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Creative work and subjectivity in the Chinese cultural economies

Lin, J.

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Appendix I

Interview List

Number	Name	Organisation	Job	Interview Date	Gender	Case study	Interview Place	Note
1	Liana Cui	Chinese Film Library	film festival curator	7/27/16	female	SOCEs	Beijing	
2	Jiang Tao	Company A	journalist and editor	8/4/16	male	SOCEs	Beijing	
3	Lily Yang	CCTV	producer director	8/5/16	female	SOCEs	Beijing	
4	Chew Fei	Guiyang News Group	journalist	9/1/16	male	SOCEs	Beijing	
5	Carl	CCTV	senior manager	9/2/16	male	SOCEs	Beijing	
6	Simon Wong	Anhui Media Group	producer	9/4/16	male	SOCEs	phone	
7	Judie Deng	Shanghai Media Group	director producer	9/20/16	female	SOCEs	Shanghai	
8	Robin Chen	Anhui Media Group	administrative manager	9/26/16	male	SOCEs	Hefei	
9	Even Yang	SMG	business manager	10/25/16	female	SOCEs	Shanghai	

10	Liu Kang	State Council; People's Daily	Photographer; filmmaker	11/25/16	male	SOCES	Amsterdam	
11	David Wong	freelance	filmmaker	7/13/17	male	international	Beijing	Canada (Nationality)
12	Sarah Lau	freelance	freelance journalist	7/15/17	female	international	Beijing	Hong Kong
13	Simon	unknown	entrepreneur (digital media)	7/18/17	male	international	Beijing	Malaysia
14	Laurent	freelance	photographer	7/24/17	male	international	Beijing	France
15	Marc	freelance	artist	7/24/17	male	international	Beijing	The Netherlands
16	Pedro	freelance	artist	7/24/17	male	international	Beijing	The Netherlands; non-recorded;
17	Jolene	freelance	journalist	7/25/17	female	international	Beijing	Taiwan
18	Mike	game company	creative producer	8/3/17	male	international	Beijing	The Netherlands
19	Lance	freelance	filmmaker	8/6/17	male	international	Beijing	USA
20	Elsa	unknown	graphic designer	8/7/17	female	international	Beijing	Belgium
21	Dahlia	embassy, designer	freelancer	8/12/17	female	international	Beijing	The Netherlands
22	Nancy	CCTV	TV editor	8/12/17	female	international	Beijing	France
23	Amy	NYT	news editor	8/14/17	female	international	Beijing	Taiwan
24	Anna	I: Project Space	art curator	8/16/17	female	international	Beijing	Germany

25	Denis	unknown	Interpreter, freelancer	8/17/17	male	international	Beijing	UK
26	Ruben	unknown	journalist photographer	8/21/17	male	international	Beijing	The Netherlands
27	Liu Huanhuan	freelance	script writer	9/25/16	female	indie film; general	phone	
28	Jian Haodong	freelance	filmmaker	7/18/16	male	indie film	Beijing	
29	Shan Zuolong	Dangmai Pictures	CEO, film producer	7/21/16	male	indie film	Beijing	
30	Bai Xiaohong	freelance	screenwriter, director	7/30/16	female	indie film	Beijing	
31	Jin Dixiang	unknown	filmmaker, photographer	8/21/16	male	indie film	Beijing	
32	Chang Biao	freelance	filmmaker	8/26/16	male	indie film	Beijing	
33	Zhao Liang	freelance	filmmaker	8/31/16	male	indie film	Beijing	
34	Yang Cheng	unknown	CEO, film producer	9/10/16	male	indie film	Beijing	
35	Guo Xiaodong	freelance	film editor; producer	9/11/16	male	indie film	Beijing	
36	Xie Shuchang	freelance	filmmaker	11/22/16	male	indie film	Amsterdam	with Rowan Parry
37	Fan Jian	freelance	filmmaker	11/25/16	male	indie film	Amsterdam	with Rowan Parry
38	Lola	freelance	filmmaker	11/25/16	female	indie film	Amsterdam	
39	Zhu Rikun	freelance	filmmaker	11/25/16	male	indie film	Amsterdam	with Rowan Parry
40	Wang Fa	freelance	filmmaker	2/28/17	male	indie film	phone	

