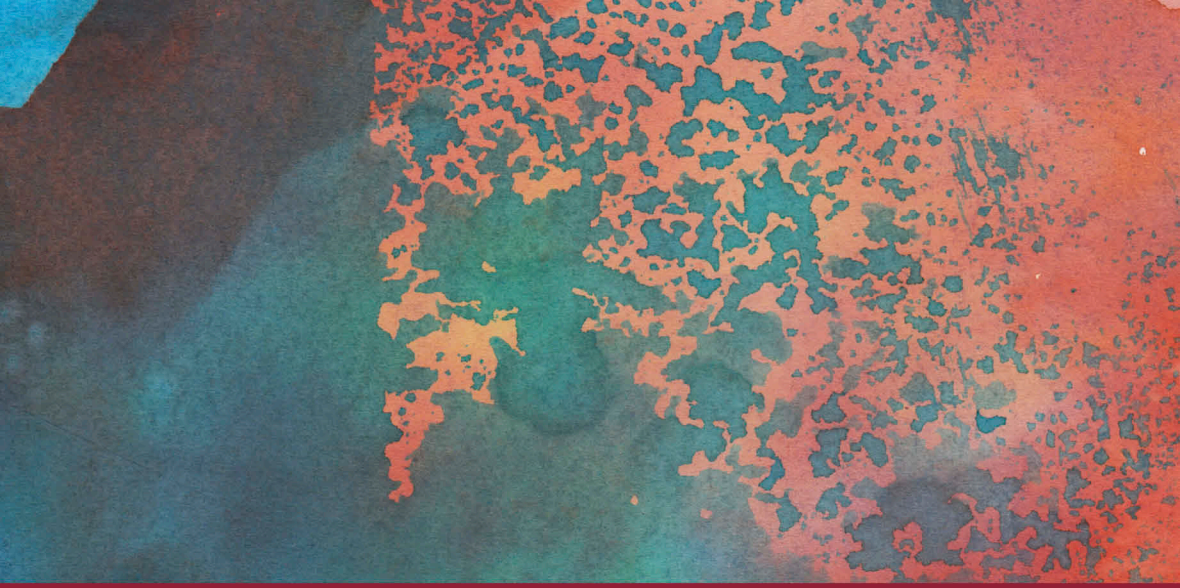
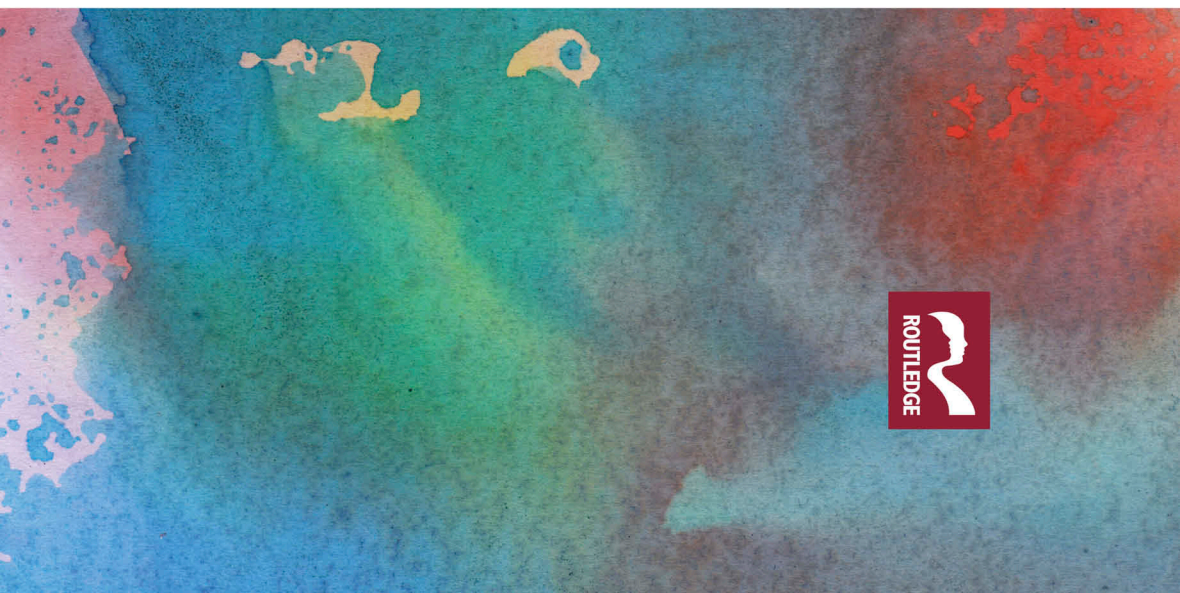


Routledge Research in the Creative and Cultural Industries

GLOBAL CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES POLICY

OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND IMPLICATIONS

Tarek E. Virani



Global Creative and Cultural Industries Policy

Examining the global creative and cultural industries (CCIs), this book seeks to help readers understand key policy challenges faced by the sector.

