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978-1-107-00450-4 - Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries: Fairs, Festivals and Competitive Events

Edited by Brian Moeran and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen

Excerpt

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Introduction

BRIAN MOERAN AND JESPER
STRANDGAARD PEDERSEN

This book is about how those working in the creative industries take into account, negotiate and try to use to their advantage different kinds of values when participating in fairs, festivals and competitive events. It addresses three broad themes that cover the production, exchange and consumption of cultural or creative products. One concerns the nature of creative industries themselves and their production processes; another the role of fairs and festivals as institutions of economic and cultural exchange in the creative industries; and the third the ways in which different fields of cultural production are constituted and evolve through negotiation of the various values that different actors bring to bear on, and that ultimately extend to the consumption of, cultural products.

Creative industries

The – seemingly oxymoronic – notion of a ‘creative industry’ is an amalgam of two older terms that can be traced back to two separate sources. The first is ‘creative arts’, which derived from the philosophy of civic humanism espoused by the Earl of Shaftesbury and Sir Joshua Reynolds in England during the eighteenth century, and which came to be associated with an intellectual ideology of ‘public art’ (Hartley, 2005: 6–7). The second is ‘culture industry’, a term coined in 1947 by two members of the Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, in their influential book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, to describe the role of media in contemporary society. This phrase was preferred to that of ‘mass culture’ because the authors wished to argue against the then prevalent idea that culture arose spontaneously from the masses themselves. Instead, they suggested that cultural products were carefully tailored for consumption by the masses and were thus manufactured more or less according to plan (Adorno, 1991: 85). For this reason, Adorno later explained, the expression ‘industry’ was not intended to be taken too literally. It did not refer strictly to production

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processes, but to the standardization of cultural products, as well as to the rationalization of techniques relating to their distribution (Adorno, 1991: 87). Both these terms, in their separate ways, were originally advocated in opposition to the commercial exploitation of creativity.

In spite of Adorno's clarification, it was production processes that were taken up in ensuing research on what, in an attempt to avoid the monolithic determinism of Horkheimer and Adorno, have since been called the 'cultural industries'. Scholars such as Paul Hirsch, Howard Becker and Richard Peterson have all in their various ways advocated what has been called a 'production of culture' perspective – either by analysing the role of gatekeepers and distributor organizations (brokers, distributors, media outlets) as a crucial means of linking creative people to their audiences (Hirsch, 1972; 2000); or by showing how creative people do not work in aetherial isolation, but make use of networks to produce works that are very much a result of co-operative endeavour (Becker, 1974; 1982); or by focusing on 'how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems in which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught and observed' (Peterson and Anand, 2004: 311; Peterson, 1976). Gary Fine (1992) has added his own nuance to this approach by looking at the aesthetic choices and constraints facing creative people (in his case professional cooks) in what he refers to as 'the culture of production'.

'Cultural industries' were – provisionally, at least – overtaken by the term 'creative industries', which came into policy and education discourses in Australia and the UK in the mid-1990s initially, before spreading to other parts of Europe, Asia and the Americas, as creativity was, and still is, openly exploited for political and commercial ends. It is national and local governments in particular, rather than the industries themselves, that have identified which industries are 'creative' and which, by implication, are not in the so-called 'new economy', where value arises out of processing information and creating experiences rather than products *per se*. And yet, as John Hartley (2005: 26–30) further argues, creative industries cannot be identified at the levels of either industry or organization since creativity is, unlike an automobile or sheet of aluminium, an input, not an output. Moreover, the creative industries have not developed common interest associations that might exploit their 'creativity', partly because creative workers are for the most part employed on a casual, part-time, freelance basis and thus develop 'portfolio' rather than organization-based careers.