41	Chang Biao	indie film	filmmaker	7/11/17	male	indie film	Beijing	second interview
42	Jenny	woman issue	filmmaker	7/23/17	female	indie film	Beijing	
43	Wang Lu	Alibaba, digital entertainment	marketing and operation	7/17/16	female	general	Beijing	
44	Hu Yang	Alibaba, digital entertainment	marketing and operation	7/17/16	male	general	Beijing	
45	Chen Yuxuan	Miwei Media	director	7/19/16	female	general	Beijing	
46	Yan Di	Chun Feng De Yi Media	film marketing manager	7/26/16	female	general	Beijing	
47	An Ruyi	Asura cast	assistant producer	8/1/16	male	general	Beijing	
48	Sun Xu	Enlight Media	producer	8/2/16	female	general	Beijing	
49	Cao Jun	Miwei Media	director	8/3/16	male	general	Beijing	
50	Xu Zhiyuan	OWS	writer, founder of OWS	8/19/16	male	general	Beijing	
51	Eddy	Sole Video, OWS	photographer, video editor	8/19/16	male	general	Beijing	
52	Qiao	Sole Reading, OWS	editor	8/19/16	female	general	Beijing	
53	Weina	Salon, OWS	chief director	8/24/16	female	general	Beijing	
54	Xiao Wei	Wezeit, OWS	deputy chief editor	8/24/16	male	general	Beijing	

55	Li Shihong	Drum Tower West Theatre	marketing manager	8/26/16	male	general	Beijing	
56	Wu Qi	Sole Reading, OWS	chief editor	8/29/16	male	general	Beijing	
57	Wang Hai	Tencent	HR manager	9/1/16	male	general	Beijing; phone	
58	Xian Jing	ENTERTAINMENT CAPITAL	entertainment reporter	9/1/16	male	general	Beijing	
59	Jing Yu	ENTERTAINMENT CAPITAL	entertainment reporter	9/2/16	female	general	Beijing	
60	Xiao Yue	unknown	TV(web) show director	9/11/16	female	general	Beijing	
61	Song Jiaxin	Douyu Media	live show hostess	9/11/16	female	general	Beijing	
62	Xu Yajing	Tencent	advertising editor	9/25/16	female	general	Shanghai	
63	Sarah	Can Xing Production	commercial director	10/23/16	female	general	Shanghai; Phone	
64	Li Qin	woman issue	curator	8/4/17	male	general	Beijing	
65	Xian Jing	wechat; weibo; sina	content creator	4/2/18	male	digital	Beijing	
66	Silvie	wechat	developer; content creator	4/4/18	female	digital	Beijing	
67	Xie Fei	youdao	product manager	4/7/18	female	digital	Beijing	

68	Xiao	university researcher	computer scientist	4/15/18	male	digital	phone	
69	Ellen	unknown	software engineer	4/17/18	female	digital	Beijing	
70	Jackie	unknown	content creator	4/18/18	male	digital	Shanghai	
71	He Yang	wechat; taobao;	content creator; intermediary	4/23/18	male	digital	Shanghai	
72	He Xin	toutiao	content creator	4/24/18	male	digital	Phone	
73	Derek	Kuaishou; tencent	algorithm engineer	4/24/18	male	digital	Phone	
74	Xie Mei	douyin; toutiao	content creator	4/25/18	female	digital	Phone	
75	Mou Ming	wechat	content creator	4/25/18	female	digital	Phone	
76	Bai Chao	tencent	media worker	4/27/18	female	digital	Phone	
77	Lei Lei	wechat	content creator; intermediary	4/27/18	male	digital	Phone	
78	Qian Ge	Kuaishou	content creator	9/6/18	male	digital	phone	
79	Wang Hai	Kuaishou	HR manager	9/9/18	male	digital	phone	second interview

Appendix II

A list of Chinese cultural industries policy (1987-2017 selected)

Date	Policy Title	Government Bodies
02/02/1987	Interim Provisions on the Administration of Cultural Institutions Conducting Commercial Service and Activities	MoC; MoF; SAIC
16/03/1988	Interim Provisions on the Administration of News, Journal and Publishing Presses Conducting Commercial Service and Activities	SAPP, and SACI
10/06/1991	Several Economic Policies on the Cultural Undertakings	The State Council; MoC
30/12/1992	Procedures of Financial Management in Cultural Sectors	MoC
22/03/1993	Notice about further supporting Cultural Propaganda Undertakings	STA (State Taxation Administration)
25/04/1995	Provisions on Special Funds for Propaganda and Cultural Development	MoF
05/09/1996	Regulations on further Improving Cultural Economic Policies	The State Council
07/07/1997	Interim Regulations on the construction fee for the Cultural Undertakings	The State Council; MoF; STA
06/06/2000	Instructions on Deepening Reform in the Film Industry	SARFT; MoC
18/12/2000	Policies on Supporting the Development of the Cultural Undertakings	The State Council
18/10/2001	The Tenth Five-year Plan for the Development of the Cultural Industries	MoC

