Making Cultural Cities in Asia
Mobility, assemblage, and the politics of aspirational urbanism

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Introduction

Tim Oakes and June Wang

This book explores the practices and policies of making cultural/creative cities in Asia. Such practices and policies have become widespread, from international film festivals in places like Busan, South Korea, and an urban renaissance driven by the nostalgic invention of imperial culture in Xi’an, China, to the urban promotion of national culture in Malaysia and the competing aspirations of Singapore and Hong Kong to be Asia’s cultural hubs. Urban cultural policies in Asia have, in other words, gone far beyond the objective of promoting local culture industries. Culture and creativity are now instruments serving the ‘global city’ ambitions of Asia. The wave of cultural city-making has become one of the most influential urban developmental strategies worldwide, as cities search for new directions to counteract their decaying Fordist production systems (Castells, 2000; Scott, 2006, 2007). More importantly, these strategies demonstrate an effort to build an ‘overall structural competitiveness’ (Jessop and Sum, 2000) in the global urban network. The emergence of an urban cultural policy agenda – and the restructuring that often results – is a highly politicized process with often contradictory but very real material impacts. Any study of the politics of cultural-driven urban development must be put within this globalizing context, in which ‘elsewhere is right here as much as it is over there’ in the policy world (Cochrane, 2011, xi). Innovative ideas, fast policies, and ‘best-practice’ models have travelled through global networks established by supranational organizations and populated by mayors, consultants, and other key actors.

Taken as a whole, then, the case studies collected here consider Asian cultural/creative city-making in the context of global policy mobility. The authors – most of whom are Asia-based and represent the fields of geography, sociology, urban planning, communication, cultural studies, media studies, comparative politics, and urban studies – are particularly interested in the political tensions and social dynamics that emerge when Asian cities attempt to become ‘cultural’ or ‘creative’ cities. The chapters collected in Part I focus on policy-making practices themselves, while those in Part II explore more of the place-based social implications of these practices. As a whole, the chapters explore the politics of cultural/creative city from the aspect of policy-making. As Margit Mayer points out in the volume’s final chapter, the negotiation of creative producers with policy remains a topic about which a great deal of research is still needed. As more and
more cultural workers in Asian cities enter the ranks of the precariously, this volume seeks to establish a benchmark from which additional research may delve deeper into the hidden geographies and histories of cultural production in urban Asia as governments and markets strive to promote and brand cities by instrumentalizing artistic and creative production.

Since it is with ‘culture’ that cultural city policy-making is ostensibly concerned, we begin this introduction with a brief consideration of the disconnect between critical understandings of culture as an everyday human phenomenon, on the one hand, and cultural/creative city policy-making, on the other. We find that putting the latter in conversation with the former requires a recognition of what we might call the postcolonial moment of contemporary urban studies in Asia. Following this, we explore the concepts of policy mobility and, more specifically, assemblage, that help frame the case studies that follow. Finally, we examine the question of urban cultural policy-making in the political context of state authoritarianism that dominates most of the case studies in the volume. This examination compels us to raise questions about how the ‘right to the city’ might be framed as a struggle over cultural city-making in Asia.

Making cultural cities? Culture and the postcolonial moment of Asian urban studies

What does it mean to make a cultural city? It is important to recognize from the outset that all cities are already cultural. They have their ways of life, their distinctive rhythms, their own practices and rituals, their own tribes and territories. And all cities have their own creativity that emerge from the unique and ever-shifting energies generated by the diversity of their inhabitants. Were we to consider the question of cultural cities today, the literary critic and theorist Raymond Williams might have observed that the culture and creativity of the city emerge from the everyday and ordinary struggles of people making a living and making sense of the ever-changing world swirling around them. The urban theorist Henri Lefebvre would have shared in this sentiment, noting the social transformative and revolutionary potential of creativity embedded in the everyday rhythms of urban dwelling. Neither Williams nor Lefebvre would have recognized as a separate ‘class’ those whom Richard Florida (2002) has told us, however vaguely, now constitute the creative potential of a city.

