisation, dominated and controlled by a certain group or class of social elites, are used to justify the dominance of their social power. It can be equally argued that those social groups of little power, the underdogs, can also strategically deploy symbolic means to shape the cognitive schemes of society, in order to achieve social justice, as much Marxist literature tends to suggest (Harvey, 1992, 2013). In the cultural and creative landscape, this can be seen when cultural entrepreneurs or artists use means of aesthetic experiences (writing, drama, film, painting, photographer) and novel business models (digital media, social enterprise, for example) to publicise the alternative ways of cognitively understanding reality, to create new social movements that address contemporary problems of injustice (for example, the movement of street graffiti artists often exemplified by the work of Banksy). In summary, symbolic capital is closely associated with the hierarchies of social power and how actors consciously struggle to resist symbolic dominance and create alternative ways of cognitive understandings. The production of symbolic capital means cultural entrepreneurs and artists are fully engaged in the power struggle of their societies and the ability to offer alternative means of interpretation.

Beijing as a creative city

In this section, we present a case study of Beijing as the city is undertaking a significant transformation towards a new urbanism by culture and creative economy. In the light of the conceptual framework of creative capital, we assess the potential of Beijing’s urban space of creativity in terms of how it can mobilize those heritage resources embedded in its spatial structures and historical narratives (cultural, relational, symbolic), by analysing the structure of creative capital on three levels of urban space (everyday practice, institutional practice, and modernity/aesthetics theories). We then draw lessons of what we find on each level of Beijing’s creative capital, and suggest implications for future theoretical development and policy-thinking on creative cities – which is a paradigm shift of urbanism from the old pure economic point of view that takes creative economy as an industrial engine of growth to a new perspective that appreciates the historical continuation of aesthetics traditions and the community-institutional mode of cultural

production, and manages to convert these embedded creative capital into unique advantages of future economic development and urban regeneration.

In recent years, Beijing set ambitious targets to become a global city with a focus on the cultural and creative economy. In the contemporary era of Reform and Open-Up, the city has extensively urbanised itself and sprawled into rural peripheries. Today the capital is the biggest metropolis in China – leading the table of so-called Tier 1 cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen). Such growth, however, has placed enormous pressure on the urban fabric of living space, cultural heritage, wellbeing and health, and environment (especially, under the threats of desert expansion, extreme weather, water shortage, and air quality). In order to cope with the urbanisation challenges, the municipal government of Beijing has been campaigning for more support resources (capital investment, water reservoir and canals, infrastructure and building space, etc.), including legislative measures to control the influx of migration. These efforts were largely counterproductive and produced serious moral and constitutional backlashes.

After the 18th CPC (Communist Party of China) Congress in 2012, a series of pivotal, long-term decisions were made in the sense that Beijing, as the way it has always been, should be transformed from being an economic centre to a metropolis of culture and creativity. Under the grand strategy of President Xi, Beijing aims to distribute the economic and industrial functions into the periphery regions, in particular forging a closer economic partnership with the Tianjin City and the Hebei Province, the latter of which remains one of the least-developed provinces in China ironically at a proximate distance to Beijing. In the context of wider sustainable development pledges and planning, the president's grand strategy for Beijing includes setting up a completely new future city outside Beijing (*Xiong'An*), which is supposed to not just host the ministerial and state organs but also set the benchmark of what a sustainable, wellbeing-oriented future city should be. The grand strategy also includes the emigration of Beijing's Municipal Government from the inner city to the suburb towns (the re-defined Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Metropolis). According to the new plan of regional integration, the city of Beijing shall return to the status as the capital of culture, civilisation, and creativity, just like the way it has always been for many centuries.