22/12/2001	Instructions on Deepening Reform in the News, Publishing, Broadcasting, Film and Television Industries	The Central Committee of the CCP; The Publicity Department of the CCP; SARFT; SAPP
03/06/2002	Instructions on the Conglomeration of Press and Publishing Industries	SAPP
17/06/2002	Instructions on the Cross-region Operation of the Press and Publishing Industries	SAPP
20/04/2003	Instructions on the Development of the Animation Film and Television Industries	SARFT
04/09/2003	Instructions on Supporting the Development of the Cultural Industries	MoC
30/12/2003	Instructions on Promoting the Development of the Broadcast, Film and Television Industries	SARFT
31/12/2003	Regulations on Supporting the Development of the Cultural Industries and the Enterprise Reform of Cultural Units	The State Council
18/10/2004	Instructions on Encouraging, Supporting and Guiding Non-public Economy in the Development of the Cultural Industries	MoC
10/11/2004	Decisions on Naming the Exemplary Bases of the Cultural Industries	MoC
29/03/2005	Tax Policies for Supporting the Cultural Industries	MoF; GAC (General Administration of Customs); SAT
29/03/2005	Tax Policies For the Enterprise Reform of Cultural Units	MoF; GAC; SAT

13/04/2005	Decisions on the Entry of Non-public Capital into the Cultural Industries	The State Council
10/07/2005	Instructions on Promoting and Improving the Export of Cultural Products and Services	The State Council
04/11/2005	Instructions on Promoting Private Art Performing Groups	MoC; MoF; MoH (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security); SAT
18/08/2006	Regulations on the Special Funds of National Film Industry Development	MoF; SAT
13/09/2006	National Plan for the Cultural Development in the Eleventh Five-year Era	The Central Committee of the CCP; The State Council
14/09/2006	The Eleventh Plan for Cultural Development	MoC
05/11/2006	Policies for Promoting the Export of Cultural Products and Services	The State Council; MoF
07/12/2006	Notice about the Naming of in the Cultural Industries National Research Centres	
11/04/2007	Catalogue of Industries for Cultural Export	MoC (Ministry of Commerce); MoC; SARFT
25/06/2007	Notice about the Naming of the Selected First Round of National Cultural Industrial Parks	MoC
13/08/2008	Instructions on the Promotion of the Animation Industry	MoC

12/10/2008	Regulations on Supporting the Development of the Cultural Industries and the Enterprise Reform of Cultural Units	The State Council
26/03/2009	Tax Policies For the Enterprise Reform of Cultural Units	MoF; SAT
27/03/2009	Tax Policies For Supporting Cultural Enterprises	MoF; SAT
17/07/2009	Tax Policies For Supporting the Animation Industry	MoF; SAT
20/07/2009	Instructions on Promoting the Healthy Development of the Audio-Visual Industries	SAPP
08/09/2009	Investment Catalogue of the Cultural Industries for	MoC
29/09/2009	Instruction on Speeding up the Development of the Cultural Industries	MoC
28/10/2009	Scheme of Reform of the Audio-Visual and Publishing Industries	SARFT
01/01/2010	Instructions on Further Promoting Press and Publishing Industries	SARFT
21/01/2010	Instructions on Promoting the Development of the Film Industry	The State Council
09/03/2010	Instructions on Using Financial Tools to Promote the Cultural Industries	Publicity Department of the CCP; PBC (People's Bank of China); MoF
09/06/2010	Notice about Strengthening the Administration of the Cultural Industrial Parks	MoC

10/10/2010	Instructions on Developing E-book Industry	SARFT
29/12/2010	Notice about the Insurance Industry Supporting the Cultural Industries	IRC (Insurance Regulatory Commission); MoC
23/02/2012	Planning of Multiplying the Growth of the Cultural Industries during the Twelfth Five-year Era	MoC
24/02/2012	Instructions on Speeding up Conglomeration Reform in the Media Industry	SARFT
07/05/2012	Interim Regulations on the Special Funds for the Cultural Industries	MoF; MoC
08/06/2012	Instructions on Promoting and Guiding Private Capital in Investing the Cultural Sectors	MoC
06/07/2012	Notice about Further Strengthening Regulation on Internet Audio-Visual Programmes such as Web Series and Micro Film	SARFT; CAC (Cyberspace Administration of China)
26/02/2014	Instructions on Promoting the Integration of Cultural Creativity, Design and related industries	The State Council
17/03/2014	Instructions on Promoting the Intergration of Cultural and Financial services	MoC
19/06/2014	Several Economic Policies on Supporting Film Industry	MoF; SARFT
08/08/2014	Instructions on Promoting the Characteristic Cultural Industries	MoC; MoF
09/08/2014	Instructions on Promoting the	The State Council