What, then, does it mean to make something that already exists? At issue here is not the question of cities making culture in an urban ‘cultural desert’, though this is often the conceit that governments and consultants like Florida concoct to justify their policies. As Wang’s chapter in this volume observes (Chapter 8), the city of Shenzhen was often referred to as a ‘cultural desert’ (woebotus shamo) before government initiatives transformed it into a UNESCO-recognized Global ‘City of Design’. Such arboresque views of culture – a delicate flower to be cultivated in the money-grubbing environment of global production systems – prop up an ideology of culture as ‘civilisation’. It was precisely this ideology that theorists like Williams and Lefebvre sought to expose and discredit. At issue, then, is the question of culture and creativity as instruments, representations, resources, and articles of faith in the ‘worlding’ ambitions of powerful urban actors.

Ironically, the more successful cities have been at realizing their worlding ambitions – often resulting in gentrification, real estate speculation, and increased consumption – the more difficult many residents have found it to maintain the ordinary cultural rhythms of their daily lives. The ambitions of powerful actors to make their cities into globally significant centres of culture and creativity have often erased the very conditions within which creativity and cultural production tend to thrive. In his study of the creative economy in Beijing, for example, Chou (2012, 198) argues that ‘the construction of cultural space in Beijing is a state-sponsored effort that emphasizes the construction of infrastructure and an institutional framework for the world-city building, but to a great extent neglects the organic construction of the artistic network’.

Lim’s chapter on Taipei in this volume (Chapter 2) makes a similar observation.

This immediately raises questions, then, about the nature of ‘organic’ cultural or creative production itself. For many would argue that culture always finds a way of emerging from within the cracks in urban planning and the contradictions of urban life. Culture and creativity also look different in different places, as astutely observed, for example, by Luger, Wang, and Ren in this volume (Chapters 13, 8, and 11). In China, as Visser (2010, 67) has observed, the sometimes absurd fetishisms of urban planning have themselves inspired artistic scrutiny and cultural contestation. ‘Artists’, she writes, ‘have been particularly sensitive to the fact that the frenzied, contingent, and opportunist development of Chinese cities creates major social and political ruptures rather than a predictable order evolving toward higher degrees of civility’. The result has been cultural production outside and unpredicted by the plans of the state or the market. ‘Art’, ‘culture’, and ‘creativity’ get caught up in the top-down governing of cities, forcing us to think about (hidden) ways the aesthetic might still remain a site of resistance, and bottom-up claims of identity and space. Thus, Carolyn Carter (2012, 17) has observed that, Rancière’s understanding of the aesthetic regime recognizes diverse cultural projects in the world today whose products and material outcomes are not readily identified as ‘art’ in a public sphere that has been socialized by normative state discourses of ‘creative industry’, that is, an expectation of ‘culture’ in saleable forms.

Who, then, is a creative producer in the world today and to what extent are they included in (or excluded from) ‘creative city’ policies? In this volume we consider how cities are trying to make themselves into cultural cities as a way of enhancing their dreams of world city status, their worlding ambitions, their aspirational urbanism. Kong and O’Connor (2009) have argued that creativity tends to be understood by planners and policy-makers as an input or a design attribute. Cho (2010) has similarly noted the South Korean state’s instrumental appropriation of ‘Hong-dae culture’ in its efforts to promote Seoul as a world-class city during the
lead-up to the 2002 Football World Cup. But in addition to the appropriation of culture for aspirational urbanism, we consider the city as a cultural space, where people negotiate these worlding ambitions in their everyday lives. There is a precariousness to these cultural spaces and to the everyday production of culture, but there is also resilience, adaptation, and the fact that culture is always being produced in multiple — though often hidden and unacknowledged — ways. Branding-oriented appropriations of culture and creativity neglect the complex social formations that are productive of actual and emergent creativities. Those social formations do exist all over Asia, but they are more often than not treated as obstacles to creative city policy, not as social phenomena to be nurtured. We are therefore interested in this volume in considering cultural/creative city policy-making within the particular social, economic, political, and cultural contexts of the cities where this policy-making occurs. While this interest may, at the outset, appear banal, it bears emphasizing given the extent to which much of the boosterish work, like Florida’s, on cultural and creative cities seems to occur as if in a geographical and even (ironically) cultural vacuum. There remains, in other words, a distinct need for research that places urban policy-making firmly in the particular spaces within which it occurs.

