

Creating structure from talk?

On boundaries, obstacles and failures in new forms of creative governance, or when too much novelty hampers innovation in governance

Creativity is viewed as the new key resource of urban development and has given rise to a new urban growth ideology. This is evidenced by a multitude of concepts, such as the creative city, creative economy, and creative class, which are restructuring the current research discourse in relation to urban development and whose “policy formulas” are being readily adopted by urban governments throughout the world. Creativity is, however, a volatile resource which is linked to individuals and groups, certain practices and the (re)combination of diverse knowledge resources. Thus the question arises for cities as to how they can manage these resources or develop governance structures within which creativity can unfold. The current interest in creativity is predominantly based on the increasing relevance of knowledge-based economies in restructuring urban economies. For example, the various sectors of the creative industries are identified by urban governments as a major “creativity resource pool”, which influences not only the development of the creative industries but also other economic sectors in the city, whether through knowledge spillovers or direct cooperation. In addition these industries are said to be relevant for the overall social, political, and cultural development of cities. But, what do cities – here understood as their governments – themselves contribute to the organization and development of the phenomena of creativity and the creative industries, e.g. what forms of coordination do they choose to support the sectors of the creative industries?

From a governance perspective creativity and especially creative industries support constitute a classical “wicked problem”, whereby the actual problem is difficult to define, has vertical and horizontal cross-cutting dimensions, multiple stakeholders, is closely connected with other problems and has a relentless quality (see Weber/Khademian 2008). I will put forward four specific arguments and challenges (heterogenous stakeholders, cross-sectoriality, coordination and representation of thousand microenterprises, and uncertainty) to support this claim. Consequently, it’s not only the novelty of the policy field, but also its complex nature that calls for new forms of governance. The paper draws on four case studies I conducted in Berlin and London for my PhD dissertation on the Governance of Creative Industries (2007-2011). What these four cases have in common is a horizontal approach in co-governance. These unfolding governance arrangements share objectively several productive features for success and policy innovation in that particular policy field: they combine a diversity of new actors and stakeholders in innovative designs, exhibit passion and endurance of key actors, display a common interest and are matched by supportive, new strategic objectives from the two urban governments. Nevertheless, they also miss several features: a common frame of reference for defining the problem and for integrating disparate knowledge between all stakeholders, no prior cooperation experiences, hardly any financial resources, and eventually, a rather opportunistic and weak commitment by urban governments. So, the question arises, can too much novelty hamper innovation?

New forms of governance between creative industries and urban governments provide a rich empirical field for studying “co-governance in the making” and the emergence of novel governance approaches and practices. Besides introducing these four governance arrangements, their specific structures and purposes, I will focus on the limitations of these

governance forms. Therefore the paper explores boundaries, obstacles and failures in these four attempts to set up new forms of governance for creative industries in Berlin and London. This paper will identify why most of these governance arrangements are not more than “talking shops” and why their (policy) effect has been “rather reaffirmative than transformative” (see Peck 2011) despite their current privileged place in urban (re)development strategies and all the surrounding euphoric political rhetoric about “Being a Creative City”.

Literature:

Peck, Jamie (2011): Amsterdam, Vehicular Ideas and the Adaptive Spaces of Creativity Policy. In: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Early View Online Article from Juni 3rd, 2011. Not yet published.

Weber, Edward P./Anne M. Khademian (2008): Wicked Problems, Knowledge Challenges, and Collaborative Capacity Builders in Network Settings. In: Public Administration Review 68 (2), S. 334-349.

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