	Development and Reform of Tourism Industries	
20/08/2014	Instructions on Supporting Small and Micro Cultural Companies	MoC; MoIIT (Ministry of Industry and Information Technology); MoF
29/08/2014	Instruction on Strengthening the Administration of Internet Security in Telecommunication and Internet Sectors	MoIIT
15/01/2015	Instructions on Speeding up the Construction of Modern Service System for Public Culture	The Central Committee of the CCP; The State Council
08/05/2015	Made In China 2025	The State Council
16/06/2015	Policies on Promoting Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation	The State Council
04/07/2015	Instructions on Promoting the ‘Internet +’	The State Council
04/09/2015	Scheme for the Promotion of Triple Play in Telecommunication Industry	The State Council
05/09/2015	Scheme for the Promotion of ‘Big Data’ Initiatives	The State Council
14/09/2015	Instructions on Promoting the State-owned Cultural Enterprises to put social benefits first, while Uniting the Social Benefits with Economic Benefits	The State Council
03/10/2015	Instructions on the Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture and Arts	The Central Committee of the CCP
26/06/2016	Notice about Further Strengthening the Regulation of Broadcasting Hosts and	SARFT

	Guests	
07/11/2016	The Film Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China	NPC (National People's Congress)
29/12/2016	Action Plan of Cultural Development for the 'One Belt One Road' (2016-2020)	MoC
07/05/2017	Scheme of Planning for Cultural Development and Reform in the Thirteenth Five-year Era	The State Council

Summary

Schizoid Creators: Creative Work and Subjectivity in the Chinese Cultural Economies

This study investigates creative labour conditions and the formation of creative subjectivities in China in terms of the precariousness these conditions generate, but also of the opportunities creative labour offers subjects from diverse social backgrounds. Based on my empirical fieldwork in China (mostly Beijing and Shanghai) and archival research (e.g. policy documents and industrial reports), this study 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 in Beijing and the newly emerged digital creative class on social media. By investigating the subjectivation of creative workers in relation to the complex and diversified labour conditions of cultural production in contemporary China, this study engages with three questions concerning governance, precarity and subjectivity: 1) How are cultural production and creative labour organised and regulated in the contemporary Chinese cultural economy (governance)? 2) What are the working and living conditions of creative workers in this specific political economy of the Chinese cultural industries (precarity)? 3) How do individual creative workers navigate the politico-economic system of cultural production in China? (subjectivity)?

I start from two basic premises. First, that there is a lack of concern with contextuality in current scholarship on creative labour and that we urgently need to take into consideration the different politico-cultural-economic circumstances in the societies where creative labour flourishes. My aim is ‘not to reverse the binary relationships – west and east or north and south, coloniser and colonised, centre and periphery’ – but to displace or interrupt the ‘taken-for-grantedness of congealed

knowledge claims' (Alacovska and Gill 2019, 3) in extant attempts to theorise cultural work. Second, in claiming creative work as aspirational, I refuse to view these aspirations as merely false consciousness. The recognition that aspirational creative workers may overlook or be willing to tolerate the precarious conditions under which they work does not necessarily mean that their aspirations or positive experiences of creative work are simply illusory or founded in misleading ideology (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

While unveiling how politico-economic inequalities are concealed by the production of creative aspirations in the Chinese cultural industries, I also seek to affirm the experiences and agency of individuals working in a wide range of cultural sectors, including television, film, design, journalism and social media. These creative subjects, I argue, are far from docile bodies that are simply manipulated by (state) capitalist ideologies. China's specific 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' – a concept borrowed and developed from Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis of contemporary capitalism (1983). 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 always '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.