It reveals a key contradiction: While the sector is praised for flexibility and innovation, it suffers from job insecurity and unequal value distribution due to its close ties with neoliberal economics. The book proposes a justice-focused ecosystem approach that reshapes cultural policy to prioritise fair working conditions, inclusive participation, and public cultural benefits. Readers will develop analytical skills to understand the sector's contradictions and gain practical tools for building stronger local creative ecosystems. The work helps readers assess how policy measures and organisational structures affect creative workers, while showing how to align cultural policy with labour rights, platform regulation, climate action, diversity, and decolonial practices. It uses multiple research methods, including historical policy analysis, theoretical frameworks, and systematic examination of policy definitions across national and global contexts. It reframes local policy through ecosystem thinking, focusing on support networks, affordable workspace, funding, and fair employment. It examines how digital platforms and new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) affect creative ownership and contracts.

Finally, whether academics, students, or industry professionals, readers of ***Global Creative and Cultural Industries Policy*** book will gain a holistic understanding of global policy as it pertains to the creative and cultural industries.

Tarek E. Virani is Associate Professor of Creative Industries at the University of the West of England, Bristol, in the School of Arts within the College of Arts, Technology, and Environment. His research spans urban and cultural policy, creative and cultural ecosystems, organisational resilience, hubs and clusters, culture-led regeneration, and the international dimensions of creative work. He is recognised for shaping ecosystem approaches to the creative and cultural industries and for applied research that bridges scholarship and practice across city-regional programmes. His work foregrounds intermediaries, shared infrastructures, and fair work as foundations for resilient cultural production. His publications and projects engage policymakers, cultural institutions, and industry partners. He regularly contributes to public conversations on creative economy resilience and policy design.

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Global Creative and Cultural Industries Policy

Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications

Tarek E. Virani

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1 Cultural Policy and a Creative and Cultural Industries 'Paradox' – An Introduction

Introduction

The creative and cultural industries (CCIs), as a policy construct, has come a long way in the past ten or so years, and more so since the global pandemic of 2019–2021. It has transitioned from being a construct which required strong advocacy to substantiate itself as a legitimate part of the socioeconomic policy landscape to becoming a mainstay and a priority in macro- and microeconomic policy the world over (Lash & Lury, 2007; Flew, 2013; UNCTAD, 2008, 2010; UNESCO, 2025a, 2025b; UNESCO/UNDP, 2013). Indeed, we are at a time where UNESCO's (2025a) first *Global Report on Cultural Policies* argues that culture should become a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal after 2030[1]. All of this policy activity has arrived at a time of monumental shifts and changes in our collective socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental landscape. Currently, we face significant challenges, including widening economic inequalities, precarious employment, and the impact of technological disruption on traditional industries. Alongside these, our societies are contending with cultural fragmentation, contested values, and the urgent need to address climate change and environmental degradation, all of which demand innovative and resilient responses across communities and sectors. This book examines the current state of the CCIs globally with a particular focus on the challenges it, as a construct influenced through policy, faces. Through the framing and use of 16 case studies across the volume, the book argues for a need to move away from our conventional understanding of the CCIs as an all-encompassing policy concept with the power to ameliorate numerous social and economic challenges. Instead, through a holistic, and research-informed, understanding of the limits of the CCIs as a concept and/or construct, we can be better placed to pursue effective targeted policy that is both culturally and socioeconomically contextually relevant.

The primary argument here is that the CCIs are both the object and the instrument of a distinctive set of paradoxes along the lines described earlier, that have crystallised through three decades of policy experimentation, market restructuring, and technological change. These paradoxes are not incidental tensions that can be smoothed out by more precise definitions or by improved data collection. They are coconstitutive features of a policy

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construct that took shape within neoliberal transformations of the economy and the state, and that continues to be mobilised to address problems it partly helps to reproduce. The cross-cutting theme that binds the chapters is therefore the perpetuation of the CCIs as predominantly neoliberalist (for better and worse). While the CCIs have been named through policy as flexible, entrepreneurial, innovation-led, and socially and environmentally beneficial, they nonetheless exist within a dominant organisational ecology which has normalised microenterprise fragmentation, project-based work, and the offloading of risk onto workers and communities – again for better and worse. This book treats such contradictions not as aberrations but as structural paradoxes to be confronted if the field is to move beyond an imaginary of growth toward a durable settlement that values culture's public purposes alongside its market mediated outputs.

Theoretically the book is framed by a political economy that treats the creative and cultural industries as a policy artefact forged within neoliberal restructuring. While in the past scholars such as Flew and Cunningham (2013) argued that neoliberalism was too crude a concept to ascribe it a deleterious effect on culture, this volume argues that although this was perhaps true at the time, it (neoliberalism) also makes up one part of a double helix within economies of culture – for better and worse. Drawing on policy histories and critical accounts of the 1990s and early 2000s, the argument situates the sector's consolidation alongside entrepreneurship agendas, flexible labour, and intellectual property metrics that were codified through instruments such as the UK's *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* (DCMS, 1998, 2001) with all sorts of implications for a global policy construct (Chapter 2, this volume). Authors such as O'Connor (2024) and Hesmondhalgh (2013) are engaged to show how this settlement elevated growth and visibility while under specifying production conditions, a tension later exposed by the financial crisis and the pandemic, which in turn prompted hybrid recalibrations of market and state that we are still in the midst of.