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Perhaps because of the sheer variety of ways in which they can be examined, creative industries are now variously referred to as copyright and (digital) content, as well as creative and cultural industries, depending on whether assets, technology, industrial production, labour inputs or public policy funding are the focus of attention (Hartley, 2005: 30).¹ Whichever of these terms is adopted, what is at issue is the extent to which such industries can, or cannot, be explained by economics. In a seminal work, the economist Richard Caves (2000) uses the theory of contracts to ask why self-interested parties in the creative industries structure their work in the ways that they do. He assumes that creative workers do not differ from others in that they are purposive and ‘intendedly rational’ in what they do. However, their preferences or tastes, together with production processes and the goods and services that they produce, differ in substantial and systematic ways from those of people working in other parts of the economy where creativity is not an issue. From this Caves (2000: 3–10) argues that there are certain ‘bedrock properties’ – which include the infinite variety of creative products, together with an accompanying uncertainty of demand; a need for close temporal and social co-ordination in production because of timing and the diverse skills required to complete creative works; the care that creative people bring to their work, which is itself qualitatively differentiated in terms of their rank; and intellectual property rights with their durable rents – that distinguish creative industries from other sectors of the economy.

Contributors to this edited volume have been trained in various different social sciences, though not in economics. Their focus, therefore, is more on the symbolic practices and organizational forms characterizing different forms of cultural production such as animation, art, book publishing, fashion, film, music, television and wine, than on economics *per se*. What interests them all is the ways in which various aspects of what might be broadly construed as ‘culture’ interact with, affect and are themselves affected by the economy of fairs, festivals and other competitive events including wine contests, art biennales and auctions.

Fairs and festivals

In spite of their obviousness and the fact that they have been increasing in number very rapidly over the past two decades (for example,

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currently more than 3,500 film festivals take place worldwide [see Mazza and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2008]), trade fairs and festivals have, until recently, largely been ignored by scholars working in such disciplinary fields as sociology, anthropology, strategy and management, as well as economics, although – as we shall here see – not by geographers or historians.² In hindsight this is surprising. After all, historically, fairs have been the essential tools of long-distance trade since medieval times and, some would aver, from much, much earlier. The fairs of Troyes, for example, are alleged to date back to Roman times, and those of Lyon to AD 172 (Braudel, 1992: 82). Whether such allegations are true may be of doubt, but from medieval times fairs, like those of Champagne (Face, 1958), were extremely important elements in what was an international economy. They functioned to break the usual cycle of trade and ‘interrupt the tight circle of everyday exchanges’ (Braudel, 1992: 82) – a function still performed, as we shall later see, by such creative industry events as the Venice Biennale (Tang, Chapter 3), London Fashion Week (Entwistle and Rocamora, Chapter 10), and Fan Fair country music festival in Nashville (Lena, Chapter 9).

Although the present-day ‘sample’ fair is in many ways different from the ‘commodity’ fair of old (Allix, 1922: 557–60), a number of historical parallels between the two should be noted. Firstly, fairs have always taken on the appearance of *temporary townships* or cities (Skov, 2006; see also Skov and Meier, Chapter 11). Either they have been incorporated in a fixed town (like Leipzig), taking over everything in it and itself ‘becoming’ the town – something we see in the Cannes Film Festival (Mezias *et al.*, Chapter 7) or the Documenta art exhibition held every five years in the German city of Kassel – or they are held in juxtaposition to a town, outside its limits, and becoming thereby an extension of the town, like the Frankfurt Book Fair held in the city’s Messe (Allix, 1922: 542–4; Braudel, 1992: 82–4). Occasionally, an event may move from the centre of a town to its edge (Moeran, Chapter 5), or from the edge to its very centre (Lena), or from one city to another and back again (Skov and Meier).

Secondly, unlike markets which are held on regular days of a week or month to enable immediate exchange, fairs were instituted to enable periodic forms of exchange for large-scale, especially international, commerce. This periodicity existed in terms of both the frequency and length of time with which fairs were held, and depended originally upon the itinerancy of traders and their merchandise (Allix, 1922: 540).