Since Beijing is set to be the capital of culture and creativity, the business and investment of cultural and creative industries in the periphery regions – and indeed possibly the whole country – have become even more agglomerated and centralized in the new creative space in the downtown of Beijing. Institutionally, Beijing's Capital Cultural Industry Association and the counterparts of Tianjin and Hebei are set to become more institutionally integrated from 2015, as the three agencies joined efforts in workshops and seminars, annual industrial expos. The new institutional arrangement of regional coordination provides policy and economic impetus to the growth of the cultural and creative economy, mostly in the form of new industrial districts. The purpose of these institutional efforts is to create a clear cultural identity for the metropolis region of Beijing.

Globally, Beijing provides a world-class infrastructure of cultural communication and exchange, in terms of its geographic proximity of pivotal cultural institutions (universities-museum-media), and the advantageous access to global connections. Hosting a rich list of public libraries, museums, theatres, architectural heritage, Beijing is globally recognised as the place of best exemplifying China's rich heritage of literature, music, architecture and craft, and folk art. The city is listed by the UNESCO as a member of Creative Cities Networks with a cultural identity of the "City of Design", recognizing the city's great potential in combining Chinese cultural heritage with the country's contemporary achievement in industrial manufacturing. After the Olympics in 2008, Beijing has substantially transformed its cultural landscape with the aspiration of becoming a truly global city for culture. Recent projects of urban space

regeneration such as the Olympic Stadium Park (Bird's Nest and Water Cube), and the Grand National Theatre have added great value to the city's contemporary cultural identity. As China is making unprecedented commitments to globalization and sustainable development in recent years, the city is making great efforts to become the place of cultural exchange and global connections, especially as the meeting place for setting a global development agenda (i.e. the Belt and Road Summit, the UNESCO Centre for Creativity and Sustainability, the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Creative Cities Network Summit etc.).

From networks to modernity: encountering creative capital in Beijing

So how do we approach the 'creative capital' embedded in the potentials of Beijing as the city transforms itself towards a future of culture, harmony, and sustainability? With the lens of the multi-level framework (Table 20.1), we find the incredible foundations of creative capital in the spatial and historical fabrics of the city. As the capital city of China for more than 800 years, Beijing remains one of the central places of Chinese civilisation for nearly ten centuries, displaying remarkable resilience against political disasters, waves of foreign invasion and cultural shock, migration and demographic change, climate and environmental deterioration. The contemporary spatial foundation of Beijing was master-planned and built between Yuan and Ming dynasties (13th–14th century, AD). For nearly 800 years, the city has been designed, maintained, and used as an imperial capital, not just of a nation but of a central place of civilisation which accommodate different cultures, ethnicities and religions, while conforming to the *dao* of living (as modern Chinese decide to name the country, 中国 “Central State” or “the State of the Medium or the Middle-Way”). The Chinese civilisation has consistently emphasized the wisdom of harmony between human society and the nature (天人合一, from the book of *I Ching*, 1000–750 BC), which is symbolically shrined in rituals of “emperor” traditions and the imperial residential city. The city of Beijing is supposed to be a living testament to such civilizational belief.

On the level of modernity and aesthetics theories, the fact that the city's historic resilience, as an imperial and intellectual capital of Chinese civilisation in defiance of dynastic change and foreign invasion, reveals many facets of heritage on the philosophical and aesthetic meanings of modern life in a Chinese city, and its mirrored projections in contemporary China. According to Confucianism, to take responsibility for the society (shè jì, “社稷”) by serving in the civil service – hence, the emperor – is priority of the educated members of society, commonly referred to as the “*shi*” (士), or gentleman class (*jūn zǐ* 君子). Theorists of Confucianism and Daoism, both originating from the book of *I Ching*, established that the ruling legitimacy of the state comes from the ways the ruler (who is to be assisted by the cascading class of wise gentlemen) understands and practices the constant of the nature (tiān dào, the Dao of the Celestial, 天道). Confucianism does not define the class of gentleman by blood, property or wealth, but instead on the depth of intellectual education and the capability of independent thinking, and that it is the ruler's responsibility to find and foster these capable men and to listen to their wisdom with patience. Generations of Chinese intellectuals, rich or poor, lived and worked in this imperial city with a deep sense of pride and self-esteem, most of whom were cherry-picked by the imperial court through a sophisticated, competitive examination system. It is clear that meritocracy and social mobility is deeply embedded in the heritage of Chinese society, and Beijing is the city where these miracles of social mobility actually take place. The imperial examination system is itself a heritage institution that dates back to the Sui and Tang dynasties (the 7th century, AD), which ensures the authority and efficiency of the mandarin system of the empire. The backbones of this institutional heritage can be still seen today as the country's twin elite universities