A second theoretical strand clarifies the book's conceptual foundations by mobilising the classic sociologies of cultural production to explain definitional instability. Bourdieu (1993) frames the field as a struggle for symbolic capital and recognition, Peterson and Anand (2004) locate output in institutional and organisational arrangements such as technology, law, and markets, and Becker (1982; 2004) foregrounds cooperative conventions within art worlds. These lenses are set against classification frameworks such as Throsby's (2008) concentric circles and the DCMS, WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation), and UNESCO models to show how measurement freezes a heterogeneous terrain while missing project-based, freelance, and platform-mediated labour realities. The authors are used not to adjudicate a single definition but to legitimise theoretical pluralism as a condition for valid evidence and workable policy.

The place-based policy chapter is framed by work on the creative city, clustering, and hubs that emphasises how culture has been instrumentalised

for regeneration, image repair, and social cohesion. Landry (2012) and Florida (2002) provide the annals for demand-led urban imaginaries, while Evans (2009) and others supply evidence of paradoxes in which visibility and participation rise but precarity, finance gaps and displacement persist. The reframing toward ecosystems (De Bernard et al., 2022; Virani, 2023) is built from scholarship on hubs, intermediation, and outcomes-based evaluation, and it argues for coupling cultural infrastructure with social infrastructure, value capture, and fair work so that demand multipliers reinforce local production.

Digital political economy provides another frame in which platform society and platform capitalism become the organising context for creative work. Van Dijck et al. (2018), Srnicek, (2017), and others are used to theorise datafication, algorithmic intermediation, and multisided market power that compress incomes while widening access. The pandemic literature gathered by OECD, the European Parliament, and UNESCO is read to redefine resilience as governed infrastructure, labour protection, and organisational capability rather than entrepreneurial grit alone. Case material on regional ecosystems is then positioned as evidence that platform dependence can be mitigated where public goods and first-party audience relationships exist.

Yet another frame couples technological change within legal institutionalism to read AI, VR, and AR as an expansion of expressive possibility that simultaneously intensifies enclosure. Authors on platforms and data extraction are brought into dialogue with copyright doctrine that anchors protection in human authorship, with guidance and case law used to map stress points around inputs, outputs, and prompts. Labour agreements and trademark disputes further demonstrate how rights and contracts are becoming primary venues for rebalancing power in immersive and generative environments.

Two cross-cutting perspectives complete the theoretical architecture of the volume. Climate authors and sector initiatives frame the sector as both risk bearer and agent of transition, motivating a pivot from output metrics to ecosystem governance that embeds environmental limits (Oakley & Banks, 2020). Inclusion and decolonial authors such as Anibal Quijano (2000) treat exclusion and coloniality as system properties of project-based cultural capitalism and platformised markets, arguing that representation without shifts in ownership, governance, and revenue sharing remains metaphorical. The conclusion assembles these literatures into an ecosystem-oriented policy programme that aligns cultural, labour, digital, and environmental rules so that creative vitality rests on durable institutions rather than episodic visibility.

Situating the volume in creative and cultural industries scholarship

This volume extends and updates key strands of creative industries scholarship by treating the CCIs as a policy artefact coconstituted with neoliberal

restructuring and by centring the paradoxes that flow from this formation (Virani, 2024). Comunian et al.'s (2022) *A Modern Guide to Creative Economies* offers a valuable cartography of methods, mobilities, entrepreneurship, and futures, yet it is largely programmatic rather than diagnostic of the political economy that now structures creative systems. Chapter 2 in this volume reconstructs the field's genealogy as a late-twentieth-century settlement that valorised flexibility, small firms, project finance, and visible intellectual property, thereby externalising risk onto workers and communities and encoding a growth-oriented imaginary that privileges GDP share and audience numbers over production conditions and distributional outcomes (Chapter 2, this volume; Chapter 10, this volume). Chapter 3 shows how 'map and list' classifications and output metrics stabilised heterogeneous value logics around audiences and revenues while rendering ownership, governance, labour standards, and community rights largely invisible to policy, which set the stage for persistent mismatches between rhetoric and reality across place, platforms, inclusion, decolonisation, and climate (Chapter 10, this volume). In combination the chapters of this volume recast the field's core problem as a neoliberal paradox in which celebrated indicators of visibility coexist with entrenched precarity and unequal value capture, and they supply the analytical spine upon which later chapters build a more holistic and justice-oriented ecosystem approach.