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Precisely because merchants needed time to travel from town to town with their packhorses, carts and goods, fairs were timed to accommodate their movement. In this respect they formed *networks of fairs* – or, in the current terminology of economic geographers, ‘cyclical clusters’ (Power and Jansson, 2008) – that were mutually dependent and communicated with one another. This kind of *perpetuum mobile* is still true of industry fairs and art biennales (Thompson, Chapter 2; Tang) today – so much so that a fair will create its own network if none at first exists (Rüling, Chapter 8). Just as a merchant used to travel to the fairs centred on Linz along the Danube – from Krems to Vienna, and thence to Freistadt, Graz, Salzburg and Bolzano, before heading back to Krems (Braudel, 1992: 92) – so nowadays does a book publisher move (albeit by somewhat swifter means of transport) from Abu Dhabi to, in quick succession, the Leipzig Book Fair, Bologna Children’s Book Fair and Salon du Livre in Paris in March, before travelling on to the great spring fair in London in mid-April, and thence, if so inclined, to the Thessaloniki Book Fair at the end of the same month, and the Tehran International Book Fair and Book Expo America in May.³ There is a hierarchy of fairs in each network (Power and Jansson, 2008: 439; see also Thompson; Moeran; and Mezias *et al.* in this volume) and clashes of fair schedules that might upset this hierarchy – as when Frankfurt decided to hold its fair at the same time as Leipzig’s in the early 1700s (Beachy, 1999: 437–38) – are frowned upon. This explains why a lesser fair, like the Tokyo International Book Fair, for example, had to adjust its timetable by rescheduling from April to July when the London Book Fair shifted *its* dates from March to April in 2005 because of a move to a new location (Moeran, 2009: 3–4).

Thirdly, fairs are not simply places in which to conduct business. They have always ‘meant noise, tumult, music, popular rejoicing, the world turned upside down’ (Braudel, 1992: 85) and were often centres of popular entertainment (Isherwood, 1981) where celebration could become contestation (Rearick, 1977: 437; (Delacour and Leca, Chapter 1). Fair time, in other words, was like *carnival time* (Thompson). It was also spectacle time with its processions, competitions, bonfires, fireworks, juggling, miracle cures and tooth-pulling. Nowadays, perhaps, we may prefer to have our teeth examined (at worst, pulled) in the private comfort of a dentist’s chair, but creative industry fairs and festivals today still provide an entertaining array of spectacles for participants – from boozy book fair parties to topless

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would-be actresses on the beach at Cannes, by way of the red carpet approach to the Academy Awards venue. It is in their concentrations of goods (books, films, music, fashion, wine), people and entertainment that fairs and festivals retain their importance and make their mark.

Finally, fairs have several *symbolic functions*. Fairs and festivals distinguish between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, between the more and the less privileged (Thompson; Havens, Chapter 6; Entwistle and Rocamora). In the past this was revealed in clothing and accessories distinguishing buyers from sellers, as well as different professional specializations (Gueusquin-Barbichon, 1980: 328), although nowadays such distinctions are made most obviously in the different colours and kinds of badges worn by participants, as well as in more general styles of dress (Smith, Chapter 4). It is also revealed in terms of the disposition of space – of who is placed where in an exhibition hall (Moeran), and of who may go where, when and for what purpose (Gueusquin-Barbichon, 1980; see also Havens). The medieval ‘passport’, or ‘conduct of the fair’, which assured travelling merchants of free passage to a fair on certain defined routes during a prescribed time is also replicated in the accreditation badges that not only permit entry to contemporary fairs and festivals (Entwistle and Rocamora), but also give special advantages (like free travel on city transport) for their duration (Allix, 1922: 540, 560).

More generally, the symbolic function of fairs is to be seen in activities that are carried on *outside* the normal course of trade exchange. Food and drink are shared, parties held, relationships between male and female participants formed and occasionally cemented, and all the time information is exchanged. In contemporary as in traditional town fairs, it is in the cafés and ‘watering holes’ surrounding the marketplace of commodities that the main exchanges often occur. In the old days, everything from the trade of goods to the arrangement of marriages took place there, so that the fair has been an opportunity for the renewal of social communion among participants, and an occasion to reinforce in-group boundaries (Maho, 1980: 66).

