

# The Consequences of the Creative Class: The pursuit of creativity strategies in Australia's cities

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**Abstract:** The concept of 'creative cities' is gaining increased prominence amongst urban planners and policymakers concerned with the linkages between economic development and the 'soft' attributes of cities. While definitions of what exactly constitutes 'creative industries' and who the members of a 'creative class' actually are continue to be contested, many key urban policy actors are focused on engendering changes in their cities that set them apart as 'creative'. While stressing the need for a tolerant urban milieu, these strategies have also been associated in the literature with a series of detrimental outcomes, including the gentrification of lower-cost neighbourhoods, zero-tolerance policing and the broader displacement of progressive and welfarist orientations in local politics and programmes. We provide an overview of recent attempts to implement creative cities ideas in five Australian cities (Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Melbourne and Sydney) where eighty-two in-depth qualitative interviews were carried out involving a hundred city government, business and community stakeholders. The paper frames the potential benefits and pitfalls of incorporating creative cities ideas into urban governance structures and their reception by community and NGO groups, both in terms of the incorporation of these ideas into policy and practice, and in terms of their unintended social impacts.

## Introduction

Left to its devices, the creative economy ... will both exacerbate existing problems and create new ones.... Inequality is rising. Housing has become unaffordable in many of the leading creative centres... These are all externalities of the creative age - and they are just beginning to be felt.' (Florida 2005: 64)

At the moment, there is a dominance of economics over culture in terms of what is important. Creative cities point to economic development as part of the argument, but if economic development is the only argument I'm not sure where some of the most marginalised people can participate. (NGO Director, Sydney)

Creativity and economic development have become a key feature of the theoretical and practice landscape of urban politics in the last decade. For some commentators this is already a tired formula whose implications are as likely to be the dislocation of low income households as the creation of creative and tolerant milieus (Peck 2005). Yet the idea of an economy based fundamentally on skills and services containing creativity has become a popular discourse that has deeply affected the ground rules for generating economic development. This has invariably affected the tone and strategic direction in which many cities, both gifted and derelict in these attributes, have sought to manage their economies and, increasingly, the arts, culture and place-based attributes that make the city a good place to live. Where Florida's initial analysis (2000) highlighted the coming wave of opportunities for all cities based on a prescriptive list of ingredients and actions, his more recent work (2005) emphasises the flight of creativity and, by implication, capital and economic security. In short, we are presented with a context in which regions, not countries, compete for a globally footloose class of creative types who are the innovatory basis of the high profit sectors that now dominate the western world. It is in this context that urban governance is now presented with an apparent challenge – how to attain a desirable position on a hierarchy of place by producing the quality of environment that will attract talent and subsequent economic success.

For all the boosterism of Florida's analysis, his work has imprinted itself on the strategies of Australian cities. A visiting speaker at several key events in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney, Florida's aggressive blueprints for the pursuit of competitive advantage have been influential in debates about building increasingly creative cities and improving competitive advantage in a globalised pursuit of innovation in the Australian state capitals. In this paper we detail Florida's position and the creative cities literature in more detail and consider what the consequences of this pursuit of the creative class might be. We structure this analysis in three distinct phases. First, we review the international and Australian research literature examining the influence of creativity on strategies of urban economic and social development, with particular emphasis placed on the work of Richard Florida and Charles Landry. It is to Florida and Landry that policymakers and urban leaders have turned in pursuing and legitimating a wide range of programs, interventions and investment decisions. In the second section we examine the degree to which strategic thinking, action and policymaking work and partnerships have engaged with these ideas about creative cities. This is based primarily on interview data with key actors working in senior roles as state officials, consultants,

and city bureaucrats in related areas in Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Melbourne and Sydney but also on state budget and policy documents. The final section of the paper considers the likely longer-term impacts of this shift within city governance for more marginalised residents.

### 1. Creative cities and the creative class

The concept of 'creative cities' is gaining increased prominence amongst urban planners and policy makers as well as academics concerned with urban issues. While definitions of what exactly constitutes the 'creative industries' and who the members of the 'creative class' actually are continue to be contested, what is not disputed is that increasing numbers of urban governors are focusing on re-inventing their cities as 'creative' (e.g. Yorkshire, London, Tampa Bay, New England, Silicon Valley, Auckland, Brisbane). Such attempts have been promoted by initiatives such as the European Union's 'European Capital of Culture' initiative, in place since 1985 and UNESCO's 'Global Alliance's Creative Cities Network'. This focus has included the marketing of cities as creative places, the promotion of creative industries, and the wooing of the 'creative class'.

Creative city ideas can be understood in the context of two major economic shifts. The first is concern on the part of cities to survive, and even take advantage of, "changing conditions in the global economy" (Mommaas 2004:21, see also Pink 2005; Scott 2006). The second is a recognition of "the growing importance of the creative economy" (Mommaas 2004:21) in comparison with other economic sectors. While the major focus on cities and regions during the industrial age was to attract capital into their constituencies, so as to promote economic development and provide employment for their citizens and residents, with the move towards the information and conceptual age, the focus has turned towards attracting particular types of people with particular skills and capabilities. As a result, many major metropolitan areas around the world are now more drawn to a developmental formula that combines a focus on the new economy, investment in cultural resources, and an attempt to create a vibrant sense of place. Two of the most well-known names in the creative city movement are Englishman Charles Landry and American Richard Florida. While there are some similarities in their arguments, both theorists approach the issue of the creative city in distinctive ways.