Chapter 1 investigates the policy and institutional context of commercial cultural production in contemporary China. Based on a genealogical overview of Chinese cultural economy policies, it shows how the discourse of 'cultural industries' was introduced and incorporated by the Chinese Party-State in the post-Mao era. The Party-State adopts a functionalist, top-down approach to culture, which is viewed as both an economic asset and a crucial tool for wielding national and international soft power, and maintaining social and political stability. The cultural industries are thus supported and promoted by the Chinese authorities,

while also being put under strict surveillance and censorship. Crucially, this top-down approach on the cultural industries and cultural production is imbued with contradictions, as becomes clear when considering the institutional features of the Chinese political system and the process of policy implementation. The fragmented administrative system, the decentralised authoritarian regime and the complicated state-commerce relationship all profoundly affect the actual process of policy-making and implementation in the contemporary Chinese cultural sectors. The uncanny political system ultimately yields as many obstacles as flexibilities for creative producers and other actors in the Chinese cultural sphere. Consequently, the crucial task for cultural producers in China is to find ways to negotiate and ‘play’ with state power, which is contested, non-unitary and multiple.

Chapter 2 studies creative labour in Chinese state-owned cultural enterprises (SOCEs). Transformed from state-controlled cultural work units, these state-owned companies are the most powerful players in the Chinese cultural industries. Based on the empirical analysis of fieldwork data, this chapter explores the governance of creative labour in Chinese SOCEs through an analysis of the condition of autonomy and the discourse of self-realisation within selected Chinese state-controlled media companies. The autonomy of creative work within the system is made contingent by the Party-State’s ideological regulation, which results in a highly bureaucratic management system. Nevertheless, the various welfare benefits and career opportunities provided by the SOCEs also motivate state-employed creative workers, through the discourse of self-realisation, to ‘be creative for the state’. In practice, however, as cases of loafing on the job and the ‘resignation wave’ illustrate, the state-sponsored system is permeated with contradictions that can enable creative individuals to distance themselves from the expected subjectivity of ‘being creative for the state’.

Chapter 3 studies Chinese independent filmmaking as a form of creative labour. My ethnography shows that independent filmmaking is often chosen due to the filmmakers’ expectation that it will allow them to balance their aspirations to career success and their ‘discontent’ with their previous lives and the state of

society. Once having become practitioners in the industry, however, these filmmakers soon find that their creative labour is precarised in the existing production system: the stringent film censorship and the thriving state-supported domestic cinema industry prompt filmmakers to accept ‘co-optation’ and ‘depoliticisation’ in production; certain international film festivals and institutions, at the same time, encourage these Chinese filmmakers to identify themselves as ‘dissent/artistic independents’. This process of precarisation steers Chinese independent cinema towards a depoliticised ‘art cinema’, while filmmakers have to deploy forms of self-governance such as multi-tasking, networking and emotional management. But this precarity and precarisation also produces an informal mutual-caring community among independent filmmakers to combat their career precarity. Animated by common aspirations to ‘independence’ and ‘freedom’, this community triggers a more open understanding of ‘independence’ and ‘independent filmmaking’. They are becoming what I have termed ‘schizoid creators’ in the sense that their creative labour on the one hand is integrated into the larger governing system of cultural production in China. On the other hand, such a more inclusive and fluid conception of independence in turn allows for differences between the community’s members, who are no longer circumscribed by rigid identities such as ‘politically dissent’ or ‘non-commercial’.

Chapter 4 shifts the research focus from local Chinese creators to international creative subjects in China. The emerging Chinese cultural industries and the existing gap between China’s cultural economy and its western competitors have translated into a thirst on the part of Chinese authorities and companies for ‘creative know-how’, fostering job opportunities for international cultural workers. However, the career opportunities brought by the emerging Chinese creative economy are also accompanied by risks and precarity; China’s limitations on migration, precarious working conditions, political restrictions and social-environmental problems all call for effective self-governance among transnational creative workers in China. At the same time, the precarious life produced by the mobility and flexibility demanded of international creative workers in Beijing fuels

interaction and mutual understanding between local and global subjects, providing the conditions for a cosmopolitan subjectivity. This subjectivation of international cultural workers may transcend the Chinese authorities' expectation of a conforming and profitable creative workforce. In this way, the transnational mobility of creative labour in Beijing epitomises the process of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, and exemplifies what Isabel Lorey (2015) terms the 'incalculable' consequences of precarisation and self-governance.

