Schizoid creators

Creative work and subjectivity in the Chinese cultural economies

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This study investigates creative labour conditions and the formation of creative subjectivities in China. It combines a political economy of cultural production in contemporary China with four empirical case studies focusing on creative workers in state-owned cultural enterprises, independent filmmakers, international creative workers and social media creators. The study engages with questions concerning governance, precarity and subjectivity in analysing labour conditions of cultural production in contemporary China. While unveiling how specific politico-economic inequalities are concealed by the production of creative aspirations, I also attempt to affirm the experiences and agency of individuals working in a wide range of Chinese cultural sectors. This cultural economy produces space for individual agency as well as precariousness, leaving open the possibility for cultural workers to become what I term ‘schizoid creators’. The vibrant network of cultural production in China both pushes and limits individuals' aspirations to creativity and self-realisation. Expected by the state and market to ‘be creative’ in particular ways, cultural workers also find possibilities to resist this imperative, developing a schizoid subjectivity that serves the governing system but challenges it at the same time.

Jian Lin is a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam and Western Sydney University (joint-degree).
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Creative Work and Subjectivity in the
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# Table of contents

Publication history ................................................................................................................ iv

Author contributions ............................................................................................................ v

Acknowledgement ................................................................................................................ vi

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

*Creative labour and China* .................................................................................................. 5

*Schizoid creators* .............................................................................................................. 13

*Methodology* ..................................................................................................................... 21

*Chapter outline* .................................................................................................................. 26

Chapter 1 Understanding ‘cultural industries’ in China: History, policies and institutions ............................................................................................................................33

*Introduction* .......................................................................................................................33

*The advent of the ‘cultural industries’ in China* ................................................................36

*Developing strategies* ........................................................................................................40

*The state discursive formation* ..........................................................................................45

*Institutional deficiencies and the potential for flexibility and agency* ...............................50

*Conclusion* ........................................................................................................................56

Chapter 2 Being creative for the State: Creative workers in Chinese state-owned cultural enterprises .................................................................................................................................58

*Introduction* .......................................................................................................................58

*Autonomy, self-realisation and the creativity dispositif* .......................................................61

*From ganbu to employees: cultural system reform and Chinese SOCEs* .........................64
Chapter 3 From independent to art film and back again: Independent film, precarity and creative labour ..............................................................80

Introduction .................................................................................................................80

Precarity, precarisation and Chinese independent filmmaking .......................................85

Independent cinema as a way to counter personal and social discontent .........................88

Precarising Chinese independent cinema ........................................................................94

A community based on difference ..................................................................................101

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................106

Chapter 4 (Un-)Becoming Chinese creatives: Transnational creative labour mobility in global Beijing ......................................................................108

Introduction .....................................................................................................................108

Creative labour, mobility and precarity ...........................................................................111

Method ............................................................................................................................114

Why come to Beijing? ......................................................................................................116

Precarity: Unbecoming Chinese creatives ........................................................................120

The production of cosmopolitan subjects in Beijing .......................................................127

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................133

Chapter 5 The unlikely creative class: Kuaishou and Chinese digital cultural production ..................................................................................135

Introduction .....................................................................................................................135

The platformisation of cultural production in China ........................................................138
Chapter 2 Be Creative for the State

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Chapter 5 The Unlikely Creative Class

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Both authors discussed the research topic and relevant academic literature. Jian Lin (JL) developed the research outline and collected interview and online data through fieldwork, with JdK’s advice. Both JdK and JL analysed the empirical data and JL prepared the first draft. JdK commented on and revised the manuscript.
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