Landry's focus is on bringing creativity into the practice and policies of urban renewal. He argues that "the creativity of those who live in and run cities will determine future success" and recognises that while this has always been the case, the need to think about creativity in regards to city policy and practice is of particular importance today when cities face significant periods of transition (often decline) "brought about by the vigour of renewed globalisation" (Landry 2000:xiii). At the same time, cities are facing a number of new and accelerating problems. These include increasing social fragmentation, an increase in fear and alienation of city residents, a growing dissatisfaction with the physical environment, a growing awareness of the inequity of mobility (i.e. more mobility for some is paralleled by less mobility for others) and "the diminishing sense of locality, of shared place and identity" (Landry & Bianchini 1998:14-15). Landry's book *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* describes how creativity can (and should) aid in "a new method of strategic urban planning" (2000:xii) to address these economic and social problems. Landry's vision of a creative city is a place where people feel free to use their imagination and to use innovation to tackle social problems.

Florida's ideas differ from those of Landry. Florida argues that a 'creative class' has emerged in American (and other western) societies. This creative class is important, according to Florida (2002, 2005a, 2005b), because in an economy increasingly driven by creativity, cities and regions with creative people will be those that succeed under a new set of economic development rules. As early as the 1960s Peter Drucker coined the term "knowledge worker" (see also Drucker 1979, 1999) and in 1973, Daniel Bell argued that theoretical knowledge was becoming increasingly important in the economy and that there was a growth of a "knowledge class" of scientists and engineers. Later, during the recession in America in the early 1990s, Robert Reich (1991) argued that the economic future of America would depend upon the skills of individuals, in particular "symbolic analysts", rather than the profitability of corporations. Similarly, in 1989, Castells spoke about the importance of an 'informational mode' of development<sup>1</sup>. According to Florida, a successful economy requires 'three Ts': technology, talent and tolerance. While Florida's focus on technology and talent harks back to discussions on the 'information society' and the 'knowledge worker', what is new about Florida's analysis is his addition of 'tolerance'. Florida's argument is that in order to attract creative workers to a city, that city has to have a lifestyle attractive to the new 'creative class', a group who value diversity and tolerance in the places in which they live. For Florida, companies follow creative workers (rather than the reverse) and creative workers have a large degree of choice over their location.

An important issue to arise from the work of both Landry and Florida is that cities must compete with each other to attract and retain both investment and creative people. Place promotion has become an important consideration in city strategies worldwide. Jensen (2005:4) notes that cities have been attempting to make themselves attractive in the market economy for a long time, however

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<sup>1</sup> For comprehensive overviews of these developments, see Healy 2002, Jensen 2005 and Pink 2005.

these urban branding activities are becoming increasingly 'professionalised'. For example, an important part of the process of urban branding and place competition is the ranking of cities (Jensen 2005:13) – a device that Florida himself has actively pursued.

The popularity of these creative city ideas can be partially explained by their promotion by both Landry and Florida themselves who have travelled around the world to speak about their ideas and to consult for different urban governors. Indeed, in Australia Landry promoted his ideas as an early contributor to Brisbane's *Creative City* strategy in 2002, as a "thinker in residence" in Adelaide in 2003, and as a speaker at the 2004 Canberra Ideas and Innovation Festival. Florida has given talks in Melbourne in 2002 (Collins 2002) and 2004 (Flew 2004) and in Sydney in 2004 (Parliament of NSW 2004). However, there are more substantial reasons behind the popularity of these theories. First, the ideas of both Florida and Landry fit well with a broader recognition of the importance of the cultural industries in the economy (see Gibson 2003 and Musterd & Deurloo 2005 on Florida). Second, particularly in the case of Florida's ideas, the creative class thesis is not at odds with economic rationalist or neo-liberal policies (see Gibson and Klocker 2005, Peck 2005, Gibson 2006a). For example, the creative class thesis normalises flexible labour-market conditions (Peck 2005:764). Understood in the context of the new workplace relations changes in Australia, Florida's arguments allow for a positive spin to be placed on the deregulation of labour markets, with insecurity being seen as the 'new freedom' (Peck 2005:759).

Numerous criticisms have been levelled against the creative cities arguments, particularly those of Florida. For example, a number of academics have argued that Florida's arguments depend on assumptions about causality that have not been proved (e.g. Montgomery 2005 and Peck 2005). Florida assumes that creativity is a cause of economic growth, however as Peck (2005:755) notes, "street level innovation may be a consequence of economic growth, not necessarily a cause". Another common criticism is that Florida fails to relate the emergence of successful cities to the histories and pre-established conditions of those cities (e.g. Hall 2004, Malanga 2004, Montgomery 2005 and Musterd & Deurloo 2005; Scott 2006:11).