Spaces need not be delimited to the enclosed territory of particular cities, however. Our focus on policy mobility — discussed further below — insists on a networked understanding of space, where practices, actors, ideas, and objects form assemblages of cultural/creative policy-making in particular places and at particular moments. While we highlight the general Asian spaces in which such assemblages occur in our case studies, we reject the notion that there is something called the ‘Asian city’ characterized by some distinct and essential cultural content. Instead, Asia is important to us as a relational container, in which mobile policies and ideas about urban planning, ‘best practices’, and experimental policies are increasingly being circulated within Asia rather than between Asia and the ‘West’. Acts of citation and inter-referencing among Asia-based policy actors, in other words, are increasingly inter-Asian phenomena themselves.

Making this observation signals a recognition of the postcolonial space that urban studies in Asia has carved out for itself. Our focus on making cultural/creative cities in Asia is meant to question a narrative that seeks simply to find the ‘Western’ origins of Asian urban development. Such a project reveals many otherwise critical political-economic studies of Asian urbanism. Such narratives, as Edensor and Jayne (2012) have noted, tend to view non-Western cities in terms of their ‘problems’, making it difficult to understand the ways in which non-Western cities are ‘creative’ on their own terms. Postcolonial urbanism, Ananya Roy (2011, 310) argues, demonstrates how seemingly original templates of modernism, developmentalism, and neoliberalism emerge through global circulation and experiments. They are, in other words, thoroughly hybrid, thoroughly corrupted. This hybridity and corruption, Roy goes on to argue, suggests an ‘unstable’ space of inter-Asian betweenness where notions of Asia travel, fuelling urban experiments and providing a ‘citational structure’ for urban experiments throughout the continent and beyond. But she is also careful to point out that attempts to contain such urban experiments within a framework defined by an essential ‘Asian’ cultural content would be misguided. Iterations of a cultural ‘Asia’ in Asian urban policy-making, she writes, ‘generate a surplus that cannot be easily contained within familiar frames of urban success and globality’ (Roy, 2011, 331).

We hope, therefore, to add our voices to Roy’s (2009) ‘new geographies of theory’ by offering empirical evidence for Castells’s (2000, 380) claim that ‘the global city phenomenon cannot be reduced to a few urban cores at the top of the hierarchy’. The Asian city, this volume collectively suggests, should be viewed as a (cultural) policy generator, not just (cultural) policy recipient. This is something, of course, that urban studies scholars working in Asia have been observing for some time. As Bunnell and Das (2010, 282) put it in their study of the policy relationship between Kuala Lumpur and Hyderabad: ‘Rather than presuming that innovations and models for city development originate in the West, the KL–Hyderabad case unsettles North American-centered or Atlanticist imaginaries.’ That said, it is also important to recognize — as Lin’s chapter on Taipei, Das’s chapter on Hyderabad, and Bowen’s chapter on Seoul demonstrate (Chapters 2, 3, and 5) — that ‘Western’ policy models remain highly influential in the aspirational urbanism of Asian cities. Yet these authors also insist on viewing these cities not as sites of local ‘variations’ of ‘universal’ Western models, but as locations where mobile policies are always already remade as they travel within the networked space of global urbanism.

