BOOK REVIEWS

Cultural industries and environmental crisis. New approaches for policy, edited by Mark Banks and Kate Oakley, Springer, 2021, 166 pp., EUR 106.99 (softcover book), EUR 139.09 (hardcover book), ISBN: 978-3-030-49384-4

The book is rooted in a five-year interdisciplinary project of the Center for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity in the UK, which dealt with the concept of ‘good life’ in the face of global multiple crises. Part of which was related to the arts and culture and their role in dealing with current socio-economic and environmental crises. The topic of the book is timely and surprisingly under-researched.

The ideas and studies presented in the book challenge the prevailing perspectives on the cultural and creative industries as desired tools to boost economic recovery or to enhance economic growth, urban revitalization, and social inclusiveness. It is an important contribution which disenchants the creative work – often perceived as green per se – and points to the environmental costs, such as the resource use, pollution or waste associated with some of the creative sectors. It also exposes the issues of multiple social inequalities inside the creative economy. On the other hand, it shows huge potential inside the creativity field for becoming a tool for radical transformation of the economic growth-centered development model.

The book consists of an Introduction and eleven chapters written by authors representing various disciplines and theoretical perspectives. The Introduction presents the cultural and creative industries in the context of ‘entwined’ crises and the need for novel approaches which could address the current challenges of unsustainable economic paradigms. The authors criticize the common view held by many policymakers at various levels that creative industries are a remedy for economic recovery, overlooking issues such as inequalities or ecological constraints. According to the editors of the book, Mark Banks and Kate Oakley, its aim is to problematize the links between cultural production and environmental challenges by examining ‘ecological contradictions and costs’ inside the world of creative activities (p. 8). At the same time, there is a normative dimension of this research initiative: to propose some ideas about cultural and creatives industries beyond the typical discourse of ‘engines of economic growth’. For the editors, those sectors of economy have an enormous potential to transform the socio-economic model of development which exacerbates the environmental crisis, and, thus, to contribute to a ‘sustainable prosperity’ (p.9).

Mark Banks challenges the creative economy model, and its growth imperative, which is questionable, as he argues, in economic, social and environmental aspects. Contrary to the prevailing narratives, the cultural and creative industries, which include digital communication, the IT sector, or media, are not universally ‘green’ nor sustainable. Then, Banks discusses one of more radical alternatives to the growth principle – de-growth, and proposes the concept of ‘creative de-growth’ which can be a prospective scenario for the ecologically-sustainable cultural industries. Richard Maxwell analyzes the limits and promises of environmental accounting and reporting inside the creative economy sector. He tells the story of Kodak and its practices which harmed the environment. Finally, some strategies for the greening of creative industries are proposed. Matt Brennan – a scholar and a musician – refocuses the sustainability debate on the topic of the music industry, taking as case studies live and recorded music and musical instruments. He proposes that the ecological approach to live music should incorporate materiality, the independence between actors and materials, and the sustainability of live music culture. One of the questions which he leaves unanswered is who should be responsible for the green transformation of this sector. Paula Serafini considers the creative economy model in the context of Latin America extractivism, taking Argentina
as a case study. She argues that the cultural field is not typically considered in the critique of development processes. The issue of the environmental impact of the creative and cultural production in Argentina is still not thoroughly discussed. A vision for post-extractivist cultural sphere and the role of culture in a transformation towards post-extractivist society is proposed.

Brett Caraway criticizes the ecological aspects of business practices of Amazon, with a special focus on the logistics which basically supports the mass consumption model. The company has announced its environmental programs and it supports other initiatives for sustainability, but simultaneously it is not being transparent about its environmental dimension. As the author argue, for this company, ‘sustainability is about sustaining Amazon. It is not about sustaining global ecologies’. (p. 75). Cecilia Dinardi raises the issue of socio-economic inequalities related to the creative and cultural sectors. In her contribution she focuses upon an informal sphere, which remains mostly unnoticed by policy makers and the orthodox discourse on this topic. The chapter analyzes the informal cultural sector and local governments’ initiatives in peripheral urban areas of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. She argues that the support for the informal, community-led and resource-lacking cultural sphere in disadvantaged areas may have multiple positive effects, such as social inclusion or socio-economic development.

Mariangela Lavanga and Martina Drosner focus on the culture – sustainability nexus. The authors offer a critical insight into an Amsterdam-based initiative which is an eco-friendly workplace for creative and social enterprises located in the post-industrial area with sustainability and the circular economy as the key principles. They notice that culture has served mostly as a tool for other goals, such as economic and environmental. Frederick Harry Pitts research considers the workplace and the working conditions of freelancers in the UK and the Netherlands. Referring to Marxian theoretical arguments and discussions on the concept of a ‘metabolic rift’, Pitts explores sectors such as design, branding and advertising. He argues that contradictions inherent in the capitalist system lead to precarious and unsustainable way of life of many freelancers, especially in the creative field. To counter this tough situation, some creatives develop their own responses to reconstruct their working conditions.