Both Landry and Florida have recognised a number of social issues related to the creative economy. For example, Florida (2005b:172) notes that there are a number of externalities related to the creative economy including uneven regional development, sprawl and ecological decay, mounting stress and anxiety on individuals and political polarisation. In particular he points to housing affordability and congestion as problems that require management frameworks to prevent them from becoming a brake on the economy. However, the question of social inequity in relation to creative cities policies requires further attention according to a number of commentators (e.g. Bradford 2004, Peck 2005, Gibson 2006a). Indeed, safety and a supportive open milieu are important to Florida's diagnosis of the key features that the creative class are looking for in making locational decisions and the result of this policy emphasis may be gentrification and the displacement of social difference in the name of the pursuit of open and tolerant cities (Peck 2005). Indeed, Florida's arguments have been seen to be divisive, splitting society into the 'creative' class and by extension, the 'un-creative others' (Bradford 2004; Gibson & Brennan-Horley n.d.; Peck 2005; Gibson 2006a). Florida himself also recognises that inequality is strongest in city-regions at the top of his creativity scale. However, he sees this as a set of problems that require action, rather than recognising any connection between the privilege of much of the creative and professional classes and the low wage economies that surround and service them. It is these critiques that set the context for the remainder of this paper.

## **2. Creative cities? Strategic and ad-hoc urban governance and creative cities**

We need to be more [creative] than we are today. There are other cities that compete. If Melbourne wants to maintain its creative advantage more has to happen in terms of innovation, for example what Victoria has to offer in Asia (for example, exporting education), how we market arts, how we attract people. (State Arts Organisation, Melbourne)

How do we explain the relative strategic application and engagement with ideas of creativity? In this section we assess and discuss the degree to which ideas around creative economies and cities have come to be applied in five Australia state capitals – Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart. We ask whether there are explicit or de facto strategies in place that operate via networks of institutional actors working together in co-ordinated ways on these issues. A particular issue at stake here is whether an emphasis on these explanations of future economic vitality impact on broader policy priorities around urban social problems and provision for a broad social population base.

Our aim is to consider the range of actions by city government and other institutions that combine to form considered directions in policy, interventions and investments that explicitly or implicitly port ideas of creativity and development to the local urban arena. A strategic focus implies a competitive understanding of development and economic growth issues and can be seen to be allied to understandings of urban economies that are based on a need for advantage relative to other cities, states and countries globally. As we saw through our interviews, key actors working in state and city

government are acutely aware of what they perceive to be an inter-city and global competition for talented and creative workers and industries. It was only in Sydney that this emphasis appears to be dulled by the scale of a city that was seen to yield its own pre-eminence and position atop the Australian urban hierarchy. For the other four state capitals creativity and growth are fundamentally intertwined.

## 2.1 State level developments

There has generally been little interest in creative city issues at the national level, though the Howard government has used Florida's creativity index via the 2002 National Economics and Australian Local Government Association *State of the Regions* report in Australia. The report included a score on the creativity index for all regions in Australia, and also presented the equivalent city in America based on these creativity index scores. The report (National Economics 2002:i) suggested that Australian regions should look at how their comparable US regions are performing, "select those that have been doing reasonably well socio-economically and explore what is driving this outcome"<sup>2</sup>.

While the federal government has little involvement in creative cities ideas in Australia, the situation is different at State and city levels. The Queensland state government in particular draws upon a number of creative cities ideas. The *Capital Cities* policy was set up in 1998 as a joint initiative between the state government and Brisbane City Council, designed to fill in the gap left when the Commonwealth Government dropped *Building Better Cities*. In addition, the State government's *Smart Queensland* (2005:4) envisions "a State where knowledge, creativity and innovation drive economic growth to improve prosperity and quality of life for all Queenslanders" and discusses the need for "a culture of discovery, creativity, diversity and risk-taking", where "skills and knowledge are encouraged and stretched to keep pace with change". The *SEQ Regional Plan* (2005:85), tied to the *Smart State* Strategy, points to "priority sectors for the development of high value-added, knowledge-based jobs", including "creative industries". Also tied to the *Smart State* strategy is *Creative Queensland*, an arts strategy that draws heavily upon creative cities rhetoric. The strategy argues that strategic investment in arts and cultural development will help to achieve the Queensland Government's vision "to be a culturally dynamic place, rich in diversity and experiences where ideas and talent are supported; where artistic and cultural pursuits are encouraged; and where the economy is enhanced by excellence in creative innovation" (2002:3-4). This, it is argued, will contribute to the government priorities of community engagement and a better quality of life as well as growing "a strong diversified economy and a community of well skilled and knowledgeable people" (2003:3).

In Victoria, the state government has indicated its awareness of the importance of innovation and creativity in the 'new global economy'. The *Victorian Government's Innovation Statement* (2002:6) points to the importance of innovation for "harnessing Victoria's strengths and advantages to generate new ideas and knowledge, attract skilled workers and investment, and develop new products and services for the global market" and notes that innovation is crucial if Victoria is to be "seen by the world as a forward-looking, exciting and globally connected economy – a perception that is vital to attracting skilled people, investment and high growth industries" (*our italics*). Similarly, *Victoria: Leading the Way* points to the need to invest "in our creative industries" (2004:13). Victoria's arts strategy (Arts Victoria 2003:14) also points to the importance of creativity for the economy, stating that:

Developing creative abilities is of fundamental importance in meeting the challenges of economic development ... The arts can play a key role in the transition to a knowledge based economy and a culture of innovation, providing a social resource of intellectual capital and creativity.

South Australia's *Strategic Plan* (2004), includes as one of its objectives, "fostering creativity". This includes building on creative heritage, fostering a culture of creativity and encouraging. Of note here is the goal of the plan to "achieve a ranking in the top 3 regions of Australia in Richard Florida's Creativity Index within 10 years" (2004:7 & 41).

