

SHAPING CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SPACE: BEIJING AS A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Supported by research and policy reform, China's creative and cultural industries have seen explosive growth in recent years and this rapid expansion is anticipated to have an unprecedented and far-reaching influence on the future of the country and its economy. Researchers from Cultural Development Institute (CDI) based at The Communication University of China (CUC) and The College of Fine Arts (COFA) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) present recently generated data and discuss Beijing as a case study to provide an informed overview of the recent proliferation of art parks and creative clusters in the city.

Keywords: Creative and cultural industries, Beijing, China, urban space, creative clusters, art parks

Introduction

In the British Council report *Mapping the Creative Industries* Shelagh Wright, advisor to Britain's Creative and Cultural Economy Program, called for development strategies that, "...unleash the creative potential of all to respond to the far-reaching cultural, economic, social and technological shifts that we are living through" [1]. The report points to the crucial contribution mapping the cultural and creative economy can make at the interface between economics, technology and culture within a global context of increasing interconnectedness and complex challenges. This, Wright explains, "is shorthand for a whole series of analytic methods for collecting and presenting information on the range and scope of the creative industries" [2]. In a media saturated world in need of innovative ideas, the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) have been seen by many as offering the potential for creating new jobs, new economic drivers, new forms of wealth and well-being - and crucially, new cultures.

Although the emergence of CCI is widely acknowledged to have occurred in Britain, the vision has spread to diverse parts of the world, with particularly enthusiastic interest coming from the Asian region. Singapore, Korea, and both Mainland China and Hong Kong have all developed detailed analyses of their economies through this lens. Such initiatives have resulted in a range of policy mechanisms, including local economic development strategies, national industry policy and cultural policy implementation. In most instances this has been based on the UK model [3] rather than the more contested "Creative Class" model proposed by theorist Richard Florida [4]. Florida's premise that fostering an elite 'creative class' generates positive urban re-generation hasn't gained traction in China for example. The UK model embraced in Asia defines CCI as industries having individual creativity at their core. This has typically included: advertising, architecture, the art and antique market, crafts, design, fashion, film and video, the games industry, music, performing arts, publishing, software developers and television and radio. Naturally this listing has attracted "considerable debate" especially from those who argue that most, if not all, new products and services have "...elements of creativity and intellectual property embedded" and therefore the label 'creative' is somewhat arbitrary [5]. In China, creative industries have a much broader interpretation as any industry that is dynamic and moving forward in an innovative manner [6]. The aforementioned list therefore more correctly should be referred to as 'cultural industries' in the Chinese context.

Acknowledging those precedents, concerns, and differences, this paper describes current developments in China where CCI have attracted considerable attention from a government wishing to quantify its economic contribution and potential for shaping urban space to forge innovation and new industries. Co-written by researchers at The Cultural Development Institute (CDI) at The Communication University of China (CUC) in Beijing and The College of Fine Art (COFA) at The University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney, we begin with an overview of China's embrace of the CCI as an important economic driver. Then, based on extensive quantitative data gathering carried out by CDI, we discuss this influence in reshaping urban space in Beijing. The concerns and focus of research in China means

this data is focused on economics. CDI researchers drawing on their own original research discuss economic statistics and describe the broader strategic development underway in Beijing to establish itself as a "global city" [7], a goal seen as an important milestone in Beijing's development. The paper concludes with their observations about the challenges faced by Beijing in order to achieve this goal.

From 'Made in China' to 'Created in China'

In China the CCI are receiving significant support from the government due to the recognition that the industries generative value that is of benefit to the society, and their crucial potential as a driver of the economy. In Beijing and Shanghai, massive material and political resources have been devoted to what leaders term "*Chuangyi jingji*" (the creative economy) as a key strategic element for advancing urban development. As such, the cultural and creative sector is increasingly playing an important role in China's development strategy. China's Premiere, Hu Jintao, famously announced in 2006 his vision for the country to make the transition from "made in China" to "designed in China" [8]. Six years on, 2011 marked the year of the commencement of China's Twelfth Five-Year Plan [9] and, as described in *The Yearbook of China's Cultural Industries* 2011, this represents in terms of policy development, "...a new starting point in history" [10]. The preceding two years have seen a ground-breaking push for the cultural industries across China to become, "...the new forces driving the local economic growth, and gradually to be turned into the pillar industries of the national economy of the country" [11]. Supported by a raft of policies designed to promote and rapidly grow CCI related expansion, this is anticipated in government circles to have, "...an unprecedentedly far-reaching influence on the future of the country" [12].