Policy mobility and geographies of assemblage

By now, a significant critical intervention within urban policy studies has established itself as the field of policy mobility. Conventional studies of urban policy transformation have tended to focus on policy as an always already complete package that is transferred from one location to another by the rational and voluntary appropriation of ‘best practices’ by policy actors who are, for the most part, spatially decontextualized and socio-culturally disembedded. The idea of policy mobility seeks to suggest an alternative approach, in which the focus on rational policy actors is replaced by spatially situated institutions with, as Clarke (2012, 27) observes, particular ‘path-dependencies, dominant paradigms, power relations, etc.’. This institutional situatedness of policy-making is something with which the chapters in Part I of this volume are particularly concerned. Justin O’Connor and Xin Gu (Chapter 1), for example, explore the complex roles of cultural intermediaries in Shanghai’s emerging creative industry clusters to point out the unexpected and locally embedded characteristics of creative/cultural city policies. Clarke further argues that, ‘notions of static, fully formed, complete policy packages are replaced with notions of learning, translation, and mobility’. This means that policies are in a constant state of transformation, rather than arriving in cities as ‘replicas of policies from elsewhere’. They are always being deterritorialized and reterritorialized, making any efforts to find ‘global convergence’ around successful policy packages
(like cultural/creative cities) a fool's errand. Instead of focusing on the package, then, such an approach compels us to focus on the networks of connection, exchange, and circulation within which such 'packages' travel and transform.

That network, as Peck (2011, 43) reminds us, is inter-urban. It is one in which officials often engage in what Clarke (2012, 35) calls 'policy tourism' -- the practice of policy professionals undertaking 'a brief and guided engagement with a mythologised, exoticised, spectacularised city'. Popular destinations have included London, Bilbao, and Barcelona, while in Asia Dubai and Singapore have emerged as more recent meccas. But mobility also occurs when popular and successful cities become highly mediatized and, as a result, deterritorialized from their spatial contexts. Such cities dominate broadband and broadcast channels, and international print media outlets, and they compel planners and officials to compare their own cities to these deterritorialized ideals. A process of reterritorialization follows in which new policy is produced from an 'original' which does not really exist.

A focus on policy mobility also signals a challenge to the apolitical quality of much of the work conducted on urban policy transfer. There are at least two aspects to this. First, there is the tendency to reduce urban development and planning to a project of technical fixes. This tendency is enhanced when policy is treated as a complete package of best practices that diffuses out and down the urban hierarchy. As Clarke (2012) argues, such fixes are often conveyed as populist 'win–win' scenarios for urban residents, governments, and commercial interests. Second is the way urban policy-making can abolish the political domain and vacate the public sphere. By focusing on spatially situated institutions and how they shape policy practice and implementation, work on policy mobility tends to refocus our attention on the political contexts swirling around urban policymaking.

One result of apolitical and aspatial approaches in the study of urban policy-making in Asia has been the tendency to reproduce a long-established dichotomy of innovation versus imitation. Asian states have been repeatedly accused of the latter, from nineteenth-century claims of Japan ‘apring’ the West in science and technology, to contemporary concerns about China’s knock-off shanzhai economy and its persistent violation of intellectual property rights (see Chapter 8). The innovation–imitation dichotomy thrives in the study of Asian cultural/creative city policy-making as well, and it tends to result from an unproblematic view of policy transfer. That is, when policy is viewed as a travelling package, it is easy to view new adopters as merely imitating or appropriating some other place’s ideas and practices. Indeed, much of urban development in Asia appears, on the surface, to be highly imitative. New cities are being built as if from an off-the-shelf kit, a ‘city in a box’ (Oosterman, 2012), so that the new towns of Guangzhou, Seoul, and Kuala Lumpur look much the same as those in Astana, Dubai, and Baku.

In viewing such citational urbanism from the perspective of policy mobility, however, such ‘generic cities’ cannot be taken as merely imitative, but need to be understood as being produced through institutions that are situated spatially within networks and places, and that such situatedness is conditional of particular political, social, and cultural outcomes in different cities. That said, there is clearly a tendency in these citational practices of city planning and policy-making that reduces culture and creativity to an aesthetic image or design attribute, reminding us of Kong and O’Connor’s (2009) critique of the ‘creative city’ idea as culturally repressive. This issue will be discussed further in the next section.

