



# Development Through the Creative Economy in China

25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> October, Shanghai, China

An International workshop organized by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the UK and the Research Councils UK (RCUK) China Office in partnerships with UNESCO Creative City (Shanghai) Promotion Office, the Shanghai Promotion Centre for the City of Fashion, the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Jiangsu Department of Culture.

## Summary

This report provides an overview of presentations and key points raised during discussion at a two-day workshop held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October in Shanghai. The event was attended by 75 delegates from the UK and China with research interests in Heritage, The Visual & Performing Arts and Design. The workshop was preceded by a PhD Masterclass on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October, by UK artist Sarah Butterfield and a reception at the 'Science is Art' exhibition at the ART LABOUR gallery, Shanghai.

*Notes prepared by Prof Tom Inns, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017.*

# Workshop Day 1 (Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October)

## Welcome and Introductions

The workshop began with welcoming comments from the workshop's sponsors; the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the UK, the Research Councils UK (RCUK) China Office, the UNESCO Creative City (Shanghai) Promotion Office, the Shanghai Promotion Centre for City of Fashion, the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA) and the Jiangsu Department of Culture (JDC).

These introductory talks emphasized the scale, growth and policy interest in the creative economies in both the UK and China from the perspectives of economic and cultural & social development. The presentations described the long standing creative and cultural traditions of both the UK and China. The talks also highlighted the role played by research in building understanding about the creative economy and in encouraging innovation in the sector.

## **Setting the scene, the Creative Economy in the UK & China: new research partnerships for economic growth and social welfare.**

Conor Roche, Director of BOP Consulting in Shanghai chaired a session with presentations from Professor Anthony Lilley (Magic Lantern Productions Ltd & University of Ulster), Professor Zhang Xiaoming (Chinese Academy of Social Science), Dr Marina Guo (China Innovation Service Alliance for Culture & Technology), Dr Dave O'Brien (University of Edinburgh).

These presentations explored the characteristics of both the UK and Chinese Creative sectors in more detail. The presentations were an interesting demonstration of how quality research can help build a better understanding of a dynamic economic sector. Emergent themes included:

- The significance of digital innovation in the creative sectors of both the UK and China and discussion about how digital innovation is:
  - disrupting creative economy business models
  - driving creative economy growth and bringing creative content to new audiences in both the UK and China
  - providing new opportunities for research in the new data rich digital environments
  - different in the UK and China as digital platforms are not the same
- Many of the presentations emphasized the importance of tradition, craft practices and the role of place in the creative economy in both the UK and China.
- The policy regimes in both China and the UK were described by different speakers. Reference was made to the significance of 5-year planning cycles in China. These plans can be used to narrate recent creative economic growth and help forecast

future direction. In the UK Policies such as the UK's Industrial Strategy were described.

- Speakers emphasized the emergent nature of the creative economy, how bottom-up innovation from very diverse sectors can drive change both within and outside policy frameworks.
- The issues of diversity in the creative industries workforce were described and the challenges for future working based on changes in demographics in both the UK and China.
- Likewise shifts in audiences and patterns of consumption of creative content, were described from a UK and China perspective.
- Speakers talked about the challenges of investigating creative practices and encouraging innovation at the micro-level through specific projects and then scaling-up new knowledge to create impact in the wider creative economy. Likewise, the challenges of investigating the creative economy at the macro-level to identify general trends and drivers and then using these to drive innovation at the micro-level were explored.

### **Partnership Building, research cultures, promoting collaboration**

Sarah Kerr, Co-Director, China Cultural Visiting Hub (University of Nottingham) chaired a session with presentations from Dr Emilie Wang (Guildhall School of Music & Drama), Dr Haili Ma (Cardiff University/Beijing-Normal Cardiff-Chinese College), Dr Zhang Chao (Jiangsu Culture and Arts Research Institute) and Dr Jessica Harrison-Hall (British Museum).