Allen J. Scott's *The Cultural Economy of Cities* (2000) remains foundational in demonstrating the connection between cultural production and urban industrial concentration and the logic of agglomeration that underwrote early creative city strategies (Scott, 2000). The present volume acknowledges that legacy while moving beyond a single-city scale by distinguishing production-oriented instruments such as clustering, hubs, and university-anchored R&D, from consumption-oriented instruments such as creative city titles, culture-led regeneration, cultural districts, and creative tourism, and by showing that both families of tools produce a recurrent paradox. They deliver visibility, prototypes, and participation, yet reproduce fragility, displacement, and weak local embedding when not coupled to social safeguards, affordable space, fair work standards, benefit sharing, and outcomes-based evaluation that tracks inclusion, health, and local multipliers rather than footfall alone (Chapter 4, this volume; Scott, 2000). This reframing positions place as an ecosystem of intermediation and social infrastructure and not merely a container for clustering, thereby updating Scott's urban thesis for a platformised political economy (Chapter 4, this volume).

John Howkins's *The Creative Economy* (2001; 2013) and his later *Creative Economy Handbook* (2017) popularised a firm and IP-centred narrative about how people monetise ideas, which was appropriate to an earlier market structure (Howkins, 2001; Howkins, 2013; Howkins, 2017). The current volume relocates monetisation inside platform-mediated circuits of discovery and remuneration. Chapter 5 demonstrates how platforms

disintermediated some legacy gatekeepers and widened participation while simultaneously recentralising control through data extraction, network effects, and algorithmic rationing of visibility. This created a structural double bind in which the very infrastructures that preserved organisational continuity during the pandemic also deepened dependency and compressed incomes, especially for nonstandard workers (Chapter 5, this volume). Chapter 6 connects the business lens to doctrine by showing how AI, VR, and AR reconfigure authorship, ownership, labour contracts, and distribution chokepoints and by arguing that the settlement of these issues will hinge on aligning IP and data rights with labour protections, interoperability, and equity, which shifts the emphasis from entrepreneurial tactics to institutional design under platform capitalism (Chapter 6, this volume; Howkins, 2013).

Richard Florida's seminal *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) anchored early policy in talent attraction and amenity-based urbanism and the triad of technology, talent, and tolerance (Florida, 2002). Chapters 4, 5, and 8 start from a world in which many jurisdictions have already adopted those ideas and ask how to stabilise livelihoods and embed value when project ecologies, informal hiring, and responsibilised risk remain the dominant organisational facts. They show that resilience correlates with ecosystem supports such as digital infrastructure, social insurance access, funded intermediation, and affordable workspace rather than with individual bootstrapping, and they specify how inclusion rhetoric, decoupled from production reform, reproduces inequality, which reframes a post-Florida agenda around governance rather than solely around amenities and attraction (Chapter 4, this volume; Chapter 5, this volume; Chapter 10, this volume; Florida, 2002).

Dominic Power and Allen Scott's influential *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture* (2004) consolidated an account of how sectors such as film, music, and television organise cultural production for mass consumption (Power & Scott, 2004). The present book widens and updates that frame by tracking a shift from copyright pipelines to audience and platform-mediated circuits of value and by translating that analysis into actionable policy. Chapters 2 and 3 explain why today's small firm ecology and output-centred indicators persisted and why they continue to generate paradoxical outcomes, and Chapter 10 converts diagnosis into a program for outcomes-based evaluation, funded intermediation, risk aware finance, affordable space as social infrastructure, and benefit sharing that secures local multipliers, all of which reposition production conditions and distribution as the centre of cultural policy (Chapter 10, this volume; Power and Scott, 2004).

Terry Flew's *The Creative Industries: Culture and Policy* provides a global perspective on the sector's economic and cultural significance and its capacity to drive innovation (Flew, 2012). This volume retains that global horizon while foregrounding the distributional question under platform dependency and ecological limits. Chapters 6 and 10 detail how AI governance, platform regulation, and environmental standards must be integrated with cultural policy to reconcile innovation with labour dignity, discoverability,

remuneration transparency, and emissions accountability, and they specify tools that include research access provisions, algorithmic audits, collective bargaining coverage for freelancers, and environmental conditionality for public funding (Flew, 2012; Chapter 6, this volume; Chapter 10, this volume).

Hartley et al.'s (2015) *Creative Economy and Culture* synthesises challenges, changes, and futures across copyright, finance, digitalisation, globalisation, and consumer behaviour (Hartley et al., 2015). The present volume updates that map by showing how those forces have consolidated into a platform society in which intermediation and datafication shape creation and capture and by specifying the institutional levers that convert trend catalogues into system change. Chapters 4 and 10 propose an ecosystems approach that funds 'connective tissue' such as brokers, shared infrastructures, and cohort learning and that couples demand-side instruments such as districts and events to local commissioning, benefit sharing, and outcomes beyond footfall so that visibility translates into embedded value rather than displacement (Chapter 4, this volume; Hartley et al., 2015).