(Peking and Tsinghua, literally located next to each other) remain the place where the country's most-respected intellectuals and academically elite students live and work. The north-west corner of the city, the district of Haidian today, where universities, academies, and research institutes are next door to each other, still maintain intimate relationships with the power centre of the country, the inflows of ideas, politics, and intellectual labour.

It is important to note that the cultural heritage of Beijing, the spatial and institutional patterns of how intellectuals cope with the epochal change, breeds the ideal of modernity in the early 20th century that fundamentally re-shaped China as a modern state. After the 1911 Republican Revolution, Beijing became a city with an emperor still living in the forbidden city, stripped of political power yet with formidable symbolic power. Everything has changed yet nothing has been changed. So how has China taking on modernity? Open forums, public debates, private salons, and academic seminars organized by the networks of intellectuals and students take place regularly and intensively within the campus of Peking University (Bèi Dà, 北大), or in proximate locations. These debates and continuous discussions between the Confucian conservatism (the royalists), the republicans, the social democrats, the neo-revolutionists (communists), and the anarchists etc., consequentially shape the discourses and re-construct the meta-narratives about China, Chinese civilisation, and Chinese modernity, when the military juntas and warlords took turns to preside over short-lived and powerless central governments amid paralysed projects of political institutionalization.

The historical significance of such intellectual milieu of Beijing, in the cultural forms of lectures, books, proses, newspaper comments or other publications by scholars and public intellectuals working for Peking, Tsinghua, and similar local institutions in 1910s–1930s, remain the central points of intellectual debates in China today. Most of these debates focus on the subjects of cultural identity of China and its critique (Lú Xùn 鲁迅, Liáng Qichao 梁启超), history of Chinese philosophy (Feng Youlan 冯友兰, Jin Yuèlín 金岳霖), the civilisations and history of the West (Wang Guowei 王国维), social justice (Lǐ Dàzhào 李大钊, Chén Dúxiù 陈独秀), the art of poetry (Chen Yanque 陈寅恪) and painting (Feng Zikai 丰子恺), modern literature (Hú Shì 胡适), and architecture (Liáng Sīchéng 梁思成), university and education (Cai Yuánpéi 蔡元培). The intellectual achievement of this period becomes the sources of ideas and ideals about Chinese modernity that drive the transformation of China in the 20th century.⁴

Historians now refer to this period of Chinese culture and art movements as the “New Culture Movement”, a major shift of Chinese cultural life marked by the replacement of classical prose by everyday mundane language (bái huà wén 白话文) in literature. A notable example is the periodical called *The New Youth* (新青年), edited by then Peking professor Chen Dúxiù (who was the dean of the Humanities Faculty), created the communication space where students and scholars talk about art, philosophy, and political thoughts using everyday language that is accessible to the wider society. The periodical is later recognised as the focal communities of scholars and students who orchestrated the *May 4th Movement* in 1919 (五四运动), which eventually lead to the founding of the CPC in 1921, and subsequent events of historical magnitudes. Theories on contemporary art and aesthetics were gradually formed in this rich and diverse intellectual milieu of Beijing. These emerging aesthetic theories were built upon the concepts of progress, justice, and self-esteem. These concepts, to various degrees, remain the foundation of contemporary Chinese aesthetic and modernity theories. Any imagination of Beijing's future cities and its connection with the cultural and creative economy is impossible without taking into account this rich intellectual legacy of Chinese modernity in the early 20th century. In other words, the creative capital is embedded, symbolically and culturally, in the ways people of Beijing interpret, embody, and mobilize these legacy thoughts in the everyday life of today's city life, which stresses upon the ideal of sustainability.