There is significantly less support for creative cities ideas at the State Government level in New South Wales, insofar as this might be evidenced by existing policy documents. However, the *NSW Competitiveness Report* (2006) does draw on those factors often associated with creative cities – including a high quality of life, a highly educated and ethnically diverse population and attracting international investment to the state. Beyond this however, we were unable to find any state-level policies explicitly addressing creative cities ideas.

## 2.2 City level developments

Brisbane has a formal creative cities strategy in place, while rhetoric reflecting creative cities ideas is apparent to some degree in all of the capitals we studied (see Table 1).

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<sup>2</sup> In an interesting development, Hong Kong has created their own index of creativity (Centre for Cultural Policy Research and Home Affairs Bureau 2004).

Table 1: The Adoption of Creative Cities Ideas in Australian Cities

City	City Governance	State involvement	City/ies involvement	Official CC strategy	De facto CC strategy	Ad-hoc policies and actions
Brisbane	Unitary	High	High	Yes	--	Yes
Melbourne	Multi	High	High	No	Yes	Yes
Sydney	Multi	Moderate	Low	No	No	Yes
Adelaide	Multi	High	High	No	Yes	Yes
Hobart	Multi	Low	Moderate	No	No	Yes

Rather than listing these developments by city, however, we outline here a number of different types of projects that are currently taking place. First, we outline programs and policies that draw specifically on the work of Landry and Florida, we then discuss strategies that focus on 'the arts', strategies that focus on innovation and the knowledge economy, place promotion strategies, strategies for managing growth while maintaining community diversity, and strategies for supporting civic life alongside economic growth, all of which draw upon creative cities ideas. These examples are by no means exhaustive but provide an idea of the types of approaches and projects currently underway in Australian cities.

### ***Involvement with the work of Landry and Florida***

Both Landry and Florida have been influential in policy developments in Australian cities, and Landry has even worked as a consultant and co-author on policy documents in both Brisbane and Adelaide. In 2002/3, Brisbane City Council, along with COMEDIA and Brecknock consulting, unveiled *Creative City: Brisbane City Council's Cultural Strategy 2003-2008*<sup>3</sup>. This final report includes the core principles of: embracing history; building cultural capital; ensuring access and equity; encouraging innovation; investing in culture; and providing leadership.

Brisbane's *Creative City* strategy is not simply a cultural policy. Landry argued that any creative city strategy needs to include three elements, which are in tension: arts policy, cultural policy and an organizational change agenda built around creativity and innovation. He noted that when such a strategy reaches the implementation stage, it is easy to fall into simply addressing responsibilities such as arts funding, rather than looking at creativity across policy areas. Indeed, what is particularly interesting about Brisbane's *Creative City* strategy is that the political process does seem to have stripped the strategy of much of its depth. Under each of these headings, the final report lists what is being done in each area and provides some suggestions of what could be done in the city. As one local government official noted during an interview, the strategy is more of a wish list of projects, rather than a strategic framework.

Earlier drafts of the strategy, on which Charles Landry<sup>4</sup> himself consulted, were much more comprehensive and included discussions on the difference between a creative city strategy and an arts or cultural strategy; the importance of human, social, cultural, intellectual, creative and environmental capital as well as new ways of valuing and measuring progress and new ways of managing as well as the need to attract, support and retain creative people. In discussions with Brisbane City Council officials, we discovered that when the creative city strategy was being written, the Mayor had been very supportive and there had also been a number of visits to the city by Florida, initiated by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the City Council. However, the creative cities strategy became a series of concrete investments, such as the Powerhouse arts venue and the final Creative Cities document was released as part of an electoral campaign. After this, there was a change of Mayor and the focus on creative cities ideas dissipated. The fact that it was a 'wish-list' and not a policy framework made it easier to ignore. This provides a clear example of how the political process can erode the premise behind creative cities ideas. However, there are a significant number of projects that continue to run in Brisbane, which draw on creative cities ideas.

Despite this apparent acceptance of the ideas of Florida and Landry in Brisbane, some interviewees cautioned against the simple adoption of these ideas to the management of the city of Brisbane. As one explained, Landry deals with the regeneration of cities in decline, while Florida deals with cities booming due to IT and tourism. However, in Queensland, the economic drivers are lifestyle and mining and it is not a question of regeneration, but of controlling growth.

While Brisbane is the only Australian city to have a creative city *strategy*, Adelaide has also been heavily influenced by creative cities ideas, and in particular by the work of Landry and one interviewee noted that Landry was in Adelaide at the time when the State Strategic Plan was drawn up for South Australia, which includes "fostering creativity" as one of its main principles. Indeed, creativity was seen to be one of Adelaide's great strengths in the 1970s and it was a driving passion of Don

<sup>3</sup> Available at [www.brecknockconsulting.com.au/07\\_downloads/AU-Q-BCC\\_creative\\_city.pdf](http://www.brecknockconsulting.com.au/07_downloads/AU-Q-BCC_creative_city.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> According to a (Peter Browning), the shift towards the Creative City Strategy happened about three years before they brought Brecknock consulting and Charles Landry in to consult on the issues.

Dunston<sup>5</sup> to establish Adelaide as a creative city. This focus shifted and it has only been in the last two to three years that there has again been a dedicated focus on Adelaide as a creative city. Charles Landry was invited to Adelaide because of increasing interest in this issue under a new government and at a time when the economy of the state was improving. Florida's arguments also received some attention.