Hesmondhalgh and Baker's *Creative Labour* (2013) and Hesmondhalgh's *The Cultural Industries* (2018) advanced labour-centred and sectoral analyses of digital disruption, commissioning regimes, and platform power and emphasised participation, power, commercialism, surveillance, and labour in the reorganisation of media industries. Chapters 5 and 8 resonate with that corpus yet generalise it across the sector and translate critique into institutional craft by demonstrating that exclusion is an efficient equilibrium of project-based cultural capitalism unless instruments reprice time, smooth income, and socialise key risks. They connect resilience to public and collective infrastructures rather than to individual grit and document how platformisation both widened access and intensified emotional labour and income compression, which calls for enforceable contracting standards, portable benefits, collective representation for the self-employed, and policy evaluation that tracks production conditions rather than outputs alone (Chapter 5, this volume).

Keane et al.'s (2012) *Digital Transformations in the Creative Industries* captured the first wave of digital disruption through piracy, emergent business models, and global case studies, which were timely at publication but predate the consolidation of platform capitalism and the contemporary AI turn (Keane et al., 2012). Chapter 6 updates this terrain by tracing how AI, VR, and AR expand creative possibility while deepening enclosure and intermediation and by showing that the doctrinal and contractual settlements now emerging around human authorship, training data, digital replicas, remuneration, and interoperability will determine whether computational culture amplifies or attenuates human creativity. It frames these developments as a neoliberal paradox in which the same tools that democratise creation stratify access and concentrate gatekeeping, and it argues for governance architectures that align IP, data rights, labour protections, and cultural equity (Chapter 6, this volume; Keane et al., 2012).

Relative to the *De Gruyter Handbook of Creative Industries* (Dubois et al., 2025), which synthesises current debates and calls for evaluation that moves from outputs to impacts with inclusion as a design constraint, this volume locates the argument more explicitly in the neoliberal genealogy of the field and pursues the paradoxes through organisational analysis and policy instruments. Chapter 10 synthesises the evidence into an ecosystem-oriented program that links cultural, labour, competition, digital, and environmental governance and that replaces pilot thinking with system components that stabilise and share value over time. It specifies income smoothing and social insurance integration, enforceable contracting standards and income floors where appropriate, affordable space as social infrastructure, environmental toolkits and conditionality, collective cultural rights and benefit sharing, and digital market regulation for discoverability and fair remuneration, thereby operationalising a justice-oriented ecology for immediate policy use (Dubois et al., 2025; Chapter 10, this volume).

Read against the other works regarding CCIs' scholarship, the distinctiveness of this volume lies in diagnosing the CCIs not as a separate entity but as a coconstitutive emergence through, and due to, neoliberal policy constructs. As such the current CCIs are riddled with productive, yet harmful, paradoxes articulated in this book which also assembles evidence-based instruments that convert visibility into durable and fairly distributed creative livelihoods.

Resituating neoliberalism within creative and cultural industries scholarship:

This volume treats the cultural and creative industries as inseparable from the rise of neoliberal policy regimes, yet it advances the debate by arguing that the CCIs and neoliberalism have been coconstituted rather than merely correlated. Flew and Cunningham's (2013) influential stocktake at the end of the first decade of debate framed the creative industries as a pragmatic synthesis of cultural policy and innovation agendas, and they called for attention to evidence, international variety, and the relation between creativity and urban development rather than a retreat to cultural protectionism (Flew & Cunningham, 2013). Their intervention captured the field's optimism that market opening, new media participation, and city strategies could align growth with cultural vitality. The present volume accepts the empirical imperative but reads the same trajectory through a historical reconstruction of policy formation that links the creative industries' institutional birth to neoliberal restructuring, while also attempting to answer the call for deeper and more robust evidence regarding this argument. Chapter 2 shows how governments made creativity a vehicle for growth, flexibility, and urban competitiveness, and how this reoriented policy away from production conditions toward visible outputs, small firm promotion, and intellectual property, with risk shifted onto workers and communities (Chapter 2, this volume). Chapter 3 explains how classificatory and measurement regimes

then stabilised this formation by anchoring evaluation in audiences and revenues, which in turn rendered ownership, governance, and distributional outcomes less legible to policy. This is not an accidental drift but the evidentiary armature of a coconstitutive settlement between neoliberal policy logics and the CCIs' imaginary (Chapter 10, this volume).

Building on this genealogy, the volume addresses the austerity turn that Newsinger (2015) analysed as a shock doctrine for culture, where the language of resilience and entrepreneurialism legitimated cuts while leaving the core creative industries discourse intact within a neoliberal state formation (Newsinger, 2015). The book reads the endurance of that discourse as structural rather than discursive alone. Chapter 5 shows how platformisation and the pandemic stress test revealed that survival depended on public support and digital infrastructures while everyday rhetoric still celebrated self-reliance. The paradox is that the same platforms that widened access and preserved continuity compressed incomes and intensified emotional labour, confirming that resilience has been institutionalised as thin responsibilisation in a marketised field rather than as a publicly provisioned capability (Chapter 5, this volume; Chapter 10, this volume). Chapter 10 converts this diagnosis into policy, arguing that resilience is a property of ecosystems and should be secured through income smoothing, portable benefits, enforceable contracting standards, and long-term affordable space as social infrastructure, alongside platform governance for discoverability and remuneration transparency (Chapter 10, this volume).