On the 23rd of July 2010 the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China established the target of developing the full range of cultural industries in China as pillar industries of the national economy [13]. The impact of the changes has been swift, with local and regional authorities across China responding quickly to government directives to implement the policy, economic triggers and create suitable conditions to expedite rapid

change. The results, in economic terms, suggest cultural industry sectors in China are experiencing what has been described by The Institute of Cultural Industries in Beijing as “explosive growth”. CUC researchers responsible for *The Yearbook of China’s Cultural Industries* cite economic figures indicating revenues for the year exceeding some 953.6 billion *yuan*, with numerous industries (focusing particularly on the film, radio and television, press and publishing, new media, design and gaming sectors) exceeding previous trade records and experiencing higher levels of new enterprise entering the market [7]. The data published alludes to, “...the huge potential and bright prospect of the development of the emerging cultural industries of strategic importance...” [14].

However, soft power, especially in terms of cultural innovation, and the coordinated development of economy, society and environment, is urgently needed to refine Beijing’s comprehensive influence and to realise its goal as an intelligent innovative, global city by 2050.

How to shape and change city culture? The case of Beijing

Following urban renewal strategies emerging from the United Kingdom and Western Europe, the “creative city” has become a key trend for city development globally, introducing important ways of thinking about how to regenerate the city [15]. Focusing on the clustering characteristics of the cultural and creative industry, creative spaces are seen in China as a new pattern for urban renaissance that leverages the dynamics of creativity and innovation. As a form of spatial organisation, urban cultural space forms an essential part of public life and plays an important role in guiding the construction of first-tier world cities. Beijing has therefore set the goal of establishing itself as “a cultural urban centre” and is working to establish itself as a significant CCI node in the global network. In order to thrive, urban cultural space not only needs a healthy external environment, but also suitable city locations, a tribe of creative professional inhabitants, and a suitable policy framework and development processes. Only with the appropriate internal and external prerequisites can the urban cultural space be fostered and expanded.

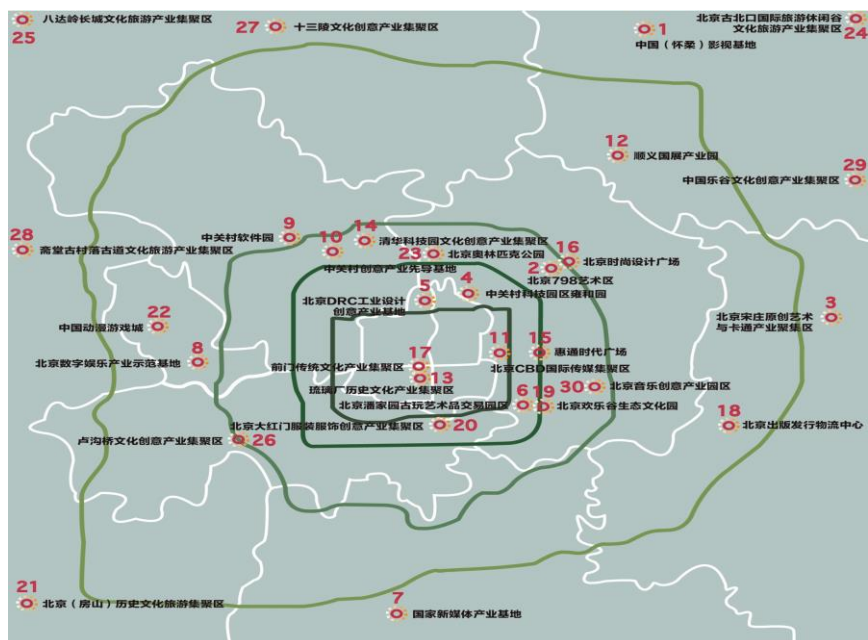


Fig 1: The spatial distribution of Beijing municipal-level cultural and creative industry gathering areas or zones. © The Culture Development Institute, The Communication University of China, Beijing.