Chapter 5 studies an 'unlikely' group of creative workers enabled by the emerging platformisation of cultural production in China – short video makers on the social media platform Kuaishou. It examines the contingent relationship between Kuaishou and the state governance of culture and economy, and shows how this relationship is embedded in the digital algorithmic system of the platform. It is this state-platform contingency that distinguishes the functioning ecology of Chinese media platforms from those in the west. The platform economy provides opportunities for 'grassroots individuals' from diverse backgrounds to become creative workers, pandering to the state's goal of restructuring the economy while also enabling a new form of social class mobility. The grassroots digital entrepreneurship fostered by Kuaishou transcends the passive 'digital labour' and 'prosumer' model some critical politic economists have identified (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Fuchs, 2010). In parallel with the institutional regulation and censorship of the internet, Kuaishou creators actively participate in Chinese platform creative economy, appropriating the algorithmic digital system and negotiating with the state/platform governance to achieve their own creative and financial aims. Within their experiences of creation and monetisation, we can find moments of play, if not resistance – moments in which the official narrative of the 'China Dream' is juxtaposed to multiple dreams from actors that hardly ever get a face or a voice in mainstream media in China.

Samenvatting

Schizoïde Makers: Creatief Werk en Subjectiviteit in de Chinese Culturele Economieën

Dit onderzoek analyseert de omstandigheden van creatieve arbeid en de vorming van creatieve subjectiviteiten in China betreffende de onzekerheden die deze omstandigheden brengen, maar ook de mogelijkheden die ze kunnen genereren voor subjecten van verschillende sociale achtergronden. Deze studie is gebaseerd op het empirisch veldwerk dat ik heb uitgevoerd (voornamelijk in Beijing en Sjanghai) en op archiefonderzoek (bijvoorbeeld beleidsdocumenten en industriële rapporten), en combineert als zodanig een politiek-economische analyse van culturele productie in hedendaags China met vier empirische case studies die zich richten op creatieve werkers in culturele staatsbedrijven, onafhankelijke filmmakers, internationale creatieve werkers in Beijing en de recentelijk ontstane digitale creatieve klasse op sociale media. Door de subjectivering van creatieve werkers te onderzoeken in relatie tot de complexe en gediversifieerde arbeidsomstandigheden van culturele productie in het hedendaagse China, gaat deze studie in op drie vragen over bestuur, precariteit en subjectiviteit: 1) Hoe is culturele productie en creatieve arbeid georganiseerd en gereguleerd in de hedendaagse Chinese culturele economie (bestuur)? 2) Wat zijn de werk- en leefomstandigheden van creatieve werkers in de specifieke politieke economie van de Chinese culturele industrie (precariteit)? 3) Hoe navigeren individuele creatieve werkers het politiek-economische systeem van culturele productie in China (subjectiviteit)?

Ik begin met twee basis-aanname: ten eerste dat er in het huidige wetenschappelijke onderzoek naar creatieve arbeid te weinig aandacht is voor contextualiteit, en dat we de verschillende politiek-economische omstandigheden in de maatschappijen waar creatieve arbeid floreert dringend in overweging moeten nemen. Mijn doel is ‘not to reverse the binary relationships – west and east or north

and south, coloniser and colonised, centre and periphery’ – but to displace or interrupt the ‘taken-for-grantedness of congealed knowledge claims’ (Alacovska and Gill 2019, 3) in bestaande pogingen om cultureel werk te theoretiseren. Ten tweede, in mijn claim dat creatief werk ambitieus is, weiger ik deze aspiraties te zien als een vals bewustzijn. De onderkenning dat ambitieuze creatieve werkers de precare omstandigheden waarbinnen zij werken wellicht over het hoofd zien of bereid zijn te tolereren, betekent niet noodzakelijk dat hun aspiraties of positieve ervaringen binnen de creatieve sector een illusie zijn, of slechts gebaseerd op misleidende ideologie (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

Terwijl ik enerzijds onthul hoe politiek-economische ongelijkheden verborgen worden door de productie van creatieve aspiratie in de Chinese culturele industrie, probeer ik ook de ervaringen en de agency van individuen die werken binnen een breed scala aan culturele sectoren, waaronder televisie, film, design, journalistiek en sociale media, te bevestigen. Ik betoog dat deze creatieve werkers allesbehalve dociele lichamen zijn die simpelweg gemanipuleerd worden door (staats)kapitalistische ideologieën. De specifieke culturele economie van China maakt ruimte voor zowel individuele keuzevrijheid als onzekerheid. Dit laat de mogelijk open dat culturele werkers verworden tot ‘schizoïde makers’ – een concept dat ik leen en ontwikkel van Deleuze en Guattari’s schizo-analyse van hedendaags kapitalisme (1983). Het bruisende netwerk van culturele productie in China motiveert en beperkt de aspiratie van het individu tot creativiteit en zelfontplooiing. Terwijl door de markt en door de staat verwacht wordt dat ze altijd op specifieke manieren ‘creatief zijn’, vinden culturele werkers ook mogelijkheden dit imperatief te weerstaan. Hiertoe ontwikkelen ze een schizoïde subjectiviteit die het heersende systeem dient, maar tegelijkertijd uitdaagt.