The volume also speaks to a body of scholarship that has theorised how neoliberal culture mobilises creativity as a governing dispositif and how celebratory discourses obscure the reorganisation of labour. McGuigan offers a general account of neoliberal culture as a hegemonic project that normalises market rule across institutions and sensibilities (McGuigan, 2016). McRobbie examines the new culture industries as sites where autonomy talk masks precarity, unpaid entry routes, and gendered inequalities, while entrepreneurial self-formation becomes a moral norm for workers with little bargaining power (McRobbie, 2016). The present book acknowledges these critiques and extends them by tracking how today's platform infrastructures operationalise neoliberal techniques of privatisation, deregulation, and competition through data extraction and algorithmic curation. Chapter 5 documents how creators became dependent on opaque ranking systems and how attention metrics displaced revenue in organisational strategy during crisis conditions. It defines a platform paradox in which rails that preserve participation concurrently recentralise control and devalue cultural labour, and it treats this not as a cultural malaise but as the predictable effect of market power and multisided intermediation (Chapter 5, this volume). Chapter 6 then shows that the convergence of AI, VR, and AR intensifies these contradictions at the level of law and contract, with human authorship doctrines, training data disputes, and digital replica agreements becoming primary terrains where labour dignity, IP, and data rights are renegotiated.

The chapter's argument that these technologies expand creative possibility while deepening enclosure reframes 'innovation' as a governance question rather than a purely technical horizon (Chapter 6, this volume).

Hesmondhalgh's (2008) chapter in *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis* called for clarity about the distinctions and overlaps between cultural and creative industries, and it warned against policy fashions that elevate growth narratives while downplaying power and inequality in cultural production systems (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Kong unpacked the pendulum swings between cultural and creative framings and listed recurring policy confusions about definition, measurement, labour utopianism, overblown expectations, and the myth of designable creative cities, especially in Asian contexts where state activism and global city competition interact (Kong, 2014). This book absorbs these cautions and uses them diagnostically. Chapter 3 shows how 'map and list' typologies lock heterogeneous value logics into a single administrative frame that privileges audience counts and revenue, thereby misrecognising the interplay of market exchange, public mission, and informal practice. Chapter 4 applies this to place policy by distinguishing production instruments like hubs and clustering from consumption instruments like districts and events, and by demonstrating how both can deliver visibility while reproducing displacement and fragility unless paired with social safeguards, funded intermediation, and outcome metrics that capture inclusion, health, and local multipliers. In doing so, the book updates urban development debates by relocating success indicators from consumption to production conditions and value capture, drawing an explicit line from the coconstitution thesis to concrete institutional design (Chapter 10, this volume).

Recent analyses have situated creative industries policy within neoliberal welfare states that valorise market forces as guarantors of freedom in culture. Strandberg's (2023) study of Sweden describes how cultural policy migrated from countering the market to endorsing it, reinterpreting culture as a growth lever while retaining a residual welfare language (Strandberg, 2023). Samuel's account foregrounds how digital communication technologies serve neoliberal entrepreneurship and free trade narratives in the CCIs, entangling platformised marketing with globalised competition and individualisation (Samuel, 2020). The present volume takes these national and technological insights and generalises them into a sectoral governance argument. Chapter 6 traces how platform ownership and datafication govern discovery, monetisation, and authorship across AI and immersive media, while Chapter 10 proposes that cultural policy must be woven into competition, digital, labour, and environmental regulation. It treats the *Digital Markets Act*, the *Digital Services Act*, and emergent AI rules as cultural infrastructure that can be mobilised to secure fairer discoverability, transparency, and bargaining positions, especially for freelancers who have historically been outside standard labour protections. The recommendation is to align cultural funding with social insurance integration, labour standards, and environmental conditionality

so that public value is not captured downstream by intermediaries alone (Chapter 10, this volume).

These moves reframe the long-standing dispute that Flew and Cunningham (2013) sought to cool between critics of neoliberalism and proponents of creative industries pragmatics. Rather than treating neoliberalism as an external contaminant or reducing creative industries to policy branding, the book argues that the CCIs are a policy artefact forged within and for a neoliberal political economy, which is why recurrent paradoxes show up across place-making, labour markets, platform governance, climate responsibility, and decolonisation. Chapter 9 makes this explicit for cultural equity by demonstrating that inclusion rhetoric without changes to ownership, governance, and revenue routing reproduces coloniality through contemporary forms of platform discovery and brand collaboration. It sets consent, benefit sharing, and community authority over cultural data as baseline requirements for any credible decolonial practice, and it connects these to digital market governance so that value chains reflect power sharing rather than symbolic representation alone (Chapter 9, this volume; Chapter 10, this volume).