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| <p>1: China Movie Capital</p> <p>2: 798 Art District</p> <p>3: Songzhuang Artist Village</p> <p>4: Zhongguancun Science and Technology Park</p> <p>5: DRC Industrial Design & Creative Industries Park</p> <p>6: Panjia Yuan Antique Market</p> <p>7: National New Media Industries Park</p> <p>8: Beijing Digital Entertainment Industries Park</p> <p>9: Zhongquan Chun Software Park</p> <p>10: Zhongquan Chun Creative Industries Park</p> <p>11: The Beijing CBD International Media Gathering Area</p> <p>12: Shunyi Exhibition Industry Park</p> <p>13: Liulichang Cultural Industry Cluster</p> <p>14: Tsinghua Science Park Cultural Creative Industry Gathering Zone</p> <p>15: Huitong Times Square</p> <p>16: Beijing Fashion Design Square</p> <p>17: Qianmen Traditional Cultural Industry Cluster</p> <p>18: Beijing Publishing Logistics Center</p> <p>19: Beijing Happy Valley Ecological Cultural Park</p> <p>20: Beijing Dahongmen Clothing Creative Industry Agglomeration Area</p> | <p>21: Beijing (Fangshan) Historical and Cultural Tourism Zone</p> <p>22: Chinese Animation Game City</p> <p>23: Beijing Olympic Park</p> <p>24: Beijing international Tourism and Leisure Valley of Gubeikou Cultural Tourism Industry Cluster District</p> <p>25: Badaling Great Wall Tourism Industry Cluster District</p> <p>26: Lugou Bridge Cultural Creative Industry Gathering Area</p> <p>27: Ming Dynasty Tombs Cultural Creative Industry Gathering Area</p> <p>28: Ancient village road cultural tourism industry cluster district</p> <p>29: China Music Valley Cultural Creative Industry Gathering Zone</p> <p>30: Beijing Music Creative Industry Park</p> |
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After decades of rapid development Beijing has now accumulated enough of a material base to credibly aspire to become a first-tier “global city”. Two key factors can be considered to have contributed to current perceptions of Beijing as an international metropolis. The first is the Olympic Games in 2008, an event that greatly advanced Beijing’s global standing, modernisation processes, and international competitiveness. The second is its strong performance during the global economic crisis.

In 2009, the proportion of Beijing’s tertiary industries sector reached about

75%, very near to the global city standard baseline. The passenger throughput of Beijing International Airport has now surpassed 65 million per annum making it the world's fourth largest airport. According to railway and transportation planning authorities, Beijing's railway will cover about 561 kilometres by 2015. Therefore, in terms of its urbanisation, rates of employment in tertiary industries and infrastructure building, Beijing is now reaching the stage of a developed city, having finished the framework construction required of a modern international city.

As the key strategic emerging industry supporting the capital's economic development, the CCI in Beijing is contributing significantly to wide ranging and rapidly developing prosperity. The added economic value of CCI in 2010 is estimated at 169.7 billion yuan, rising by 152% from 2005, and equating to a GDP ratio of 12%. In 2012, large-scale CCI clusters certified by Beijing municipal government reported achieving revenue of 116.16 billion yuan, representing year-on-year growth of 11.8%. The proportion of the city's income attributable to the CCI is 15.7%, and employees in the sector reached 151 thousand people – a year-on-year growth of 6.1%.

Based on this background, Beijing is useful as a case study for understanding the evolution of urban cultural space, the impact of the cultural and creative industries, impact mechanisms due to diverse cultural resource types, and the different stages of development and the associated spatial organisation. Between 2006 and 2011 thirty cultural and creative industry zones were established and certified by Beijing's municipal government [16] officially to promote the whole industry.

Beijing's Cultural and Creative Industry Parks

Why should the cultural and creative industry parks be developed in Beijing? What should be considered first - the economic benefits and promotion of GDP, or the improvement of the city's cultural creativity and a focus on development of an innovation-oriented city? So far as the vigorous development of art zones in China is concerned, these cultural and creative spaces can provide a good environment for people with excellent talents to promote the development of a cultural creative industry. Hence, it is urgent and important to investigate decision-making methods and operation-

al modes in cultural and creative industry spaces.

In its early development stage during the 1990s, Beijing's cultural creative space was characterised by sites such as Liulichang Painting and Calligraphy Street, Panjiayuan Antiques Market and Nanluoguxiang area. These sites have long histories and rich cultural connections to the historical heritage of the old downtown area of Beijing, which made them places of interest for tourists and also a space of leisure for local residents.

More importantly, these areas became a breeding ground for the cultural and creative activities of actors, directors, screenwriters and other artists, bringing together creative personalities and forming a catalyst for the formulation of ideas. Unsurprisingly these circumstances have led to a burgeoning collective creativity. The material spaces of cultural heritage have become a hinge for creative ideas with individuals forming social networks that actually become the precondition for the creative process.

Since 2000, the development of art zones in Beijing has been vigorous, with 798 Art Zone (located on the site of the earlier 798 Factory) and Songzhuang Original Art Cluster representing typical examples. This has accelerated the development of cultural industries and contributed greatly to building a large contingent of talented people across the field of culture. There has also been an equal or growing emphasis on and awareness of green industries and lifestyles. Thanks to its convenient transportation, low cost of living and good social environment, Songzhuang, one of the small towns situated in east of Beijing, has attracted artists to work and live there. Therefore, Songzhuang has become the most important base for artists in the city and has informed and influenced the whole developing background of cultural and creative industries. The formation of Songzhuang, which has grown gradually from small-scale to large-scale, is a typical case for studies on the art industries' centralising features and could suggest a framework for cultural creative industry development in other cities and rural areas.