Florida's and Landry's ideas have also permeated the thinking and policies of policy makers and planners in Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart, but have not been taken up to the same extent or as explicitly as in Brisbane and Adelaide. Having said this, the tag line for Parramatta City Council's<sup>6</sup> 2005 Arts Facilities and Cultural Places Framework is "Towards a Creative City: Identity, Contemporary Culture and Prosperity" and one of the framework's seven major strategy areas is "growing cultural and creative industries: generating new wealth and new cultural expression" (2005:4). Elsewhere in New South Wales, Florida's ideas have gained some traction and cabinet ministers were interested in his ideas, particularly in terms of developing regional areas. Former Premier Bob Carr and Planning Minister Refshauge were also interested in Florida's ideas of reinvigorating areas by attracting creative people and institutions. Florida has also spoken in Sydney on a number of occasions and at one point suggested that Sydney host the inaugural world Creativity forum, bringing in Bill Clinton and other "big names",<sup>7</sup>.

### ***The arts, innovation and the knowledge economy***

The importance of clustering creative arts-based organizations has been recognised in Adelaide, where there has been a focus on clustering creative and arts-based organizations in one part of the city, the West End. The West End is home to Arts SA, the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the Adelaide Festival and the Jam Factory<sup>8</sup> as well as numerous hotels, bars and clubs. The West End has a long arts and entertainment based history, with two of the earliest theatres in Australia being built there in the 1840s. However, in the 1990s Hindley Street, one of the major streets in the West End, had gained a reputation as 'the Kings Cross of Adelaide' and vacancy rates in the area were high. Adelaide City Council encouraged arts organizations to move into the West End for purposes of urban renewal.

We also discovered a number of community-focused arts projects in the course of our research (for example, Information and Cultural Exchange in Sydney). In Parramatta, there has been a commitment to building community through the arts and the City Council aims to embed cultural actions in their major activities. These approaches lend more credibility to the idea of a creative city as well legitimacy for new funds.

Furthermore, for many of the people we spoke with, discussions on creative cities strategies raised the issue of innovation and the knowledge economy. Indeed, as discussed above, the creative cities arguments themselves have grown out of this concern with the 'new economy'. For example, in South Australia there is a focus on innovation and on growing 'the creative industries' in the state and in particular, digital creative industries. The sorts of companies in that industry tend to have workers who want a city based lifestyle and so it is anticipated that they will have a significant impact on Adelaide's CBD.

In Melbourne, the planning document *Melbourne 2030* talks about the promotion of specialized activity centres, which are large precincts around universities where industry is linked with universities to "create places of increased economic activity that is knowledge based and knowledge directed". As some key actors suggested, in the "new economy" you can not tell creative people where to go, you can just provide the things they need, including liveable environments and places to interact.

While both 'the arts' and 'innovation' in the sense of the 'knowledge economy' were raised in the course of our research in relation to the utility of creative cities ideas in Australia, we noted that these two issues were seldom dealt with together. As one interviewee noted, "people think of creativity in terms of arts, culture etcetera, but not in terms of linkages in other areas. There is a lack of creativity about that". In contrast, an officer in the SA Department of Planning noted that discussions around innovation do not address the arts:

[Is there a focus on the arts] from our perspective in terms of the planning side? No, not really. There isn't, it's not something that's really picked up. The only time arts gets a mention is things like public art in urban development and urban regeneration and you know ... the airy-fairy stuff like let them do this and let them do that.

### ***Discussion***

The general absence of documented creative city strategies belies the fact that a creative city-inflected understanding of economic growth and city development is deeply embedded among policymakers

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<sup>5</sup> The Premier of South Australia in 1967-68 and 1970-79

<sup>6</sup> Part of metropolitan Sydney.

<sup>7</sup> This did not happen because of the cost.

<sup>8</sup> A centre for the design, production, exhibition and sale of ceramics, furniture, metal and glass.

and key personnel working within state, city and other 'upper level' institutions in Australia. A global context of anxieties around competitive advantage remains fixed on industry, whether it be creative or heavy, but in the context of a post-industrial economy. In addition to the embedding of this paradigm at the level of networked and ad-hoc urban governance practices the language, parameters and assumptions contained within Florida and Landry's reading of creativity and urban success have proved to be deeply engrained in the views of those working in community and NGO organizations. In this latter respect these ways of seeing appear to be a result of taking on the realities of debates about economic vitality and spinning these off into two interpretive frames. The first of these is acceptance in order to achieve legitimacy and funding within current frameworks. The second is a more critical reading of creative cities theory highlighting the significant role of communities, inherent human capacities, innovation and local problem-solving.

It is at this point we can see a key problem emerging to the extent that the creativity paradigm can be used, rather pointlessly, to encompass almost all aspects of economic development and urban governance. For example, a council officer in Brisbane provided us with an example of infrastructure developments (a new road tunnel) being justified as promoting liveability under the Florida formulation. Another example would be the use of creativity as a mode of general problem-solving by communities and policymakers. Here creativity becomes not a theoretical lens or way of understanding shifts in strategic decisions, resource allocation and place-competition but the very broadest underwriting of the urban system as a creative system that permeates through to the most fundamental rationales of urban life and policymaking.