As such, the volume advances a narrative in which creative and cultural vitality depends on rules and infrastructures that stabilise livelihoods and distribute value, not on visibility alone. It engages the optimism of the first decade by incorporating its attention to evidence and international variation, yet it updates the field by showing how evidence must be reorganised around production conditions, platform power, ecological limits, and community rights. The coconstitutive thesis clarifies why the institutional DNA of the CCIs continues to generate paradoxes of widened access and deepened precarity, and it motivates a program that moves from pilots to systems capable of sharing the benefits of culture in a warming and data saturated world. This is a creative industries imaginary that is finally aligned with its material conditions and that treats governance as the primary site of cultural innovation today.

Outline of chapters in this volume

Historicising a policy construct coproduced with neoliberalism

Chapter 2 emphasises that the CCIs were not simply discovered when governments learned how to count copyright-based activities. They were made through policy projects that reframed diverse cultural practices and media activities as a single sector promising growth, jobs, exports, and urban renewal. The Australian *Creative Nation* report (1994) and the United Kingdom's *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* (1998, 2001) supplied templates that were widely diffused, often through powerful but pragmatic 'list and map' devices that designated which subsectors counted as creative for the purpose of policy and funding (see O'Connor, 2024). The

consolidation of this construct coincided with and was shaped by neoliberal restructuring, particularly vertical disintegration and the diffusion of small firm and freelance models that transferred flexibility and risk from corporations to atomised suppliers (Pratt & Virani, 2015; Virani, 2024). The chapter argues that the CCIs are best understood as coconstitutive with these political economic transformations rather than as a cultural victim of them. This situates subsequent chapters in a shared frame in which neoliberal values and instruments are neither external to culture nor merely hostile to it. They are inscribed in the organisational form and policy vocabulary of the sector itself.

This historicisation matters because it clarifies why succeeding debates have been so fraught. The ambition to ground the sector empirically pulled strongly toward commensurable measurement frameworks, while the heterogeneity of cultural production repeatedly escaped the fences erected around it. The performative power of policy classifications produced their own realities by directing investment, conferring status, and shaping organisational incentives even as critics drew attention to the flattening effects of economisation. As such, Chapter 2 shows that the early insistence on entrepreneurship and intellectual property as the heart of the sector was not only descriptive of an emerging economy; it was also prescriptive of what the creative economy should become, privileging those practices that could be expressed as commodified IP outputs and downplaying public cultural infrastructures and practices less amenable to market valuation. The paradox here is foundational. The more persuasively policy translates culture into economic metrics, the more it risks eroding the plural and often collective values that culture is meant to sustain.

Definitional tensions and the limits of measurement

Chapter 3 revisits the long-running difficulty of definition and measurement. Rather than treating the problem as a technical matter of boundary drawing, it frames definitional instability as the expression of deeper theoretical fault lines concerning the relationship between culture and economy. Field theory (Bourdieu), production of culture approaches (Peterson and Anand), and art worlds (Becker) perspectives illuminate different aspects of cultural production, yet none can be collapsed into a single operational definition that would satisfy economic statisticians and cultural theorists at the same time. The policy impulse to settle lists through DCMS, WIPO and UNESCO (2025b) schemes sits uneasily with organisational realities that are variegated and dynamically changing, particularly under conditions of platformisation and project-based labour markets. The paradox is thus one of knowledge and governance. Policymakers need stable categories to allocate resources and assess performance, while the sector's vitality draws on forms of value that exceed or resist those categories. Attempts to resolve the paradox through ever more granular taxonomies underestimate the extent to which

culture's meanings and practices are coproduced with the social relations that make up markets, communities, and institutions.

The chapter further highlights how measurement challenges are amplified by the dominance of microenterprises and freelancers (not to mention the informal economy) whose activities elude conventional data instruments. In method as in policy, the CCIs demand plural and theory-aware metrics that can register production processes alongside consumption and that can capture the precarious and contingent forms of value generated within networks rather than within hierarchies. Such a programme is more than a call for better statistics. It is a call to take seriously the paradox that the search for evidence able to prove the sector's worth often enacts an economised reduction of its worth.

Place-based instrumentalisation and the urban paradox

Chapter 4 analyses how the CCIs have been enrolled in place-based policy agendas across the globe. The 'creative city' and 'creative cluster' repertories were rapidly normalised as ready-to-hand solutions to postindustrial malaise, deindustrialisation, and urban image problems. The policies that proliferated from the early 2000s promised to leverage cultural vibrancy and creative talent for regeneration, investment attraction, and tourism. The chapter shows that this instrumentalisation produced a striking policy isomorphism across very different contexts as similar combinations of cultural districts, incubators, festivals, and branding campaigns were introduced in cities with widely varying labour markets and civic capacities. The paradox here is spatial and social. Creative place policies of inclusion and revitalisation frequently generate exclusionary outcomes through rent inflation, gentrification, and displacement that degrade the very cultural ecologies they intend to support. Equally, the overstatement of small firm growth potentials can obscure the structural dependence of microenterprises on large-scale platforms and financiers, sustaining a 'whale and plankton' ecology at the local level that reproduces uneven development.