At the risk of simplifying this complex and dynamic historic period unfolding in the urban space of Beijing, the concept of modernity in China has come to somehow a rather *inconclusive* consensus, an ongoing project with open possibilities, the one that is about being open to and learning from the great examples of the Western civilisation, particularly the institutional structures and technical rationality, while remaining deeply divided over the Confucian heritage and its modern values. The latter became the antecedents of Cultural Revolution in the 1970s when the politics of anti-Confucianism and anti-intellectualism peaked and wreaked havoc for ten years, which took its inspirations and initiatives from the student movements in Beijing's Tsinghua campus in 1966, the neighbour institution of Peking. The point we try to make here is to highlight that the creative capital of Beijing must be approached by associations with the city's intellectual struggles between accommodating modernity and cultural heritage at the same time, which, by no means coincidentally, touches the nerve centre of China's modernisation project, the *Realpolitik* in Zygmunt Bauman's sense (Bauman, 1988). In other words, the spatiality of Beijing, as it is changing today, carries great symbolic, cultural, and relational significance as it has the potential to (re-)define the meaning of Chinese modernity, which itself is heritage concept from China's state-state-building experience in the 20th century.

On a relational level, one can find the structural resemblance of creative and cultural networks in contemporary Beijing that characterized the city of "New Cultural Movement" in the 1910s–1930s. These creative and cultural networks are anchored by the institutional ties in universities, cultural industries (media, publisher, film, antique, performance art, etc.), museums and national academies. These creative networks share similar ideals of art standards which can be traced into a common sense on the question of "what is Chinese modernity" and how it is to be lived in contemporary city life. Artists, cultural entrepreneurs, students, and mandarins are co-located in the same space where reviews and communication channels are made. Cultural tastes are shaped and magnified by business and political interests. Institutionally, the city hosts the clusters of universities, think tanks, international organizations, and the government research bodies which had developed sophisticated networks of information flows and knowledge sharing, to extent that it has an indisputable regional identity as the modernised Chinese way of life, as the example of living thick cultural heritage into modern life within the context of global connections. The recent establishment of UNESCO International Centre for Creativity and Sustainability in Beijing is just another endorsement on this regional identity of Heritage-Modernity, the East and the West.

Symbolically, the city is recognised as the place where ideas of Chinese modernisation are shared, debated, and decisions are made; the open space where intellectuals, activists, political parties, and foreign powers meet and share the same time and space for communication, debates, and association. The co-presence of elite universities, research institutes, think tanks, artistic and intellectual heavyweights, ministerial mandarins in the western and north-western part of the city create the high-level place with the support of cultural infrastructures to make ideas being articulated, mediated, and being listened by the people of influence. The city's institutions of memories, enshrined in the forbidden city, the museums, the libraries, the theatres, and the academies, become the silent context and stage where innovations on art forms and content can be proposed and put into practice. A detailed analysis of Beijing's creative capital can be expanded into the network structures of creative ecosystems, and how these creative ecosystems can be supported or limited by the institutional structures that characterize the regional culture of Beijing.

Conclusion

How can we draw lessons from the analysis of Beijing's creative capital? The critical point is that a theory of creative capital is about the content and the forms of cultural production activities