### **3. Community impacts and the creative drive: The consequences of the creative class**

The second key focus of our research was to throw light onto the kind of connections articulated by our key actor interviewees between the relative emphasis on a creative mode of economic development, strategies to realize these outcomes, and the possibility of a socially restricted set of impacts. Writers like Florida have been strongly critiqued for producing accounts of development that stress the kind of artistic mode of neighbourhood development that has long been associated with a softening-up of neighbourhoods for capital (Zukin, 1995). In this final section we trace some of the problems and consequences of the pursuit of creative city strategies on existing communities. Through our analysis of the interview data we hone-in on themes generated from a matrix analysis that enabled us to distinguish between the views of actors working in the various cities, in different positions within those cities (universities, consultants, NGO and community organizations, city and state organizations) and at different levels ('city' and 'community'). We are thereby sensitized not only to the range of problems and consequences but also to the relative interests of the key actors identifying particular issues.

#### **3.1 Gentrification and household dislocation**

Differentiating between housing market impacts derived from a specific drive for creative professionals and economic forces operating through the housing market is difficult. Gentrification has become a concern in all of the cities we examined, and this concern is not restricted to the community groups and NGOs we spoke to. Many officers operating in state and city arts organisations and others recognised that the loss of social diversity and housing stress among low income groups has become a critical issue. However, for actors working in the 'city' sector there was a strong sense that gentrification is something that has happened *to* these cities and that it is something beyond the control of local governments. Certainly it is the state housing authorities who control access and relative investment in public housing that might ameliorate some of these issues but these services have increasingly been withdrawn and for some NGOs it is this kind of response to emerging social problems that has led the criticism that state and city governors are more interested in the bright lights of the creative economy, rather than poorer social groups in the city who are increasingly unable to compete for housing in the central city areas.

Beyond the problem of gentrification itself is the issue of a lack of affordable housing. This has occurred for a range of reasons, primarily demographic, and the extent to which local governments have been directly involved in this process is less clear. However, many key actors in the community sector view the pursuit of a creative class as being synonymous with a desire for gentrification and the supplanting of needy communities with high income groups who might also facilitate the improvement of the physical fabric of the city. In this sense there is a fractured policy drive with some organizations stressing a holistic and innovative approach to community development, and other splinters of government and politicians who are keen to see higher income residents in their constituencies. This process was described in Brisbane by an NGO official in these terms:

The reality is that when artistic communities are attracted into areas, there's often corresponding gentrification of those communities where cost of land increased etcetera and I don't think that cultural strategies have necessarily grappled with that. So you can end up with a city that's got a lot of hall-mark cultural opportunities and at the leading edge of culture and creativity, but there

may be a further sub-set of people who are further excluded within that city because they can no longer afford to live there. So, the presence of artistic and creative communities is not the only determinant of gentrification, but it is usually part of a broader process of gentrification. And I think if governments are going to pursue these kinds of active strategies, then they need as strident strategies for ensuring the social diversity of a city is sustained. (NGO, Brisbane)

For many of the NGO and community representatives we spoke to, the lack of a response to housing stress and the welfare of lower income groups highlighted a callous face of urban governance that was perceived to have been corporatised and directed primarily at the needs of existing and footloose industry and creative/ professional groups. In Melbourne the Docklands development was regularly singled out as a prime example of the kind of place-making that was being delivered for these groups with little affordable or public housing component. While the documentation associated with Docklands stresses the diversity of this community as a hallmark of its sustainability, this was significantly at odds with the perception of community groups, though it was acknowledged to have provided public space infrastructure for a broader community.

For many NGO and community organisations the role of the city council was seen to be one of promoting business interests leading to a disconnection between these interests and those of the existing community. For many, gentrification was the hallmark of this search for the right kind of people and this was wrapped up with what was seen as a drive for creative or young professional groups. In Sydney City, where most city revenue comes through business rates, the implication appeared to be a reliance on business and the small but high-income residential population. In both Melbourne's Yarra and Port Phillip City councils the problem of gentrification was attached to the broader growth challenges of the wider metropolis and was seen as problematic yet difficult to change.

Often these concerns ran side by side with social programs designed to engage with local communities through arts and creative strategies. The tension here lies in the fact that local governments, while closest to the community, receive relatively small amounts of financial support. Even if brakes could be placed on the gentrification process through public housing, this would be directed by the States, where there is currently very little investment. This has left the cities under-prepared, even if they wanted to maintain affordable housing in the city. As one Yarra City Council official bemoaned:

It is the property market that will dictate the kinds of communities we live in (Yarra City Council, Melbourne).

While there have been some initiatives that successfully address these issues, like Brisbane's Kelvin Grove Urban Village, these are relatively rare, and even Kelvin Grove has provided a negligible contribution to the need for affordable accommodation in the central city.