Given these historical continuities between medieval and contemporary fairs, we should note that fairs and festivals, though not exactly the same, share a number of common features. Firstly, they are *spatially bounded*: usually stage-set in, and framed by, a particular location – whether an indoor exhibition hall, park, around a town or city, or a combination thereof. Such settings are often set apart from their

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surroundings, thereby reflecting the liminal nature of the events that they house (Skov, 2006: 768). Spatial boundedness may also be found in the display of cultural products themselves (Delacour and Leca).

Secondly, they are *temporarily bounded* in terms of both duration and regularity. Fairs are short-term events in which all related activities take place over a period of from three days to three weeks, although some festivals – especially those with artistic content – tend to go on considerably longer (in some special cases up to three months). They are also usually held at regular intervals – normally once a year, but sometimes, as with fashion weeks, more frequently (Entwistle and Rocamora; Skov and Meier) and occasionally much less so, as with art biennales which are held every two, five or ten years (Tang). Temporality also asserts itself in other ways. For instance, it is crucial for collectors that they get access to art works displayed in art fairs before their competitors since prized pieces sell very quickly; for this they are prepared to pay premium admission prices. Also, both fashion shows and auctions are marked by a temporal flow in which selected cultural products are exhibited and sold. Finally, temporality occurs as a means of creating, sustaining or subverting a fair or festival's hierarchical structure, as the chapters on a wine classificatory system and competition by Croidieu (Chapter 12) and Anand (Chapter 13) attest.

Thirdly, fairs and festivals are *socially bounded* in that they bring together a large and diverse number of participants – industry manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers – who are closely involved in the production and distribution of the products and services being exhibited. As such, in their composition, they closely approximate DiMaggio and Powell's (1983: 143) definition of an organizational field as: 'those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services and products'. Such organizations structure a field as 'a configuration of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97) and as 'a socially structured space in which agents struggle' (Wacquant, 1992: 17). Such social boundedness means that end-users tend to be marginal.

Finally, fairs and festivals are also *functionally unbounded*. By this we mean that they serve multiple purposes – purposes that are often tightly related to the actors and agents participating in these events, since both fairs and festivals bring together a large and diverse group of

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participants who also happen to have diverse agendas and reasons for going to such events (Moeran; Skov and Meier). Some may come to trade (to buy or to sell products exhibited); others to obtain financial support for projects; some to build or maintain social relations and networks; others to engage in some form of reputation-management by promoting a product, a company, themselves, or some kind of political agenda. Fairs and festivals also attract other kinds of participants who are not closely linked to the industry concerned: for example, media organizations gather at such events in order to get or create a good story (Reff Pedersen and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2008). Indeed, formal and informal talk and opinion, information exchanges, and story-telling are an inherent aspect of fairs and festivals (Delacour and Leca; Smith; Moeran; Entwistle and Rocamora), during the course of which certain discourses emerge and the meanings of symbolic keywords are contested and negotiated (Rüling; Skov and Meier; Croidieu).

This leads us to the following definition, where we ourselves rephrase André Allix's modification (1922: 568) of his own earlier definition of fairs (Allix, 1914): *a fair or festival is a temporary township, superimposed at intervals upon a permanent town or city, which in important, though not regularly defined, social and symbolic ways contributes to the global needs of a particular industry and those who work therein.*

What is interesting about fairs and festivals, then, together with awards, prizes, auctions, exhibitions and other related phenomena, is the intersection of institutions and individuals, on the one hand, and of economic, social and symbolic activities, on the other. Overtly, trade fairs are about exhibiting 'the new', be it an idea in its initial state or a finalized product, showing one's capabilities, and trading in a particular commodity (that can range from aerospace to art, by way of electrical engineering, energy, food and restaurants, hardware, health, information technology (IT) and telecoms, jewellery, leisure boats, optics, packaging, pharmaceuticals, security, toys and travel, to keep the list fairly short). They provide opportunities for participants to enter into business negotiations with long-term partners, to gain knowledge through market information exchanges and to initiate and sustain social relations (Anand and Watson, 2004; Skov, 2006; Lampel and Meyer, 2008). Fairs also let participants observe competitors' exhibits. They may lead to vertical integration along an industry's supply and value chains, as well as to horizontal interaction among competing firms therein (Maskell *et al.*, 2006: 1,001–2). But, contrary to the claim