Anthony Killick and Kate Oakley were interested in the issue of place, social class, and the opportunities in the area of creative work. The authors refer to their research conducted in the UK in places of different scale: metropolis – London, a small town, and a post-industrial city. They claim that materiality and class issues have a real impact on how young people interested in creative work think of a career in that sector. They also underline the need to ‘re-think the nature of the work itself’ and point to the role of collective mobilization such as guilds and trade unions, cooperatives, and place an emphasis on the working conditions in these allegedly individualistic jobs. Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson explore the topic of the ‘Green New Deal’ stressing its potential for the wide-scale transformation of infrastructure. The authors explore the ways cultural industries may not only benefit from this ambitious project, but also, they can contribute to deal with enormous challenges of climate change by offering new socio-economic and ecological language and narratives, among others. Last but not least, Ealasaid Munro analyzes the lives of creative workers who chose to live in the rural areas of Scotland for numerous reasons. Referring to Deleuze’s concept of ‘exhaustion’, she argues that it characterizes the lives of many people involved in creative activities who face the widespread expectations of constant growth. Finally, the paper points to the emerging trend of challenging the state of exhaustion by engaging, directly or indirectly, with the topic of environmental crisis.

The book constitutes a significant contribution to the academic debates on the role of culture in sustainable development. It presents many arguments and interesting ideas which challenge the mainstream, orthodox views of cultural and creative work and production.

What is missing in the book is the theoretical part which could link presented cases to a wider academic discussion on culture and environmental crisis or propose an analytical framework. While there is quite a lot of analyses of concepts related to cultural industries, the topic of environment seems to be undertheorized. Conceptual work on the relation between culture and environment
would be useful. There are also no conclusions, which would sum up the whole book and propose further research paths.

Another point of criticism refers to the geographical coverage of the book. While most case studies refer to the Western world, there are also two chapters about Latin America which is a very interesting case given the popularity of the creative economy mantra and the neo-liberal, extractivist model. However, cultural and creative economies have been developing globally, supported by many central and local governments and also international organizations, such as UNESCO, UNCTAD or the World Bank. More representative coverage would be beneficial for the book’s aims. Many experiences from other parts of the world, with their unique problems and solutions, could add to the critical exploration of culture and environment.

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**Canadian cultural policy in transition**, edited by Devin Beauregard and Jonathan Paquette, London, Routledge, 2022, 280 pp., £96.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-367-68059-6

Canadian cultural policy – what the authors a little self-ironically introduce as a particular niche subject, both regarding the policy field and the geographical focus – turns out to be a very rich and dense compilation of high-quality articles that are acknowledging the historical foundations and contemporary transformations of the Canadian cultural policy landscape. In *Canadian Cultural Policy in Transition* published in 2022 by the Routledge Studies in Media and Cultural Industries, Devin Beauregard and Jonathan Paquette collected 18 articles by 18 contributors focusing on the history of Canadian cultural policy, its values, transition and current trends.

Devin Beauregard is a policy analyst and cultural policy researcher as well as affiliate researcher at the Centre on Governance at the University of Ottawa. Jonathan Paquette is a full professor at the University of Ottawa’s School of Political Studies. He is the director of the cultural policy research network at the Centre on Governance at the University of Ottawa.

In part I of this volume ‘Situating Canadian cultural policy – Classic and conventional conceptions of Canadian cultural policy’, the authors are drawing a historical overview opening with a critical reflection on the foundation of an official Canadian cultural policy from pre-Confederation focusing on ‘Arts policy, heritage policy, and the construction of a Canadian identity (1840–1949)’ (Dholandas and Paquette 2022, 2). By asking the question of where and when Canadian cultural policy began, Dholandas and Paquette are shedding light on the main myths of the foundation of Canada that significantly shape the images and narratives that one encounters in public debates, as well as in the development of a Canadian cultural policy. The authors herewith introduce the inevitable topic of colonization and a Canadian political and administrative system that ‘is rooted in the European legal and philosophical traditions of sovereignty’ (Dholandas and Paquette 2022, 3). Most importantly, the authors point out the significant ‘lack of conscious and subconscious representation of Indigenous traditions beyond the occasional symbolic gesture’ (Dholandas and Paquette 2022, 4) and are questioning whether pre-colonization cultural governance practices are actually part of today’s ‘Canadian’ cultural policy (Dholandas and Paquette 2022, 4). Based on this first overview of cultural policy under the French regime over the first decades of the Confederation and the period of development of museums in Montréal towards the end of the nineteenth century characterized by a ‘progressive