Hoofdstuk 1 onderzoekt het beleid en de institutionele context van commerciële culturele productie in hedendaags China. Gebaseerd op een genealogisch overzicht van het Chinese culturele economiebeleid, laat ik zien hoe het discours van de ‘culturele industrie’ geïntroduceerd en geïncorporeerd werd door de Chinese Partijstaat in het post-Mao tijdperk. De Partijstaat hanteert een

functionalistische, top-down benadering met betrekking tot cultuur, beschouwd als zowel een economische troef als een cruciaal instrument om nationale en internationale soft-power uit te oefenen, en sociale en politieke stabiliteit te handhaven. Zo worden de culturele industrieën ondersteund en gepromoot door de Chinese autoriteiten, terwijl ze ook onder strikt toezicht en censuur staan. Cruciaal is dat deze top-downbenadering van de culturele industrieën en culturele productie doordrenkt is met tegenstrijdigheden, zoals duidelijk wordt bij het beschouwen van de institutionele kenmerken van het Chinese politieke systeem en het proces van beleidsimplementatie. Het gefragmenteerde administratiesysteem, het gedecentraliseerde autoritaire regime en de complexe staat-commercie relatie beïnvloeden allemaal het proces van beleid maken, alsook de implementatie van dit beleid binnen de hedendaagse Chinese culturele sectoren. Het ondoorgrondelijke politieke systeem levert uiteindelijk net zoveel obstakels als flexibele omstandigheden op voor creatieve producenten en andere actoren binnen het Chinese culturele veld. Het is daarom voor culturele producenten in China cruciaal om een manier te vinden om te onderhandelen en te ‘spelen’ met de staatsmacht, die wordt betwist en die non-unitair en meervoudig is

Hoofdstuk 2 bestudeert creatieve arbeid binnen Chinese culturele ondernemingen in staatseigendom (SOCEs). Deze staatsbedrijven zijn getransformeerd van door de staat gecontroleerde culturele werkeenheden en zijn de belangrijkste spelers binnen de Chinese culturele industrieën. Gebaseerd op een empirische analyse van veldwerkgegevens onderzoekt dit hoofdstuk het bestuur van creatieve arbeid in Chinese SOCEs middels een analyse van de omstandigheden van autonomie en het discours van zelfrealisatie binnen de door de staat gecontroleerde Chinese media. De autonomie van creatief werk binnen het systeem wordt afhankelijk gemaakt van de ideologische regelgeving van de Partijstaat, wat resulteert in een zeer bureaucratisch managementsysteem. Desondanks motiveren de verschillende welzijnsvoordelen en carrière mogelijkheden geboden door SOCEs creatieve werkers ook om, via het discours van zelfrealisatie, ‘creatief voor de staat’ te zijn. In de praktijk is het door de staat gesponsorde systeem echter doordrenkt van

tegenstrijdigheden, waardoor creatieve individuen de mogelijkheid krijgen zich te distantiëren van de verwachte subjectiviteit waarin ze ‘creatief voor de staat’ moeten zijn, zoals gevallen van ‘lanterfanten op het werk’ en de ‘ontslag golf’ illustreren.

Hoofdstuk 3 onderzoekt onafhankelijke filmproductie in China als een vorm van creatieve arbeid. Mijn etnografisch onderzoek laat zien dat onafhankelijke filmproductie vaak wordt gekozen omdat filmmakers verwachten dat het een balans zal brengen tussen enerzijds hun ambities voor loopbaansucces en anderzijds hun ‘ontevredenheid’ over hun vroegere leven en de toestand van de maatschappij. Als ze eenmaal werkzaam zijn binnen de filmindustrie, komen deze filmmakers er echter snel achter dat hun creatieve arbeid onzeker wordt gemaakt binnen het bestaande productiesysteem: de strenge filmcensuur en de bloeiende binnenlandse filmindustrie die wordt gesponsord door de staat leiden ertoe dat filmmakers ‘coöptatie’ en ‘depolitiseren’ in hun werk accepteren, terwijl bepaalde internationale filmfestivals en instituten hen tegelijkertijd aanmoedigen om zich te identificeren als dissident/ artistiek onafhankelijk. Dit proces van precarisatie stuurt de Chinese onafhankelijke film richting een gedepolitiseerde ‘art cinema’, terwijl filmmakers vormen van zelfbestuur moeten inzetten, zoals multitasking, netwerken en emotioneel management. Maar deze precariteit en precarisatie genereert ook een informele gemeenschap van onafhankelijke filmmakers waarbinnen voor elkaar gezorgd wordt, en die de precare omstandigheden van hun carrière bestrijdt. Deze gemeenschap wordt gestimuleerd door gemeenschappelijke ambities van ‘onafhankelijkheid’ en ‘vrijheid’, en creëert zo een breder begrip van ‘onafhankelijkheid’ en ‘onafhankelijke filmproductie’. De filmmakers worden, zoals ik het noem, ‘schizoïde makers’: enerzijds is hun creatieve arbeid geïntegreerd in het grotere regeringssysteem van culturele productie in China. Anderzijds laat hun meer insluitende en flexibele opvatting van onafhankelijkheid verschillen tussen de leden van de gemeenschap toe, die niet langer worden begrensd door rechtlijnige identiteiten zoals ‘politiek afwijkend’ of ‘niet-commercieel’.

