

# Urban Cultural Policy and the Changing Dynamics of Cultural Production



## Position Paper

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Urban Cultural Policy and the Changing Dynamics of Cultural Production

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### 1. Aims

This project aims to identify new directions for urban cultural policy by conducting international comparative research around the emerging nexus between the cultural industries and manufacturing, by:

- 1. examining the relationships between cultural industries and urban manufacturing, particularly the exchange of knowledge, skills, and practices that hold potential to create new products, processes, and work opportunities;*
- 2. determining how changing industry, urban development, technological, and policy dynamics affect cultural production; and*
- 3. identifying lessons from other countries that are responding to these changing dynamics and developing new policies around cultural production and manufacturing.*

### 2. Objectives

The results will yield essential new insights into urban industry dynamics and fundamentally transform how we conceptualise urban cultural policy in Australia.

### 3. Research questions

Positing that there are under-researched links between the cultural industries and local manufacturing, our investigation is being guided by the following research question:

*How can urban cultural policy better support and sustain cultural manufacturing (new production innovations, cross-industry linkages, and high quality employment opportunities)?*

The following sub-questions are also guiding the research:

1. *How do changing industry, technological, urban dynamics affect cultural production relationships?*
2. *How do cultural industries interact with manufacturing and craft industries?*
3. *What are the key factors that foster mutually beneficial linkages?*
4. *What are appropriate models of a cultural-manufacturing ecology?*

### 4. Conceptual framework

The research is conceptually oriented around the interaction of four major dynamics that are hypothesised to influence cultural production:

1. **Industry relations:** the study of networks among cultural industries, craft and other manufacturers and how they shape the exchange of knowledge, skills, values, and work practices;
2. **Space and urban development:** revisiting theories of urban agglomeration and cultural clustering in light of changing urban development trajectories and industry characteristics;
3. **Technological innovation:** the influence of digitalisation and new production technologies on production processes, communication, distribution, and markets; and
4. **Policy-making:** the roles of regulatory and government entities and their interaction with public and private stakeholders in fostering cultural production.

### 5. Significance of the study

Policies that govern Australia's cultural economy focus predominantly on cultural consumption. This outmoded approach fails to account for the changing dynamics of the cultural economy, particularly the emergent relationships with a complex urban manufacturing sector. As a result, many innovation, employment and urban development opportunities around cultural production are

unrealised. What is largely missing is a synthetic examination of the reindustrialisation of the cultural economy and the ramifications for urban and cultural policy.

This project addresses this gap by developing a program that incorporates traditional manufacturing industries and workforces. This necessary task, addresses the question of the deeper economic and cultural fracturing of cities: ‘innercity’ versus periphery; creative/knowledge workers versus manual workers; white versus immigrant; elite vs underclass. The literature has intermittently identified the importance of local materials, skills, and know-how for the cultural industries themselves (Rantisi et al 2006; Rantisi and Leslie 2010). Yet, little work examines how these factors are shaped by interactions with manufacturing, and how long-standing industrial traditions and migrant labour patterns influence contemporary cultural production (Gibson, 2016). For example, in El Paso a vibrant craft-based boot making scene has flourished among the city’s migrant Mexican workers, while in inner-city industrial lands of Australian cities, maker micro-enterprises are co-locating with ethnic small businesses in food processing and craft production.

## 6. Background to the study

The ABS (2014) estimates that cultural and creative industries contribute \$65.8B or 5.6% of Gross Valued Added to the Australian economy, on a par with health care and transportation industries. Yet, the cultural economy is rapidly changing due to altered dynamics around production and labour, urban development, and digital technologies. Once seen as a replacement for declining manufacturing industries and a means of redeveloping land in the urban core, the cultural sectors are increasingly connecting with new forms of material production through design-led manufacturing, innovation-driven additive manufacturing, and craft-based production (Carr & Gibson, 2015; Grodach, Gibson, & O’Connor, 2015; Luckman, 2015; O’Connor & Gu, 2014; Thomas et al., 2013). Cultural economy policies have not kept pace with these transformations. As a result, Australia risks undermining the gains from existing policy and stifling important sources of innovation and job growth that emanate from its cultural industries. This research will provide evidence and knowledge to make informed policy decisions around cultural production.