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made by Maskell and his co-authors, actual trade itself is *not* necessarily marginal (Skov, 2006: 770), even though trade fairs (and festivals) are largely about social relationships, symbolic hierarchies and cultural capital prized by the institutions and individuals attending them. One indication of the economic importance of fairs is a participant's expenditure and income. Booths at the Maastricht Art Fair, for example, may cost as much as €50,000, with total costs for a dealer wishing to exhibit there (including shipping, travel, accommodation, food and entertainment) reaching €80,000. In 2007, sales arranged at this venue for the 219 participating dealers had a value of €790 million, with dealers claiming that 40–70 per cent of their annual sales were made during the eleven days of the fair (Thompson, 2008: 188–9).

Values

The research carried out on fairs and festivals so far shares at least one concern: the extent to which what might be broadly termed 'cultural phenomena' inflect economic practices and vice-versa, as different values are brought to bear by the different actors involved (Throsby, 2001).⁴ This concern may be traced back to anthropological approaches to the study of so-called 'primitive economies' (Sahlins, 1965; Firth, 1967), but the study of values has always been central to explanations of the political economy.

Economists regard the notion of 'value' (utility, price and worth) as the origin of, and motivation for, all forms of economic behaviour (Throsby, 2001: 19). In its singular form, value has been examined principally as a means towards equating the 'inherent' qualities of commodities with their quantitative worth. As Karl Marx (1976: 138) noted long ago: 'they are only commodities because they have a dual nature, because they are at the same time objects of utility and bearers of value'. Many other social scientists, however, adopt a very different approach and regard economists' notion of value as at best problematic. But there is little coherence among the different disciplinary approaches in their conceptualization and measurement of such values (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004: 359–60). For sociologists, for example, values tend to be abstract ideals – as opposed to norms which are 'definitive principles or rules which people are expected to observe' (Giddens, 1993: 31) – and refer to the taken-for-granted processes by which social structures regulate individual actions. For linguists, however, values indicate

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‘meaningful differences’ in language, where ‘the value of any one element depends on the simultaneous coexistence of the others’ (de Saussure, 1983: 113). For their part, economists have built theories of value around the concept of a price system (e.g., Debreu, 1987). It is the idea that, like fairs themselves, values are meaningful only in so far as they form a system of complementary differences that this introduction develops.

Values are the criteria by which people judge what is legitimate (Suchman, 1995: 574) and worthwhile in their everyday lives (Graeber, 2001: 3). They are concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviours. They transcend specific situations, and tend to guide evaluations of behaviour and events. They are also usually ordered by relative importance (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987: 551). It is the patterns of values held by different professional groups occupying different social structural positions in different creative industries; the ways in which such values are negotiated (by whom, with whom, when, where, for what ends, and so on); and how they motivate social behaviour that are of interest here. Such patterns also affect cultural products themselves, and the (re)valuation – or ‘consecration’ (Bourdieu, 1993) – of art works, books, fashions, films, music and so on ‘is one of the central processes in the cultural industries’ (Lampel and Nadavulakere, 2009: 239).

Fairs, festivals and competitive events provide a venue for the (re)enactment of institutional arrangements in a particular industry’s field and for the negotiation and affirmation of the different values that underpin them. Thus, while the function of economic exchange may be to create value, all sorts of other, different kinds of – material, social, temporal, spatial, appreciative and other – values are introduced and promoted as part of the negotiation of the economic worth of an art work, fashion collection, book, film, television programme, or other creative product. In this respect, fairs and festivals epitomize Simmel’s argument that value is never an inherent property of objects, but arises from a judgement made about those objects by people whose whole lives ‘consist in experiencing and judging values’. In other words, the conceptual meaning of value or valuation is not itself part of the world, but ‘the whole world viewed from a particular vantage point’ (Simmel, 1978: 60). For this very reason, values become what might broadly be called ‘cultural’. This book explains how particular professional worlds, bounded in space and time, are viewed from the vantage points