Hoofdstuk 4 verschuift de focus van lokale Chinese makers naar internationale creatieve subjecten in China. De opkomende Chinese culturele industrieën en de bestaande kloof tussen de culturele economie van China en haar westerse concurrenten hebben zich vertaald in een honger aan de zijde van de Chinese autoriteiten en bedrijven naar ‘creatieve knowhow’, waardoor de kansen op de arbeidsmarkt voor internationale culturele arbeiders worden vergroot. De carrièremogelijkheden die door de opkomende Chinese creatieve economie worden gegenereerd brengen echter ook risico’s en precariteit met zich mee. De beperkingen in China wat betreft migratie, precaire arbeidsomstandigheden, politieke beperkingen en milieuproblemen vragen allemaal om effectief zelfbestuur onder transnationale creatieve werknemers in China. Tegelijkertijd zorgt het precaire leven dat ontstaat door de mobiliteit en flexibiliteit die van internationale creatieve werknemers in Beijing verwacht wordt voor interactie en wederzijds begrip tussen lokale en mondiale subjecten, en biedt het de voorwaarden voor een kosmopolitische subjectiviteit. Deze subjectiviteit van internationale culturele werkers kan de verwachting van de Chinese autoriteiten dat het creatieve personeelsbestand aangepast en winstgevend zal zijn, overstijgen. Op deze wijze belichaamt de transnationale mobiliteit van creatieve arbeiders in Beijing het proces van de-territorialisering en re-territorialisering, en illustreert het wat Isabel Lorey (2015) de ‘onberekenbare’ gevolgen van precarisatie en zelfbestuur noemt.

Hoofdstuk 5 bestudeert een ‘onwaarschijnlijke’ groep van creatieve werkers, gecreëerd door de opkomende platformisering van culturele productie in China: makers van korte video’s op het sociale media platform Kuaishou. Het onderzoekt de voorwaardelijke relatie tussen Kuaishou en het staatsbestuur van cultuur en economie, en laat zien hoe deze relatie is ingebed in het digitale algoritmische systeem van het platform. Het is deze contingentie van staat en platform die de functionerende ecologie van Chinese mediaplatforms onderscheidt van die in het westen. De platformeconomie biedt mogelijkheden voor ‘grassroots individuen’ van verschillende achtergronden om creatieve werkers te worden, in overeenstemming met het doel van de staat om de economie te herstructureren en tegelijkertijd een

nieuwe vorm van sociale klassenmobiliteit mogelijk te maken. Het grassroots digitale ondernemerschap dat door Kuaishou wordt bevorderd, overstijgt het passieve ‘digitale arbeid’ en ‘prosumer’ model dat enkele kritische politieke economen hebben geïdentificeerd (Ritzer en Jurgenson, 2010; Fuchs, 2010). Parallel aan de institutionele regulering en censuur van het internet, nemen Kuaishou-makers namelijk actief deel aan de creatieve economie van het Chinese platform, waarbij zij zich het algoritmische digitale systeem toe-eigenen en onderhandelen met de staat/ het platform om hun eigen creatieve en financiële doelstellingen te bereiken. Binnen hun ervaringen van creatie en tegeldemaking, kunnen we momenten van spel, zo niet weerstand vinden – momenten waarop het officiële verhaal van de ‘China Dream’ wordt afgewisseld met meerdere dromen van actoren die nauwelijks een gezicht of een stem krijgen in de reguliere media in China.