at the same time. The discussion on the content of artistic productions, such as the cultural/aesthetic meanings, the social values, the economic values etc., have been often separated by the forms of art (literature, film, painting, poetry, design, music, etc.), which creates a constant dilemma for the theorizing project of art management – either to focus on the cultural meaning (pure theory, the art-for-art's sake), or on the process of cultural production (the business management side, the industry, the intellectual property and its associated value chains, the ecosystems etc.). An analysis on the creative capital potential of Beijing reveals that the forms of artistic productions can be universally synthesised by understanding the philosophical core of what modernity is and how art expressions articulate such meanings of modernity in economic and industrial terms. Such synthesis should address the challenges of heritage and modernity that are enshrined in the daily life of creative cities, and provide an important opportunity to theorize 'creative cities' in the line of Danto's 'artworlds', Bourdieu's sociology of taste, and Becker's thesis of "Art as Collective Actions" (1974). This analysis can only be done by developing a multi-level framework on the activities of cultural productions: the everyday practice, the institutional nexus, and the modernity reflections. Secondly, the development of creative city is not just about policies that incentivise cultural entrepreneurship or creating new industrial parks that contribute to the competitiveness of cities. Rather, the thesis of creative city focuses strategically on the quality and wellbeing of city life, which is predominantly about the cultural progress of learning, networking community building, and social movements, about how the future cities can provide infrastructure that is focused on the content of aesthetic meanings. The theory of creative capital provides an opportunity for urban planners, policy-makers, and practitioners (1) to address the practical challenges of urban regeneration by tapping into the strength of art and aesthetics; (2) to appreciate the historical legacy of the urban culture by bridging the past with the future.

The theoretical framework of creative capital can be regarded as the beginning of continuous research efforts to uncover the significance of creative cities for future cities. Future research should aim to address a number of important questions whose answers remain largely unclear. For example, we still know little about the patterns of social ties in the space of creativity in Chinese cities, and how such patterns of social networks are associated with the institutional structures in the Chinese space of creativity, and the Chinese ways of interpreting modernity. We know little about the corresponding relationships between the patterns and meanings of social ties (social relations), the institutional arrangements (regional systems of creativity?), and the abstract level aesthetic ideals of artistic and cultural productions, or whether such corresponding relationship can change across time and places, in China or other countries. These theoretical curiosities will be the future research agenda of creative capital, and we look forward to generating more insightful understandings on the space of creativity, and ways to contribute to the discourses on contemporary critique of modernity.

Notes

- 1 In response, many business corporations nowadays are investing resources and efforts to become more mission-driven, instead of profit- or share-shareholder driven. Corporations successful at retaining a large pool of talents and human capital tend to be those elite groups that have clearly articulated their agenda of "changing the world into a better place" (The Silicon Valley groups like Google, Facebook have been particularly strategic in combining such mission with business success). The trend can be interpreted as an adaptive tactic of the business world to accept the fact that in a future economy of innovation and creativity, corporate loyalty is in crisis unless the employees believe the value they create stretch far beyond the accounting books and stock market dynamics.
- 2 For example, a prominent cultural economist David Throsby (2010) defined cultural capital as "an asset, tangible or intangible, which embodies or yields cultural value in addition to whatever economic values

- it embodies or yields". We believe this definition of capital is a bit narrow in the sense that it is too much objectified perhaps in measurement of economic/monetary terms, to the extent that it overlooks the dynamic historic process of accumulation and the social structure that give rise to the particular potentiality of change (Bourdieu, 1986) that is the intrinsic value of capital.
- 3 In fact, the detachment of symbol from the meanings it claims to represent is exactly the point made explicit and artistically re-created by the postmodernist culture, which has no universal doctrine of aesthetic theories but are unified in criticizing the fallacy of "the project of modernity" and its associated "metanarratives" (Bauman, 1988; Habermas, 1983; Harvey, 1990). A further exploration on the impact of postmodernism on the formation and function of creative capital is relevant and highly interesting for understanding the relationship between culture and future cities, yet beyond the scope of this paper.
 - 4 It is notable that Mao Zedong worked as a librarian in the Peking University in 1910s, living and working at the heart of the intellectual milieu of the "New Cultural Movement". He was influenced by Li Dazhao, professor at PKU, the translator of '*Das Capital*' into Chinese, and the leading founder of CPC in 1921.

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