A focus on policy mobility suggests an affinity with the idea of assemblage. The recent proliferation of uses of this term in a wide variety of fields and contexts, passing a wide variety of definitions makes any overview account problematic. We view assemblage as a largely descriptive approach emerging out of loosely related bodies of work, including actor network theory, non-representational thinking, and ‘new materialist’ geographies. Assemblage has been called on to describe in non-linear and non-hierarchical ways emergent and temporary collectives of human and non-human elements. An assemblage might then be thought of as the composition of diverse elements into a provisional socio-spatial formation. While little justice can be done to the nuances of assemblage in this brief introduction, it is nevertheless important to point out some elements that resonate with a policy mobility approach to cultural/creative cities. As suggested by McFarlane (2009) and Anderson and McFarlane (2011), these elements include emergence, multiplicity, and indeterminacy. The term ‘seeks to blur divisions of social–material, near–far and structure–agency’ (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011, 124).

Putting assemblage in conversation with policy mobility might thus view culture/creative cities policy-making as an assemblage of spatial and temporal elements (rather than, say, a linear transfer of a policy package ‘down’ the global urban hierarchy). McCann and Ward (2011) observe that there is a tension between ‘policy as relational and dynamic’ and policy as ‘fixed and territorial’. Policy both travels and focuses on places. This quality of policy, they suggest, makes assemblage a potentially productive approach. They continue:

The concept derives from Deleuze and Guattari’s work and speaks not to the static arrangement of a set of parts, whether organized under some logic or collected randomly, but to ‘the process of arranging, organizing, fitting together . . . [where] an assemblage is a whole of some sort that expresses some identity and claims a territory’ (Wise 2005, 77; his emphasis). More strongly, ‘assemblages create territories. Territories are more than just spaces: they have a stake, a claim . . . Territories are not fixed for all time, nothing is always being made and unmade, reterritorialising and deterrioralising. This constant making and unmaking process is the same with assemblages: they are always coming together and moving apart.’

(McCann and Ward, 2011, xvii)

Such an approach compels McCann and Ward (2011, xvii) to argue that the policymaking literature ‘needs more empirical accounts of the struggles, practices, and representations that underpin urban–global relations and that assemble or territorialize global flows’.
In considering Ong’s (2011) argument that urban theory is dominated by the two dominant and sometimes intrinsically incompatible poles of political economy on the one hand and postcolonialism on the other, assemblage approaches appear to suggest an alternative. On the one hand, the political economy approach posits global networks of flows structured by capitalism. The postcolonial approach, on the other hand, tends to argue for a shift from an analytics of structure to an analytics of agency, rejecting the assumption of ‘universal laws’ established by global capitalism. Ong proposes a shift from the dualistic analytic of structure/agency – which dominates in both political-economic and postcolonial thinking – to the analytic of assemblage, viewing the city not as a fixed locality but as a node in a network of exchange, circulation, mobility. Within this network, she argues, modelling and inter-referencing occur, as well as new associations and solidarities.

The state, democracy, and the right to the city

As suggested earlier, critical scholarship on cultural/creative city policy-making has argued that projects designed to develop cultural and creative economies in cities often produce outcomes that are in fact detrimental to cultural or creative production. Gentrification is the most obvious example, and one discussed at length in Chatterjee’s chapter on the postindustrial transformation of Mumbai’s chawls (Chapter 14). But the precariness of cultural and creative production in Asian cities needs to be understood not just in terms of rising rents forcing ‘creative’ out of inner-city neighbourhoods. More fundamentally, the implementation of cultural and creative city development projects raises basic questions about the relationship between creativity and democracy, about creativity and access to urban space, about the role of creativity in political movements (such as the recent Occupy Central protests in Hong Kong; see Wong 2015), and about the extent to which cultural/creative city policy-making serves to reproduce state power.