Revolutions, crisis, and organisational resilience in the CCIs

Chapter 5 situates the organisational dilemmas of the CCIs within the long arc of digitisation and the consolidation of platform capitalism. It interrogates the narrative that digital technologies have democratised production and distribution, showing instead how a small number of companies have established infrastructural control over discovery, monetisation, and data. The pandemic shock functioned less as an exogenous rupture than as an accelerant that deepened dependencies on platforms and exposed the fragilities of revenue models predicated on live experience and thin margins. The paradox is organisational and temporal. The same infrastructures that enable unprecedented participation and reach also intermediate value capture away from creators and small organisations, while the emergency pivot to digital forms secured short-term survival at

the cost of longer-term strategic autonomy. The chapter reads instances of organisational resilience not as refutations of structural critique but as situated adaptations that reveal the sector's ingenuity and its limits when operating within platform governed attention economies.

Technological transformation, authorship, and the legal political paradox

Chapter 6 turns to the convergent pressures of artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, and their collision with intellectual property regimes fashioned for an earlier technological settlement. The promise of augmented creativity, immersive cultural experiences, and new markets is weighed against unresolved questions of authorship, training data provenance, labour displacement, and platform capture of the value generated by human machine assemblages. The paradox here is epistemic and legal. Instruments designed to reward and protect human authorship are increasingly mobilised to legitimise data extractive practices that destabilise creative livelihoods, while the rhetoric of empowerment routinely masks the consolidation of control over the infrastructures of visibility. Law appears simultaneously as the guardian of creative autonomy and as a vector through which the asymmetries of platform capitalism are reproduced. These tensions cannot be solved by legal doctrine alone since they are rooted in the political economy of cultural production in which the terms of access to audiences are set by entities that own the distribution rails.

Climate crisis and the ethics of cultural production

Chapter 7 addresses the existential threat that climate change poses to cultural heritage, cultural livelihoods, and the spatial bases of creative economies, while also insisting on the sector's complicity in carbon-intensive practices and its potential agency in shaping low carbon transitions. The triptych of victim, perpetrator, and potential saviour expresses one of the volume's most acute paradoxes. The same festivals, touring circuits, media infrastructures, and digital services that anchor cultural economies contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and ecological degradation. Yet cultural institutions and producers are also among the most effective communicators of climate knowledge and among the most skilled convenors of publics capable of supporting transformation. The challenge for policy and practice is to turn this paradox into a lever for structural change rather than a rhetorical gesture. That requires integrating cultural assets and practices into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and redesigning funding and regulatory regimes to support low carbon creative infrastructures.

Social exclusion and the reproduction of inequality

Chapter 8 brings into focus the persistent inequities that characterise the CCIs across ethnicity, gender, and class, arguing that these inequities are not

anomalies but are reproduced by the sector's neoliberal architecture. Inclusion programmes can deliver important benefits to individuals and even to firms, yet they often struggle to shift the structural conditions that generate exclusion in the first place. The project-based labour market favours those with the financial buffers and social networks needed to endure intermittent income and to access opportunities that circulate informally. The paradox is moral and institutional. A sector that narrates itself as progressive and meritocratic consistently fails to reflect the diversity of the publics it serves in a meaningful way. Efforts to improve inclusion often reproduce the logic of responsibilisation by upskilling individuals to cope with precarity rather than transforming the organisational and funding models that entrench it. The implication is that serious progress depends on revisiting the distribution of risk and reward across value chains and on building collective capacities that can counterbalance market individualisation.

Decolonising beyond representation

Chapter 9 argues that decolonisation in the CCIs cannot be reduced to more diverse representation within existing hierarchies of value and ownership. It analyses how coloniality persists in extractive market logics, epistemic dominance, and platform-mediated monetisation of cultural expression, using case studies that range from contested urban heritage to fashion industry appropriation and platform-enabled infotainment that packages racialised harm as content. The paradox here is political. Diversity rhetoric and symbolic recognition can grow apace with the expansion of extractive practices unless governance, ownership, and revenue sharing are restructured. Decolonisation requires reconfiguring who controls discovery, who benefits from the data generated by cultural participation, and whose knowledge systems are legitimated in canons and curricula. Without these shifts the creative economy's growth risks consolidating coloniality under a progressive veneer.

Chapter 10 synthesises the volume's argument by showing that the creative and cultural industries are the outcome of policy choices and measurement regimes that privileged growth, visibility, and intellectual property while neglecting production conditions and distributional outcomes, and it frames these tendencies as structural features that generate recurring paradoxes across place policy, digital intermediation, technological change, climate responsibility, social inclusion, and decolonial agendas. The chapter argues that these paradoxes are not anomalies but expressions of an ecology built around small firms, flexible contracting, and entrepreneurial subjectivities, and it links the persistence of exclusion to evidentiary systems that count audiences and outputs while leaving labour standards, ownership, and governance off the ledger. The proposed way forward is an ecosystem-oriented cultural policy that moves from pilots to stable architectures by assembling proven institutional components and coordinating cultural agencies with labour, competition, digital, and environmental regulators. Concretely, the