### **3.2 Revanchism and the new economy**

A second strand in the linkages between the emphasis on creativity and the new economy and local communities appeared in what can be seen as more aggressive policies and ad hoc decisions that have made the city less liveable or intolerable for certain social groups. This has emerged as the result of two factors. First, the drive to create clean and safe spaces to encourage social and economic investment. Second, the emergence of new communities in cities who are themselves less tolerant of some of these social problems. The result of these forces has been to create a climate in which social difference and more marginal social groups have been policed, designed and otherwise priced-out of central city areas. The general story for Melbourne city was described in the following terms:

The population of central Melbourne was very low in rooming houses etcetera, with gentrification there has been more high cost housing and it has produced a different social and cultural mix (that is, high net worth individuals and affluent young professionals). These groups are more likely to want cleaner streets and less diverse social and cultural amenity. There is pressure on local government for measures for getting rid of buskers and beggars, these are the risks and downsides of stimulating creative growth. (Charity, Melbourne)

In Adelaide and Brisbane local bylaws have been passed to prevent forms of public drinking that target Aboriginal and homeless people. Interviewees also noted physical changes in the city's structure so that these groups found it increasingly difficult to maintain a presence:

Homeless people used to sleep in toilet blocks in Victoria square. The buildings were very old and could have been heritage listed. They were knocked down. Also the square was made into a 'dry zone' [i.e. alcohol free]. You cannot argue that it was for any other reason but to get rid of the unsavoury elements. So these people moved out into the parks surrounding the inner-city. The parks around the city hide these people. Adelaide has a really cleansed look, an engineered city thing going on. They were just relocated, with no provision of services. (NGO, Adelaide)



Other examples of local NIMBYism could be found between new residents and existing users of these spaces. While examples could regularly be found of new resident professionals complaining about existing music from pubs, we also found evidence of complaints about initiatives that might help to alleviate the problems of homeless people:

The council started a station at Newfarm park for homeless people with showers and lockers for them to use, but the local residents complained and council backed down. (NGO, Brisbane)

However, in Melbourne we also found that state and homeless organizations had produced a protocol with the police to stop homeless people being moved-on prior to the Commonwealth games so it is also clear that these policies and practices are uneven. More aggressive policies of social displacement were now in evidence in Brisbane, here we found that:

There have been 'move-on' powers in Brisbane now for 1-2 years. Council applied to the state government to be able to move people on in 5 areas of the city ...The areas they targeted included XXX and XXX – traditional gathering places for indigenous and homeless people. Now virtually any council in Queensland can move people on [i.e. both police and council rangers]. But there is not necessarily a strategy of where they are being moved to. Anyone who is thought to be causing stress and disquiet to people can be moved on. Since [a number of NGO groups] complained about it, it has been extended state-wide. (NGO, Brisbane)

### **3.3 Colonising the arts for capital**

The role of the arts in the creative economy and strategies for economic growth is highly complex. However, one feature that is important to recognize is the way in which both laissez-faire and targeted approaches now see the arts as having a fundamental role in such growth. We find examples of low rent units and space in cities like Brisbane and Melbourne – designed to promote diversity of neighbourhood central city uses to encourage an environment that tourists, visitors and creative professionals more generally might come and visit. There is a strategic 'savvyness' to these lines of engagement with economic development – diversity is seen to pay much broader dividends than any potential losses from lower rents and such provision might initially imply. A further critical issue is the tacit understanding of the ways in which encouraging artists provides the seedbed for a kind of staged model of gentrification that has become widely understood among policymakers.

On the one hand these shifts have resulted in a greater optimism around the role of arts and communities in the development of the city, but also the much clearer elevation of the arts and artists as the temporary vanguards of creative strategies who are often displaced by the subsequent raising of rents and gentrification that might take place later on. While writers like Florida have been keen to assert the need for 'garage' and cheap space for business start-ups, creative enterprises and other seeding approaches, there is a fundamental contradiction between the way that many Australian cities now operate, not least in the way that low-cost accommodation for 'creative' and artistic uses is celebrated while similar space for 'non-creative' labour and social groups is lost. On the other hand, the work of NGOs in using the arts to build community capacity are often glossed over. For example, Arts Anglicare run a program working with homeless people making jewellery, but few people know about it, except for the people who are directly involved (NGO, Adelaide).

### **3.4 The dislocation of the community agenda**

The final area we consider in this paper is the potential for a political/economic trade-off between investment in the drive for strategies around place promotion and competition for talent on the one hand and reductions in action around community and social investment on the other. The clearest example of this can be found in what was seen in cities like Adelaide and Brisbane to be a lack of consultation around the emerging strategic actions in these areas. There was a certain irony to this as City officers often discussed how much effort had been spent on ensuring adequate consultation:

I do think that young people do get left out, I think generally the community does get left out. They've done some consultations for the State Strategic Plan and they were holding community forums and those sorts of things, but it was sort of an invitation thing and that whole thing of getting people to fill out a survey on the internet and putting an advertisement in the paper and telling people to, you know, you can contribute to our State Strategic Plan, tell us what you want for South Australia, isn't necessarily an effective way of consultation. (State government, Adelaide)

From the NGO sector we generally found that, even in cities not deploying creativity agendas, interest in engaging communities has tended to be slight. For this sector generally there has been a disconnect between strong economic growth over the past decade and a general shifting of investment that has not seen lower income groups improving their position, as one state housing official argued:

Socially inclusive communities (e.g. including people with low incomes) are critically important to a tolerant society. To the extent that the state doesn't see those things I worry. (State government, Brisbane)

Also in Brisbane we found that much of the broader social ethos underpinning the *Creative City* strategy had been supplanted by a more aggressive focus on business as well as the general downplaying or ignoring of the strategy. In Melbourne, where perhaps gentrification and the sense of community dislocation was strongest, we also found that city-level corporate think-tanks had the opposing view in which they felt that they played a key role in generating an inclusive social base in the central city:

The XXX is certainly aware of the growing disparity between rich and poor. The quality of the city is not just for some. We're taking creative steps to address these issues: Set up the XXX project. This is a new concept in Australia. We are using Melbourne as a model, but hope to take it national. Most major companies have a corporate social responsibility program. Some of the issues are so profound, that no one company can solve them. They've brought together a collaboration of companies to work together to address these issues. (Thinktank, Melbourne)

The last word on these issues is probably that there is a benign ignorance of much of the social pain, loss and general discomfort that lower income families have experienced during the long boom of the past decade. In this context the creative city holds the allure of an inclusive and exciting prospect for city and state policymakers and charismatic leadership in the government and corporate sectors. For the community and NGO sectors creative cities maintain the privilege of privilege in these cities and cut few paths towards a more sustainable position for those on lower incomes who are seen to be potentially threatening to the investment of footloose creative 'gentrifiers' or business investors. As one commentator argued:

Governments focus on the voters that matter and concentrate their resources on them – they don't waste their money on those groups who will always or never vote for them. (Corporate, Melbourne)

#### **4. Conclusion: Florida, without the sun?**

In this paper we have sought a fresh take on debates about the creativity and local economic development and the broader impacts of this for more deprived groups in the city. We started with the question of the degree to which writers like Florida and Landry, as stripped down and easily digested models of creativity and economic growth, have influenced strategic policymaking and partnerships across Australia's cities. We found that these 'strategies' and policies are both unevenly expressed and are often ad hoc or rely on the actions of individuals. This appears to be the result of a number of local contingencies related to the governance of cities (and its relative fragmentation) as well as the way in which such ideas have tended to ebb and flow around the political system. Far from being 'Florida groupies' the majority of key actors working in city government, private companies and think tanks demonstrated strong interest in, but also sophisticated critiques of, the degree to which such recipes for action might be effective.

A range of ideas drawn from the creative cities literature appear to be influential in some circuits of city governance. The Florida 'formulation' is particularly important because even while his work has been criticized by academics it is this recipe for action, focusing on liveability, a quest for footloose creative talent, and generating particular varieties of social milieu that has most impacted on policymakers in the Australian context. This influence does not only run along the lines of culture and the arts but extends into economic development, housing and other sectors of urban governance. Yet these ideas are unevenly understood and applied and they also rarely appear to be acted on through direct policy formulations or in strategic ways – but this experience varies significantly between cities and sometimes within the cities themselves and much of this is due to the structure of government in place. The features of these approaches can be summarized as follows:

1. The raising of knowledge/high tech, creativity and (commercial) research and development to a higher value under conditions of perceived urban competition between cities within Australia and individual cities competing for talent and investment with other cities globally. Much of this is about a search for core product development and service systems that can be produced with relatively little infrastructure investment.
2. A story of urban development and growth that is fundamentally anchored to understandings of the role of creative talent as an endogenous feature of existing populations and the tacit linkage of prosperity attached to a city's ability to attract such talent from external sources.
3. An almost unshakeable and universal belief in the uniqueness of place and a discourse of singularity that connects competitive place-advantages to prior urban culture, creativity and other soft attributes.
4. The largely contradictory placing of competitive and corporate understandings of growth side-by-side with largely rhetorical devices stressing community sustenance and development.

Feeling the fear associated with global patterns of competition and advantage, cities are 'doing' creativity anyway – dialogues about being left behind, missing the boat and becoming redundant luddite spaces cast outside the new economy provide a major spur to plans for economic futures. The

precise direction that strategic efforts take beyond these commonalities is, as we have seen, diverse, complex and often ad hoc and linked to the role of key charismatic figures. For those cities effortlessly riding a long economic boom (Sydney and Brisbane) interest and action is variable, for those with more to gain (Adelaide) there is a history of more intense interest in these ideas.

The second key question we started with concerned whether the rise of a creativity agenda in local urban politics meant the relative displacement of welfare and other agendas, such as housing affordability, from city, state and federal budget headings. Here things become much muddier and demonstration of causal linkages profoundly difficult. Our interviews with key actors from NGOs and other welfare agencies highlight a concern with the way that economic growth in the previous decade has bypassed those groups they deal with, and has raised the prospect of exclusion from new wealth. There is also a disjunction between the perceived attempt to attract young and affluent groups and the inequities that this has generated in many neighbourhoods through patterns of gentrification. However, it remains difficult to calibrate the influence of these policy flavours and directions given the way in which the wider private economy of household investors has effected these changes without strategic direction or support from the public sector.

If creativity is not the universal boost to the city economy and community infrastructure that many of our strategists might hope, it is also not clear whether the consequences of the creative class have been negative across Australia's cities. In cities like Sydney and Brisbane the costs of gentrification and household displacement have come largely as the result of broader economic cycles of investment and shifts in the nature of the local economy. What may be more debatable is the degree to which the cities and states have acted effectively to ameliorate the problems associated with economic growth and ensuring community engagement, in the broadest sense. The bright lights of the newly creative city are tinged with the development of anti-social and regressive policies and injunctions, which have taken on the hue of revanchist policies – against the homeless, and marginal urban communities such as indigenous communities. While a rhetoric of engagement and universal social potential is often seen accompanying ideas around the creative economy, it appears that the proliferating partners in urban governance arrangements are Janus faced, offering the rewards associated with creativity on the one hand, and clearing away those excluded from or unable to join the new economy and whose presence threatens this investment in this new growth model.

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