The study responds to the two dominant narratives that currently shape policy for the cultural economy. First, under the rubric of creative industries, the cultural economy has been positioned as a central part of a knowledge economy defined by advanced services, information technologies, innovation, and a workforce high in human capital (Howkins, 2013; Potts, 2012; Cunningham, 2009). The rise of knowledge and innovation-driven industries parallels the deindustrialisation and loss of employment in older, heavy manufacturing in most OECD countries including Australia. While the growth of knowledge industries has enhanced urban economic development in many places, it has developed in tandem with a lower-wage service economy that offers few career opportunities (Sassen, 2012). Creative economy and knowledge-based development strategies tend to focus on attracting highly educated and skilled professionals (cf. Florida, 2002), but have yet to address the cost of mounting workforce inequality.

Second, the cultural economy has emerged as a central facet of urban policy for its ability to drive

consumption, attract mobile knowledge workers, and improve the city image (Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Oakley and O'Connor, 2015). Cities around the world have spent considerable sums of money to develop arts precincts, flagship cultural destinations, and other cultural amenities. While the consumption-based approach has generated a few success stories, the reality is that this has limited economic impact (Grodach, 2010; Noonan, 2013). Further, many argue that this approach has contributed to the displacement of preexisting residents and businesses, including many cultural producers (Catungal, Leslie, & Hii, 2009; Curran, 2010; Grodach, 2012, 2013; Shaw, 2013). Taken together, **these policy narratives exacerbate uneven urban development while threatening established creative clusters and important segments of the cultural sector workforce at the forefront of the innovation economy.**

At the same time, as part of a broader innovation agenda, cities on the leading edge of urban cultural policy are seeking ways to reconnect cultural industries with material manufacture and craft-based production (Anderson 2012; Berger 2013; Birtchnell and Urry 2013; Westbury, 2015). Mature urban cultural policy is just beginning to consider how to link the cultural industries with other sectors in novel ways that revitalise manufacturing and tap into new opportunities for the development and expansion of a wide range of cultural and craft industries (Bryson and Ronayne 2014; Rantisi, 2014; Pratt Center, 2015; Tomlinson and Branston, 2014). For example, many cultural industries look to local manufacturers to supply crucial materials and components. Architecture firms may rely on metal-workers and foundries for specialised building components or industrial designers may look to ceramics manufacturers to fabricate special containers and prototypes. In addition, cultural industries often require specialised craft and manufacturing skills and services. For instance, film and theatre producers rely on the expertise of set designers and woodworkers. Moreover, important niche markets with strong local and culturally specific profiles develop around the products of small manufacturers and craft producers including apparel, textiles, furniture, and food products. **However, the detailed nature and extent of these connections has yet to be studied in a rigorous way so that informed policy initiatives largely do not exist in Australia.** This project will build a substantive research base on which to construct policy that capitalises on these new directions.

## 7. Research approach

This is a multisite, primarily qualitative study examining the changing dynamics of cultural production and the interactions among different cultural and manufacturing sectors. The study relies on substantial fieldwork in a set of case studies in Australia, China, Germany, and the US. Each case includes the collection and analysis of secondary data (including policy documents and industry data); workshop and walking tours; and interviews with cultural producers and firms, industry groups, planning and policy officials, and other appropriate subjects. These methods allow the researchers to achieve each of the project aims geared toward the understanding of cultural production and building a robust body of evidence to support new cultural and economic development policy directions.