The session explored the challenges associated with running collaborative research projects between UK and Chinese partners, based on the experience of researchers who have recently run partnership projects. Key challenges raised included:

- The time it takes to build relationships between research partners in the UK and China. It is very important for both partners to have trust in each other and for partners to have the confidence to be upfront should problems arise. Time should be set aside for face-to-face contact to build this trust and understanding.
- Both sides of the partnership have to have an interest in the research that is being undertaken. What is of interest to one may seem mundane and of little significance to the other.
- It is very important to understand the differences in context that exist between China and UK, this difference might be to do with scale, speed or traditions and can have a significant impact on research design.

- Strategies need to be put in place to deal with the challenges of language and time differences, both during project operations but also when publishing and disseminating project outcomes.
- It is important to remember that there are different research infrastructures in each country, UK funding might be channeled through the AHRC, in China there are a variety of different funding bodies that might provide match-funding. The reporting requirements and strategic aims of each funder may be subtly different.
- It is important to understand that cultures of research may be different in the UK and China with researchers having different interpretations of issues such as:
  - Interdisciplinarity
  - Research design
  - The role of practice-based approaches within creative economy research
- The importance of valuing existing research relationships as well as supporting new relationships was highlighted.
- Some AHRC schemes require the Principle Investigator to be based in the UK. This presents a problem when ideas are developed in China where applicants may be unwilling to be a CoI as far as issues such as IP are concerned.

A variety of different strategies for dealing with these challenges were suggested through round-table workshop discussions following the presentations:

- The role and importance of well-structured and carefully thought through Memorandums of Understanding was emphasized.
- The opportunity to involve UK and Chinese partners in PhD exams within their respective partner country was highlighted as a powerful way of building a mutual understanding of research approaches in both countries.
- The practice of sharing opportunities for research training in both the UK and China was identified as a way of building effective partnerships.
- Carefully planned workshops, symposia and conferences were suggested as important activities to build into UK:China research projects to help fast-track knowledge exchange between research partners.
- It was suggested that mentor schemes could be set up between those with experience of China:UK cross-cultural partnership working and those about to embark on partnership projects.
- A number of delegates suggested that the AHRC's new scheme had two different forms of funding, perhaps one stream to support existing well-formed projects and partnerships and a second stream to build capacity and relationships between

partners who had ideas for strategically significant projects but needed time to develop ideas and build trust.

**Pioneering research methodologies for the creative economy: co-design, interdisciplinarity and innovative practice.**

Professor Lou Yongqi, Dean of Design Innovation (Tongji University) chaired a session with presentations from Professor Nick Kaye (University of Exeter), Dr Yi Na (Chinese Academy of Social Science), Professor Yangwen Zheng (University of Manchester), and Professor Ding Wei (Shenzhen University).

The session provided an opportunity to discuss some of the research methods and approaches that have been used in past and present creative economy research projects. Some of these methods and approaches are described in outline below:

- Co-design approaches were identified as a useful research method within Creative Economy projects, through discussion it became clear that different disciplines had varying interpretations of what co-design might mean and how these methods might be deployed.
- The emerging opportunities for accessing data about the creative economy were discussed, for example real-time data generated through new digital practices within creative organisations, or data gathered through government and agencies. The challenges of accessing equivalent data in the UK and China were explored as both places have quite different data gathering platforms and approaches to data collection and data access.
- The opportunities to examine a single creative practice from the perspective of different disciplines and bodies of knowledge were discussed. Such exploration could have a significant impact on both understanding of the creative practice itself and the knowledge base of each individual discipline.
- The challenges of research within the many genres of culture & creativity were discussed, the traditional, the popular, the avant-garde, the main-stream and within sub-cultures. It was suggested that all have an important part to play in any creative eco-system and all are equally worthy of quality research.
- There was a great deal of discussion about study of the artefact and the critical role of narrative around the artifact in developing and disseminating new knowledge.
- The role of academic research, with-and-about the creative economy was discussed. The creative economy moves fast, the academic research space offers a place for experimentation when the creative sector does not have the time or resources to explore. The academic research space also provides the space for reflection, to build understanding of trends, emerging practices and changing policy – each of these research roles is associated with quite different research methods. It was suggested

that some of the most effective creative economy research projects use a portfolio of approaches.