It should not be surprising to observe – as Chou (2012), Chen (2012), and Zhang (2014) have – that cultural/creative city policy-making is sometimes not about promoting creativity at all, despite the sincere desires of planners and officials to incite the new Silicon Valley in their own city. The creative city is more often about making money, and attracting a certain demographic of young professionals, first as tourists, then as new residents. It is about investment, branding, and creating what Shepherd (2007) called ‘happy space’. Lefebvre would have said it is about creating state space, territorializing the city through the aesthetics of display and the rendering visible of the ‘arts zone’ or the ‘arts district’. Creativity, since its 1997 policy debut in the UK (Kong, 2014), is about producing a postindustrial growth engine for building a ‘global city’. If it was ever about cultivating and supporting creative producers, that moment in the arc of creative city policy has passed. ‘Gone is the emphasis on democratizing culture economies in favor of marginalized social groups,’ Peck (2011, 52) argues, creativity is now sold as an urban growth strategy, modeled on the achievements and lifestyles of a cosmopolitan elite. ‘The creative city is now a theme park, modelled on a free trade zone (Easterling, 2014); the creative city is now a ‘city in a box’ (Oosterman, 2012; de Kloet, 2014).

Thus, as Chen (2013, 283) found in her study of transnational place-making in Taipei, working creative city ambitions have had a suppressing effect on diverse forms of cultural production:

I have found that all official multicultural activities have disappeared in Taipei since 2008. There appears to have been no space left for multicultural and bottom-up ways of placemaking since then. Aiming to become a World City, Taipei has apparently turned its back on its largest foreign population. The true multicultural landscapes of Taipei have been sacrificed in the pursuit of aesthetic developmentalism with an ever growing number of consumer-oriented, cosmopolitan places.

Creative city policies, ‘smart cities’, and other top-down urban planning projects, for Sassen (2013), can be part of the elite and powerful forces that ‘deurbanize’ cities, smoothing out the chaotic diversity that breeds creative production.

Yet this gloomy outlook may be premature, since it probably gives more credit than deserved to the effectiveness of creative city policy-making to produce significant developmental impacts. Cities all over the world retain their un Governable spaces of creativity. Recognizing this, Sassen (2013) insists that the city is like the only significant space in which the powerless can still make history. As Julie Ren argues in her chapter in this volume (Chapter 11), creativity can be a powerful political resource for artists precisely because it is so highly valued by planners and officials. And T.C. Chang (Chapter 6) outlines the Singapore state’s relatively successful efforts to promote creativity by zoning, districting, and developing new spaces for creative production, even though such spaces are seldom used up working in intentional or intended ways. Creativity in cities remains a product of struggle, conflict, negotiation, and resistance, as is made clear in the chapters by Joanne Lim (Malaysia), Agnes Shuk-mei Ku (Hong Kong), and Jason Lugar (Singapore) (Chapters 9, 12, and 13). It is seldom a product of ‘good governance’ or ‘best practice’. At issue, then, is not whether the developmentalist orientation of creative city-making displaces the cultural endeavour, but whether cities are prepared to recognize, and support, creativity where it actually exists.

This is Gyan Prakash’s point in his description of Mumbai as a ‘kinetic city’ where the bottom-up entrepreneurial creativity of the city’s slum dwellers challenges the ‘slum rehabilitation’ gentrification projects emerging out of McKinsey & Company’s Vision Mumbai plan. ‘The slum rehabilitation projects’ of such global consultancy firms, he argues, represent attempts to displace the kinetic city, to expunge its existence, and to order Mumbai to the dull discipline of the static city, to the delight of real estate magnates and the middle-class heritage activists. Fortunately, the kinetic city survives in [the massive slum of] Dharavi; Mumbai’s legendary
This may run the risk of romanticizing poverty, but the point is to recognize the hidden spaces and practices of creativity, and to argue that the making of cultural/creative cities can just as easily wipe these out as cultivate them.