Guided by the four major dynamics outlined in the conceptual framework, the project's six case

studies—Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, Shenzhen, San Francisco/ New York, and Berlin—will investigate the following:

1. *Definitions*
2. *Geographic specificities*
3. *Cultural production links to local manufacturing*
4. *Cultural production links to advanced manufacturing*
5. *Challenges and opportunities for existing policies and policy-making processes*
6. *Makerspaces as emergent sites of cultural manufacturing*

## 8. Overview of Case Studies

The case study approach will produce a comprehensive understanding of cultural production and enable theory testing around the interrelationship between the four dynamics framing the study as identified in the Conceptual Framework. The project will begin by analysing sites of cultural production and manufacture in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney. These cities have been selected for in-depth study because they are the three largest and most diverse economies in Australia and because they possess different industrial histories and regional strengths. Following this, the researchers turn to the international case studies. These cases will focus on places and programmes that support a comparatively advanced cultural manufacturing base and are testing new industry and place-based policy directions. Findings from the Australian cases will be brought to bear in the refinement of research strategies conducted abroad. Finally, researchers will conduct follow-up interviews with key informants from the Australian cases based on findings from the international study. This process allows the team to cumulatively build and refine their knowledge over the life of the project.

### 8.1 Melbourne

The Inner North (Fitzroy, Brunswick, Collingwood, Northcote, Preston, Reservoir) is the classic home of small manufacture in Melbourne. Currently undergoing displacement by residential development it is also witnessing an intersection between small manufacture and emergent cultural industries. The case will focus on a) the structures and dynamics of cultural manufacturing across this inner-urban region, and b) Creative Collingwood a State-led initiative by Marcus Westbury of Renew Newcastle/Australia aiming to develop new approaches to creative space in the Inner North.

### 8.2 Sydney

The Inner West suburb of Marrickville, traditionally one of Sydney's working-class industrial heartlands, has been the focus of urban cultural policy for over a decade. Local industry and jobs policies seek to develop cultural production linked to manufacturing in established industrial districts where diverse cultural industry-manufacturing links are being forged around fashion, craft beer, furniture, food processing, set, costume and prop design. This ecology of creativity is increasingly important, but also under threat from eviction, in a city losing its industrial-zoned land

to high-rise apartment redevelopment. Knowledge will be generated on firm linkages and worker values across the creativity-manual work spectrum in this intensified production cluster.

### 8.3 Brisbane

This case will study the cultural production-manufacturing nexus in the dispersed workshops and industrial spaces of Brisbane. The case will examine how producers of outdoor gear, custom furniture, metal products, and other industries are engaging with both craft and advanced manufacturing skills within the context of weaker agglomeration economies than the Sydney and Melbourne cases. It will examine how these cultural product manufacturers negotiate the dwindling industrial lands in the urban core and their place between the City's "Creative Brisbane" plan and its policy focus on "innovative manufacturing."

### 8.4 New York City and San Francisco

New York City and San Francisco are leading a manufacturing revival in the US with their apparel, ceramics, furniture, and food industries. Manufacturing in these cultural sectors forms a key economic development strategy for both cities. The cases will focus on areas in San Francisco's Eastern Neighborhoods rezoning program and New York's North Brooklyn Industrial Business Zone. In both cases, government is enacting planning strategies to preserve and grow the strong concentrations of cultural industry and traditional, small manufacturing enterprises that are under threat from land use competition.

### 8.5 Shenzhen

Shenzhen has received substantial government investment in new technologies and entrepreneurial ventures which aim to transform China's traditional heavy manufacturing base into smaller, more specialised manufacturing. This case study will be based in Hua Qiang Bei (HQB)—an innovation incubator with hundreds of small and micro companies specialising in new manufacturing technologies such as digital fabrication. Unlike other state funded science and technology parks, HQB focuses on grassroots innovation and is to become the new Chinese model for innovation. This case is also important in understanding how traditional manufacturing can be upgraded through their connection to the global cultural economy.

### 8.6 Berlin

Berlin has been home to many artists, makers, cultural intermediaries and small scale cultural industries, moving into the cheap and accessible space that emerged post-1989. From the late 1990s, consequent upon its growing status as federal capital, some large-scale cultural industries moved their regional headquarters to the city, followed by increasing level of 'angel investor funds' and global real estate investment. In the last 5 years these two cultural economies have come into friction and even direct conflict as they make over the urban space of the city. Space is no longer as cheap and as accessible; the cachet of Berlin is now leading to rapid gentrification. The city authorities are dealing with the problem of how they can promote the small scale artisanal and

making aspect of urban culture, and how to deal with rampant gentrification. This will form the basis of the Berlin study.

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