### **Thematic Session 1 – Design ‘Innovation from tradition’: new markets, new audiences and new design method for business and society**

Presentations from Professor Yang Weng (Tongji University) and Dr Catherine Rossi (Kingston University London) described design approaches and areas of research interest in both the UK and China.

Delegates then engaged in round table discussions and explored three questions associated with the design theme:

- *What can we learn from exploring the design approaches in east and West?*
- *How are the new roles for design developing in both parts of the world?*
- *What are the connections between contemporary design and the history and traditions of two quite different cultures?*

During round table workshop discussions, the following key points were raised:

- Design is made up of many different disciplines (product, service, fashion, communications, interiors etc). Within each discipline there are significant opportunities for UK:China research projects, comparing, contrasting – seeking synergies etc.
- There are opportunities to look at collective approaches to sustainable design in East & West.
- Collaboration between UK and China design researchers would provide opportunities to develop new ways of working (not just explore different approaches in different territories).
- In a fast-moving digital world, the relationships between tradition & authenticity and contemporary design can be explored in new ways.
- There may be merit in researching design approaches based on individualism (UK) and collectivism (China).
- Research could identify the process by which centres of design are evolving in China.
- There are many opportunities to explore the role of design and ‘design thinking’ in the heritage sector, and opportunities to look at the relationships between craft practices and heritage (particularly in rural areas).



- There are many opportunities to explore new social design approaches in China, co-design for example.
- Research could explore the shift in design from Human Centred Design 1.0 (practical, consumption, material based etc) to Human Centred 2.0 (wellbeing, sustainability, consumption change) in both UK and China.
- What does 'innovation from tradition' mean in a China context?
- There was much discussion about the importance of 'critical doing' in partnership with 'critical thinking' – in a field like design insights and advances are often embodied in non-academic outputs.
- The developing collaborative design methods such as co-design, social design etc offer considerable scope for exploring high-density urban design in a holistic user-centred manner. How might some of these practices develop in a Chinese context?



## Workshop Day 2 (Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October)

### Reprise

The day began with a summary of discussions from Day 1 of the workshop on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Thematic Session 2 – The Creative and Performing Arts: ‘new platforms for performance, engagement and exchange’: traditional skills and contemporary approaches to practice, curation and exhibition.**

Presentations from Professor Judith Mottram (Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, University of Lancaster) and Professor Sun Huizhu (Shanghai Theatre Academy) described different priorities for visual arts research and different approaches to theatre studies research in the UK and China.

Delegates then engaged in round table discussions and explored three questions associated with the creative and performing arts theme:

- *What can we learn about contemporary approaches to practice, performance, curation and exhibition in the visual and performance arts worlds of East & West?*
- *How can these approaches inform new models for audience engagement, inclusion and growth?*
- *What are the opportunities to exchange, ideas, themes, practices and models of creative education between cultures with very different histories and traditions?*
- *How do arts practices that are rooted in place, react to and influence the global contemporary?*

During round table workshop discussions, the following key points were raised:

- The boundaries of ‘east’ and ‘west’ are no longer appropriate now that we live in a world of a global visual and performing art marketplace. Research would tell us more about the development of these relationships.
- Opportunities exist for bringing practice based research methods into the textual approaches of humanities research in both China and the UK.
- Discussion explored to what extent research funding structures in both the UK and China foreground ‘bidding specialists’ and ‘text’ based research? – how does this impact in the visual and performing arts research in both places?
- Research in China could explore audience reaction, relationship and perspective on different genres of theatre (and indeed the visual arts), particularly the relationship between the traditional and contemporary.