While cultural/creative city policy-making may sometimes result in the suppression of ‘organic’ creativity, the ‘kinetic city’ remains, for some, an irrepressible force in the democratization of creative production. In Asia, where urban governance in some places is carried out in more authoritarian, top-down, and state-centric ways, a similar issue presents itself regarding the relationship between cultural/creative city policy-making and state power. Does the promotion of creative industries merely serve to reproduce state power? And if so, at what scale? These questions point us toward broader issues regarding the significance of the city as a governable space, and of the various components of that space – including the arts and creative production – as technologies of government. Putting the question in these terms suggests a governmentality perspective derived from the late work of Foucault (2004), who argued that in liberal states the control of territorial space for maintaining population security formed the predominant apparatus of state power. As Osborne and Rose (1999) have argued, that territorial space is dominated by cities: that is, liberal government has been territorialized in the urban form. Increasingly, in other words, the city is the experimental zone and model for territorial governance; the state governs its territory as it would govern a city. In this context, culture would seem to have a role to play in urban government, in the ‘conduct of conduct’, and in maintaining social and political stability (Barnett, 2001; Bennett, 1998). Yet, the cases collected in this volume, along with much of the broader critical scholarship on Asian cities, suggest a limited role for a notion of governmentalized power in cultural/creative city-making. While many Asian states may aspire to the kind of ‘governing at a distance’ that Foucault’s notion of governmentality describes in relatively wealthy liberal democratic states, they tend to employ a more direct form of rule associated with a notion of disciplinary power. This is most obviously seen in China. In her study of Beijing’s Factory 798 and Songzhuang, Zhang (2014) argues that the government is deeply involved in the promotion, and thus the control, of arts and creativity for the purposes of social stabilization. The basic strategy, she points out, is for the government to grant artistic freedom (thus promoting culture and creativity) but retain control of ‘the channels through which art is published, exhibited, and circulated’ (Zhang, 2014, 841). Nearly every chapter in this volume, and particularly those in Part I, demonstrate such ‘state-led creativity’ in practice. However, as Se Hoon Park (Chapter 10) demonstrates, such ‘state-led creativity’ in the service of developmentalism can in fact devolve into genuine ‘community-based creativity’ under conditions of state decentralization. This and other place-based social implications of cultural development practices are explored throughout Part II.

Perhaps more relevant than Foucault’s liberal governmentality in viewing culture as a resource and technology of government, then, is Lefebvre’s (2003) notion of urbanism as an ideology that has displaced industrialism as the pivot around which social classes and political contests are formed. Asia seems to have taken the ideology of urbanism to heart. The state, Lefebvre’s work suggests, reproduces itself in urbanism, not only through its restructuring and reorganization in the form of urban institutions and partnerships for urban development (for example, with real estate firms or global consultancy groups like McKinsey), but by constructing new urban space itself. In this context, Padawangi (2014) reminds us that the built environment is not an innocent physical structure, but emerges out of the social processes and power relations that shape society. The built environment tends to normalize those power relations by making them part of the infrastructure of people’s everyday lives. The space of the city, then, is part of the ideological nature of urbanism, and why Lefebvre (1971) found it so necessary to critique and politicize everyday urban life.

Finally, Lefebvre (2003, 88) also reminds us that the ‘space of state control’ is largely ‘optical and visual’: that is, an aesthetic space of representation. This is, in many ways, the space that ‘creative cities’ policy-making strives to produce – a highly visual, spectacular space of culture rendered as exhibit and object. Here, Lefebvre echoes Deleuze’s (1967/1994) view of image and ‘spectacle’ as key tools by which powerful class and state actors maintain their positions of authority and control in society. In making cultural cities in Asia, image and spectacle have played significant roles, as this volume’s chapters by Lin (Taipei), Zhang (Beijing), Yang (Xi’an), and Wang (Shenzhen) (Chapters 2, 4, 7, and 8) demonstrate.

This volume merely scratches the surface of a vast and largely uncharted world of cultural/creative city-making in Asia. With this brief introduction we have sketched out a few of the key issues touched on by the chapters that follow, and we believe these suggest several productive questions for ongoing research:

- How has cultural/creative city policy-making disrupted established urban hierarchies in Asia and worldwide?
- What is the nature of ‘organic’ creativity in Asia’s vastly diverse and dynamic cities?
- To what extent do cultural/creative city policies prop up authoritarian states, and to what extent do they help produce new struggles for democracy and urban inhabitation?
- What do these struggles even look like in urban Asian contexts?
- How might studies of policy mobility within Asia disrupt existing bodies of work developed in more Euro-American contexts.

These are but a few starting points for what we believe to be a rich and significant area of research in urban and cultural studies.
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