Landmark projects such as the "City Originality Complex" established by Beijing Cable 8 Group have been conceptualised in the form of an "urban oasis" or "cultural community" intended to fuse media, design, fashion and art enterprises to become a hub for the generation and realization of creative ideas. By August 2012, Beijing Cable 8 Group,

the city's the first park operator had established eight cultural and creative clusters in succession with a total business area of 110,000 square meters. There are 300 large-scale cultural and creative firms assigned to the parks whose gross revenue has reached 17 billion yuan, generating taxes of 1 billion yuan for the city. These cultural and creative clusters have become symbolic of the industry in Beijing. They are viewed positively because of the improvement they have made to the physical environment and the contribution they have made to the cultural life of the city.

Since 2010 due to the ongoing integration of culture and technology, many traditional industrial clusters and high-tech parks are undergoing a transition to include newer forms of industry, including digital publishing, mobile multimedia, animation and game design, as well as cultural tourism. Examples of this emerging creative industry base include Zhongguancun Science and Technology Park, Shijingshan Digital Entertainment Industry Base, the cultural and creative hub Tsinghua Science Park, and The National New Media Industry Base in the Daxing district of Beijing. The "creative factories in Hutong alleys" concept cultivated by Zhongguancun Science and Technology Park has attracted more than 500 small and medium sized cultural and creative enterprises. By breaking through the original science and technology enterprise incubator model, the growing base of new cultural enterprises has integrated multiple functions of business service, entertainment and leisure, creative tourism. Furthermore, they provide useful templates for further cultural and creative development of Beijing through this internal renewal cycle.

To conclude, the cultural and creative enterprises described are concentrated in certain urban areas with proximity to creative industry parks or regions that are being established around the city of Beijing. Although the Beijing case confirms the mutual influence of CCI and urban space, it equally suggests the potential for further policy adjustments and the need for further research. CUC researchers hope the data gathered to date may give some guidance to Beijing and other cities on how to shape creative cities with a view to cultivating the cultural and creative industry clusters and parks through further space development and judicious regulation. This should be done in a manner that transforms the traditional industry park, and its mono business model, in order to attract inno-

vation orientated enterprises to settle in and create new opportunities for the cultural and creative industry to thrive.

Future prospects and challenges

However, the prospects for this are not yet clear because there remain many problems in China. The goal of using the development of cultural and creative industry to drive GDP growth is difficult and may not be achieved in a short period. Moreover, there are fears that constructing cultural and creative industry parks blindly may accelerate the formation of real estate bubbles, which can produce negative impacts on many aspects of the economy and culture and can even threaten social stability. The simple construction of the parks cannot in itself meet the multi-level development needs of the cultural and creative industry. What China requires is a clear framework to understand and analyse the creative economy so it may formulate explicit policies.

From a longer-term, global perspective, Beijing still has a long way to go to before it can become a developed global city like New York, Paris and Sydney. The city policy makers clearly understand the city's predicament. Beijing per capita GDP is still quite low and the city lacks appeal to many international organisations. As a cultural centre, historically and in a contemporary sense, its cultural influence still remains rooted in traditional areas and the city lacks world-renowned cultural organisations and cultural activities.

Although the city's science and technology research and development capability has reached an advanced level, when compared with other global cities, Beijing lags behind in independent intellectual property rights and additionally confronts huge pressures in coordinating appropriate development of population, resources and environment.

The arduous task for Beijing is to know how to build itself as a real innovative global city. Beijing authorities are planning to achieve this goal through the following procedures. The priority is to further develop the Zhongguancun Science Park to establish an international research and innovation centre to help drive the city's creative development. Secondly, Beijing will move to improve its economic openness and level of internationalisation by expanding global communications services, providing a stable business environment to interna-

tional organisations, and encouraging favourable conditions for attracting international talent. Third, in building a more livable city, Beijing has the opportunity to perfect its urban infrastructure, the social pension system, medical treatment, and urban greening. The latter creates the opportunity for construction of a low-carbon city. In this respect Beijing will require rigorous research into the design and implementation of low-carbon transportation, a recycling economy, low-carbon community development, energy conservation and construction, renewable energy, low-carbon city space and comprehensive utilisation of water resources.

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