- The potential of digital platforms (which are different in the UK and China) and their relationship to Arts Practices could be explored through research.
- Research could explore the arts in both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' modes in the UK and China.
- Approaches for taking arts practices to new audiences in China and the UK could be explored (to schools, the elderly etc).
- There are considerable opportunities for new models of theatre in China and exploration of Chinese theatre and opera in a UK context.
- The role of cultural production is key – there is so much to learn by doing and through experimentation with new approaches.
- In both the UK and China there are different dynamics in the relationship between 'private' and the 'public' funding for the Arts, different approaches result in different practices and different relationships with audiences. All areas ripe for further research.
- New technologies and approaches (such as immersive experiences) can result in new forms of performance and art, different approaches in the UK and China could be usefully explored through research.
- In China, there is great diversity – urban versus rural. Exploration of context through research would tell us a great deal about new approaches to visual and performing arts.
- The changing demographics of China (the cultural consumption patterns of 'returners') will have a big impact on visual and performing arts in the China – research could give us insight into these patterns and the relationship to global practices.

**Thematic Session 3 – Heritage: *'New audiences, new challenges': innovative approaches to audience engagement in cultural institutions and heritage strategies for development, social cohesion and skills enhancement in urban contexts***

Presentations from Professor Zhao Dongsheng (Nanjing University), Chloe Pei (Tsinghua University) and Professor Dana Arnold (University of East Anglia) described the challenges and opportunities for Heritage research in projects based in China and the UK.

Delegates then engaged in round table discussions and explored three questions associated with the heritage theme:

- *What are the challenges associated with conserving the heritage assets of different sectors in both East and West, particularly in emerging urban contexts?*

- *How can the embodied knowledge of artefacts and architecture be communicated to multiple audiences, how are audiences engaged in East and West?*
- *What is the role of the digital in making heritage accessible and understandable, what are the opportunities for digital co-operation between East & West?*

During round table workshop discussions, the following key points were raised:

- Research can show us how digital approaches can enable:
  - physical realization and reproduction of physical objects (relevant to collections that are shared between the UK and China)
  - generation of digital records for object analysis (often at a distance)
  - greater accessibility (again highly relevant to collections that are shared between the UK and China)
  - creation of complete sensory experiences (smells, sounds and touch)
  - statistical analysis of visual elements
  - virtual reality experiences
  - but more knowledge is needed about user experiences (in China and UK) more attention needs to be paid to the story, not just the digital platform.
- In China Archaeology is often referred to as 'Technical Archaeology' with a focus on technology.
- There are differences in the way the Chinese and UK audiences relate to heritage.
- A focus on heritage is demonstrating benefits such as social inclusion, regional identity and place making – there is great interest in this in both UK and China.
- Heritage research is not just about the physical (tangible). The intangible (stories and narrative) are equally important, but can be challenging to construct – balancing an emotional response with objective historical facts. Some of the histories of the past are politically complex – there are significant sensitivities regarding Chinese cultural assets that are within UK collections. This is an area where further research is needed.
- Research can show the process of reconstruction – explaining the agency of archaeology to new audiences.
- The role of museums in both the UK and China was discussed both from the perspective of communicating cultural heritage, but also the community role and the museum as a sustainable business, generating revenue for a place.
- There is a role for heritage to work with design in the creation of IP and cultural products, research could tell us what makes a meaningful cultural souvenir.

- The Chinese Heritage context has very particular attributes: Vulnerability, natural hazards, theft, the challenges of economic development, the pressures associated with rapid urbanisation, some sites with too many visitors (forbidden city) – some of these attributes are mirrored in the UK (Stonehenge).
- In the UK context heritage often has complex histories (association with a colonial past). In China histories are equally complex, often associated with the histories of different ethnic groups. These issues are becoming increasingly significant in both the UK and China as the views of the public change in an increasingly globalized world.

### **Planning for future research partnerships and the funding call**

During the final workshop session Adam Walker gave an overview of the AHRC's plans for a UK:China funding programme. This would be developed over the next 2 months, it was anticipated that a research call would be announced in January/February 2018 inviting applications for April 2018 to support projects beginning in October/November 2018.

Delegates were asked to comment on the features they thought it would be beneficial to build into the call. Suggestions included:

- Inviting new approaches to building sustainable partnerships – with applicants suggesting innovative ways that links between China and the UK might develop and flourish
- Welcoming projects that celebrated both the difference and similarities between UK and China, but framed around questions that were of clear interest to both parties.
- Framing the programme so that it could support a wide portfolio of research approaches, for example: digital research, performance, arts, design interventions, mapping, research into access and audiences etc.
- Welcoming projects that cut across traditional discipline divides within heritage, design and the arts.
- Potentially focusing on networking and workshop events in the first instance to build research communities and trust – bearing in mind funding per-project may well be limited. More conventional research project structures PDRAs etc might prove too expensive for the funds available.
- Having a programme that supported dialogue between the projects running within the scheme through regular knowledge sharing events in the UK and China.

Workshop delegates were then asked to group themselves into four groups, themed around 'heritage', 'design', 'arts' or 'other'. Each group was tasked with outlining ideas for future

research projects. Some of the projects were potential projects that workshop delegates were considering before the workshop. There were also new collaborative projects, with new partners, using new approaches to look at new issues within the Creative Economy that had emerged from discussions during the workshop. All of these example projects are useful in understanding the very broad interests of the UK and China research communities. (There are clearly many opportunities for projects that might emerge from UK and China partners who did not attend the Shanghai workshop).

**Potential ‘Design’ research projects:**

<b>Project Aims</b>	<b>Potential Partners</b>
`intelligent mobility’ – Autonomous vehicles – How will big data, urbanization and population growth influence the development of sustainable transport.	SAIC, Hyundai-Kia, Jaguar-Landrover, Royal College of Art
Design Innovation & Ageing Populations – How will design improve user experience and reduce costs in ageing and well-being.	Tsinghua University, Royal College of Art, Imperial College, Tongji University
Service Design in Health & Social Care	Renji Hospital, AGE UK, Alzheimer’s Society, Lancaster University
Design’s role in sustaining intangible cultures – practice based research	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences – LICA at University of Lancaster.
Design Education, Critical Thinking – research through design – design cultures	Kingston University SJTU
Design Education Innovation to support the needs of emergent local industries.	Ningbo University & Glasgow School of Art
Immaterial Heritage Futures – what is the role of designers in creating economic sustainability for rural immaterial heritage in China	Northumbria University, Shanghai Style and Fashion Centre, Xian Jiaotong, Moma Design, QMUL, Liverpool University.
How can design help revitalize sustainable culturally significant products, practices and designs.	Imagination, Lancaster

**Potential ‘Heritage’ research projects:**

19 <sup>th</sup> Century Cultural Identity, repositioning the cultural identity of 19 <sup>th</sup> Century China	Museums, City Historians, Digital
Shopping 19 <sup>th</sup> Century to 21 <sup>st</sup> Century – Cultural consumption, urban practice and tourism	Urban development corporations, Museums, Digital
Old Summer Palace v. 2.0 – new interpretation, presentation and behavioral interactions – Policy Changes through integrating science and technology in	UK National Trust Bureau of Tourism China Manchester University Manchester Metropolitan University

cultural heritage.	Nottingham Ningbo University Tsinghua University
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**Potential 'Arts' research projects:**

Children's literature in adaptation (theatre & various forms) in China – widen social enlightenment – the digital?	Shanghai Theatre Academy – publishers
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**Potential 'Other' research projects:**

Creative labour and well-being in context – motivations / rewards	Edinburgh / CASS / TU / York
Storytelling in Curatorial practices – accessibility and engagement / audience development	Regional museums Nottingham Nanjing and Tsinghua Falmouth